



American Occupational Therapy Association

# Evolving OT in Response to Society Needs

## Our Charge

AOTA strives to support the occupational therapy workforce in meeting society's ever-expanding needs. We aim to mobilize the OT community to meet the growing needs of society. In turn, we create a demand acknowledging how our OT skillset can address gaps in resources.

## Our Approach

Building on the **Occupational Therapy Practice Framework** (American Occupational Therapy Association [AOTA] 2020) **domains** and **core values**, this infographic provides a model for AOTA to address workforce capacity as a guide to evolve the field across practice settings. Starting with the fundamentals of occupational therapy, the pillars of **domain and process** emphasize the ways our profession can address **Social Determinants (Drivers) of Health (SDoH)** for the clients we serve—at every age, every stage, and in every context.

## Our Focus

Each spoke in the wheel builds upon the belief that occupational therapy has a direct impact on everyday life occupations for persons, groups, or populations (AOTA, 2020) and our role is vital to tackle the social drivers that influence **daily living and engagement, successful participation, and overall health and well-being.**



**Occupational therapy starts with you. Together, we can build momentum in the workforce. We are occupational therapy!**

## 1 Health Care Access & Quality

- Recognize the impact of limited insurance coverage on quality of care.
- Advocate for clients through creative ways of addressing needs and challenges and educating clients on resources and referrals.
- Foster culturally inclusive care that promotes belonging.
- Provide access to prevention of conditions for underserved populations and communities through a grass-roots approach.
- Offer access to appropriate services and resources to address sexual health.

## 3 Social & Community Context

- Recognize OT's role in providing non-traditional (medical) practice models.
- Seek non-healthcare funding sources (HUD, local and state grants).
- Support occupational justice in policing and justice policies.
- Advocate for policies that promote health and well-being for all.
- Provide unhoused resources.

## ! Other SDoH Considerations

- Adverse childhood experiences (ACES)
- Bias and discrimination
- Early childhood education
- Food insecurities and nutrition deficits
- Language
- Literacy
- Mental and behavioral health
- Policy inequities (income gap, gender inequality, health care, etc.)
- Systemic racism
- Exposure to domestic and community violence and trauma (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2019)

## 2 Neighborhood & Built Environment

- Ask about access to grocery stores, pharmacies, social and cultural connections, and engagement.
- Offer transportation options for continued mobility.
- Assess safe, accessible, and affordable housing options.
- Determine availability and access to [open green spaces](#) (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022).
- Consider [community livability](#) for available services and accommodations (AARP, n.d.)

## 4 Economic Stability

- Support vocational and pre-vocational interventions.
- Address food insecurity to promote nutrition and access.
- Develop strategies for financial management (paying bills, routines).
- Navigate medical bills and insurance barriers to service delivery.

## 5 Education Access & Quality

- Advocate for your role in mental health in school-based, early education, and community programs.
- Assess children and youth for changes in behavior during therapy sessions.
- Infuse justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion (JEDI) curricula into higher education.
- Develop and advocate for pathway opportunities that foster diverse and equitable representation.

Practice Settings

Social Determinants of Health

Domain & Process

Core Values

### References

AARP (n.d.). AARP livability index—Great neighborhoods for all ages. <https://livabilityindex.aarp.org/>

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Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2022). What's your role? Parks, recreation, and green spaces. <https://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/activepeoplehealthynation/everyone-can-be-involved/parks-recreation-and-green-spaces.html>

Kaiser Family Foundation. (2019). Beyond health care: The role of social determinants in promoting health and health equity. <https://www.kff.org/racial-equity-and-health-policy/issue-brief/beyond-health-care-the-role-of-social-determinants-in-promoting-health-and-health-equity/view/footnotes/>

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