The Definition of Occupational Therapy Practice for the AOTA Model Practice Act\textsuperscript{1} is an important document that asserts the scope of practice of occupational therapy for state regulation. Any changes to this document must be adopted by AOTA’s Representative Assembly (RA). States are encouraged to adopt this language in their practice acts because it reflects the contemporary occupational therapy scope of practice as defined by the professional policy making body of the profession. Defining a scope of practice in state law legally articulates the domain of occupational therapy practice and provides guidance to facilities, providers, consumers, and major public and private health and education facilities on the appropriate use of occupational therapy services and practitioners.

A profession’s definition of practice must be broad enough to include its full and appropriate scope, yet specific enough to indicate unique aspects that distinguish it from other professions. Scope of practice, as reflected in this legal definition, should directly relate to the standards for education, training, and clinical application for that profession.

The Definition of Occupational Therapy Practice for the AOTA Model Practice Act was last updated in 2004. Since that time, several states—including Colorado, the District of Columbia, Idaho, Indiana, Michigan, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oregon, Tennessee, and West Virginia—have introduced, adopted, or adapted the model definition for use in their practice acts. Other states have used previous versions of the model definition in their practice acts. As states upgrade their practice acts, AOTA will recommend use of the Definition of Occupational Therapy Practice for the AOTA Model Practice Act as well as other aspects of AOTA’s Model Practice Act.

Revision of the Occupational Therapy Practice Framework: Domain and Process (Framework-II) in 2008\textsuperscript{2} created a need to update the Definition of Occupational Therapy Practice for the AOTA Model Practice Act in order to reflect the changes in the Framework-II and changes in practice since the development of the current definition in 2004. The current definition was sent to a broad spectrum of stakeholders via e-mail, the AOTA Web site, and an article in OT Practice. Stakeholders included state regulatory boards and councils, educators, state association presidents, RA representatives, and Board members. The State Affairs Group coordinated a cross-functional team of AOTA staff to review stakeholder comments and to draft a revised definition. The revised definition was then sent to the stakeholders for a second call for comments. Stakeholder comments were again thoroughly reviewed and integrated into the revised definition.

The revised draft of the Definition of Occupational Therapy Practice for the AOTA Model Practice Act, published as part of the Report of the President to the RA, is available on AOTA’s Web site at www.aota.org/meetingslibrary/springra/modeldefinition. If you are unable to access this, call the RA office at 800-SAY-AOTA (729-2682), ext. 2103. RA representatives will be seeking input on this motion from their constituents prior to the RA meetings in April. If approved by the RA, this definition will be distributed to state regulatory boards, state associations, and other interested parties. Note: the revised definition will not replace the definition of occupational therapy practice in state practice acts without the adoption of the definition by individual state legislatures.

AOTA members are encouraged to review the RA reports, including suggested changes to the Definition of Occupational Therapy Practice for the AOTA Model Practice Act, and to share their thoughts about action items with their RA representatives.

References

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