

Occupational Therapist



Roles and Responsibilities: Occupational therapy practitioners (occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants) in a school environment support a student's ability to participate in expected daily school routines, activities or "occupations" by supporting academic achievement, promoting positive behaviors necessary for learning and preparing students for life after graduation. Occupational therapy practitioners assist the educational team in addressing both mental and physical health in collaboration with a variety of partners, including students and parents.

Information about Occupational Therapists: Occupational therapists contribute educationally relevant services and early intervening activities for struggling general education students, evaluate students to determine special education eligibility, develop student individualized education program (IEP) goals and collaborate with others to provide and support student success across all school environments. Service delivery is along a continuum of prevention, promotion and intervention to serve individual students, groups of students, whole classrooms and whole-school initiatives.

Occupational Therapists are Trained to:

- Analyze activity and environmental demands to identify limitations in occupational performance and then reduce barriers that impede student participation;
- Collaborate with teachers to plan and adapt instructional activities for classroom implementation to support student access and meaningful student participation throughout the school day;
- Assist in determining and implementing methods for alternate educational assessment and learning styles;
- Design strategies and interventions to improve behavior management, self-awareness, body and sensory awareness, coping strategies and positive behavior supports for students;
- Develop early childhood skills (such as motor, sensory processing/perceptual, cognitive, communicative, self-help and social);
- Promote productive leisure skills, such as recess or participation in sports and clubs;
- Develop self-help skills, including dressing, eating, grooming, toileting, meal preparation and housekeeping;
- Develop functional skills to promote student performance across school environments (for example: playground, classroom, lunchroom, bathroom, school bus or work site) through interventions, adaptations and accommodations;
- Leverage students' strengths to design and implement programming to promote inclusion and accessibility for all learners;
- Educate parents, teachers, administrators and other staff members about the student's disability, diagnosis or condition (such as stamina, strength, posture, attention span, organizational skills) and any impact to the student's educational performance and need for specialized interventions;
- Provide or adapt assistive technology (low to high) to support students across all school environments;
- Design, adapt and create prevocational or vocational opportunities to promote work behaviors and engagement;
- Assist the school team to identify short- and long-term goals for appropriate post-school outcomes;
- Develop adult living and community living skills, such as using transportation, shopping, banking, library skills and functional mobility;
- Prepare students for transitions to post-high school employment, independent living and/or education;
- Promote self-advocacy and self-determination skills for the student's future planning and transition to college, career/employment and community living.

References:

- American Occupations Therapy Association. (2018). Member resources for children and youth. Available from <https://www.aota.org/Practice/Children-Youth.aspx>.
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- American Occupations Therapy Association. (2018). Occupational Therapy's Distinct Value Children and Youth, Resources for Policy Administrators. Available from <https://www.aota.org/Practice/Children-Youth/distinct-value.aspx>.
- American Occupations Therapy Association. (2018). Early Intervention and School Special Interest Section. Available from <http://www.aota.org/practice/manage/sis/siss/eissis.aspx>.
- Morris & Hallenbeck. (2016) Evaluating student participation: focus on strengths. OT Practice.
- Occupational Therapy Practice Framework: Domain and Process (3rd ed.) American Journal of Occupational Therapy, 68 (Suppl.1), (2014). S1-S48.<http://dx.doi.org/10.5014/ajot.2014.682006>.
- Ohio Department of Education. (2014). Ohio Operating Standards for the Education of Children with Disabilities. Available from <http://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Special-Education/Federal-and-State-Requirements/Operational-Standards-and-Guidance/2014-Ohio-Operating-Standards-for-the-Education-of-Children-with-Disabilities.pdf.aspx>.