

Career Profile OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST

“What is an Occupational Therapist?” – Career Description/ Scope

Occupational Therapists (OTs) are regulated health care professionals who help people learn or re-learn to manage the every day activities and roles that are important to them (e.g. caring for themselves or others, caring for their home, participating in paid/unpaid work and leisure activities). The scope of practice of occupational therapy is the assessment of function and adaptive behavior and the treatment and prevention of disorders which affect function or adaptive behavior to develop, maintain, rehabilitate or augment function or adaptive behavior in the areas of self-care, productivity and leisure. 1991, c. 33, s.3.

Occupational therapy is the art and science of enabling engagement in everyday living, through occupation; of enabling people to perform the occupations that foster health and well-being; and of enabling a just and inclusive society so that all people may participate to their potential in the daily occupations of life (Townsend & Polatajko, 2013, p. 380).

Registration with the College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario (COTO) qualifies occupational therapists to use the protected title of “Occupational Therapist” and the designation “OT Reg. (Ont.)”.

Education Requirements to Work in Ontario

- As of 2008, Occupational Therapy programs in Canada are Masters level entry programs; programs are two years in length and consist of academic units and clinical placements
- People interested in applying to an OT program in Canada must have another degree as a pre-requisite and must fulfill all other criteria for the specific university program

Occupational Therapy Practice Requirements

To practice in Ontario, Occupational Therapists must be registered with the College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario (COTO) and meet the following requirements:

- Entry to Practice
 - A Bachelor of Science degree or Master of Science in Occupational Therapy obtained in Ontario or an academic qualification considered equivalent by the College's Registration Committee (international applicants should refer to www.coto.org for specific criteria for international graduates)
 - Successful completion of 1000 hours of fieldwork hours as part of their education; specific currency hours
 - Successful completion of the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists' National Occupational Therapy Certification Exam
 - Professional liability insurance including a sexual abuse therapy and counseling fund endorsement
 - Good conduct; language fluency; work eligibility as outlined by COTO
- Ongoing
 - Professional liability insurance including a sexual abuse therapy and counseling fund endorsement

- Mandatory participation in the COTO Quality Assurance program, consisting of maintenance of a professional portfolio made up of three mandatory tools:
 - Bi-annual Self-Assessment Tool
 - Annual Professional Development Plan
 - Annual Prescribed Regulatory Education Program (PREP) Modules
- Maintain ongoing competency/professional skills

How does an Occupational Therapist Practice at TBRHSC?

- OTs follow the Occupational Therapy Practice Process to assess and carry out interventions in collaboration with their clients and interprofessional teams to enable clients to engage in their meaningful activities of daily life in their environment of choice
- OTs working at TBRHSC work in both outpatient and inpatient programs
- OTs may supervise a Rehabilitation Assistant and assign different tasks to them to carry out aspects of treatment with clients
- OTs follow relevant legislation including the Public Hospital's Act, Mental Health Act, Health Care Consent Act, Substitute Decisions Act, Regulated Health Professions Act, Occupational Therapy Act, privacy legislation, as well as relevant policies and procedures established by TBRHSC
- OTs maintain and advance their skills through professional development opportunities (e.g. workshops, courses, research opportunities, and peer support)

What does an Occupational Therapist do?

- Uses evidence based practice and professional reasoning to guide work with clients
- Practices in a client-centred manner using client goals to guide the focus of assessment and intervention
- Works with individuals of all ages and populations, in a variety of practice settings ranging from hospitals and Family Health Teams, to universities, community based practices, schools, Long Term Care facilities, and many others; clients may be having difficulties as a result of accident, disability, disease, emotional or developmental problem or change related to the normal aging process
- OTs can work in clinical and non-clinical roles in such diverse sectors as physical health (e.g. orthopaedics, oncology, complex care, etc.), mental health (e.g. Assertive Community Treatment Teams, acute psychiatry, etc.), health promotion, school health, community based practice, palliative care, administration, sales, research, and academia
- Under medical directive Occupational Therapists with specialized education in advanced skills may practice as Advanced Care Practitioners in Arthritis Care or Orthopaedics

Web Resources

- College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario www.coto.org
- Ontario Society of Occupational Therapists www.osot.on.ca
- Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists www.caot.ca
- World Federation of Occupational Therapists www.wfot.org
- Occupational Therapy Ontario www.OTOntario.ca