



Resources for students
from The American
Occupational Therapy Association

Your career in Occupational Therapy

Workforce Trends in Occupational Therapy

The demand for occupational therapy services is strong. The U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) projected employment of occupational therapists to increase between 21% and 35% between 2000 and 2010, and employment of occupational therapy assistants to increase by 36% or more during the same period. This projection is based on the Bureau's assumptions that demographic trends and advances in medical technology will fuel demand for therapy services.

Occupational therapy workforce shortages are appearing in selected markets and sectors. The American Hospital Association's Commission on Workforce for Hospitals and Health Systems found in a 2002 report that hospitals were experiencing shortages in occupational therapy personnel. Demand for occupational therapy services in early intervention programs and in schools for children with disabilities served under the federal Individuals With Disabilities Education Act remains strong. Newly emerging areas of practice for occupational therapists related to the needs of an aging population are increasing demand for services. These include low-vision rehabilitation; treatment of Alzheimer's disease, and other forms of dementia, including caregiver training; older driver safety and rehabilitation; assisted living; and home safety and home modification to enable "aging in place." Based on a June 2003 survey of education program directors, 62% of occupational therapy and occupational therapy assistant students were able to secure jobs before graduation or within 4 weeks of graduation, and 95% were able to secure jobs within 6–8 weeks of graduation.

Current Workforce

Based on 2003 survey results from state occupational therapy regulatory boards, American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) staff estimates the current active occupational therapy workforce to be roughly 113,000 practitioners. This includes approxi-

mately 86,000 occupational therapists and 27,000 occupational therapy assistants.

Recent AOTA surveys indicate that 92% of practitioners are female, almost three quarters (71%) are employed full-time in the profession, and the median level of professional experience is 13 years.

The BLS data for 2002 indicate a median annual income of \$51,990 for occupational therapists and \$36,660 for occupational therapy assistants.

Information from the American Medical Association 2000 Salary Survey indicated average entry-level salaries of \$40,000 for occupational therapists and \$30,000 for occupational therapy assistant. Recent indications of plentiful job advertisements and frequent sign-on bonuses suggest that those entry-level salaries have risen and that applicants are receiving multiple job offers.

Occupational therapy practitioners work in a wide range of settings including schools, hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, home health, outpatient rehabilitation clinics, psychiatric facilities, and community health programs. School systems, hospitals, and long-term-care facilities are the primary work settings for occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants.

Licensure and Regulation

The practice of occupational therapy is regulated in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and Guam. The most common and highest form of regulation is licensure. Licensure is required in 49 of those jurisdictions for occupational therapists and 46 jurisdictions for occupational therapy assistants. Colorado and Hawaii do not regulate occupational therapy assistants but do regulate occupational therapists (registration law in Hawaii and trademark law in Colorado)

If you have specific questions about a career in occupational therapy, please contact educate@aota.org.

Visit www.aota.org for more information about the profession and the activities of the American Occupational Therapy Association.



The American Occupational Therapy Association



The Occupational Therapy Workforce (2003)

Who They Are...

| | |
|---------|---------------------------------|
| 85,683 | Occupational Therapists |
| 26,970 | Occupational Therapy Assistants |
| 112,653 | Total Practitioner Workforce |

Where They Work...

| | |
|-------|--------------------|
| 34.4% | Schools |
| 25.3% | Hospitals |
| 13.4% | Nursing Facilities |
| 5.5% | Academic |
| 3.7% | Home Health |
| 3.5% | Behavioral Health |

(Primary practice settings, 2003)

