



# OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST

## **JOB DESCRIPTION**

Occupational therapists (OTs) help people improve their ability to perform tasks in their daily living and working environments. They work with individuals who have conditions that are mentally, physically, developmentally, or emotionally disabling. They also help them to develop, recover, or maintain daily living and work skills. Occupational therapists help clients not only to improve their basic motor functions and reasoning abilities, but also to compensate for permanent loss of function. Their goal is to help clients have independent, productive, and satisfying lives.

## **EXPERIENCE & SKILLS**

Occupational therapists must be warm, kind, patient and must possess strong interpersonal skills to inspire trust and respect in their clients. Ingenuity and imagination in adapting activities to individual needs are assets. Previous work experience in the field either in a volunteer or paid position is usually required. Essential skills needed are:

- Assessing/Analyzing
- Ability to communicate well
- Patience/Compassion
- Report writing
- Supervisory/Leadership skills
- Creativity

## **EDUCATION & TRAINING**

Currently, a bachelor's degree in occupational therapy is the minimum requirement for entry into the field. Beginning in 2007, however, a master's degree or higher will be the minimum educational requirement. As a result, students in bachelor's-level programs must complete their coursework and fieldwork before 2007. All States, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the District of Columbia regulate the practice of occupational therapy. To obtain a license, applicants must graduate from an accredited educational program and pass a national certification examination. Those who pass the exam are awarded the title "Occupational Therapist Registered (OTR)." Some States have additional requirements for therapists who work in schools or early intervention programs. These requirements may include education-related classes, an education practice certificate, or early intervention certification requirements.

## **SALARIES**

Salaries vary depending on work setting, years of experience, specialty and region or state.

Entry level	\$42,000	School settings	\$48,580
Average	\$54,660	Hospitals	\$55,710
Experienced	\$67,010	Private practice	\$58,720
Community Mental Health	\$56,600		

## **EMPLOYMENT & ADVANCEMENT PROSPECTS**

Employment prospects are excellent. Occupational therapy is one of the fastest growing occupations in the 1990's, with job opportunities expected to grow by 69% through 2006. Advancement is good and can occur when promoted to supervisor, or by relocating to a larger more prestigious facility.

## **RELATED OCCUPATIONS**

- Physical therapists
- Speech pathologists
- Chiropractors
- Recreational therapists
- Rehabilitation counselors
- Audiologists

## **REFERENCES**

The American Occupational Therapy Association at <http://www.aota.org>

Occupational Outlook Handbook, U.S. Department of Labor Statistics, [www.bls.gov](http://www.bls.gov) 2005-06