

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY PROGRAM

The Occupational Therapy Profession

Occupational therapy is the art and science of facilitating well-being through occupation. The term “occupation” represents the flow of activity that fills a person’s life and that has an effect on his or her health. Occupational therapy is particularly concerned with how people construct meaningful lives individually and in community.

In the view of occupational therapy, well-being is achieved through an active, dynamic and evolving balance between the person and his or her environment. Occupational therapists intervene when illness, disability, or social constraints threaten the person’s ability to actively create or find that balance and participate fully in society. Because occupational therapy views people as multidimensional beings, it blends knowledge from the biological and social sciences into a unique, distinct and holistic profession. In order to use occupations strategically, occupational therapists have expertise in how the body, mind and spirit work together to produce occupations as simple as feeding oneself or as complex as leading a hundred-piece orchestra.

Occupational therapy provides service to individuals, families, groups and populations in communities and institutions such as hospitals, day centers and schools. Occupational therapists both receive referrals from and make recommended referrals to appropriate health, educational, or medical professionals. Delivery of occupational therapy services involves several levels of personnel including the registered occupational therapist, the certified occupational therapy assistant, and aides.

Entry-level occupational therapy professional educational programs prepare the occupational therapist with basic skills to serve as direct care providers, consultants, educators, managers of personnel and resources, researchers and advocates for the profession and the consumer. The health care environment within which occupational therapists practice is changing dramatically, and the profession stands at the threshold of opportunity to expand practice roles. New environments need leaders who can manage organizations and systems as well as deal effectively with change.