

## What does Occupational Therapy Intervention Look Like in Special Education?

### **A Continuum of Service Delivery**

Upon parent permission to assess, a school occupational therapist completes an assessment. If the child is supported within his/her educational environment and is accessing and benefiting from his/her curriculum, occupational therapy is not required. If needs are identified in accessing and making progress in their curriculum, occupational therapy is recommended as a related service. The therapist uses his/her professional expertise and scientifically based research to determine the intensity and frequency of intervention.

Effective occupational therapy intervention uses a continuum of direct treatment, consultation, monitoring and collaboration in order to achieve the desired goals for a child. Optimally, occupational therapy services take place in the context of the child's educational environment. The mode of service delivery may vary during the course of intervention, as the child's needs change. Treatment may also be provided as a co-treatment with other related services (Physical Therapy, Adapted Physical Education, and Language and Speech).



## When is a Child Ready to Graduate From Occupational Therapy?

The recommendation for continuation or graduation of occupational therapy services is determined by the professional expertise of the occupational therapist in collaboration with the IEP (Individualized Education Program) team.

There are several factors that the IEP team should consider when making decisions regarding occupational therapy service completion:

1. The child's needs that are being addressed by occupational therapy no longer negatively impact his/her educational performance in the regular education or special education program.
2. The child no longer requires OT as a related service in order to benefit from his/her special education program.
3. The child consistently demonstrates behaviors that inhibit progress in occupational therapy such as lack of cooperation, motivation, or chronic absenteeism. In these circumstances, the IEP team should consider the initial eligibility decision since these behaviors may reflect social maladjustment, environmental, cultural, or economic factors rather than an actual disability. The IEP team may also explore alternative services or strategies to remedy the interfering behaviors or conditions.
4. The child's needs will be better served by an alternative program and/or service, as determined by the IEP team.
5. Therapy is contraindicated because of a change in the child's medical or physical status.
6. The child graduates from high school or reaches the age of 22 years old.

Occupational therapy services are intended to target specific areas of weaknesses related to educational access. They are not necessarily intended to be ongoing services for the duration of the child's academic career.

## How Do You Contact the Occupational Therapy and Physical Therapy Program?

Beaudry Building—17th Floor

333 South Beaudry Ave

Los Angeles, CA 90017

Phone: 213-241-6200

Fax: 213-241-8435

Website: [www.lausd.net](http://www.lausd.net)



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# Occupational Therapy



*The Mission of the Division of Special Education is to provide leadership, guidance, and support to the school community in order to maximize learning for all students within an inclusive environment so that each student will contribute to and benefit from our diverse society.*

# Occupational Therapy in Education

## What is School Occupational Therapy (OT)?

School occupational therapy enhances the child's ability to function within the educational environment. Occupational therapists address the child's physical, sensory motor, environmental factors and activities that support or limit participation at school and access to their curriculum. The areas addressed by a school-based occupational therapist must directly relate to the child's performance within their school setting (campus, classroom, playground, cafeteria, bathroom and library). School occupational therapy is based on the state standards, core curriculum, and the Guidelines for Occupational Therapy and Physical Therapy in the California Public Schools.

School occupational therapists are involved in:

- ◆ Prevention and pre-referral activities
- ◆ Assessments and student program planning for individuals with exceptional needs
- ◆ Teacher, staff and parent training sessions
- ◆ Treatment
- ◆ Collaboration with all service providers

## Who Are the Occupational Therapists and Occupational Therapy Assistants?

Occupational therapy is a unique profession that requires both a medical and psychosocial knowledge base. The qualifications of occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants include:

- ◆ An educational background in human anatomy, kinesiology, neurology, mental health, activity analysis and human development
- ◆ A degree from an accredited school and a current license/certification from the California Board of Occupational Therapy and the State of California (Business and Professions Code Section 2570 -2570.32), as well as registration with the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy
- ◆ Ongoing training to further advance their knowledge base is required

## What does Occupational Therapy Look Like in the School Environment?

Occupational therapists assess the child's strengths and needs (foundational components) that support or limit his/her participation at school and access to the curriculum. Occupational therapists analyze the environment, the curriculum and tasks in order to determine if the child is able to successfully participate in their educational program.

### Analyze the Environment:

- |                   |             |
|-------------------|-------------|
| ◆ Campus          | ◆ Cafeteria |
| ◆ Classroom       | ◆ Bathroom  |
| ◆ Playground/Yard | ◆ Library   |

### Analyze Curriculum and Tasks:

- ◆ Sitting upright in a chair, on the floor, etc.
- ◆ Utilizing classroom tools, including a pencil or scissors
- ◆ Imitating and copying lines, shapes or letters
- ◆ Navigating and engaging in movement exploration during playground activities
- ◆ Manipulating classroom tools and materials

### Assess Foundational Components:

- |                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| ◆ Postural Stability          | ◆ Social / Play Abilities                     |
| ◆ Sensory Processing          | ◆ Task Completion and Organization            |
| ◆ Motor Planning              | ◆ Environmental Adaptations and Modifications |
| ◆ Fine Motor                  |   |
| ◆ Visual Motor and Perception |   |

## What is the Role of the Occupational Therapist in Prevention and Pre-Referral in General Education?

The occupational therapist serves as a consultant or resource to the school staff regarding motor development and access to the educational program.

### Tier 1: Core Consultation

- ◆ Provides information on normal motor development.
- ◆ Suggests ideas for setting up the classroom for student success.
- ◆ Assists with environmental accommodations for students to access the curriculum, classroom and campus.



### Tier 2: Strategic/Supplemental Instruction and Intervention

- ◆ Observes students in the classroom or other school environments.
- ◆ Consults with parents, teachers and other school staff regarding concerns
- ◆ Suggests accommodations for general education, if limitations exist.



### Tier 3: Intensive Instruction and Intervention

- ◆ Consults with teachers and parents on a regular basis to monitor recommended accommodations and supports.
- ◆ Participates in Student Support & Progress Team

Throughout all of these phases, progress is continuously monitored. If these interventions are determined insufficient to meet the child's specific needs, the team should consider a referral for special education.

