

# OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ASSOCIATION OF CALIFORNIA FACT SHEET

## What Is Occupational Therapy?\*

**Occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants work with people experiencing different medical conditions or disabilities to develop, improve, or restore functional daily living skills. Occupational therapy is a science-driven, evidence-based profession.**

For millions of people, the service of occupational therapy is a lifeline. People of all ages receive occupational therapy to help them participate in the activities of their daily life. Sometimes people need occupational therapy to surmount their disabilities or medical conditions to do the everyday things we take for granted, like getting dressed, being productive at school or work, eating unassisted, even socializing. And sometimes well people utilize the services of occupational therapy practitioners, such as older adults who want to stay active and in their own homes, business executives who want to practice wellness activities for a healthier lifestyle and more successful career, and others.

Occupational therapy is for individuals of all ages to improve skills that help them perform daily tasks at home, school, work and play. The nature of the therapy depends on the individual, the tasks to be performed, and the environment in which the task takes place. Occupational therapy practitioners collaborate with health care providers and others in ensuring a comprehensive approach in addressing the needs of individuals.

Occupational therapy has its roots, a century ago (1917), in helping war veterans return to life at home. These days, occupational therapy practitioners work in schools, hospitals, rehabilitation centers, skilled nursing and assisted living facilities, mental health clinics, and in-home care.

***Example of Approach to Care:*** In a team of health care specialists, a surgeon operates on an injured knee. A physical therapist will devise a series of exercises to help the knee heal properly with a maximum range of motion. An occupational therapy practitioner will ask, "What do you need your knee to do? What activities do you want to do, so you can adapt (the way you walk, drive, move around at home, etc.) to that knee?" thereby determining the right treatment for keeping you mobile and an active participant in your own life.

***\*Definition*** — *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 2003:* Occupational therapy is therapy based on performing the meaningful activities of daily life (self-care skills, education, work, or social interaction), especially to enable or enhance participation in such activities despite impairments or limitations in physical or mental functioning.

*Sources: California Department of Consumer Affairs, Board of Occupational Therapy and American Occupational Therapy Association*



### VISION STATEMENT:

A world where all people participate in meaningful occupations to optimize their life experience.

### MISSION STATEMENT:

OTAC is the collective voice that serves, promotes, and supports the profession of occupational therapy and its practitioners.



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