
What is Occupational Therapy?

- Occupational Therapy is a health care profession concerned with a student's ability to perform daily occupations (i.e. tasks), including self-care (e.g. dressing, feeding) productivity (e.g. school work) and leisure (e.g. play).
- Occupational Therapists are trained to assess and treat occupational performance problems in the environments where these tasks are being performed, e.g. classrooms, schools and playgrounds
- Occupational Therapy is a determinant of health, well-being and helps give meaning to life.

Occupational Therapy with School-Aged Children

- Occupational Therapists (OTs) work with children, parents, teachers and caregivers to enable children to participate fully in tasks and routines.
- School-Aged Therapy supports children and youth in the school, home and community settings.
- Support in the home setting may include home-based assessments, provision of appropriate medical equipment and caregiver training.

Role of Occupational Therapist

- OTs analyze the children's abilities, activity requirements and environments in which they do those tasks, including classrooms, playgrounds, and homes settings
- OTs determine how to increase the fit between the person, task and environment. When there is a good fit among these areas, children are successful in their participation and progress in their development
- Active engagement in meaningful activities is important in positive health and well-being

Who Might Benefit from OT? Children who have:

- Physical difficulties, such as sensory or motor development disorders, that affect self-care, social interaction, or mobility
- Cognitive difficulties that impact on their learning development, as well as ability to organize themselves, their belongings, time and thoughts
- Social or cultural difficulties that impact on social participation, peer relationships, following routines, and ability to transition between tasks or environments
- Emotional difficulties affecting regulation of emotions and behaviour

What Can Occupational Therapists Do for School-Aged Children?

Self Care:

- Help children develop skills expected for their age, such as independent dressing, eating, hygiene and mobility
- Prescribe equipment such as wheelchairs, bath and toileting aids
- Educate caregivers and work with children to become independent

Productivity:

- Educate parents and school staff about the sensory, motor, perceptual, social, and behavioural characteristic of a specific child and the demands of the activities at school and home
- Provide in-services to enhance capacity of teachers and educational assistants
- Determine how environments might be changed to accommodate for a student's needs
- Participate in the development of an Individual Education Plan (IEP)
- Recommend accommodations that include adapting existing materials and tools, including desks, seating, agendas, worksheets, writing implements and storage spaces
- Introduce and prescribe technologies to address fine motor limitations
- Support transition into Kindergarten, new settings and/or adult programs



School-Aged Occupational Therapy may include:

- Screening and/or assessment to identify performance limitations, including motor, sensory, cognitive (e.g. visual-motor, perception) and social-emotional, self-regulation challenges
- Consultation with school staff, including: interpretation of medical information and the implications for that student at school; in-service training to support school staff to carry out routines and strategies to enhance integration and inclusion of students with special needs
- Recommendations to school staff to enhance fit between the person, occupation and environment. Areas may include: sensory, motor, cognitive, social or emotional difficulties, which may be affecting access to the curriculum, school participation, self-care, social or physical play
- Limited direct or group therapy. When more intense, 'direct' or ongoing OT support is required, families must access community-based OT support.



Access to Occupational Therapy Services

Referrals to School-Aged Therapy OT can be initiated by:

- School-based teams, which includes teachers and parents

Please Contact Your Child's School

OR

- Your child's medical specialist, e.g. Neurologist or Pediatrician
- Early Intervention team when transitioning into Kindergarten
- Other community service providers, such as MCFD's Child and Youth Special Needs social workers.

Please contact:

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