

COTNS Practice Guideline: Occupational Therapy Support Personnel (2005)



COLLEGE OF OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS OF NOVA SCOTIA

PRACTICE GUIDELINE:

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY SUPPORT PERSONNEL (2005)

Practice Guidelines

Members of the College of Occupational Therapists of Nova Scotia are accountable for the practice they provide to the public. Guidelines are issued by the College for the assistance of the professional. They represent guidance from the College on how members should practice. Guidelines are intended to support, not replace, the exercise of professional judgement by therapists in particular situations.

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Background

Each year the College receives numerous inquiries from occupational therapists regarding occupational therapy support personnel. Often the members are requesting additional information to that outlined in the Occupational Therapists Act, 1998, c.21, s.1. Therefore, the College felt that the development of a practice guideline would assist occupational therapists in their practice. This practice guideline represents guidance from the College on how members should practice. Guidelines are intended to support, not replace, the exercise of professional judgment by therapists in particular situations.

This guideline was adapted from the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists Guidelines for the Supervision of Assigned Occupational Therapy Service Components (CAOT, 2003a). This guideline developed by CAOT has become the standard for regulatory bodies in Canada and has been used by several provinces in the development of similar guidelines. The College's practice committee reviewed and revised this document to suit the needs of occupational therapists practicing in Nova Scotia. Comparisons were made to similar guidelines from other provincial regulatory bodies (NBAOT, COTBC, COTO).

Upon completion of this review and revisal, the draft document will be sent to the Board and then sent to occupational therapists from across the province for feedback.

COTNS endorses the inclusion of support personnel in occupational therapy services in Nova Scotia as long as such services are in accordance with the Occupational Therapists' Act.

A. Definitions

Assignment: The process by which an occupational therapist designates another service provider, other than an occupational therapist, to deliver specific occupational therapy service components. The recipient of the service components is a client of the occupational therapist. The occupational therapist has the ongoing responsibility for the provision of the occupational therapy service (CAOT, 2003a).

Client: As defined most usually by the College as the individual(s) whose occupational performance issues have resulted in a referral for occupational therapy service. Most often the client is the direct recipient of occupational therapy service. The referral source or payer of the service is not defined as the client and while these individuals play an important role within service delivery, their interests are secondary to those of the client. Occupational therapists must establish and fulfill contractual agreements with stakeholders in a manner that respects the rights of the client (COTO, 1999).

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Occupational Therapy Service Component: Any task related to the delivery of the occupational therapy service (CAOT, 2003a).

Occupational Therapy Support Personnel/Workers: Any service providers who are not qualified occupational therapists but are knowledgeable in the field of occupational therapy through experience, education and/or training and directly involved in the provision of occupational therapy services under the supervision of an occupational therapist (CAOT, 2003a).

Qualified Occupational Therapist: An individual who is registered by COTNS as an occupational therapist.

Supervision: A process in which two or more people participate in a joint effort to promote, establish, maintain or increase a level of performance and service. One person is identified as having ultimate responsibility for the quality of service (CAOT, 2003a).

B. Guidelines for the Supervision of Occupational Therapy Support Personnel Responsible for Provision of Occupational Therapy Services

The Nova Scotia Occupational Therapists' Act, section 34 (1)(b)(c), make it an offence for any person other than a licensed occupational therapist "to hold himself or herself out in any way or be entitled to practice occupational therapy" and/or assume any title or description implying or designed to lead the public to believe that that person is entitled to practice occupational therapy."

Occupational therapists are the primary service providers for occupational therapy. The Nova Scotia Occupational Therapists' Act, section 2(p) defines "occupational therapy" as "the performance of professional services requiring specialized knowledge of occupational therapy theory in order to promote, develop, restore, improve or maintain optimal occupational functioning in the area of self-care, productivity and leisure...".

Components of occupational therapy services may be assigned to support personnel, however an occupational therapist is responsible for the supervision of assigned components of occupational therapy services.

The supervisory role of occupational therapists for support personnel assigned occupational therapy service components includes overseeing the quality and quantity of work as well as to ensure the expected outcomes of the assigned occupational therapy components are met. Supervisory responsibilities of occupational therapists must follow these steps: i) assignment of occupational therapy service components, ii) development of a supervision plan, and iii) monitoring and evaluation of task completion (CAOT, 2003a).

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Supervisory Responsibilities of Occupational Therapists

i) Assignment of Occupational Therapy Service Components

The occupational therapist is responsible for:

- determining the extent of supervision required by the support personnel
- identifying the occupational therapy service components to be assigned to support personnel.
- establishing that the support personnel providing service is competent to provide the service assigned.
- ensuring clients have provided informed consent.
- ensuring the support personnel providing service acknowledges accountability to the supervising occupational therapist.
- ensuring the assignment of the service component will not compromise the quality and outcome of the occupational therapy service.
- documenting the assignment of occupational therapy service components to support personnel in the client records.

Occupational Therapy Service Components Not to Be Assigned to Support Personnel

The occupational therapist is responsible to ensure appropriate service is provided to the client. There are occupational therapy service components which require substantial specialized knowledge of occupational therapy theory in order to promote, develop, restore, improve or maintain optimal occupational functioning in the area of self care, productivity and leisure which should not be assigned to persons who are not occupational therapists. These occupational therapy service components are stated in the Project Summary Report: Profile of Performance Expectations for Support Personnel in Occupational Therapy in Canada (CAOT, 2003b):

- interpretation and prioritization of referrals
- initial interviews/assessment findings
- interpretation of assessment findings
- intervention planning (including goal identification and selection of treatment strategies or procedures)
- interventions which require continuous clinical judgment to closely monitor and guide client progress
- modification of intervention beyond limits established by the supervising occupational therapist
- discharge decisions and/or referral of a client to other professionals or agencies
- communication (written or verbal) of occupational therapy recommendations, opinions, findings

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ii) Development of a Supervision Plan

The occupational therapist should:

- outline methods and frequency of service supervision prior to assignment, which is dependent on judgment of the complexity of the service component and level of knowledge and competency of the support personnel
- ensure that supervision is ongoing, and involves regular contact with support personnel (which may include observation, record review, meetings, input from other health professionals)
- determine the number of support personnel that can be supervised to ensure effective, safe and appropriate care is provided
- identify mechanisms for support personnel to access the supervising occupational therapist, particularly for emergency situations
- ensure that communication mechanisms and supervisory responsibilities of assigned occupational therapy components to support personnel are clarified if the occupational therapist is aware that the support personnel has been assigned additional components from other professionals

iii) Monitoring and Evaluation of Task Completion

The occupational therapist should:

- monitor and evaluate the completion of assigned tasks to ensure client and/or program outcomes.
- evaluate client and other stakeholder satisfaction with services and cost efficiency.

Documentation/Client Records

An occupational therapist keeps records as set by the College. The support personnel to whom the occupational therapy service component was assigned may record his/her direct interactions with the client. The occupational therapist, however, must record on the formal record that these notes, when present, were reviewed in determining future service planning for the client on the record.

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References

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