



HEALTH CAREER OPTIONS GUIDE

for internationally educated health professionals

Occupational Therapist Assistant (OTA)

This profession is also known as:

- occupational therapy support personnel
- occupational therapy support worker
- occupational therapy aide
- rehabilitation support worker
- rehabilitation assistant

Note: The Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists (CAOT) reserves the term Occupational Therapist Assistants” for those who have graduated from an accredited educational program. Others are referred to as “occupational therapist support personnel.”



What is an occupational therapist assistant?

An OTA works under the supervision of a licensed occupational therapist to perform tasks assigned to him/her by the licensed occupational therapist. Although supervised, OTAs are responsible for their own practice. OTAs work in a variety of clinical practice areas with clients who have difficulty completing their daily occupations due to injury, disease, or the social and/or environmental conditions where a client lives.

What are the main duties of an occupational therapist assistant?

Tasks assigned to the occupational therapist assistant may include:

- office administration
- direct client care such as assisting with assessment, intervention, and education
- management of equipment and supplies
- program planning
- evaluation

OTAs work with clients of all ages, from infants to older adults. Their work hours and duties are determined by the setting and the needs of their clients.

What personal characteristics or desired traits should I have for this work?

OTAs need:

- Patience and sensitivity for the challenges of others
- Physical and mental stamina to assist people who have disabilities
- Excellent interpersonal skills to work with people under stress
- Good communication skills
- Good time management and prioritizing skills

- Awareness and understanding of the policies, procedures and positions of the OT regulator and professional association
- Willingness to contribute to the professional model
- Understanding and respect for client confidentiality
- Ability to follow instructions and guidelines
- Ability to work independently and as part of a team member of health care providers
- Creative and manual skills required for activities such as crafts, music, carpentry and sewing

Where do occupational therapist assistants work?

OTAs work in many different practice settings. These include:

- Community agencies
- Hospitals, continuing care facilities, rehabilitation centres and clinics
- Elementary and high schools
- Colleges and universities
- Municipal, regional or federal government agencies
- Insurance agencies
- Professional organizations
- Private practice

What are typical work conditions for this work?

Conditions vary greatly by client need and client's location. A typical work day would be an 8 hour shift in a care facility. It could involve some travel time between client's homes.

What qualifications do I need for this work?

To use the name, "Occupational therapist assistant", a candidate must complete a two-year combined occupational therapist assistant (OTA)/ Physiotherapist assistant (PTA) accredited college program. See otapta.ca for a list of accredited programs.

Many employers in this sector may require the following as part of the hiring process:

- Completion of an accredited program
- current, official Criminal Record check
- Vulnerable Sector check
- Child Abuse Register search

What communication skills do I need for this work?

OTAs need excellent verbal and written communication skills. You must be able to communicate well with the occupational therapist, members of the health care team, and your clients. The occupational therapist assistant, in collaboration with the occupational therapist, must communicate:

- relevant assessment findings
- goals
- planned interventions

- the expected responses
- changes in the client's condition
- the client's response to treatment
- any observed changes in the client's health status that occurs during, or as a result of, the occupational therapy intervention.

You must be able to identify when a change has occurred with a client and report that change to the occupational therapist. This is a critical element in the delivery of safe and effective occupational therapy care.



What wage may I expect for this work?

Typical Canadian hourly wage Low 12.00 Median 17.50 High 26.06

http://www.jobbank.gc.ca/LMI_report_bynoc.do?noc=3414&reportOption=wage

Career Outlook

http://www.jobbank.gc.ca/LMI_report_bynoc.do?noc=3414&reportOption=outlook

Are there opportunities for advancement?

There is some opportunity for increased responsibility with experience. Further advancement would require more education. Employment at the OTA level could allow an IEOT to work while furthering education.

Learn more about occupational therapist assistants by viewing these sites:

- National Occupation Code 3237
The government of Canada has given a code to each occupation/profession. Use this code to learn more about occupational therapist assistants through government sites.
<http://www5.hrsdc.gc.ca/NOC/English/NOC/2011/ProfileQuickSearch.aspx?val=3&val1=3237>
- Self Assessment Readiness Tool™ for OTA
This tool provides information about the skills and requirements to work as an OTA
<http://assesshealthcareers.ca>
- OTA/PTA Educational Accreditation Program
<http://otapta.ca/pdfs/OTA-Practice-Profile-2009.pdf>

References

- Government of Canada (NOC 3237)
<http://www5.hrsdc.gc.ca/NOC/English/NOC/2011/Welcome.aspx>
- Outline from CSMLS webpage, Accessed 3/25/2016
<http://altcareers.csmls.org/careers/assayer/>
- Government of Canada, Job Bank
www.jobbank.gc.ca
- Government of Canada, COPS
<http://occupations.esdc.gc.ca/sppc-cops/occupationssummarydetail.jsp?&tid=120>

