



Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists Code of Ethics

Preamble

Occupational therapy is a health profession concerned with promoting health and quality of life through occupation. The primary goal of occupational therapy is to enable people to participate in the activities of everyday life. Occupational therapists work collaboratively with people of all ages and abilities who experience challenges or obstacles to participation. These obstacles may be caused from an impairment of body structure, a change in function, or from barriers in the social and physical environment (Adapted from the World Federation of Occupational Therapists, 2004).

Occupational therapy in Canada is evidence-based as it focuses on client-centered enablement of occupation, based on client information and critical review of relevant research, expert consensus and past experience (Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists et al., 1999).

CAOT is a voluntary professional association for occupational therapists in Canada with a mission to advance excellence in occupational therapy. It is the vision of CAOT that all people in Canada will value and have access to occupational therapy.

Occupational therapy is based on a set of values. Occupational therapists believe (CAOT, 2002a, p. 31):

About occupation,

- occupation gives meaning to life
- occupation is an important determinant of health and wellbeing
- occupation organizes behaviour
- occupation develops and changes over a lifetime
- occupation shapes and is shaped by environments
- occupation has therapeutic effectiveness

About the person,

- humans are occupational beings
- every person is unique
- every person has intrinsic dignity and worth
- every person can make choices about life
- every person has some capacity for self-determination
- every person has some ability to participate in occupations
- every person has some potential to change
- persons are social and spiritual beings

- persons have diverse abilities for participating in occupations
- persons shape and are shaped by environment

About the environment,

- environment is a broad term including cultural, institutional, physical and social components
- performance, organization, choice and satisfaction in occupations are determined by the relationship between persons and their environment

About health,

- health is more than the absence of disease
- health is strongly influenced by having choice and control in everyday occupations
- health has personal dimensions associated with spiritual meaning and life satisfaction in occupations and social dimensions associated with fairness and equal opportunity in occupations

About client-centred practice,

- clients have experience and knowledge about their occupations
- clients are active partners in the occupational therapy process
- risk-taking is necessary for positive change
- client-centred practice in occupational therapy focuses on enabling occupation

Code of Ethics

CAOT members are expected to abide by this Code of Ethics. The goal of the Code of Ethics is to achieve and maintain high standards of professional integrity toward clients, colleagues, partners, stakeholders, the public and CAOT. The Code describes expected conduct of all CAOT members in occupational therapy practice, including those involved in direct service to clients, management, administration, education, research and/or business.

Expectations of members regarding occupational therapy:

CAOT expects its members to:

- possess the qualities of integrity, loyalty and reliability;
- use professional communication with clients, colleagues, partners and stakeholders;
- value and respect clients' rights to be self-directed in their decision-making in accordance with their own needs, values and available resources;
- value and respect clients' rights to be treated with respect and dignity within a safe and non-judgmental environment;
- ensure confidentiality and privacy of personal information;
- recognize and manage issues related to conflict of interest;
- maintain a standard of professional competency to provide high quality service;
- abide by legislative requirements and codes of ethics established by provincial occupational therapy regulatory organizations (as applicable) and other organizations to which the member has obligations (e.g. employer, facility);

- contribute to interdisciplinary collaboration and development of partnerships to advance the occupational performance of the population served;
- understand and manage ethical implications involved in all practice domains, including research;
- participate in continuing professional development throughout their career and apply new knowledge and skills to their professional work which is based on best available evidence;
- promote the profession to the public, other professional organizations and government at regional, provincial and federal levels; and
- contribute to the development and/or dissemination of professional knowledge.

Expectations of members regarding CAOT and the profession:

CAOT expects its members to:

- use the Canadian Framework for Ethical Occupational Therapy Practice (CAOT, 2006) to reflect and develop their practice;
- draw upon the Profile of Occupational Therapy Practice in Canada (CAOT, 2007) to identify the competencies necessary to achieve and promote excellence in occupational therapy;
- uphold the integrity and by-laws of CAOT (CAOT, 2008) when interacting within or on the behalf of the Association; and
- support CAOT initiatives.

For questions or comments please contact the CAOT National Office at 1-800-434-2268.

References

Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists. (2008). Objects and Bylaws, Ottawa: Author.

Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists. (2007). Enabling Occupation: An Occupational Therapy Perspective, Revised Edition, Ottawa: Author.

Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists. (2007). Profile of Occupational Therapy Practice in Canada. Retrieved from www.caot.ca on December 20, 2006.

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Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists et al. (1999), Joint Position Statement on Evidence-based Occupational Therapy. Retrieved on December 21, 2006 from <http://www.caot.ca/default.asp?pageid=156>.

World Federation of Occupational Therapists. (2004). Definition of Occupational Therapy. Retrieved on December 21, 2006 from www.wfot.org

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