

Fieldwork Level II and Occupational Therapy Students: A Position Paper

The purpose of this paper is to define the Level II fieldwork experience and to clarify the appropriate conditions and principles that must exist to ensure that interventions completed by Level II fieldwork students are of the quality and sophistication necessary to be clinically beneficial to the client. When appropriately supervised, adhering to professional and practice principles, and in conjunction with other regulatory and payer requirements, the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) considers that students at this level of education are providing occupational therapy interventions that are skilled according to their professional education level of practice.

AOTA asserts that Level II occupational therapy fieldwork students may provide occupational therapy services under the supervision of a qualified occupational therapist in compliance with state and federal regulations. Occupational therapy assistant fieldwork students may provide occupational therapy services under the supervision of a qualified occupational therapist or occupational therapy assistant under the supervision of an occupational therapist in compliance with state and federal regulations.

Occupational therapy Level II fieldwork students are those individuals who are currently enrolled in an occupational therapy or occupational therapy assistant program accredited, approved, or pending accreditation by the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE; 2012a, 2012b, 2012c). At this point in their professional education, students have completed necessary and relevant didactic coursework that has prepared them for the field experience.

The fieldwork Level II experience is an integral and crucial part of the overall educational experience that allows the student an opportunity to apply theory and techniques acquired through the classroom and Level I fieldwork learning. Level II fieldwork provides an in-depth experience in delivering occupational therapy services to clients, focusing on the application of evidence based purposeful and meaningful occupations, administration, and management of occupational therapy services. The experience provides the student with the opportunity to carry out professional responsibilities under supervision and to observe professional role models in the field (ACOTE, 2012a, 2012b, 2012c).

The academic program and the supervising OT practitioner are responsible for ensuring that the type and amount of supervision meets the needs of the student and ensures the safety of all stakeholders. The following General Principles represent the minimum criteria that must be present during a Level II fieldwork experience to ensure the quality of services being provided by the Level II student practitioner:¹

- a. The student is supervised by a currently licensed or credentialed occupational therapy practitioner who has a minimum of 1 year of practice experience subsequent to initial certification and is adequately prepared to serve as a fieldwork educator.

¹When the term *occupational therapy practitioner* is used in this document, it refers to both occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants (AOTA, 2006).

- b. Occupational therapy students will be supervised by an occupational therapist. Occupational therapy assistant students will be supervised by an occupational therapist or an occupational therapy assistant in partnership with the occupational therapist who is supervising the occupational therapy assistant (AOTA, 2009).
- c. Occupational therapy services provided by students under the supervision of a qualified practitioner will be billed as services provided by the supervising licensed occupational therapy practitioner.
- d. Supervision of occupational therapy and occupational therapy assistant students in fieldwork Level II settings will be of the quality and scope to ensure protection of consumers and provide opportunities for appropriate role modeling of occupational therapy practice.
- e. The supervising occupational therapist and/or occupational therapy assistant must recognize when direct versus indirect supervision is needed and ensure that supervision supports the student's current and developing levels of competence with the occupational therapy process.
- f. Supervision should initially be direct and in line of sight and gradually decrease to less direct supervision as is appropriate depending on the
 - Competence and confidence of the student,
 - Complexity of client needs,
 - Number and diversity of clients,
 - Role of occupational therapy and related services,
 - Type of practice setting,
 - Requirements of the practice setting, and
 - Other regulatory requirements. (ACOTE, 2012a, 2012b, 2012c)
- g. In all cases, the occupational therapist assumes ultimate responsibility for all aspects of occupational therapy service delivery and is accountable for the safety and effectiveness of the occupational therapy service delivery process involving the student. This also includes provision of services provided by an occupational therapy assistant student under the supervision of an occupational therapy assistant (AOTA, 2009).
- h. In settings where occupational therapy practitioners are not employed,
 1. Students should be supervised daily on site by another professional familiar with the role of occupational therapy in collaboration with an occupational therapy practitioner (see b above).
 2. Occupational therapy practitioners must provide direct supervision for a minimum of 8 hours per week and be available through a variety of other contact measures throughout the workday. The occupational therapist or occupational therapy assistant (under the supervision of an occupational therapist) must have three years of practice experience to provide this type of supervision (ACOTE, 2012a, 2012b, 2012c).

- i. All state licensure policies and regulations regarding student supervision will be followed including the ability of the occupational therapy assistant to serve as fieldwork educator.
- j. Student supervision and reimbursement policies and regulations set forth by third-party payers will be followed.

It is the professional and ethical responsibility of occupational therapy practitioners to be knowledgeable of and adhere to applicable state and federal laws, and payer rules and regulations related to fieldwork education.

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