

FAQS: OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY IN SCHOOLS

What is occupational therapy (OT)?

OT helps individuals with disabilities engage in meaningful activities.

Why are OTs needed in schools?

OT maximizes the educational and developmental successes of students with special needs.

What about the law?

Federal special education law, IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) 2004, states that educational programs are responsible for providing OT to children with disabilities who meet the requirements so that they may benefit from their instructional program(s).

INCREASED OT CASELOADS

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INCREASED STUDENTS LEFT BEHIND

What is the issue?

OT caseloads in schools have been steadily rising since the 1990s. 33% of OTs in Oregon have 50+ students per caseload. OTs have less than 40 minutes/week to treat each child.

What is at stake?

OTs in Oregon agree that educational goals for special needs children may not be met due to insufficient exposure and lack of time spent in therapy.

This contributes to graduation rates!

Public high school 4-year graduation rate for those with disabilities:
National Average: 65.5% vs. Oregon: 55.5 %



OTs NEED YOU TO ADVOCATE FOR A DECREASED CASELOAD IN SCHOOLS!

DOING SO WILL:

- Improve quality of life for children needing therapy.
- Increase opportunity for early intervention, thus enhancing goal outcomes.
- Raise graduation rates among all students, disabled or not.
- Follow the laws of other states (Wisconsin, Ohio, & North Carolina) that have caseload limitations in place.
- Uphold federal mandates to the highest degree by limiting caseloads.
- Reduce burn-out, turnover, and pressure on OTs practicing in schools.

Lower caseloads will create a successful future for students, and when students are successful a cycle will evolve with lower necessary caseloads.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) Encourage the JOINT COMMITTEE ON STUDENT SUCCESS - Students Ready and Able to Learn Work Group to fulfill Goal 3 "Provide sufficient resources to schools and families to meet the behavioral health, physical health, nutritional and support needs so students can reach their full potential to learn" through district programs that hire Occupational Therapy Assistants (OTAs). OTAs will serve students by providing support according to their Individual Education Plan (IEP) and under the supervision of an OT Supervisor.
- 2) Support HB2985: Relating to the provision of occupational therapy to students. This bill supports OT caseload limits: "(c) Establish limits on the number of children to whom an occupational therapist or occupational therapy assistant may provide services."

**THE BOTTOM LINE? ADVOCACY!
BE THE CHANGE WE WANT TO SEE!**

