



## Supporting your Practice Excellence

### Planning for your Professional Development

Occupational therapists plan for and engage in activities that develop their clinical and professional skills and competencies throughout their career. Professional development is an investment in oneself that is so worthwhile!

While formal courses, workshops, webinars, conferences and other organized educational events may come first to mind as professional development opportunities, there are countless ways in which to learn, synthesize and apply your learning to your practice. Finding strategies that *best* work for you is in itself a professional development goal!

OSOT offers a diverse listing of professionally developing opportunities. Consider strategies that you can build into your annual Professional Development Plan.

1. **Monitor the marketplace for professional development activities that meet your needs or expand or advance your practice knowledge or perspectives.** OSOT maintains a [PD Event Listing](#) in which we list all PD events we're made aware of relevant to occupational therapists. Make a habit of checking the page regularly to support your PD planning.
2. **Make a goal to seek information on topics or issues you wish to learn more about to enrich your practice or your ability to position or promote your practice.** These days, so much information can be delivered to your inbox....**just a subscription away.** Consider the following:
  - a. [Google Alerts](#) – set up an alert to receive news/information related to your interests
  - b. [Seniors Health Knowledge Network](#) – resources and communities of practice that support sharing evidence-based care practices relating to seniors' health, for example;
    - i. [Fall Prevention Community of Practice](#) – LOOP
    - ii. [Medically-at-Risk Senior Drivers Community of Practice](#)
    - iii. Sign up for [SHKN Monthly Newsletter](#) for updates
  - c. [Institute for Work and Health](#) – explore the website for evidence-based resources relating to return and stay at work. Sign up to receive:
    - i. [At Work](#) – quarterly publication of the Institute's latest research findings in the areas of work injury, illness and disability prevention and stories of how these findings are applied in practice.
    - ii. [Monthly E-Newsletter](#) - alerts readers to the latest research publications, events, tools, achievements and more from the Institute for Work & Health
  - d. [Local Health Integration Networks](#) – find your LHIN website - sign up for their newsletters to monitor news, priorities and developments in your regional health system.

- e. [Ontario Hospital Association](#) – a wealth of hospital-oriented resources. Create a profile and you can sign up to receive a variety of alerts, newsletters, publications.
  - f. [Evidence Exchange Network – \(Eenet\)](#) – a province-wide knowledge exchange network that connects mental health and addictions stakeholders with each other and with relevant, actionable evidence to inform decision-making. Get to the know the website and its many resources. [Sign up for e-newsletters](#).
  - g. [Mental Health Commission of Canada](#) – [sign up](#) to receive monthly newsletters.
  - h. [Special Needs Strategy Website](#) – create a profile on this website to enter and view materials related to the SNS Strategy and receive notifications of updates.
  - i. [Financial Services Commission of Ontario](#) – if you work in the auto insurance system, this is an important site to know. Sign up for FSCO’s [Service Providers E-Newsletter](#).
  - j. [BMC](#) – an open access publisher of research with an evolving portfolio of some 300 peer-reviewed journals in science, medicine, etc. [Register](#) to receive e-newsletters updates or create article alerts.
  - k. Google your interest and you’ll be surprised what you can find!
3. **Make a commitment to review the OSOT website’s [Practice Resource pages](#).** You’ll find a page for almost every sector of practice and useful information to support your practice. These pages grow and evolve with member requests and suggestions so let your needs be known! They are a benefit of membership so you’ll have to log in to the website.
  4. **Register for Ontario allied health professionals’ [Electronic Health Library](#) and commit to a habit of searching for answers for your clinical questions and needs for evidence.** The library is free and accessible to every registered occupational therapist in the province.
  5. **Supervise a Student OT.** If you can’t explain what you’ve learned to someone else in a way they can understand, then you probably don’t really understand it yourself. Sharing knowledge with others is an excellent way to reveal your own strengths and weaknesses and really lock learning into place. (and you’re contributing so much to the development of a new OT!)
  6. **Get to know the research priorities of our Ontario occupational therapy academics.** When you find someone who shares your interests this can be a wonderful link to bring your clinical questions to their research focus, to support their research, etc. Review faculty research foci at:
    - a. [McMaster University OT Faculty Research](#)
    - b. [Queens University Faculty Research Foci](#)
    - c. [University of Toronto OT Faculty](#)
    - d. [University of Ottawa Faculty](#)
    - e. [Western University OT Faculty](#)
  7. **Seek a mentor.** Moving to a new focus of practice? Entering the profession? Wanting to develop a new skill? Why not commit to find a colleague who can offer support, guidance, informed conversation, feedback, etc. View [OSOT’s resources for mentors and mentees](#) and

explore the Society's [Find-a-Mentor online tool](#). You'd be surprised how many members have offered to be contacted as a mentor!

8. **Browse your OSOT Monthly Update every month** and check out....
  - a. 3 practice resources each month
  - b. Listing of upcoming PD events – webinars, workshops, conference
  - c. Policy updates – so you can best keep up to date & be informed to advance your practice and your rolesNew learning every month!
9. **Interested in developing your research skills? Why not consider applying for an OSOT Research Fund OT Research Grant.** This grant (\$1000) is targeted to support clinicians or clinician/researcher partnerships to investigate a question of relevance in the clinical context. Learn more [here](#).
10. **Offer to present a webinar or a workshop at a conference** – the skills developed in consolidating your presentation and sharing with others will take you far. OSOT is always interested to hear from potential speakers/presenters. [Contact us!](#)
11. **Commit to review OSOT's practice resource page [Finding Evidence for your Practice](#)** – consider alternatives and tools for finding evidence and integrating this into your practice ....how about setting up a journal club?
12. **Be a mentor!** Consider how you can build and consolidate your own skills as a clinician and as an educator/consultant/leader. It can be so rewarding to learn together with someone as you share your knowledge and experience and help someone develop their skills and confidence. View [OSOT's resources for mentors](#) and consider a commitment to be listed in OSOT's [Find-a-Mentor Online Tool](#).
13. **Join OSOT's [Seating and Mobility Community of Practice](#)** – if your role includes assessment of clients' seating and mobility needs, this virtual community can be a ready resource – for sharing and answering questions, for finding resources, and for keeping abreast of what's happening in the world of seating and mobility.
14. **Browse OSOT's listing of [Archived Webinars](#) and commit to view one you find relevant to your practice.** OSOT's library of archived webinars is growing and can be an enduring, accessible resource to you – view at your convenience!
15. **Plan to Apply for PD Funding Reimbursement from the [Allied Health Professional Development Fund](#).** Registered Ontario occupational therapists may apply for up to \$1500 to reimburse expenses for a professional development course, workshop, conference. While funding isn't guaranteed (due to limits on the total funding available), it is definitely worth applying!
16. **Get to know the Advocacy Organizations working to support the clients you serve.** They can be a wealth of information, resources and supports that are good to know about for your clients and can be terrific learning resources for you too! A quick google search will likely serve your purpose, but here is a listing of [health/disease organizations](#) to get you started.

17. **Make a point to follow-up on networking leads after your next workshop or conference.** Exchange business cards, but then follow up – widen your network of peers who share your interest. It's easy to send folks an email and these contacts can be sources of consultation, learning and support to your work.
18. **Brief your Team after you've attended a PD event.** Share the top three points you took away, innovative products you saw, circulate your workshop materials, and share your suggestions on how you and the team could integrate or engage any of the learning you've brought back. This shares the experience with the Team but also reinforces your own learning.
19. **After a PD event DO participate in the online evaluation surveys.** First, organizers want/need feedback but, when you're thinking through your responses, you are reminded of what you learned and this thinking about it can help consolidate your take aways from the event.
20. **Make a commitment to learn something about the public or client experience of OT.** Why not volunteer to host a public promotion booth, to present to a LTC Home's Resident Council, to host a forum that invites consumer perspectives or to view these video vignettes of the Change Foundation on the [experiences of seniors in our health system](#). Learning from our clients' perspectives can be invaluable – think of options to expand your perspectives in this area.
21. **Make a goal to understand the policy context of the sector in which you work.** What legislation frames the sector in which you work? Knowledge of the policy structure supports your ability to position your services, but also to advocate for change or to be in a position to comment on proposed changes when regulation or legislation is under scrutiny. [OSOT's Practice Resource pages](#) can be a good place to start.
22. **Write a story based on your practice or a particular client.** This develops your writing skills in a different way than charting ever will! It's a good way to begin to look at how you share the value of OT...an important skill for any OT! OSOT is always looking for stories to populate the [OTOntario website](#) so, if you're looking for a real place to land these valuable stories – please send them along to [osot@osot.on.ca](mailto:osot@osot.on.ca).
23. **Ask questions when you're confused.** Many of us think asking questions is a sign of ignorance, but look at it as a sign of maturity. If you are confident enough in your own intelligence to speak up when you need clarification, you'll have no trouble becoming a lifelong learner—and you'll know more than you did if you'd been too shy!
24. **Take a coffee break with a colleague now and then!** Really! Chatting with a colleague can be a source of terrific information/support sharing that can enrich your practice. As we chat about the difficult day, the great new article we read, etc. we're learning, consolidating our thinking, considering options, etc. in the best way possible – with another colleague!
25. **Ensure your PD goals are measurable.** Setting SMART – *Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-Based* goals is an effective process for setting and achieving your professional development goals. Developing skill in writing SMART goals is a good PD goal in itself....once achieved this goal-setting skill can help assure the satisfaction of accomplishment.