

**Ministry of Health  
and Long-Term Care****Ministère de la Santé  
et des Soins de longue durée**

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To: **All Family Health Teams**

Subject: **Approving Occupational Therapy (OT) into Family Health Teams**

The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care is pleased to announce the expansion of the approved list of Interdisciplinary Health Providers (IHPs) in Family Health Teams. Occupational therapists (OTs) are now part of the IHPs commonly approved in FHTs.

Occupational therapists are regulated health professionals who work with people of all ages who are experiencing barriers to managing day to day occupations that are part of their daily living roles and responsibilities and that give meaning to their life. Barriers may result from injury, illness, chronic disease, disability, mental health problems, learning disabilities, aging or social isolation. Working with people or groups of people to assume or reassume the skills they need for their job of living, occupational therapists will assume a variety of roles – therapist, educator, counsellor, case manager, coach, resource developer and advocate.

The approved salary funding benchmark for an occupational therapist is \$55,251 - \$66,568. It is up to the each FHT to determine the appropriate pay scale for their staff. Funding is also available for benefits at 20% of the approved salary amount.

If your team is interested in adding an occupational therapist to your staff, you may submit a request as part of the 2010/2011 budget application process. Successful applications will demonstrate readiness to operate, e.g., available space identified, and how the occupational therapist will be integrated together with the other interdisciplinary health providers to assist the Family Health Team to:

1. reduce the number of unattached patients;
2. increase access to quality family health care, through enhanced health promotion, disease prevention, chronic disease management programs, and
3. improve care coordination and navigation locally.

Occupational Therapy into FHTs

The attached *Frequently Asked Questions* will answer common questions that may arise with this announcement, and help guide teams interested in adding an occupational therapist to their clinical staff. Should you have any questions, please contact your Senior Program Consultant.

Integrating occupational therapists into the Family Health Team program will help to enhance the health and quality of life of Ontarians.

Thank you for interest and support as you continue to serve the patients of Ontario.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Fleming". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped "M" and "F".

Mary Fleming  
Director, Primary Health Care Branch

Encl.

## Occupational Therapy in Family Health Teams

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### 1. What is occupational therapy?

The practice of occupational therapy (OT) is the assessment of function and adaptive behaviour and the treatment and prevention of disorders which affect function or adaptive behaviour to develop, maintain, rehabilitate or augment function or adaptive behaviour in the areas of self-care, productivity and leisure (*Occupational Therapy Act, 1991, c. 33, s. 3*). Occupational therapists (OTs) are health professionals who address not only the physical effects of disability, injury or disease but also the psychosocial, community and environmental factors that influence function.

People live life to the fullest through meaningful occupations – the day to day skills, activities, interactions and experiences that engage us with our environment, our community and the people around us. Occupational therapists understand that one's ability to participate in occupations that are important to them promotes health and well-being. The goal of occupational therapy is to influence people's health by enabling occupation. Occupational therapists consider occupation to be everything people do to occupy themselves, including looking after themselves (self-care) enjoying life (leisure) and contributing to the social and economic fabric of their communities (work/productivity).

Occupational therapists complete assessments designed to identify the factors that may be contributing to the individual's difficulty with or loss of function. Based on the assessment, occupational therapists provide treatment plans designed to help the individual to perform daily tasks, and to develop the skills to live independent and productive lives. For more information on their scope of practice please contact the regulatory college listed under Resources.

#### 2. What do occupational therapists do in Primary Care?

The Guide to Interdisciplinary Team Roles and Responsibilities outlines the role of the occupational therapist in FHTs:

- Assessment
  - Assessment of physical, emotional, and cognitive functioning with environmental considerations
  - Evaluation of the home, work or school environment to assess the need for specialized equipment modifications and/or supports

- Treatment/Management
  - Individualized treatment plans to develop, maintain, or augment function using evidence based treatment modalities
  - Teaching daily living and community life skills
  - Prescribing specialized adaptive equipment and teaching proper usage
  - Modification of the physical and social home, work or school environments
- Education/Advocacy
  - Educating and counseling family members and caregivers regarding the impact of disability, injury or disease on the individual and their potential role within the recovery process
  - Educating and counseling to promote function and independence including health promotion and injury prevention
- Referrals/Collaboration
  - Based on assessment the occupational therapist refers the individual to additional health care and community services as needed
  - Collaborates with other health care professionals and community service providers to promote comprehensive and coordinated care

Specific examples of programs or assessments that OTs may be involved in include, but are not limited to:

- Mental health support, counseling or psychotherapy
- Screening of children with learning problems
- Chronic pain management
- Assessments for assistive devices (Assistive Devices Program and non-Assistive Devices Program)
- Chronic disease self management programs
- Falls prevention programs
- Aging at home – education, consultation, assessment,
- Cognitive/perceptual assessments
- Assessments for independent living
- Support/education for caregivers

The Ontario Society of Occupational Therapists (OSOT) is the Professional Association and is a further resource for the role of OTs in FHTs. They can be contacted at:

**The Ontario Society of Occupational Therapists**

55 Eglinton Avenue East, Suite 210

Toronto ON M4P 1G8

Telephone: 416.322.3011

Toll Free: 1.877.676.6768

Fax: 416.322.6705

E-mail: [osot@osot.on.ca](mailto:osot@osot.on.ca)

[osot.on.ca](http://osot.on.ca)

### **3. How do I apply for an occupational therapist for my FHT?**

You may apply for funding for an occupational therapist thorough the FHT budget and approvals process for 2010/2011. If you have made progress on reaching the program goals for your family health team, you may be eligible for additional interdisciplinary health providers (IHPs). Successful applicants will provide the following information:

- the number of patients being served by the FHT including whether or not the FHT has met it's current patient enrolment target;
- the hiring status against the FHT's existing IHP approvals;
- the proposed program and services to be provided by the occupational therapist; and how the OT will be integrated into the team;
- the availability of space to accommodate the occupational therapist, and
- the incremental operating and one-time costs for the occupational therapist.

### **4. I have not hired some of my other IHPs, so can I use the money for an occupational therapist?**

You may be able to request approval to transfer currently approved funding for unfilled FTE IHPs to fund an occupational therapist. Please contact your Senior Program Consultant at the Ministry for details on how you may submit a request.

### **5. How do I integrate OTs into the existing team? Are there resources available to help with integration?**

OTs will be integrated similarly as other IHPs in your team. As with the integration of any new role, there needs to be thought put into how an occupational therapist will work with the rest of your team. The Quality Improvement & Innovation Project is willing to support FHTs as they integrate OTs into FHTs. You may contact QIIP at:

#### **Quality Improvement & Innovation Partnership**

10 George Street, Suite 205

Hamilton ON L8P 1C8

Telephone: 905.667.0770

Fax: 905.667.0771

E-mail: [info@qiip.ca](mailto:info@qiip.ca)

[qiip.ca](http://qiip.ca)

**6. Other resources you may wish to contact:**

**Regulatory College**  
**College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario**  
20 Bay Street, Suite 900  
Toronto ON M5J 2N8  
Telephone: 416.214.1177  
Fax: 416.214.1173  
Toll Free: 1.800.890.6570  
E-mail: [info@coto.org](mailto:info@coto.org)  
[coto.org](http://coto.org)