

Essential Functions of Occupational Therapy Assistant

Physical Standards		Performance Level*
Lift	medium work strength to carry/maneuver heavy equipment	O
	fully/partially support weight of client during transfers to and from various surfaces (bed, chair, wheelchair, mat, toilet, tub, car, etc.) and when engaging client in functional ambulation	F
Bend/Stoop	to adjust body parts, clothing and/or functional daily life activities in all areas of occupation (Activities of Daily Living (ADL), Instrumental Activities of Daily Living (IADL), Work, Education, Play/Leisure, and Social Participation); for developmental activities	F
Kneel	to assist clients who may fall or faint; to perform CPR; to assist clients with mat activities, developmental activities and functional daily life activities in all areas of occupation (ADL, IADL, Work, Education, Play/Leisure, and Social Participation)	F
Crouch	to manage wheelchair parts and hospital beds, equipment adjustment, storing materials; to assist with lower body ADL training; to assist client in seated activities from bed, chair, wheelchair and/or mat	O
Crawl	for developmental interventions; engage in mat activities	O
Reach	for retrieval of items in closets, cabinets, etc.; to adjust equipment; to guard clients	F
Handle	sustained grasp and manipulate body parts during intervention; grasp and manipulate tools/equipment and modalities used in OT serve delivery, including but not limited to pens/pencils, craft supplies, educational supplies, personal care items; positioning devices, functional mobility equipment, physical agent modalities, blood pressure cuffs, protective gloves, gowns and masks; computers and assistive technology; adaptive equipment; suspension equipment, etc.	C
Dexterity	use fine motor skills when performing standardized tests (dynamometer, goniometer, etc.); constructing orthotic devices/splints; writing/documenting; adjusting knobs, dials, blood pressure cuffs; donning and doffing protective gloves, masks and gowns	F
Stand	stand extended periods of time and for majority of working shift	C
Walk	within facility environment (internal) for assigned shift	C
Push/Pull	wheelchairs, hospital beds, scooters, hoist lifts, and other equipment including but not limited to IV poles, oxygen tanks, portable devices	F
Balance	to assist clients with functional activities, including mobility (even and uneven surfaces)	F
Endurance	to manage full-time equivalent Level 2 fieldwork experiences and assigned work shifts (40 hours five days per week)	C
Sensory Standards		Performance Level*
Tactile	<i>feel</i> to palpate muscle contractions and circulatory pulses; palpate bony landmarks and identify joint articulation; exert the necessary pressure to form splints; to discern skin texture and temperature to discriminate hot and cold modalities	F
Auditory	<i>hear</i> verbal directions and requests from health care team and clients/families; hear heart sounds through a stethoscope; hear breath sounds; hear client distress sounds and calls for assistance up to 10 feet away; hear environmental safety alarms; hear for effective communication between clients/families/co-workers	C
Visual	<i>see</i> in detail to observe and detect client's movements, facial expressions and performance during individual and group intervention; see to observe and attend to the behaviors and needs of up to ten individuals in a group session; see from a distance to observe client behaviors and performance; see in detail to detect changes in skin integrity, sweating, skin color, swelling, muscle atrophy, and gestures of non-verbal communication; see to detect safety hazards in the environment (water on floor, cords, and other small items) that could pose danger to a client's mobility/functional performance; see in detail to detect/assess blood pressure (manometer dial) and range of motion (ROM) goniometer)	C
	<i>read</i> numbers, letters, printed, typed and cursive writing in fine print; read paper and computerized files/records; read dials on modality equipment; read manuals and forms for administering and scoring standardized tests; read client records	C

Communication Standards		Performance Level *
Speak	in English language in clear and concise manner; to communicate in person and by phone with clients, families, significant others, the health care team, and community (report factual data orally; interview clients/family; explain role of occupational therapy and purpose of interventions)	C
Respond	to clients with communication disorders (aphasia, hearing loss), or those who use ESL	F
Comprehend	oral and written language, including health care terminology in order to communicate with clients, families, significant others, health care providers, and community	
Write	in English, clearly and legibly for recording client specific data and general service delivery information in handwritten charts and computerized systems of documentation; in proper English using various electronic communication systems (email, etc.) to communicate with educational and professional community	C
Cognitive/Behavioral and Social/Behavioral Standards		Performance Level*
Think critically for sound clinical judgment in the delivery of occupational therapy services (plan and implement appropriate client-centered interventions; problem solve to make adjustments in therapeutic interventions based on appropriate and inappropriate physiological and psychological responses by clients; determine need for consultation with occupational therapists and other health care providers/team members)		C
Function safely, effectively, and calmly under demanding and stressful situations		C
Remain alert to surroundings, potential emergencies; respond to client		C
Prioritize multiple tasks and maintain composure while managing multiple tasks simultaneously		C
Sustain concentration to attend to demanding and continuous tasks throughout work shift (direct client care and service management tasks)		C
Exhibit social skills necessary to interact effectively with clients, families, supervisors, co-workers and community members of the same or different cultures with respect, compassion, politeness, tact, collaboration, teamwork, and discretion		C
Maintain personal hygiene consistent with close personal contact associated with client care		C
Display attitudes/actions consistent with the core values and ethical standards of the occupational therapy profession		C
Display attitudes/actions to effectively engage in the supervisory process including acceptance of feedback, modifying behavior in response to feedback, and providing feedback		C
Display attitudes /actions to approach workplace problems in a mature and responsible manner; seek and utilize effective strategies to resolve problems		C
Abide by established policies and procedures of educational and health care institutions		C
<p>* Performance Level: O = occasionally 50-74%; F = frequently 75-89%; C = constantly 90-100%</p>		

Applicants/students for the Occupational Therapy Assistant Program must self-certify their ability to perform all essential tasks with or without reasonable accommodation in order to participate in OTA courses through the curriculum. A list of these essential tasks is listed in the above technical standards. Students must meet these technical standards throughout the program. If, at any time during a student's enrollment, his or her ability to perform these tasks is compromised, the student must self-disclose and contact the department chair to determine appropriate action.

Used with permission from Maureen Nardella, M.S., OTR/L, Department Chair, North Central Community College, Danvers, Massachusetts