

Occupational Therapist

■ Job Description

The occupational therapist (OT) assesses needs, establishes goals, and develops treatment programs for individuals whose ability to cope with the tasks of living are threatened or impaired by congenital or developmental disability, the aging process, physical injury or illness, or psychological and social disability. An OT uses task-oriented activities to prevent, minimize, or correct disabling emotional, behavioral, or physical handicaps.

Specific occupational therapy services include providing evaluation of and training in performing life tasks (activities of daily living, work, and homemaking); using therapeutic activities to enhance physical, emotional, perceptual-motor, and sensory integrative skills; fabricating and helping individuals use adaptive equipment or hand splints; assisting in the development of prevocational skills; and helping people deal with architectural or environmental barriers. OTs serve as vital members of a treatment team, consulting with physicians, physical and speech/language pathologists, nurses, social workers, psychologists, vocational counselors, teachers, and other specialists.

■ Job Settings

OTs are employed in rehabilitation centers, hospitals and outpatient clinics, psychiatric facilities, sheltered workshops, public and special schools, nursing homes, home health programs, day care centers, and community health agencies.

■ Projected Need

Nationally and in Illinois, employment of occupational therapists is expected to grow faster than average through 2010. Occupational therapist is one of the 50 fastest growing occupations in the state.

Growth will be in response to the therapy needs of the rapidly growing population of very old people. In addition, the demand for occupational therapy in general is growing as the population increases. Nursing homes will offer the most new jobs for occupational therapists, as the number of aged and disabled people in need of therapy rises.

Much faster than average growth is expected in home health care services. This is in response to two factors. One, the number of older people with disabilities is growing because people are living longer. Two, people prefer to be cared for in their own homes.

Even though predicted job growth for occupational therapists is good, possible changes may slow it down. The federal government and insurance companies are considering limiting how much money they will pay for therapy. This change may reduce the amount of therapy patients receive. It may cause some patients to have funds for only one therapy. They would have to choose between occupational and physical therapy. Limiting how much therapy patients receive would reduce the number of jobs for occupational therapists.

In Illinois, there were about 4,150 people employed in this small occupation in 2000.

■ Salaries

Nationally, the median wage for occupational therapists is \$24.70 per hour. Half of all OTs earn between \$20.32 and \$29.14 per hour.

In Illinois, OTs earn a median wage of \$23.95 per hour. Wages in selected cities are given below:

City	Median Hourly Wage
Champaign-Urbana	\$28.53
Chicago	\$24.19
Decatur	\$25.87
Kankakee	\$23.74
Moline-Rock Island	\$22.13
Peoria-Pekin	\$25.54
Rockford	\$25.68
Springfield	\$15.32
St. Louis	\$24.21

■ Related Careers

Other rehabilitative therapies, and speech/language pathology

Phone: 301.652.2682

<http://www.aota.org>

Click on "Career Information" in the left side bar.

■ Differences in Training

To become an OT you need to complete an accredited program in occupational therapy. Accreditation is granted by the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE). Currently ACOTE accredits bachelor's degree programs, certificate programs for those who already have a bachelor's degree in another field, and graduate programs. As of 2007, however, anyone wishing to receive the professional credential Occupational Therapist, Registered (OTR), must have completed at least a master's degree in the field.

The American Occupational Therapy Foundation offers more than 90 scholarships annually. All recipients must be currently enrolled full-time in an occupational therapy educational program and must also be an AOTA member.

National Board for Certification in
Occupational Therapy
800 S. Frederick Avenue, Suite 200
Gaithersburg, MD 20877-4150
Phone: 301.990.7979
<http://www.nbcot.org>

■ Related Educational Programs

The programs of study listed below are the recommended areas of study to pursue for this occupation. Clicking on these will lead to files that show in-state and national schools that offer these programs.

The following link(s) will take you to CIS for more information. CIS requires an ID and password that can be obtained at <http://cis.ilworkinfo.com/loginhelp/> You must log into CIS prior to clicking on the links below.

[Occupational Therapy](#)

■ Credentials

All states regulate occupational therapy. In Illinois, occupational therapists must be licensed by the Illinois Department of Professional Regulation. Current licensing requirements include: completion of a baccalaureate degree from an accredited training program and passage of a national certification exam.

■ Advanced Training

A list of colleges and universities that offer master's and doctoral programs in occupational therapy may be obtained from the American Occupational Therapy Association.

■ Resources

American Occupational Therapy Association
4720 Montgomery Lane
P.O. Box 31220
Bethesda, MD 20824-1220