

The Purpose and Value of Occupational Therapy Fieldwork Education

The purpose of fieldwork education is to provide occupational therapy students and occupational therapy assistant students with the opportunity to apply the knowledge learned in the classroom to practice in the clinical setting. Fieldwork experiences are designed to enrich the coursework through observation and participation in the occupational therapy process. This serves to integrate academic knowledge with practical knowledge, as they focus on the application of knowledge and skills. The goal of fieldwork education is to develop competent, entry-level generalists. Fieldwork provides students with an in-depth experience in the provision of occupational therapy services to clients, focusing on the application of purposeful and meaningful occupation. Throughout the fieldwork experience, students are expected to increase these skills at progressively higher levels of performance and responsibility. The academic setting emphasizes the acquisition of knowledge as well as the cognitive and affective growth of the student. The development of professional behavior begins in the classroom setting, with the goal of demonstrating professionalism in the practice setting. The fieldwork site emphasizes practicing and applying knowledge through supervised intervention and professional role modeling with clients, their families, significant others, and other health care professionals. The fieldwork experience is designed to promote best practice. Students are expected to demonstrate the values and beliefs of our profession that guide ethical practice.

Occupational therapy education integrates philosophical and theoretical knowledge, values, beliefs, ethics, and skills for broad application to practice, with the aim of improving the participation and quality of life for individuals with and without impairments and limitations. Fieldwork education prepares students to become competent, entry-level generalists who can function and thrive in a rapidly changing and dynamic health and human service delivery system.

Prepared by

Donna M. Costa, MS, OTR/L
Academic Fieldwork Coordinator Representative to the Commission on Education

Ann Burkhardt, MA, OTR/L, FAOTA, BCN
Fieldwork Educator Representative to the Commission on Education

for

The Commission on Education
Charlotte Brasic Royeen, PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA—Chairperson

Adopted by the Representative Assembly 2003M41

Note: This document replaces the 1996 *Purpose and Value of Occupational Therapy Fieldwork Education* (previously published and copyrighted in 1996 by the American Occupational Therapy Association in the *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 50, 845).