

# INTRODUCTION TO OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY



Illinois  
Occupational  
Therapy  
Association

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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- We'd like to thank our guest panelists who are also contributing to this presentation:  
Jim Albertone, Bob Green, Kyra Barillier, Max Carlson, Ray Cendejas



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# AGENDA

- Introduction to occupations and occupational therapy (OT)
- OT practitioner panel
- OT as a career
- Introduction to ILOTA
- OT client panel
- OT/OTA application process
- GRE preparation
- Q&A



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# INTRO TO OCCUPATIONS & OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY



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# WHAT ARE OCCUPATIONS?

- Occupations are daily life activities that are meaningful. They are things we need to do, have to do, or want to do as part of our everyday roles.



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# WHAT ARE DIFFERENT TYPES OF OCCUPATIONS?

- Bathing, grooming, dressing, and eating
- Taking care of loved ones or pets
- Grocery shopping, cooking, cleaning, and other chores/errands
- Exercising, managing medications, and going to the doctor
- Resting, sleeping, and preparing for sleep
- Learning, working, and volunteering
- Playing and participating in leisure activities
- Socializing with family, friends, and community members



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# WHAT IS OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY (OT)?

- The skilled, evidence-informed use of daily activities (occupations) to promote quality of life for individuals, groups, or populations across the lifespan who face barriers to performing their desired occupations.



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# WHO MIGHT BENEFIT FROM OT?

- A child with autism learning how to more fully participate at school.
- A group of young adults with Down syndrome learning how to explore and register for college classes.
- A survivor of domestic violence learning how to manage a household.





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## WHO MIGHT BENEFIT FROM OT? (CONTINUED)

- A group of homeless individuals learning how to access community resources.
- An older adult who had a stroke and needs to re-learn how to dress and feed themselves.
- A group of parents with premature infants learning how to best care for their children and themselves.



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## WHO MIGHT BENEFIT FROM OT? (CONTINUED)

- An adult with depression learning how to better manage their daily routines.
- A teenager with cerebral palsy learning how to drive using adaptive equipment.
- A group of adults with carpal tunnel syndrome learning how to perform work tasks with proper body positioning to protect their joints.



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# WHO ARE OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY PRACTITIONERS?

- Occupational Therapists (have at least a four-year degree)
- Occupational Therapy Assistants (have at least a two-year degree)



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# WHERE DO OT PRACTITIONERS WORK?

- Hospitals
- Schools
- Rehabilitation clinics
- Homes
- Community settings
- Mental health facilities
- Nursing homes
- Academia
- And more!



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# OT PRACTITIONER PANEL



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# A DAY IN THE LIFE OF AN OT/OTA

- Ray Cendejas - OTA in community mental health
- Kyra Barillier - OT in pediatrics
- Max Carlson- OT in acute care and home health



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# OT AS A CAREER



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# WHY SHOULD YOU CONSIDER OT AS A CAREER?

- There are broad opportunities to work in various settings with different types of people; this variability helps prevent burnout.
- It's fun! It's a chance to be creative and be hands-on while helping people.
- You can incorporate your own interests and hobbies into your work.
- It's rewarding and fulfilling to help improve someone's quality of life.





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# WHY SHOULD YOU CONSIDER OT AS A CAREER?

- You can advance your career by specializing in various techniques, creating your own business, or taking on leadership roles.
- There are lucrative job opportunities - OT is one of the most top-rated and fastest-growing careers.
- There are various opportunities to collaborate with other professionals and experts in order to continue learning and growing.



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# WHAT QUALITIES MAKE A GOOD OT/OTA?

- Compassionate
- Patient
- Flexible
- Creative
- Good communicator
- Resourceful
- Innovative
- Critical thinker
- Perceptive
- Multi-tasker
- Responsible
- Respectful
- Reliable
- Organized
- Ethical



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# JUSTICE, EQUITY, DIVERSITY, & INCLUSION IN OT

- Presently, the overwhelming majority of OT practitioners are white females. However, the clients we serve represent diverse backgrounds and identities.
- We acknowledge the need to increase the diversity of OT practitioners in order to better address the needs of the diverse clients we serve.
- ILOTA is committed to increasing opportunities to engage in learning, dialogue, and action related to topics of Justice, Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion (JEDI)



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# ABOUT THE ILLINOIS OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ASSOCIATION



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# WHAT IS ILOTA?

- The Illinois Occupational Therapy Association (ILOTA) is the official representative of the occupational therapy profession in the state of Illinois. ILOTA acknowledges and promotes professional excellence through a proactive, organized collaboration with OT personnel, the health care community, governmental agencies, and consumers.



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# ILOTA'S VISION

- ILOTA is a multifaceted association committed to enhancing health and well-being through the utilization of best occupational therapy practices in Illinois.



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# ILOTA'S MISSION

- ILOTA is recognized as the premier occupational therapy resource in Illinois. We strive to advance the best practice of occupational therapy through serving, supporting, and promoting the profession.



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# OT CLIENT PANEL





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# EXPERIENCES FROM OT CLIENTS

- Bob Green - Stroke survivor
- Chicago OT clients -  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jwwOXILYQ4Q>  
(start at 2:00-4:40; 6:09-9:04)
- Adaptive golf OT clients



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# OT/OTA APPLICATION PROCESS: WHAT TO EXPECT



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# SO YOU WANT TO BECOME AN OT/OTA? WHAT'S NEXT?

- Observe/volunteer in settings where OT services are offered
- Explore schools and determine what the application requirements are
- Take prerequisite courses
- Obtain appropriate documents (transcripts, letters of recommendation)
- Prepare personal statement/essays/resume
- Seek out a pre-OT advisor (may be separate from your regular academic advisor)
- GRE - study, schedule, take exam



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# OBSERVATIONS/VOLUNTEERING

- Hospitals
- Public schools or therapeutic day schools
- Nursing homes/skilled nursing facilities
- Outpatient clinics
- Community mental health organizations
- Drivers rehab organizations
- Low vision programs
- Home health agencies
- If having difficulty, try reaching out to ILOTA



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# OTA PROGRAMS IN ILLINOIS

- Black Hawk College
- Fox College
- Illinois Central College
- Lewis & Clark Community College
- Lincoln Land Community College
- McHenry County College
- Midwestern Career College
- Parkland College
- South Suburban College
- Southern Illinois Collegiate Common Market
- Wright College



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# OT PROGRAMS IN ILLINOIS

- Bradley University
- Chicago State Univ.
- DePaul University
- Elmhurst University
- Governors State Univ.
- Lewis University
- Midwestern University
- North Central College
- Rush University
- Univ. of Illinois at Chicago



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# DETERMINE APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

- OTA Programs- directly through the school
- OT Programs- directly through the school or through the Occupational Therapist Centralized Application Service (OTCAS)
  - Helpful video about OTCAS at [https://www.kaltura.com/index.php/extwidget/preview/partner\\_id/764162/uiconf\\_id/39677121/entry\\_id/1\\_56duorr9/embed/dynamic](https://www.kaltura.com/index.php/extwidget/preview/partner_id/764162/uiconf_id/39677121/entry_id/1_56duorr9/embed/dynamic) (start at 1:10)



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# COMMON PREREQUISITE COURSES

- Anatomy/Physiology
- Psychology/Sociology
- Human Development
- Statistics/Research Methods
- Medical Terminology





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# OBTAINING DOCUMENTS

- Letters of Recommendation
  - Consider professors, bosses, supervisors, OT practitioners that you observed with, coworker, other professionals who know you well through volunteer/work/school activities
  - Ask people to include details about your academic strengths, work ethic, leadership skills, interpersonal skills, and professionalism
  - Include your resume in your letter request
  - Give information about how to submit the letter
  - Give the letter writer plenty of time- ask at least 1-3 months before letters are due; give them a deadline before your full application is due
  - Send a follow-up reminder close to the deadline
  - Send a thank-you note when you receive confirmation they submitted a letter



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# OBTAINING DOCUMENTS (CONTINUED)

- Transcripts
  - Consider both high school and/or college transcripts
  - Can usually find information from the Registrar's office about how to request an official transcript
  - Be aware of the processing fees and timelines- give yourself plenty of time before the application deadline to request the transcript
- Proof of Observation Hours
  - Use logs if available from the site, or use own form
  - Consider getting a signature from supervisor/OT practitioner you observed



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# PERSONAL STATEMENT/ESSAY/RESUME

- Don't:
  - Be generic
  - Plagiarize your writing from other sources
  - Include several grammatical/spelling errors
- Do:
  - Be creative
  - Provide details about your qualities, skills, and/or previous experiences that help explain why you are interested in OT or why you think you would make a good OT practitioner
  - Proofread and ask others to review
- Additional resources:
  - Utilize your mentor/career center/career counselor!
  - Review websites such as

<https://career.las.uic.edu/internship-program/resume-cover-letter-and-interview-prep/>



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# GRE PREPARATION

- Jim Albertone, Associate Director of Academic Partnerships – Midwest, Higher Education Division, Educational Testing Service (ETS)
- ETS a non-profit organization whose mission is to advance quality and equity in education
- [https://www.ets.org/gre/revised\\_general/about](https://www.ets.org/gre/revised_general/about)



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Q&A

