Occupational therapy’s distinct value is to improve health and quality of life through facilitating participation and engagement in occupations, the meaningful, necessary, and familiar activities of everyday life. Occupational therapy is client-centered, achieves positive outcomes, and is cost-effective.

“Occupational therapists are the ground floor when it comes to helping a child develop. They show children how to function with their hands and eyes—a couple of the most important senses humans need to survive. OTs help children learn how to play, which is imperative in children's social and emotional development. The OTs that my family has worked with have been nothing but patient, kind, and knowledgeable about everything pertaining to their field, and they genuinely want to see my child succeed.”
—Parent

Occupational therapy distinctly focuses on participation by:
• Using a holistic approach
• Focusing on inclusion in natural environments
• Building skills
• Adapting the environment and activities
• Providing expertise in both mental and physical health
• Offering a lifespan approach
• Providing evidence-based and cost-effective services

Working with families is an important component of occupational therapy

Why is collaboration so important?
Parent involvement is critical in occupational therapy. Parents help ideas from therapy fit into daily routines. Occupational therapy uses goals that are important to the family. Research suggests that this is the most effective and satisfying approach for families (Bruder, 2010; Dunst & Dempsey, 2007).

Evidence suggests:
• Caregivers know the most about their child and can contribute to therapy (Hanna & Rodger, 2002; Missiuna, Pollock, Law, Walter, & Cavey, 2006; Sanders & Woolley, 2005).
• Successful therapy includes the family and integrates meaningful activities (Case-Smith, 2013).
Occupational therapy can help a child and family achieve meaningful goals by:

**Enhancing growth and development**
- Building skills
- Reaching development milestones
- Supporting participation
- Facilitating eating and mealtime

**Promoting inclusive environments**
- Promoting inclusion and natural settings for all children and youth
- Modifying activities and environments
- Coaching families, caregivers, and educational staff
- Increasing disability awareness and sensitivity

**Strengthening child–family bonds**
- Improving social skills
- Enhancing mental health
- Enhancing functional communication
- Promoting safe and healthy family interaction

**Increasing family engagement and participation in daily routines**
- Building family capacity
- Strengthening parenting skills and abilities
- Increasing social emotional growth
- Supporting families as advocates for their children

**Improving academic skills**
- Improving school readiness skills, including pre-literacy and literacy
- Recommending Universal Design for Learning strategies
- Offering assistive technology
- Supporting positive behavior interventions
Building play and leisure skills
• Promoting recess participation
• Offering anti-bullying strategies
• Coaching in leisure skills

Preparing children and families for transitions to and through the education pathway towards college and career
• Building pre-vocational skills
• Enhancing community integration
• Improving independent living skills

References


