

Occupational Therapy for Vocational Rehabilitation



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Objectives

01

Identify examples of current and future opportunities for occupational therapy services in vocational rehabilitation.

02

Identify examples of how occupational therapy address vocational goals.

03

Identify common strategies successful for work skills interventions.



Introduction



Occupational Therapy (OT)

OT is a health profession focused on enabling people to fully engage in their meaningful occupations, or anything that occupies their time. OT has various roles with different populations depending on the setting.

Traditional examples of practice with the IDD population include:

- School-based therapy
- Outpatient pediatric practice
- Home health or early intervention

Occupational Therapy (OT)

Needs that are within the scope of OT:

- Independent living skills
- Sensory-based approaches for adults
- Vocational rehabilitation
 - Traditionally, OT works in the realm of vocational rehabilitation for individuals returning to work after an injury or by identifying ergonomic solutions in the workplace.
 - This process does not meet the needs of individuals with congenital conditions, such as IDD, or for those entering the workforce for the first time.



Work as an occupation

Work is a powerful occupation which provides individuals with:

- Identity
- Routine and structure
- Purpose and a feeling of contributing to society
- Social interaction and a sense of belonging
- Independence
- Financial stability and opportunity



Characteristics of IDD employees

Individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) seeking employment can successfully perform required tasks when provided with the right supports. A strengths-based approach emphasizes their abilities, focusing on what they can do rather than their limitations. By matching their strengths to the right job roles and offering tailored assistance, individuals with IDD can contribute meaningfully to the workplace and achieve long-term success.

Challenges

- Social interaction difficulties
- Adapting to change
- Sensory sensitivities
- Support for complex tasks

Strengths

- Unique problem-solving skills
- Loyalty and retention
- Attention to detail
- Task commitment
- Resilience and perseverance

Employment Options

- Supported Employment
 - Integrated and supports gradually fade
 - Offered through Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) and Texas Health and Human Services
- Customized Employment
 - Custom-built opportunity based on strengths
 - New program that will be offered through Texas Workforce Commission, but has been used for years in other states
- New opportunities for OT to integrate are being explored
 - Work capacity evaluations
 - Job site evaluations
 - Consultation with employer

Employment Options

- Sheltered Workshops or Dayhab Centers
 - Specifically designed for individuals with disabilities and are not integrated opportunities
 - Build work skills and provide daily opportunities for engagement
- Work Experience Opportunities or Volunteering
 - Unpaid with no plan to become paid work; can be a stepping stone or a final outcome
 - Elite Therapy in Waco has started a program for 18-21 y/o to learn work skills from an OT approach
 - *UMHB in Belton has a work skills program to develop job skills and transition into future integrated work*

Cru Work Skills Program

<https://www.umhb.edu/cc/cru-work-skills-program#1845>



Occupational Therapy Approaches

Create/Promote

Create and promote opportunities and skills that everyone needs to be involved in the community, contribute to society, and for financial stability

Establish

Establish new skills that may be more challenging or have not yet been learned to apply them appropriately to a job.

Modify

Changing the ways the clients would participate in job tasks The task itself or environment where the client is working can be changed to encourage participation.

Prevent

Skills and approaches that can prevent further injuries or negative consequences at work.

Occupational Therapy Approaches for Vocational Rehab

Addressing Personal Factors

Skill development in cognition, behavior, motor skills, sensory processing, and self-advocacy, or habit and routine formation. Includes compensation strategies.

Task Modification

Simplifying work tasks, eliminating demands of tasks, or re-organizing work tasks.

Environmental Modification

Rearranging or adjusting the physical set-up, creating a health and safe atmosphere through education of employers and coworkers about disabilities, and increasing overall accessibility and inclusion.

Case Study Example

Client profile:

Johnny is a 19-year-old male diagnosed with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). He demonstrates sensory-seeking behaviors, particularly with an oral fixation, which has led to him consuming food items directly from the workplace food line. Additionally, Johnny experienced challenges with task completion, such as cleaning windows thoroughly and consistently monitoring his work for accuracy. Despite these difficulties, Johnny responds well to verbal instructions, receives feedback positively, and excels in customer service interactions.

Case Study Example

Interventions:

1. Addressing personal factors

- a. Role-playing and scripting were used to enhance Johnny's communication and social interaction skills, focusing on improving his self-advocacy and behavioral response.
- b. Body positioning training was provided to develop better motor control and physical task execution.
- c. Visual scanning strategies were taught to help Johnny better assess and evaluate the completeness of his work.
- d. A piece of candy was provided to address Johnny's oral fixation, redirecting his sensory-seeking behavior in a safe and appropriate manner, thus minimizing workplace disruptions.

Case Study Example

Interventions:

2. Task modification

- a. A task checklist was introduced to simplify and break down cleaning tasks into manageable steps, improving Johnny's abilities to focus and complete them thoroughly.
- b. Johnny was allowed to alternate between two different tasks every 10 minutes to prevent becoming bored and seeking more stimulation, such as doing jumping jacks.

3. Environmental modification

- a. The checklist was placed in an easy to find location so that he could refer to it as needed.
- b. Tables were labeled 1-10 to help Johnny keep track of the tables that he had already cleaned and which ones he still needed to complete.

Questions?



Let's connect!

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