



Position Statement: Practice Boundaries for Occupational Therapists

Introduction

This position statement informs practitioners who are considering or providing services beyond the occupational therapy scope of practice.

Background

Increasing pressures and demands upon the health and social care systems have been instrumental in challenging the traditional practice boundaries for health professionals, including occupational therapists.

Central government makes clear the need for health workers to think beyond narrow definitions of health, to work collaboratively, considering an integrated social response in a timely and equitable way so that all New Zealanders can live well, stay well and get well (1). The Whanau Ora (2) initiative has also provided opportunities for new ways of working. These initiatives in turn provide opportunity for practitioners to re-examine boundaries of practice. Environmental pressures, such as role-emerging practice areas and geographic location, require occupational therapists to be increasingly flexible and responsive in their practice (3).

Current Position

Practitioners working beyond the occupational therapy scope of practice must ensure they have the appropriate qualifications/education, experience, authority, and supervision to do so.

The Occupational Therapy Board of New Zealand (OTBNZ) has one prescribed scope of practice - the General Scope of Practice: Occupational Therapist. The nature of practice is broad, and the scope reflects the broad range of practice areas, life span and contexts that occupational therapists might work. Practitioners must ensure that their practice continues to fit with the existing scope of practice, and that they have the skills and knowledge to practice within their particular area. Practice must also meet the standards outlined in the OTBNZ's *Competencies for Registration and Continuing Practice (2015)* and *Code of Ethics for Occupational Therapists (2015)*.

What is practising beyond the occupational therapy scope of practice?

Practising beyond the occupational therapy scope of practice may include using skills, knowledge, experience and techniques that are:

1. not easily identified within the General Scope of Practice: Occupational Therapist
2. not included in the competencies for registration and continuing practice for occupational therapists
3. not included currently in the educational programmes of the prescribed New Zealand qualifications for registration.

When considering the appropriateness of the provision of service beyond the occupational therapy scope of practice practitioners need to ensure that this practice is aligned with:

1. The Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act (2003)
2. the General Scope of Practice: Occupational Therapist
3. the *Competencies for Registration and Continuing Practice (2015)* as an Occupational Therapist
4. the *Code of Ethics for Occupational Therapists (2015)*
5. their competence to provide the service and other relevant contextual factors
6. the availability of appropriate advice, support and supervision.

Determining alignment between practice and scope

The OTBNZ has developed "Practice Boundaries for Occupational Therapists: A Guide for Practitioners". This document is available on the OTBNZ's website at www.otboard.org.nz.

This guide supports practitioners through the process of determining the appropriateness of provision of specific services, which may not be considered to fall within the current occupational therapy scope of practice. This process enables practitioners to determine how any proposed activities fit with the six criteria outlined above.

Supervision

The OTBNZ requires all practicing occupational therapists to be actively engaged in supervision. Supervision is an important component in developing awareness of self and abilities, and critical reflection. Because of the opportunity it affords to receive feedback and guidance, supervision is considered a critical component of continuing competence. If occupational therapists are considering working beyond the occupational therapy scope of practice, they may need to seek advice and

supervision from appropriate individuals (this may include health professionals from other disciplines).

The OTBNZ's Supervision Requirements for Occupational Therapists (2016) is available on the OTBNZ's website as www.otboard.org.nz

References

1.

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2.

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3.

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