



**Occupational Therapy
Board of New Zealand**

Kaihaumanu Tūroro o Aotearoa

Guideline for Delegation to Occupational Therapy Assistants

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Purpose

The purpose of this guideline is to provide guidance where in the course of their practice Occupational Therapists need to pass occupational therapy tasks and roles to non-regulated support staff.

Guideline

This guideline is to assist occupational therapists who utilise the services of an occupational therapy assistant by outlining the responsibilities they hold. The occupational therapist remains ultimately responsible for the quality of occupational therapy service provided to the client by the occupational therapy assistant. Only occupational therapist registered with a current practising certificate can delegate and supervise the occupational therapy services carried out by an occupational therapy assistant. The occupational therapist must ensure formal supervision is provided for occupational therapy assistants for whom she or he is responsible.

The title occupational therapy assistant may only be used if the person is working under the direction of, being supervised by, and accountable to, an occupational therapist. If the worker is not under the direction of the occupational therapist then the practitioner should refer to the '*Guideline For Delegation To Personnel Who Are Not Under The Direction Of An Occupational Therapist*'.

Responsibilities of the Occupational Therapist

The occupational therapist:

- must retain ultimate clinical responsibility for the management of the client
- must always direct and supervise the occupational therapy assistant
- must ensure that the occupational therapy assistant is appropriately trained and competent for the tasks required
- must ensure the occupational therapy assistant is familiar with the Occupational Therapy Board of New Zealand's *Code of Ethics for Occupational Therapists*
- must ensure *formal supervision* is provided for occupational therapy assistants for whom she or he is responsible (as per Section A, 3.7 Code of Ethics, 2004)
- must ensure that the occupational therapy assistant does not take on the professional role of an occupational therapist
- must ensure that the occupational therapy assistant is clearly and correctly identified as an assistant (or related title), both in person and in written records, to avoid public perception that the assistant is an occupational therapist
- must ensure that the occupational therapy assistant clearly understands the limits of their responsibilities and the legal implications of holding himself or herself out to be an occupational therapist (Section 7(1), HPCAA).
- must be satisfied that the occupational therapy assistants quality of work is regularly evaluated to ensure that there is no risk of harm to the public
- must ensure the occupational therapy assistant is aware of their responsibilities
- must provide a written plan for the occupational therapy assistant to follow

Responsibilities of the Occupational Therapy Assistant

The occupational therapy assistant:

- must not take on the professional role of an occupational therapist
- must ensure that they are clearly and correctly identified as an assistant (or related title), both in person and in written records, to avoid public perception that the assistant is an occupational therapist
- must clarify with the occupational therapist if they do not understand any of the directions they have been given
- must immediately report to the occupational therapist any changes and concerns they have about their work with a client
- responsible for following the written plan provided by the occupational therapist

Definitions

Occupational therapy assistant: is a person employed to assist occupational therapists in providing an occupational therapy service. For the purposes of this guideline the term 'occupational therapy assistant' will refer to all support staff working for an occupational therapist, no matter what position title they use. Position titles may include but are not limited to the following: rehabilitation assistants, health care workers, community mental health support workers, activity supervisors, support staff. Occupational therapy assistants may be employed in generic roles and have responsibilities to other health professionals, such as physiotherapists or nurses, in addition to the occupational therapist.

Occupational therapist: is a registered occupational therapist with a current practising certificate.

Work: refers to activities carried out under the direction and supervision of an occupational therapist, within the occupational therapy scope of practice.

References

- Code of Ethics for Occupational Therapists, 2004
- General Scope of Practice: Occupational Therapist, September 2004
- Guideline For Delegation To Personnel Who Are Not Under The Direction Of An Occupational Therapist, OTBNZ 2011
- Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act, 2003

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