

# OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ASSISTANT

## Is being an Occupational Therapy Assistant for me?

*The field is for you if you ...*

- Genuinely like working with people.
- Can adapt to change easily.
- Enjoy working as part of a team.
- Have good interpersonal skills.
- Have good organizational skills, judgment, and problem solving abilities.
- Have effective oral and written communication skills.

## What skills will I need for this field?

*You will need to have ...*

- Self-confidence.
- Self-awareness.
- Good observation and activity analysis skills.
- Flexibility and dependability.
- Leadership skills.
- Professional work behaviors.
- Empathy.
- Creativity.
- A commitment and dedication to a profession.

## What is the work atmosphere like?

Occupational Therapy gives people the “skills for the job of living” that are needed for independent and satisfying lives. The OT practitioner interacts with clients to evaluate their existing performance deficits, sets goals, develops treatment plans and implements therapy to enable clients to function better in their personal environment. Treatment may concentrate on upgrading an individual’s self care or independent living skills, leisure interests and work skills or may offer creative solutions on how to adapt equipment or environments for success.

A wide variety of people can benefit from occupational therapy, including those with work-related injuries, chronic physical conditions, mental health or behavioral problems, developmental disabilities or issues related to the aging process.

Occupational Therapists work in hospitals, clinics, schools, home health, extended care facilities, mental health programs and industrial rehabilitation settings.

## What are my degree options?

### **Associate’s Degree**

Associate in Applied Science (AAS)

### **Master’s Degree**

A bachelor’s degree in a major other than occupational therapy is required. Professional content is basically the same as a bachelor’s degree, but there is a greater emphasis on research and critical thinking. Educational preparation will include clinical fieldwork.

### **Professional Certification**

The Occupational Therapy Assistant program at College of DuPage is accredited by the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) of the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA). Graduates of the program will be able to sit for the national certification examination for the occupational therapy assistant administered by the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy, Inc. (NBCOT). After successful completion of this exam, the individual will be a Certified Occupational Therapy Assistant (COTA). Illinois requires licensure in order to practice; however, state licenses are usually based on the results of the NBCOT Certification Exam.

## What are my career opportunities?

Employment in the field is expected to grow faster than the average for all occupations because public interest in the rehabilitation of disabled persons is high, and the U.S. population is aging and established occupational therapy programs are highly successful.

## What can I do with these degrees?

*If you have completed ...*

### **Associate in Applied Science Degree**

Certified Occupational Therapy Assistant (COTA)

### **Master's Degree**

Registered Occupational Therapist (OTR)

## How can I prepare now?

*Recommended courses ...*

### **Math**

Algebra

### **Science**

Anatomy and Physiology, Biology

### **Communications**

Composition, Speech, Reading

### **Occupational Electives**

Volunteer or work experience in health field

### **Recommended Supporting Electives**

Psychology, Computers

## What about my articulated credit?

Check with your high school coordinator to see if you are eligible for articulated credit at College of DuPage.

## What should I take my first semester at C.O.D.?

ENG 1101: Composition I

PSY 1100: General

Students must meet program admission requirements, in addition to school entrance requirements. Students interested in a bachelor's degree or entry-level master's degree in OT should not apply to an associate's degree OTA program but should contact their transfer institution before planning any college course work. Technical (OTA) and professional level (OTR) occupational therapy programs are two distinct paths of study leading to complementary but different practice roles. Occupational therapy is not a ladder program from technical (COTA) to professional (OTR) levels.

## Whom can I talk to for more information?

Health, Social, and Behavioral Sciences Division  
(630) 942-2495

For further information on the Associate in Applied Science Degree curriculum, see your program coordinator or go to [www.cod.edu](http://www.cod.edu).

For more information on Occupational Therapy, go to the American Occupational Therapy Association web page (@[www.aota.org](http://www.aota.org)).