



A.A.S. IN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ASSISTANT

SIGNIFICANT POINTS

- ◇ Think of an occupational therapy assistant (OTA) as a teacher or coach who helps others overcome physical, mental, or developmental disabilities at any stage of life. Sometimes the goal is to re-engage at work at the same level as before; sometimes the goal is to learn or re-learn how to perform daily living activities such as getting dressed.
- ◇ Successful OTAs have certain personality qualities: friendly demeanor, compassionate, effective in one-to-one communication. They are detail oriented and have the physical strength to move patients to different therapy positions when needed.
- ◇ The occupational therapy assistant ranks as the #12 “best healthcare support job” in the nation, according to U.S. News & World Report.¹ The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics notes that it’s also the #4 fastest growing occupation with 35% change of employment between 2019-29.²

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ASSISTANT: AN EXPANDING ROLE IN TODAY’S HEALTHCARE

The trend toward early diagnosis and detection of disorders— autism, developmental disorders, etc.— means OTAs increasingly work with younger populations. At the same time the baby-boom and millennial generations seek a more active and independent lifestyle than previous generations, yet they still face health problems associated with aging.

Today, with the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA), new recovery strategies, and an increased focus on wellness, more people are returning to the lifestyle or work environment they love. Many others are trying to maintain a certain level of performance or independence with daily life activities and need support from OT/OTAs to accomplish this.

An OTA works as part of a team with an occupational therapist, usually interacting directly with the client while delivering the therapy plans. No two days are likely the same, and work settings are varied. OTAs work with people across the lifespan (infants to older adults) in school districts, hospitals, nursing or assisted care facilities, their homes and in community-based settings.³

On an average day, an OTA might:

- Demonstrate a beneficial play activity for a child with a developmental disability
- Assess client situations and make recommendations
- Help clients practice adaptive ways to complete daily living activities such as eating and grooming
- Provide guidance and encouragement to the client, family members, or caregiver
- Document client progress
- Partner with clients to implement long-term solutions for chronic pain and other issues
- Set up and train people to use equipment.

TWO-YEAR OTA DEGREE PROGRAM AT CUKC

Preparing future practitioners with the necessary knowledge and skills to help people live fulfilling lives is the mission of the Associate of Applied Sciences (A.A.S.) in Occupational Therapy Assistant program at Cleveland University-Kansas City (CUKC). This result is accomplished by combining high-quality academic education with embedded fieldwork experiences.

Fieldwork is essential because this is where knowledge becomes action. You’ll develop a comfort level in working with people and how to understand their needs. In any given week you might be working with a young child with a developmental disability, an office worker recovering from surgery, or a senior adult relearning a daily activity.

The OTA degree is 73 credit hours, which includes:

- 24 credit hours of general education courses
- 49 credit hours of professional OTA courses as a full-time student.

OTA courses at the University are delivered in sequential 8-week modules year-round, allowing for students to complete the program in two years. Academic and fieldwork courses are offered during the day in order to model typical clinical experiences.

Even better, the knowledge and skills learned in each course at CUKC lead directly into the next one, which makes the concepts of the new course easier to grasp. CUKC offers multiple program start dates.

The OTA program is fully accredited by the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) of the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA).⁴

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LICENSURE AND CERTIFICATION

The OTA degree program at CUKC not only gets you the knowledge and skills needed for a career, but does it in a two-year, associate degree program that prepares you to pass the national licensure exam of the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy (NBCOT).

All states require a license to practice. State licenses are based on the results of the NBCOT Certification Examination. Occupational therapy assistants are responsible for renewing their certification and registration as well as meeting continuing education requirements.

EARNINGS AND JOB OUTLOOK

OTAs earn more than several other healthcare support jobs. The median annual wage is \$62,940, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). For example, OTAs can make twice as much as Certified Nursing Assistants (CNA) and 60% more than home health aides.⁵ The higher salaries for OTAs trend toward metropolitan areas and demand is higher in home healthcare and nursing care facilities than in other areas, such as clinics and hospitals.⁶

Employment for OTAs will grow by more than 35% between now and 2029, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics.

OTAs work with people of all ages, and possibilities for employment are numerous. The American Occupational Therapy Association, Inc. (AOTA) lists six practice areas:⁷

- Children and youth
- Health and wellness
- Mental health
- Productive aging
- Rehabilitation and disability
- Work and industry

CAMPUS VISITS AND TOURS

Campus tours and visits are an excellent way to get to know the CUKC program, faculty, and campus environment.

Contact the Admissions office at admissions@cleveland.edu or call toll free: 800.467.2252.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION (Referenced July 2021)

¹<https://money.usnews.com/careers/best-jobs/occupational-therapy-assistant>

²<https://www.bls.gov/ooh/fastest-growing.htm>

³<https://explorehealthcareers.org/career/occupational-therapy/occupational-therapy-assistant/>

⁴<https://acoteonline.org/schools/ota-associate/>

⁵<https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/occupational-therapy-assistants-and-aides.htm#tab-8>

⁶<https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/occupational-therapy-assistants-and-aides.htm#tab-5>

⁷<https://www.aota.org/Practice.aspx>

FREE EBOOK DOWNLOAD

Visit cleveland.edu/ota-ebook to download a FREE ebook that can help you find more of the answers you need about becoming an occupational therapy assistant.

ACOTE® accredited occupational therapy and occupational therapy assistant educational programs satisfy the states' educational requirements in all states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. Students graduating from an ACOTE® accredited occupational therapy and occupational therapy assistant educational program are eligible to take the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy (NBCOT) certification exam and apply for licensure in all states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. For more information regarding state qualifications and licensure requirements, please refer to the AOTA State Licensure webpage.

Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) of the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA), located at 6116 Executive Boulevard, Suite 200, North Bethesda, MD 20852-4929. ACOTE's telephone number c/o AOTA is (301) 652-AOTA and its web address is www.acoteonline.org.