

# Occupational Therapy's critical role in the Future of Healthcare



## Opioid Crisis

- Understanding, addressing and treating chronic pain before it is treated from a pharmacological aspect may be the single most important step in combating the opioid crisis in our state.
- Occupational therapy practitioners are working toward improved recognition of early warning signs of opioid abuse/dependence, screening clients for possible addiction, and provided the client with information on addiction resources. The occupational therapy practitioners' distinct value in this area lies in our ability to assess the client from a holistic view while implementing treatment designed to improve the quality of life for people experiencing pain, and assist them with increased participation to improve their overall health and well-being.
- Benefits of occupational therapy include helping clients to live and function productively. Within the context of chronic pain and pain management, occupational therapy practitioners evaluate the pain's impact on a client's desired activities and quality of life, and equip him or her with the skills and strategies to manage the pain.

**Support legislation which addresses the opioid addiction crisis and incorporates non-pharmacological treatment for pain management, such as care provided by occupational therapists.**

## Medicaid Reimbursement

- Medicaid reimbursement levels for occupational therapists in Florida are amongst the lowest in the country, despite the fact that occupational therapists are a key factor in reducing health care costs, improving quality of life, and helping people return to work.
- Occupational therapy has been shown to have a statistically significant relationship to lower 30-day readmission rates for primary health conditions such as heart failure and pneumonia, as well as reduce hospital length of stay for intensive care patients, resulting in cost savings for the health care system.
- With training in addressing physical and behavioral health, rehabilitation, and habilitation, occupational therapy as part of a primary care team can reduce health care costs by improving issues that affect daily function and quality of life.

**Support increased reimbursement rates for Medicaid providers and specifically occupational therapists.**

## Mental Health in Schools

- Occupational therapists have specialized knowledge/skills in mental health and are educated to select and use evaluation and interventions to promote mental health, but also improve physical, sensory, interpersonal, and cognitive function.
- In the school environment, occupational therapists are among the few school personnel who have education in mental health and can contribute to school efforts in mental health promotion, prevention and intervention.

- Incorporation of occupational therapists as mental health providers in schools creates a continuum of services aimed at social-emotional and mental health promotion, prevention of problem behaviors, early detection through screening, and intensive intervention.

**Support the education of school districts, students and families of occupational therapy as a resource for the treatment and prevention of mental health disorders.**

### **Telehealth**

- Collaboration between the occupational therapy practitioners and the client is critical to the occupational therapy process. Delivering occupational therapy services through telecommunication technologies allows access to care and services wherever the client is located, thereby removing barriers to care and promoting intervention approaches within the natural context and environment. This can influence performance and engagement of activities and affect health and wellness, participation, and prevention, thereby improving quality of life.
- Occupational therapy practitioners use telehealth as a service delivery model to help clients develop skills, incorporate assistive technology and adaptive technologies, modify work, home, or school environments; create health-promoting habits and routines. Telehealth allows the occupational therapy practitioner to perform consultations, client evaluations, client monitoring, supervision and intervention regardless of the client's location.
- Benefits of a telehealth service delivery model include increased accessibility of services to clients who live in remote or underserved areas, improved access to providers and specialists otherwise unavailable to clients, prevention of unnecessary delays in receiving care, and workforce enhancement through consultation and research among others.

**Support legislation which includes occupational therapists as practitioners able to provide telemedicine services within the state of Florida.**