

Public Health Committee

March 14, 2007

Testimony on SB 1220: AAC The Birth To Three Program

Recommendation: Delete Section 2 of the proposal.

Dear Senator Handley, Representative Sayers and Members of the Public Health Committee:

This testimony is in regards to Raised Bill No. 1220, AAC The Birth to Three Program, which is before the Public Health Committee. **We have specific concerns about Section 2 of this bill.** This Bill seeks to amend existing legislation concerning the Birth-to-Three Program. You are asked to amend Sec. 2. Subdivision (10) "Qualified personnel" to allow imposition of additional qualifications for practitioners in order to work with the birth to three population. Occupational Therapists are among those considered "qualified personnel". **We respectfully request that the Public Health Committee delete section 2 of the bill should it choose to pass this legislation.**

Connecticut Occupational Therapists are required to pass a national certification examination, licensed to practice in the state by the Connecticut Department of Public Health, and have to fulfill continuing education requirements to maintain certification and licensure. The American Occupational Therapy Association's educational program accreditation process requires all entry level therapists to have a master's degree and education in pediatric practice. Our education qualifies us to provide occupational therapy services to this age group without any additional credentials. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act recognizes occupational therapists as qualified service providers in the early intervention setting. This proposed change in regulation adds an unnecessary level of credentialing, a burden to already qualified professionals, and additional financial burden on taxpayers in order to establish and maintain the increased bureaucracy that will be needed for an additional credentialing process.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration. Enclosed with this testimony is the fact sheet "Occupational Therapy for Children: Birth to 3 Years of Age". We would be happy to supply any information regarding this issue, and would also be happy to meet with you should you wish to discuss this matter further.

Sincerely,

Mary-Ellen Johnson, MHSM, OTR/L, LNHA

Jillian Battaglia, MS OTR/L

President, CT Occupational Therapy Association

Government Affairs Chairperson

Occupational Therapy for Children

Birth to 3 Years of Age

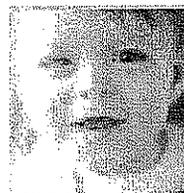


Occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants provide services to infants and toddlers birth to 3 years of age who have or are at risk for developmental delays or disabilities. Occupational therapy practitioners, as part of the multidisciplinary team, provide services to young children and their families in a variety of settings, including hospitals, early intervention programs, private clinics, child care settings, schools, and at home.

Occupational therapy is concerned with a child's ability to participate in daily life activities or "occupations." Occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants use their unique expertise to help children with social-emotional, physical, cognitive, communication, and adaptive behavior challenges.

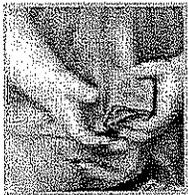
Through an understanding of the impact of disability, illness, and impairment on a child's development, play, ability to learn new skills, and overall occupational performance, occupational therapists design interventions that promote healthy development, establish needed skills, and/or modify environments, all in support of participation in daily activities.

Occupational therapy practitioners also play a key role in educating parents, caregivers and program staff about child development, and they provide information about disability and diverse learning needs.



Occupational therapists collaborate with parents and other members of the team to

- identify and conduct appropriate assessment;
- plan and implement relevant intervention strategies and developmentally appropriate activities;
- reduce environmental barriers that limit a child's participation in family, learning, and community-based activities;
- identify needed assistive technology devices and supports; and
- prepare children and their families for transition to preschool.



Occupational therapy is an important service for infants and toddlers with a variety of conditions, including premature birth, low-birth weight, congenital anomalies, neurological disorders, sensory processing difficulties, challenging behavior, neuromuscular disease, prenatal drug exposure, and autism.

Services address feeding skills, sensory integration, motor development, environmental exploration, play skills, adaptive behavior, and interactions between the child and caregiver.

Occupational therapists work with other members of the team, including physicians, nurses, speech-language pathologists, psychologists, physical therapists, teachers and parents to identify the needs of infants and toddlers and their families. They target desired outcomes and determine the services, supports, and modifications or accommodations needed to achieve those outcomes. When occupational therapy expertise is needed to help the child and family meet their desired goals, services should be included in the child's program.



Occupational therapy services for infants and toddlers are available through a variety of agencies and programs, including hospitals, Early Head

Start programs, home health agencies, and early intervention programs under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). ■

Developed for AOTA by Leslie Jackson, MEd, OTR, and Julie Bissell, MA, OTRL, ATP

References

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- American Occupational Therapy Association. (2002). Occupational therapy practice framework: Domain and process. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 56, 609-639.
- American Occupational Therapy Association (1999). *Occupational therapy services for children and youth under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (2nd ed.). Bethesda, MD: Author.



The American Occupational Therapy Association

4720 Montgomery Lane
Bethesda, MD 20814-3425
301-652-AOTA (2682)
www.aota.org

Occupational Therapy: Skills for the Job of Living

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