

Colorado School-Based Occupational Therapy

What is School Based Occupational Therapy (OT):

School based occupational therapy (OT) is a related service to special education when the unique skills of an OT are needed to support a child's access to specialized instruction. An OT is not a primary service provider and cannot stand alone on an IEP.

Services are governed by federal and state special education laws including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004 and Colorado's Exceptional Children's Education Act (ECEA). Federal Law mandates that OT in the school system be educationally relevant.

School based Occupational Therapy services are delivered by highly trained, licensed Occupational Therapists that utilize purposeful, goal directed activities and task analysis to enable a child with a disability to benefit from their Individualized Education Program (IEP).

OT services are not intended to satisfy the medical needs of a student since they must be educationally relevant and therefore may not meet the total therapy needs of a student. School based services cannot replace any necessary medically based services that address non school based motor skills and/or tasks.

DCSD OT Mission and Vision:

The mission of the DCSD Occupational Therapy Department is to provide evidence-based occupational therapy support that is student-focused and educationally-relevant, maximizing the student's functional independence and participation within the educational environment and ability to benefit from their individualized education plan (IEP).

Our resulting vision is to empower students to achieve outcomes by providing an OT service delivery model that supports all students in the development of motor skills and accommodations necessary to be successful in school and in life upon graduation.

Working with the School Team in DCSD:

OTs are an integral part of your child's school team. They work collaboratively to ensure your child's access to their specialized instruction through:

- Providing services to your child (direct services) or on behalf of your child (indirect services) in Kindergarten through the age of 21. (pre-school OT services are also available and provided but through the Department of Early Childhood- refer to their website/contacts for further details).
- Collaborating with all team members to support their academic growth, participation and performance across their various learning environments.

- Supporting the implementation of student specific accommodations and modifications as well as educating team members and families about the impact of his/her/their child's disability on their educational performance and participation.
- Writing collaborative IEP goals and objectives to best support students through multidisciplinary efforts of problem solving, data collection and progress monitoring. Collaborative goals are best practice and ensure OTs are supporting a specialized instruction not providing one.

Responsibilities of a School Occupational Therapist:

In a school setting the OT may be involved by supporting any or all of the following areas that interfere with a child's educational performance:

- School related self help skills identified as a part of their specialized instruction on their IEP
- Fine, gross and visual motor skills
- Education in sensory processing accommodations.
- School relevant visual processing/visual perceptual skills (copying from the board etc.)
- Positioning, functional mobility and transfers
- Motor components of functional communication (hand/arm function to hit a switch etc.)
- Adaptive devices and equipment and modifications of tasks

