

CAREER GUIDE FOR OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST

SOC Code: 29-1122

Pay Band(s): 5 and 6 ([Salary Structure](#))

Standard Occupational Description: Assess, plan, organize, and participate in rehabilitative programs that help restore vocational, homemaking, and daily living skills, as well as general independence, to disabled persons.

Occupational Therapist positions in the Commonwealth are assigned to the following Roles in the [Rehabilitation Therapy Career Group](#):

[Therapist III](#)

[Therapy Manager II](#)

While Occupational Therapists within the Commonwealth are all located within the Rehabilitation Therapy Career Group, individuals may want to pursue other opportunities within the Commonwealth depending upon individual training, education, knowledge, skills, abilities, and interests.

Other Career Group(s) that may be of interest are:

[Health Care Compliance](#)

[Program Administration](#)

[General Administration](#)

SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE, ABILITIES AND TASKS

(Technical and Functional Expertise)

Skills

Note: *The technical and functional skills listed below are based on general occupational qualifications for Occupational Therapists commonly recognized by most employers. Typically, you will not be required to have all of the skills listed to be a successful performer. Recruitment and selection standards for an individual state job must be based on the specific knowledge, skills, and abilities for that job as indicated in the job announcement and job description in the Employee Work Profile.*

1. Giving full attention to what other people are saying, taking time to understand the points being made, asking questions as appropriate, and not interrupting at inappropriate times.
2. Understanding written sentences and paragraphs in work related documents.
3. Actively looking for ways to help people.
4. Communicating effectively in writing as appropriate for the needs of the audience.
5. Talking to others to convey information effectively.
6. Teaching others how to do something.
7. Being aware of others' reactions and understanding why they react as they do.
8. Managing one's own time and the time of others.
9. Using logic and reasoning to identify the strengths and weaknesses of alternative solutions, conclusions or approaches to problems.
10. Understanding the implications of new information for both current and future problem-solving and decision-making.

Knowledge

Note: *The technical and functional knowledge statements listed below are based on general occupational qualifications for Occupational Therapists commonly recognized by most employers. Typically, you will not be required to have all of the knowledge listed to be a successful performer. Recruitment and selection standards for an individual state job must be based on the specific knowledge, skills, and abilities for that job as indicated in the job announcement and job description in the Employee Work Profile.*

The **Knowledge** of:

1. Principles, methods, and procedures for diagnosis, treatment, and rehabilitation of physical and mental dysfunctions, and for career counseling and guidance.
2. Human behavior and performance; individual differences in ability, personality, and interests; learning and motivation; psychological research methods; and the assessment and treatment of behavioral and affective disorders.
3. Principles and processes for providing customer and personal services. This includes customer needs assessment, meeting quality standards for services, and evaluation of customer satisfaction.
4. Principles and methods for curriculum and training design, teaching and instruction for individuals and groups, and the measurement of training effects.
5. Structure and content of the English language including the meaning and spelling of words, rules of composition, and grammar.
6. Information and techniques needed to diagnose and treat human injuries, diseases, and deformities. This includes symptoms, treatment alternatives, drug properties and interactions, and preventive health-care measures.
7. Plant and animal organisms, their tissues, cells, functions, interdependencies, and interactions with each other and the environment.

Abilities

Note: *The technical and functional abilities listed below are based on general occupational qualifications for Occupational Therapists commonly recognized by most employers. Typically, you will not be required to have all of the abilities listed to be a successful performer. Recruitment and selection standards for an individual state job must be based on the specific knowledge, skills, and abilities for that job as indicated in the job announcement and job description in the Employee Work Profile.*

The **Ability** to:

1. Listen to and understand information and ideas presented through spoken words and sentences.
2. Communicate information and ideas in speaking so others will understand.
3. Communicate information and ideas in writing so others will understand.
4. Tell when something is wrong or is likely to go wrong. It does not involve solving the problem, only recognizing there is a problem.
5. Apply general rules to specific problems to produce answers that make sense.
6. Speak clearly so others can understand you.
7. Arrange things or actions in a certain order or pattern according to a specific rule or set of rules (e.g., patterns of numbers, letters, words, pictures, mathematical operations).
8. Identify and understand the speech of another person.
9. Combine pieces of information to form general rules or conclusions (includes finding a relationship among seemingly unrelated events).
10. Read and understand information and ideas presented in writing.

Tasks

Note: The following is a list of sample tasks typically performed by Occupational Therapists. Employees in this occupation will not necessarily perform all of the tasks listed.

1. Complete and maintain necessary records.
2. Evaluate patients' progress and prepare reports that detail progress.
3. Test and evaluate patients' physical and mental abilities and analyze medical data to determine realistic rehabilitation goals for patients.
4. Select activities that will help individuals learn work and life-management skills within limits of their mental and physical capabilities.
5. Plan, organize, and conduct occupational therapy programs in hospital, institutional, or community settings to help rehabilitate those impaired because of illness, injury or psychological or developmental problems.
6. Recommend changes in patients' work or living environments, consistent with their needs and capabilities.
7. Consult with rehabilitation team to select activity programs and coordinate occupational therapy with other therapeutic activities.
8. Help clients improve decision making, abstract reasoning, memory, sequencing, coordination and perceptual skills, using computer programs.
9. Develop and participate in health promotion programs, group activities, or discussions to promote client health, facilitate social adjustment, alleviate stress, and prevent physical or mental disability.
10. Provide training and supervision in therapy techniques and objectives for students and nurses and other medical staff.

INTERESTED?

Like people, occupations have traits or characteristics. These characteristics give important clues about the nature of the work and work environment, and give you an opportunity to match your own personal interests to a specific occupation. When you choose a job in an occupation that matches your own interests you have taken an important step in planning a successful and rewarding career.

Occupations in Occupational Therapy are considered **Social** and frequently involve working with, communicating with, and teaching people. These occupations often involve helping or providing service to others.

These occupations are also considered **Realistic** frequently involving work activities that include practical, hands-on problems and solutions. They often deal with plants, animals, and real-world materials like wood, tools, and machinery. Many of the occupations require working outside, and do not involve a lot of paperwork or working closely with others.

The occupation of Occupational Therapy is **Investigative** and frequently involves working with ideas, and require an extensive amount of thinking. These occupations can involve searching for facts and figuring out problems mentally.

The occupation is also considered **Artistic** and frequently involves working with forms, designs and patterns. They often require self-expression and the work can be done without following a clear set of rules.

LICENSURE, REGISTRATION, OR CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

It is nationally recognized that occupational therapy is a health field career and is regulated to ensure competent delivery of health care services to citizens. Therefore professional standards and competencies including licensure are expected.

Licensure is required for Occupational Therapist positions in state government.

The Virginia Board of Medicine provides requirements for licensure and continuing competency for this occupation. Licensing information for Occupational Therapist can be found on the Department of Health Professions web site at <http://www.dhp.state.virginia.us/>.

EDUCATIONAL, TRAINING, AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

The U. S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (<http://www.bls.gov>) provides the following:

Occupational therapists (OTs) help people improve their ability to perform tasks in their daily living and working environments. They work with individuals who have conditions that are mentally, physically, developmentally, or emotionally disabling. They also help them to develop, recover, or maintain daily living and work skills. Occupational therapists help clients not only to improve their basic motor functions and reasoning abilities, but also to compensate for permanent loss of function. Their goal is to help clients have independent, productive, and satisfying lives.

Currently, a bachelor's degree in occupational therapy is the minimum requirement for entry into this field. Beginning in 2007, however, a master's degree or higher will be the minimum educational requirement. As a result, students in bachelor's-level programs should complete their coursework and fieldwork before 2007. All States, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia regulate the practice of occupational therapy. To obtain a license, applicants must pass a national certification examination. Those who pass the exam are awarded the title "Occupational Therapist Registered (OTR)."

Occupational therapy coursework includes physical, biological, and behavioral sciences and the application of occupational therapy theory and skills. Completion of 6 months of supervised fieldwork also is required.

Persons considering this profession should take high school courses in biology, chemistry, physics, health, art, and the social sciences. College admissions offices also look favorably at paid or volunteer experience in the healthcare field.

Occupational therapists need patience and strong interpersonal skills to inspire trust and respect in their clients. Ingenuity and imagination in adapting activities to individual needs are assets. Those working in home healthcare services must be able to adapt to a variety of settings.

Graduation from an accredited occupational therapy educational program is required to practice as an Occupational Therapist in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The Virginia Regulations Governing the Practice of Occupational Therapy requires continuing course work. The classroom or educational experience is directly related to the clinical practice of occupational therapy.

The Virginia Area Health Education Centers Program <http://www.ahec.vcu.edu/vhc/ther.pdf> lists four Virginia Educational Institutions that offer educational programs for those individuals interested in a career as an occupational therapist. Those institutions are College of Health Sciences, Longwood College, Shenandoah University, and Virginia Commonwealth University.

COMMONWEALTH COMPETENCIES

Competencies are a set of identified behaviors, knowledge, skills, and abilities that directly and positively impact the success of employees and the organization. Competencies can be observed and measured. When consistently demonstrated, competencies make employees particularly effective in their work. Competencies help lay out a road map to career success. You can use the Commonwealth Competencies to help improve your individual performance by adopting behaviors that make high performing employees successful in their jobs. In this way, you can use the Commonwealth Competencies for your further professional development.

The Commonwealth Competencies are:

1. Technical and Functional Expertise
2. Understanding the Business
3. Achieving Results
4. Serving the Customer
5. Teamwork
6. Interpersonal and Communication Skills
7. Leadership and Personal Effectiveness

The above competencies may be applied to employees throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia. They can be rank-ordered by agencies and hiring managers to represent the needs of a specific job. The rank ordering will change depending upon the occupation, an organization's priorities, the actual job requirements, and the supervisor's preferences.

Career success is both about what you do (applying your technical knowledge, skills, and ability) and how you do it (the consistent behaviors you demonstrate and choose to use) while interacting and communicating with others. Hopefully, by studying the Commonwealth competencies, identifying your developmental opportunities, and working to refine your own competence, you can take charge of your career!

For additional information about the **Commonwealth Competencies** go to: http://jobs.state.va.us/cc_planningctr.htm. For the competencies, we first list the competencies and then define each. Finally, we list competency indicators; to describe what successful performance looks like.

COMMONWEALTH CAREER PATH

Career opportunities in the Commonwealth are not limited to moving “up” to the next highest role and pay band, changing positions, or to becoming a supervisor. That’s because most roles describe a broad group of occupationally related positions that perform a range of work that requires increased knowledge and skills. For that reason, Commonwealth roles describe the career paths within the same or higher-level role for the same or different Career Group. The broad salary range and the Commonwealth’s pay practices provide flexibility in recognizing career development and advancement. ([Salary Structure](#))

For example: **Occupational Therapists**

| PAY BAND | PRACTITIONER ROLES |
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| 5 | THERAPIST III |
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| PAY BAND | MANAGEMENT ROLES |
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| 6 | THERAPY MANAGER II |
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Sample Career Path

[Therapist III](#) role provides career tracks for licensed therapists performing responsibilities ranging from entry level to first line supervisor. The occupational therapists help clients improve ability to perform tasks in daily living and working environments.

[Therapy Manager II](#) role provides career tracks for managers responsible for planning and directing an occupational therapy program that may include other rehabilitative therapies. The Virginia Board of Medicine requires licensure of these employees.

ADDITIONAL OCCUPATIONAL INFORMATION CAN BE FOUND AT:

O*NET (Occupational Information Network)

http://online.onetcenter.org/gen_search_page

Virginia Employment Commission

<http://www.alex.vec.state.va.us/>

Career One Stop

<http://www.careeronestop.org/>

Virginia Career Resource Network

<http://www.vacrn.net/>

Department of Health Professions

<http://www.dhp.state.virginia.us/>

The U. S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics

<http://www.bls.gov/>

Professional Organizations

Virginia Occupational Therapy Association

<http://www.vaota.org/>

American Occupational Therapy Association

<http://www.aota.org/>