

CAREER GUIDE FOR OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST ASSISTANT

SOC Code: 31-2011

Pay Band(s): 3 ([Salary Structure](#))

Standard Occupational Description: Assist occupational therapists in providing occupational therapy treatments and procedures. May, in accordance with State laws, assist in development of treatment plans, carry out routine functions, direct activity programs, and document the progress of treatments. Generally requires formal training.

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

[Therapist Assistant/Therapist I](#)

While Occupational Therapist Assistants 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](#)

[Direct Service](#)

[Administration and Office Support](#)

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 Therapist Assistants 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. Being aware of others' reactions and understanding why they react as they do.
3. Actively looking for ways to help people.
4. Teaching others how to do something.
5. Talking to others to convey information effectively.
6. Understanding written sentences and paragraphs in work related documents.
7. Communicating effectively in writing as appropriate for the needs of the audience.
8. Generating or adapting equipment and technology to serve user needs.
9. Adjusting actions in relation to others' actions.
10. Determining the kind of tools and equipment needed to do a job.

Knowledge

Note: The technical and functional knowledge statements listed below are based on general occupational qualifications for Occupational Therapist Assistants 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. Principles and methods for curriculum and training design, teaching and instruction for individuals and groups, and the measurement of training effects.
3. 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.
4. Principles and processes for providing customer and personal services. This includes customer needs assessment, meeting quality standards for services, and evaluation of customer satisfaction.
5. 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.
6. Structure and content of the English language including the meaning and spelling of words, rules of composition, and grammar.

Abilities

Note: The technical and functional abilities listed below are based on general occupational qualifications for Occupational Therapist Assistants 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. Tell when something is wrong or is likely to go wrong. It does not involve solving the problem, only recognizing there is a problem.
2. Listen to and understand information and ideas presented through spoken words and sentences.
3. Communicate information and ideas in speaking so others will understand.
4. Read and understand information and ideas presented in writing.
5. Apply general rules to specific problems to produce answers that make sense.
6. Remember information such as words, numbers, pictures, and procedures.
7. Exert maximum muscle force to lift, push, pull, or carry objects.
8. Identify and understand the speech of another person.

Tasks

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

1. Alter treatment programs to obtain better results if treatment is not having the intended effect.
2. Assemble, clean, and maintain equipment and materials for patient use.

3. Design, fabricate, and repair assistive devices and make adaptive changes to equipment and environments.
4. Demonstrate therapy techniques, such as manual and creative arts, and games.
5. Evaluate the daily living skills and capacities of physically, developmentally or emotionally disabled clients.
6. Implement, or assist occupational therapists with implementing, treatment plans designed to help clients function independently.
7. Instruct, or assist in instructing, patients and families in home programs, basic living skills, and the care and use of adaptive equipment.
8. Monitor patients' performance in therapy activities, providing encouragement.
9. Observe and record patients' progress, attitudes, and behavior, and maintain this information in client records.
10. Order any needed educational or treatment supplies.

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 as assistants in the field of Occupational Therapy are considered **Social** occupations 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** and frequently involve 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.

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 certification are expected.

Occupational therapist assistants are regulated in most States and must pass a national certification examination after they graduate. Those who pass the test are awarded the title "Certified Occupational Therapist Assistant."

Certification is required for Occupational Therapist Assistants positions in state government.

EDUCATIONAL, TRAINING, AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

The Department of Labor, Bureau of Statistics provides the following information:

Occupational therapist assistants and aides work under the direction of occupational therapists to provide rehabilitative services to persons with mental, physical, emotional, or developmental impairments. The ultimate goal is to improve clients' quality of life and ability to perform daily

activities. For example, occupational therapist assistants help injured workers re-enter the labor force by teaching them how to compensate for lost motor skills or help individuals with learning disabilities increase their independence.

Occupational therapist assistants and aides need to have a moderate degree of strength, due to the physical exertion required in assisting patients with their treatment. For example, assistants and aides may need to lift patients. Constant kneeling, stooping, and standing for long periods also are part of the job.

An associate degree or a certificate from an accredited community college or technical school is generally required to qualify for occupational therapist assistant jobs. In contrast, occupational therapist aides usually receive most of their training on the job.

The Virginia Area Health Education Centers Program <http://www.ahec.vcu.edu/vhc/ther.pdf> lists the following Virginia Educational Institutions that offer educational programs for those individuals interested in a career as an occupational therapist assistant: College of Health Sciences, J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College, Southside Virginia Community College, Southwest Virginia Community College, and Tidewater Community College. These community colleges that offer educational programs for the occupation of Occupational Therapist Assistant are found on the Website for the Virginia Community Colleges <http://www.so.cc.va.us/>.

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 Therapist Assistants**

PAY BAND	PRACTITIONER ROLES	PAY BAND	MANAGEMENT ROLES
3	THERAPIST ASSISTANT		
5	THERAPIST III		
		6	THERAPY MANAGER II

Sample Career Path

[Therapist Assistant/Therapist I](#) role provides career tracks for the occupational and physical therapists assistants based on licensure/certification requirements. The career track is for assistants to occupational therapists or physical therapists and requires certification or licensure by the Virginia Board of Physical Therapy or National Board for Certification of Occupational Therapy.

[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/>