

2026

Continuing Competency Profile

for the Certified Occupational
Therapy Assistant COTA[®]

COTA[®]

NBCOT[®] National Board
for Certification in
Occupational Therapy

COTA Continuing Competency Profile

Domain 1: Core Occupational Therapy Expertise

Apply foundational and advanced occupational therapy knowledge to support client-centered occupational participation and performance.

Competencies:

- 1.1 Demonstrate understanding of complex health conditions, diagnoses, and contextual factors, and how they impact occupational participation and performance.
- 1.2 Apply relevant OT models, theories, and frames of reference to guide services across the occupational therapy process.
- 1.3 Assist with administering assessments and engage in ongoing collaboration with the OTR to monitor and update the plan of care, goals, and outcomes.
- 1.4 Use activity analysis to facilitate the selection, grading, and adaptation of occupations.
- 1.5 Recognize meaningful patterns in performance and report observations to the OTR to ensure continuity of care.
- 1.6 Understand the personal and contextual factors that impact discharge planning.

Domain 2: Clinical Reasoning and Evidence-Based Practice

Apply clinical reasoning and evidence-based decision-making across the occupational therapy process.

Competencies:

- 2.1 Observe, analyze, and interpret patterns in client performance to inform clinical decision-making.
- 2.2 Locate appropriate resources to critically appraise and apply evidence to guide best practices.
- 2.3 Assess the efficacy of evidence-based interventions by measuring outcomes.
- 2.4 Draw upon best evidence, clinical experiences, and client factors to advance therapeutic outcomes.

Domain 3: Client–Centered Care

Uphold equitable, inclusive, and client-centered occupational participation throughout the plan of care.

Competencies:

- 3.1 Review the occupational profile to guide the intervention approach according to the plan of care.
- 3.2 Acknowledge and respect clients' values, identities, and lived experiences to deliver client-centered care.
- 3.3 Collaborate with the client and relevant others to identify meaningful activities and occupations.
- 3.4 Utilize therapeutic use of self to engage with clients and promote positive health outcomes.
- 3.5 Adapt interventions in response to evolving client needs and contextual factors.
- 3.6 Provide care with awareness of the principles of equity, cultural humility, and trauma-informed care and their impact on client outcomes.
- 3.7 Empower clients by addressing their needs, facilitating resource access, and fostering self-advocacy.

Domain 4: Collaboration and Communication

Build and sustain effective, respectful relationships with clients, families, caregivers, intra/interdisciplinary professionals, and other relevant parties.

Competencies:

- 4.1 Communicate with clarity, empathy, and responsiveness across all audiences and modes of communication.
- 4.2 Engage in collaborative interprofessional care that fosters respect and trust while remaining within the OT scope of practice.
- 4.3 Foster healthy intraprofessional communication with occupational therapy practitioners to promote goal-directed client-centered care.
- 4.4 Facilitate interprofessional and intraprofessional learning and teamwork.
- 4.5 Address conflict using appropriate and constructive strategies and model self-awareness and empathy.
- 4.6 Document skilled occupational therapy services accurately, ethically, and in sufficient detail to support continuity of care.
- 4.7 Adapt communication across various levels of learning and understanding to effectively communicate with clients, caregivers, and other relevant parties.

Domain 5: Leadership and Advocacy

Advocate for practice environments and systems that improve outcomes and advance the profession.

Competencies:

- 5.1 Mentor, supervise, and coach students, occupational therapy practitioners, and support personnel.
- 5.2 Serve as a resource and leader within interdisciplinary teams, organizations, and communities.
- 5.3 Advocate for the OT profession by providing education on occupational therapy's distinct value in established and emerging practice areas.
- 5.4 Address occupational injustices by advocating for marginalized or underserved populations who receive or may benefit from OT services.

Domain 6: Professionalism and Accountability

Uphold high standards of ethical, safe, and evidence-based care.

Competencies:

- 6.1 Apply ethical decision-making in everyday practice while adhering to relevant laws and regulations.
- 6.2 Utilize and uphold the supervisory process to exchange information, collaborate, and problem solve.
- 6.3 Identify and mitigate risks to ensure the safety of clients, self, and others.
- 6.4 Model professionalism by adapting practice through self-assessment, reflection, and peer feedback.
- 6.5 Model self-awareness and adaptability by taking ownership of outcomes and actions across the therapeutic process.
- 6.6 Prioritize self-care to sustain personal well-being, prevent burnout, and uphold quality care in occupational therapy practice.
- 6.7 Demonstrate professionalism by prioritizing tasks and meeting clinical, administrative, and client-centered responsibilities in a timely and organized manner.
- 6.8 Apply knowledge of billing, insurance, and reimbursement within relevant practice settings to support accurate documentation and compliance with funding and regulatory requirements.

Domain 7: Innovation and Continuous Improvement

Engage in lifelong learning with a growth mindset and contribute to individual and practice advancement.

Competencies:

- 7.1 Identify individual learning needs and pursue ongoing professional development to advance competence.
- 7.2 Utilize quality improvement initiatives, research, and outcome tracking to determine best practice.
- 7.3 Integrate new and emerging technologies, techniques, and strategies, including applications of artificial intelligence, when appropriate, to enhance service delivery.
- 7.4 Evaluate and adapt to sociopolitical changes as needed to sustain effective service delivery to individuals, communities, and populations.
- 7.5 Contribute to or lead initiatives that integrate new knowledge into current practice.
- 7.6 Remain aware of emerging practice areas to identify opportunities for professional innovation.

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