

**Working together.
Working better.**



OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS

FACT SHEET

What do Occupational Therapists in mental health do?

Occupational Therapists assess and treat the functional implications of health problems from a developmental and holistic perspective. As evidence based specialists, their academic training includes education in physical and psychological components of mental health and wellbeing.

An Occupational Therapist who is registered to work as a Better Access practitioner is a member of OT Australia. They have demonstrated their experience as a mental health practitioner and also satisfied the Australian Mental Health Competency Standards for Occupational Therapists.

Mental Health Occupational Therapists specialise in assessing how an individual's mental health disorder impacts in their ability to function in activities of daily living.

Occupational Therapists receive training in the Focused Psychological Strategies on which the Medicare Better Access initiative is based. In addition to their academic training, Occupational Therapists develop specialist expertise through their clinical experience and like other allied health professionals are required to engage in ongoing professional development.

What kinds of people use Occupational Therapy services?

Occupational Therapists work with people with a range of mental health disorders and therapy needs, from all walks of life.

For example Occupational Therapists may work with people with:

- Schizophrenia
- Depression
- Anxiety and phobias
- Post-traumatic stress disorders
- Bipolar affective disorder
- Eating disorders
- Stress-related disorders
- Obsessive compulsive disorder

What services do Occupational Therapists provide?

Mental Health Occupational Therapists provide individual and group assessments and interventions in the hospital, community, home and work environments. They can also work both in the public mental health system and in private practice.

They work with the individual who has a mental health disorder, family members /carers and also collaborate with other health professionals and community organisations.

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FACT SHEET (cont.)

Occupational Therapists have particular expertise in helping individuals with mental health disorders in the areas of activities of daily living, vocational, pre-vocational, leisure and social aspects of individuals' lives.

How can Occupational Therapy help individuals with mental health issues utilising Focused Psychological Strategies?

Mental Health Occupational Therapists utilise and apply the following main forms of Focused Psychological Strategies (FPS) to an individual's level of functioning:

- Cognitive Behavioural Therapy
- Interpersonal Therapy
- Narrative Therapy
- Psychoeducation

Examples of strategies utilised from these main forms of Focused Psychological Strategies (FPS) include activity scheduling, behaviour modification, self instructional training, relaxation strategies, social skills training and parent management training.

How do I refer?

Referral may occur by a Psychiatrist, General Practitioner or specialist, other health professional or through the consumer / family member or carer.

Referrals to Occupational Therapists under Better Access are made in the same way as other Allied Health Better Access providers. A written referral letter is required from a General Practitioner, Psychiatrist or less commonly a Paediatrician through a GP Mental Health Care Plan.

An Occupational Therapist registered to work as a Better Access practitioner must then receive the referral and provide the GP or referrer with a written report providing information on:

- Assessments carried out
- Treatment provided, and
- Recommendations for future management

How can I find an Occupational Therapist?

You can find a list of Occupational Therapists in your area by visiting OT Australia's website on www.ausot.com.au.