



Advocacy Toolkit

Where to Get Information

- NCOTA Advocacy Updates: <https://www.ncota.org/advocacy-information>
- Find your legislator: <https://www.ncleg.gov/RnR/Representation>
- AOTA State Policy Updates: <https://www.aota.org/Advocacy-Policy/State-Policy.aspx>
- Sign up for N.C. Department of Health and Human Services Alerts: <https://www.ncdhhs.gov/>
- NCDHHS Provider Playbook on Medicaid Transformation: <https://medicaid.ncdhhs.gov/providers/provider-playbook-medicaid-managed-care>
- NCDHHS COVID-19 resources: <https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/public-health/covid19>

Building a Relationship with Your Legislator

1. **Send a note or e-mail and introduce yourself:** This doesn't have to be long or complicated. A simple e-mail to let the legislator know you are an occupational therapist/OTA in his/her district and that you are engaged. A sample e-mail is included at the end of this section.
2. **Learn more about their policy and personal backgrounds:** You can do some brief research online or you can simply ask the legislator. Most legislators have a website on the General Assembly's site, but they also have a separate site where they communicate more with constituents.
 - a. Sign up for your legislator's updates and/or follow them on social media: Many legislators have weekly or monthly e-mail updates where you can read about their policy priorities and what events they are attending.
 - b. **Find some areas in common:** Find ways to connect with your legislator on a more personal level. These areas of shared interest can be policy areas (i.e. support for occupational therapy or understanding of Medicaid) or something un-related (the same alma mater, a favorite event in your community).
 - c. **Ask about their experience with occupational therapy:** For example, ask your legislator if they know someone who has benefitted from OT. Perhaps they had a friend or child who needed occupational therapy. This is a great way to connect and also creates the foundation for later outreach efforts.
3. **Attend legislators' events in your community:** Many legislators hold town halls or community events in their local district. It is a good idea to attend these events if

possible to be visible and remind them about the importance of occupational therapy. Many also share events they will be attending or speaking at in their newsletters.

4. **Attend campaign events if you are comfortable and willing:** Not all campaign events are about fundraising. Often campaign events are opportunities to learn more about your legislators' policy positions.
5. **Attend advocacy days at the General Assembly:** If possible, come to Raleigh for NCOTA's Advocacy Day. Even if your legislators aren't available that day, stop by and visit with staff or leave a note behind.

Sample Introduction E-Mail

Dear Representative/Senator NAME,

My name is YOUR NAME, and I am an occupational therapist/occupational therapy assistant in your district. As a therapist, I work with children/adults/disabled individuals to help them develop, recover, or maintain the activities/occupations that are important to their lives.

I wanted to send you a note to tell you how important occupational therapy is in our community. Occupational therapy helps people of all ages participate in the things they want and need to do.

[Insert your own story about the importance of occupational therapy or a brief explanation of why working as an OT is important to you.]

Thank you for your support of occupational therapy. If you ever have questions about our work in schools, please don't hesitate to contact me at EMAIL or PHONE.

Events

Inviting legislators to visits at your office, coffee meetings or other community events is a great way to build a relationship while also educating them about ~~OT~~ occupational therapy.

Event Ideas

- Work together with several area OT practitioners to invite a legislator to coffee
- Invite a legislator to visit your office or practice after hours
- Invite a legislator to visit a therapy group or community event
 - Occupational Therapy Month: April (<https://www.aota.org/Conference-Events/OTMonth/TenThings.aspx>)

Before the Event

1. Make sure your colleagues are comfortable with issuing the invitation.
2. If your dates are flexible, offer several options to maximize the possibility of legislator attendance. Friday's and Monday's are generally the best weekdays for legislators' schedules when they are in the legislative session.

3. Issue the invitation with as much information as possible, including date, time, location and other details.
4. Don't be discouraged if a legislator can't make it or has difficulty scheduling a meeting. Their schedules are busy and are often changing because of committee meetings and votes in Raleigh.

During the Event

1. Make sure you are available to greet the legislator when they arrive.
2. Keep events brief, 30 minutes to one hour if possible.
3. Introduce the legislator during the program, if appropriate.
4. Be sure to introduce yourself to the legislator and introduce a few patients as well, if appropriate.
5. Make sure to thank the legislator for their time and keep the event or meeting to a reasonable time.
6. Take photos of the event.

After the Event

1. Send a thank you note to the legislator. If appropriate, have your students send a thank you card or notes as well.
2. Thank the legislator on social media for attending the event. Share photos if possible. On twitter use the hashtags #ncpol and #ncga.
3. Send photos and information about the event to NCOTA to include in their social media.

General Talking Points

Overall Message: Occupational therapy practitioners help people of all ages participate in the things they want and need to do through the therapeutic use of everyday activities (occupations). Unlike other professions, occupational therapy helps people function in all of their environments (home, work, school, community) and addresses the physical, psychological, and cognitive aspects of their well-being through engagement in occupation.

- Thank you for your support of occupational therapy.
- Occupational therapy is an important part of our community and improving health outcomes. Common occupational therapy interventions include:
 - helping children with disabilities to participate fully in school and develop social skills,
 - helping people recovering from injury to regain function through retraining and/or adaptations, and
 - providing supports for older adults experiencing physical and cognitive changes.
- OTs and OT Assistants are qualified, trained and licensed professionals.
 - Entry level practice requires a master's degree for occupational therapists.
 - Entry level practice requires an associate's degree for occupational therapy assistants

- Occupational therapy is an evidence-based, science-driven profession that uses the most up-to-date research to improve lives.
- Occupational therapy helps improve patients' lives while saving health care dollars.
 - An independent study found that occupational therapy is the only spending category where additional spending lowers hospital readmission rates.
 - Occupational therapy takes a holistic approach that focuses on wellness, health promotion, and prevention.
 - Occupational therapy is also an important part of identifying and addressing social determinants of health.
- Please continue to support occupational therapy in North Carolina.

Contact Information

For additional questions or information, please contact NCOTA at office@ncota.org.