



2025 NCOTA Spring Conference Schedule *Detailed Educational Courses*

Saturday, March 25

8-8:15 Welcome & Introductions

Sydney Mitchell & Swetal Thaker, NCOTA Continuing Education Co-Chairs

8:30-11:30 Morning Workshops

1A. Foundational Feeding: Supporting a Child's Sensory Needs during Feeding Therapy

Gwyneth Joyce OTR/L

Children & Youth | **Novice**

Foundational Feeding: Supporting a child's sensory needs during Feeding Therapy will equip the occupational therapy practitioner with the skills to identify the unique sensory and oral motor needs of their client. This will prepare the practitioner in supporting the client through their feeding therapy sessions as well as creation of preparatory supports and home activities that are conducive to the home environment and routine. The practitioner will gain an understanding on how to set up and complete a feeding therapy session that creates a "just right" challenge for the child through the utilization of play.

1B. Physical Agents Modalities: Reset your knowledge employing effective adjunctive therapies

Jose Rafols

Physical Disabilities, Gerontology | **Intermediate**

Physical Agents Modalities (PAMs) are adjunctive modalities that are carefully selected and woven into an occupational therapist's therapeutic milieu. This condensed course reviews the use of modalities as a preparatory means to facilitate or promote independence with basic ADL skill sets, as well as occupation engagement. PAMs are never to be used as stand-alone interventions, but rather, as a means of fostering range of motion, enhancing functional mobility, decreasing edema, pain and disuse. This workshop focuses on how physical agents are blended with functional activities, when possible, to maximize interventional outcomes.

1C. The Complex Wrist Simplified

Marc Bartholdi OTD, OTR/L, CHT and Thomas Curry, MSOT, OTR/L

Physical Disabilities | **Novice**

Wrist injuries and conditions are complex. In this evidenced-based course, we will discuss wrist anatomy, explore carpal kinematics and the importance of the proximal carpal row, review common wrist injuries and conditions, systematically and logically explore wrist examination techniques, and develop treatment techniques designed to support wrist and hand function for common wrist injuries and conditions. The hands-on lab component will reinforce wrist anatomy, examination, and treatment techniques to build participants' confidence in managing wrist injuries and conditions.

11:30-12:30 Lunch & Learn Poster Session

12:30-1:30 Ethics Session

1:45 – 3:15 Short Course Session

2A. Think Inside the Box: Using Task Boxes for Skill Development with Exceptional Children

Cathy Zanowski, OT/L & Brianna Frye, OTAS

Children & Youth | **Novice**

Task boxes are powerful, hands-on tools that foster independence, cognitive development, and skill-building for children with special needs. This session will explore how Occupational Therapy Practitioners can integrate task boxes into therapy sessions and classroom settings to enhance fine motor skills, problem-solving, and self-regulation. Participants will learn how to create and adapt task boxes for different developmental levels, making learning structured and engaging. Practical strategies for using task boxes to improve attention, work tolerance, and daily living skills will be shared. Whether working with children with autism, ADHD, or intellectual disabilities, attendees will leave with actionable insights to implement task boxes effectively. This session is ideal for OTPs seeking innovative, low-cost interventions to support skill acquisition and promote meaningful participation in daily activities.

2B. Conducting Neurodiversity-Affirming Occupational Therapy Evaluations Across the Life Course

Kathryn Hansen, PhD, OTR/L, Bryden Carlson-Giving, OTD, OTR/L; Lisa Marnell, OTD, MBA; Rachel Robertson, OTR/L, CBIS

Other | **Intermediate**

This short course will begin with an overview of what it means to be neurodiversity-affirming in the field of occupational therapy and how to generally embrace these principles in clinical practice. This will set the stage for presenting a set of guiding principles to use when conducting neurodiversity-affirming evaluations and a step-by-step explanation of how to incorporate these principles throughout the evaluation process: beginning with the initial referral and ending with the selection of affirming goals/accommodations. Information and examples of neurodiversity-affirming evaluations will be provided across the life course and across various practice settings. In addition, resources and practical tools will also be incorporated throughout the presentation to augment the clinical practices of attendees.

2C. The Impact of A Sensory Garden at an Adult Day Center

Jeffery Lucas Ph.D., OTR/L, CDP, CKTP, CAPS & Sanchala Sen, OTD, MS, OTR/L FAOTA, BCPR

Additional speakers: Charis Pickett, OTS Jadicus Burns, OTS, Emma Yates, OTS, Kasey Jackson, OTS, Brianna Terranova, OTS, Robert Mendez, OTS, Ra'isah Sheppard, OTS, Namiyah Reddicks, OTS, and Madelyn Burton, OTS Home & Community | **Intermediate**

This short course will focus on how and why Occupational Therapy students decided to develop a Sensory Garden at an Adult Day Center. The course will illustrate how the recently installed garden impacts client functioning, provide and promote sensory integration and processing amongst clients with IDD. This short course will also inform caregivers/clinicians on strategies for how a sensory garden can improve their mood. Attendees will learn how to connect with nature to reduce work related stressors, decrease the risk of burnout, and decrease turnover.

2D. Occupational Justice Within Occupational Therapy Programs

Brian Gonzalez Granados, OTS and Joshua Lucas, OTS

Education and Research, Student-focused | **Novice**

This presentation explores the challenges faced by minority and disadvantaged students in

occupational therapy programs, highlighting limitations that impact academic success, professional development, and social engagement. Presenters will share lived experiences navigating occupational therapy education and discuss how these challenges contribute to occupational injustice and hinder equitable participation. Attendees will learn about effective meso-level interventions, such as mentorship programs, student-led initiatives, and networking opportunities, that promote inclusivity and success. By fostering a more supportive learning environment, occupational therapy programs can enhance student retention, well-being, and professional readiness. This presentation underscores the importance of equitable access to resources, ultimately advancing diversity and inclusion within the occupational therapy profession.

3:30 – 5:00 Short Course Session

3A. Participation, Belonging, and Justice: Improving OT Learning and Working Spaces

Linn Wakeford, PhD, MS, OT/L, FAOTA

Education and Research, Mental Health | **Novice**

A sense of belonging has physiological, psychosocial, and behavioral impacts and has been linked with participation, health, and well-being. However, a 2018 survey by CIGNA reflected high rates of loneliness and “feeling left out” among U.S. adults, and we know that finding places of belonging is particularly difficult for historically marginalized populations. The aims of this short course are 1) to explore and reflect on belonging and “othering” as constructs related to health and occupation, 2) to consider the potential experiences of students and practitioners of varying populations as they enter OT, and 3) to identify and discuss ways in which we can increase belonging, participation, and justice in education and practice.

3B. OT Interventions for Youth with Mental Health Challenges

Brianna Williams, OTS and Tomeico Faison, MS, OTD, FAOTA

Children & Youth, Mental Health | **Novice**

This session will equip occupational therapy practitioners with a deeper understanding of the current mental health challenges affecting youth in North Carolina. Participants will integrate this knowledge with the OT process to develop client-centered interventions using approaches such as motivational interviewing and additional evidence-based strategies. Through real-world case examples and an interactive activity, practitioners will refine their skills in addressing youth mental health needs. This presentation will advance the field by expanding practitioners’ capacity to implement effective interventions, ultimately fostering engagement in meaningful occupations for youth facing mental health challenges in North Carolina.

3C. Home Modifications: The OpporTunity with HUD's Older Adult Home Modification Program

Carolyn Sithong, MS, OTR/L, SCEM, CAPS, FAOTA & Kristen James, OTR/L

Technology, Home & Community Health | **Intermediate**

The Office of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Older Adult Home Modification Program has put OT at the center to assess, measure and track the success of home modification interventions for aging in place. This short course will review the program, identify opportunities for North Carolina OT practice, and feature 25 older adults who have benefitted from this program. Participants will explore the outcomes of a standardized, tech-based home assessment that point to client-centric home modifications, examine a holistic regard for client's perspectives throughout the HM process and learn how this data is shaping OT practice nationally.

3D. The OTP's Role in the Fight Against Human Trafficking: A practical toolkit for action

Cathy Zanowski, OT/L & Karen R. Pittman, OTA/S

Children & Youth, Mental Health | **Novice**

Human trafficking is a global crisis that affects millions, including vulnerable individuals with disabilities and trauma histories. Occupational Therapy Practitioners play a critical role in both prevention

and rehabilitation, helping survivors regain independence, rebuild daily living skills, and heal from trauma. This session will introduce a comprehensive OT Tool Kit designed to educate practitioners on recognizing trafficking indicators, implementing trauma-informed interventions, and collaborating with law enforcement and community organizations. Attendees will learn practical strategies for screening, skill-building, and advocacy, ensuring survivors receive holistic, client-centered care. By equipping OTs with knowledge and intervention tools, this session aims to bridge the gap between healthcare and social justice, empowering practitioners to take action in the fight against human trafficking.