

## Occupational Therapy Services in the School Setting

Occupational Therapy in a school setting is considered a related service as determined by IDEA in 2004. According to *the Recommended Practices for Occupational and Physical Therapy Services in Illinois Schools*, by the *Illinois State Board of Education* dated 2003:

- School-based therapy is integrated into the school's educational program as a means to enhance functioning and attain educational objectives. Occupational therapists and physical therapists can **provide support to the total educational system.**
- The school system also provides the therapy specified on the Section 504 plan or, as deemed necessary by the team, for **achievement of a student's identified educational goals and objectives/benchmarks.**
- When occupational therapy and physical therapy are provided as educational services, decisions regarding what type of therapy is provided, how it is provided and who is to provide it are directly tied to the student's overall educational program. **All team members support the attainment of these educational goals.**
- Therapy and other related services become a **means or method to attain educational goals and objectives/benchmarks, rather than the focus of separate therapy goals or objectives/benchmarks.**
- School-based therapy is **not intended to meet all the therapy needs of a student** but is intended to meet needs of the student to promote success in the educational environment.
- All therapy within the educational setting **must have a relationship to educational performance** while directly impacting the student's ability to benefit from their educational experiences.
- A general guideline is that therapy must contribute to the development, improvement or maintenance of the student's functional level within the educational environment. If a student needs occupational therapy to address problems, but the **problems do not prevent him or her from benefiting from the educational program, school-based therapy should not be provided.**

### Levels of Service

#### **Direct Intervention:**

- When the therapist provides direct intervention, he or she works with a student in or out of the classroom on a **frequent, consistent basis.**
- Direct intervention is used when the student **requires the unique and ongoing expertise/assessment** of the therapist because the student's performance is **insufficiently consistent** for the techniques and strategies **to be safely incorporated within the daily routine.**
- Often, only a **short interval of direct therapy is needed during a skill-building period.** The emphasis of direct occupational therapy is usually for the **acquisition of occupational performance skills**, which include activities of daily living, educational and vocational activities and play and leisure activities needed for the student's participation in the environment.

#### **Consultative Intervention:**

- Consultative intervention occurs when the **therapist collaborates** with the teacher, other staff, parents and, when appropriate, the student, regarding student-specific issues as identified in the student's IEP goals and objectives/benchmarks.
- While direct intervention with the student is needed to develop and monitor an appropriate consultative program, consultation is primarily **problem solving with the educational team** to determine appropriate expectations, environmental modifications, assistive technology and possible learning strategies for the student in naturally occurring environments.