



AOTI

Association of Occupational
Therapists of Ireland

Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct

For Occupational Therapists

Revised February 2013



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1. Purpose

1. In becoming a member of the Association of Occupational Therapists of Ireland (AOTI) an Occupational Therapist agrees to comply not only with the expressed provision of the Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct as defined by the Association of Occupational Therapists of Ireland , but also with the spirit and purpose of the code.
2. A Member must be familiar with, and comply with, the ethical practices and policies of the specific facility or practice in which the Occupational Therapy service is provided.
3. The goal of the Code of Ethics is to achieve and maintain high standards of professional integrity toward clients , colleagues, stakeholders and the public. The Code describes expected conduct of all AOTI members in occupational therapy practice, including those involved in direct service to clients, management, administration, education, research, advisory/consultation roles and/or business.
4. This code is a statement of the standards that a member is expected to adhere to in the practice of his/her profession. The Code shall be construed as a general guide and not a denial of other duties equally imperative and other rights not specifically mentioned. The Code is not intended to be a statement of the law but shall be used in conjunction with all relevant laws and statutory regulations.
5. The Code sets out the core principles by which a member must act and by which he/ she will be judged in providing his/her professional services.
6. Members are expected to use their professional judgment in the light of the principles set out in this Code.



2. Respect for the Rights and Dignity of the Client¹

1. A member's prime concern is to promote the health, wellbeing and quality of life of the client through occupation. A member shall approach all users of his/her services with respect, recognising the client's individuality and autonomy. All interactions shall be courteous, respectful of the client's dignity, privacy and safety, and have regard for the client's individual situation and rights. The member shall act as an advocate for the client in relation to upholding his/her autonomy and respecting his/her occupational identity.
2. A member shall respect the client's moral and cultural values and shall not discriminate on the basis of gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, race, membership of the Traveller Community or disability.
3. Before making decisions about interventions to be offered the member shall endeavour to gather the relevant information about the client's previous medical and social history and shall carry out an assessment of the client's needs.
4. A member shall take reasonable steps to ensure that the client understands the purpose, nature, likely effect, alternatives, mutual responsibilities and, where relevant, the anticipated cost of the proposed intervention. Where appropriate, the client's representative shall also be given this information.
5. A member must ensure that the client has received all of the relevant information to allow the client or his/her representative to make informed choices or decisions about likely benefits and risks of the occupational therapy intervention options and to safeguard his/her dignity.
6. A member must treat all client information as confidential and use it only for the purpose for which it was given. In all cases the provisions of all the data protection acts as well as the member's employer/organisation shall be adhered to when handling confidential information. A client's personal information and his/her personal details shall be passed on only with the client's consent or the consent of his/her representative². Where possible informed written consent shall be obtained to release information. In special circumstances confidentiality is waived: these include when the information is in the interest of the client, in the public interest or is required by law.

¹ Client means a person who receives a service from an Occupational Therapist. In this Code it is equivalent to the term Patient or Service User



3. Provision of Services to Clients

1. A member shall provide client centered, occupation-based and needs led services. A member has a duty of care to clients accepted for treatment/intervention. Each episode of treatment shall be planned, executed and evaluated with the client's involvement.
2. Where a client is unable to express his/her autonomy, the member may accept an individual or organisation appointed to express the autonomy of the client, and to act as an advocate for the said client.
3. A member may accept referrals from any source in keeping with the policy of the employing agency and may refuse an inappropriate referral.
4. In his/her management of waiting lists a member shall include screening of clients need. A member shall employ the best possible utilisation of resources in light of local policy on prioritisation of caseload weighting.
5. Every client shall have a clearly recorded assessment of need and objectives of treatment.
6. A member shall respect the expertise and care delivery of other professionals and accept his/her accountability to the relevant employing agency, and to the community at large. A member shall undertake to co-operate and maintain appropriate communication with other relevant colleagues or services dealing with the client in order to optimise client care.
7. A member shall be professionally responsible for all treatment and services rendered by the member, or by other personnel who are under the direct supervision of the member. Student/volunteer involvement shall be with the agreement of the client.
8. A member shall discontinue active treatment when it is felt that the client has obtained maximum benefit from treatment. Likewise the member must respect the right of the client to discontinue participation at any time. Should it be established that the client will benefit from the services of other services/professionals the member shall, with consent, make the appropriate referrals.
9. A member may be held responsible if he/she fails to act in the best interest of the client.
10. A member shall raise with relevant colleagues and report to managers concerns about unmet client needs. The unmet needs shall be recorded.

² Client representative includes the client's parent/guardian, or nominated caregiver and/or significant other. In different situations it may be relevant to communicate with one or all of these people.



11. A Member shall respect confidentiality of all forms of client information at all times. Members shall maintain comprehensive, contemporaneous, accurate and up to date records of all professional activities in relation to the client. These will include the nature, extent, duration and outcomes of occupational therapy interventions and decisions taken about same. Subjective opinion and/or emotional comment shall be avoided, or clearly identified as such if considered to be required in records.
12. Requests from individuals on the basis of the Freedom of Information Act, 1997 shall be managed according to national and local policy. A member must make provision for the secure and confidential storage and disposal of records, with reference to principles of good practice.
13. A member must act to prevent harm and to manage risk to clients in the conduct of his/her practice.
14. A member has a responsibility to contribute to the development of processes and procedures related to his/her work and to his/her professional standards through continuing professional development, critical evaluation, audit and research.
15. A member shall support positive changes in the healthcare and other relevant systems and aim to practice with effectiveness and efficiency.
16. A member shall appropriately address concerns regarding policies, systems, working conditions or the actions/inactions of others which compromise client care or public safety.

4. Professional and Personal Integrity

1. A member shall promote and maintain the highest standards of personal integrity in his/her practice as an Occupational Therapist.
2. A member shall not engage in any activity which may bring the profession into disrepute.
3. A member shall not enter into any relationship that could potentially impair his/her professional judgement and objectivity or give rise to advantageous or disadvantageous treatment of the client.
4. A member must not practice under the influence of any alcohol, drug or other toxic substance or while suffering from a health condition which may interfere with or impair the performance of his/her duties.



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5. A member shall report to the appropriate authority any alleged unethical conduct or inappropriate practice of another member or any healthcare worker or other relevant person.
6. A member shall work cooperatively with his/her colleagues to optimise client care, respecting the practices and competencies of other professionals.
7. A member, when advertising his/her services shall accurately represent his/her qualifications, areas of expertise, experience, training and services he/she provides.
8. A member shall not misrepresent any information relating to the practice of Occupational Therapy.
9. A member shall not accept inducements, tokens such as gifts or hospitality from clients and/or their families or commercial organisations when this might be construed as seeking to obtain preferential treatment or affecting his/her independent professional judgement.
10. A member shall refrain from recommending any goods, companies or services without having made an objective assessment of those goods and services.
11. A member, when employed as an agent of a commercial company, must ensure that his/her professional judgement is not impaired by personal or commercial interests including incentives, targets or similar measures.
12. When entering into a sponsorship relationship with a company or organisation, a member must make a decision based on objective judgment, and in no way compromise him/her self or the Association. The member must ensure that the company or organisation will not receive any advantageous position as a result of this relationship, and that the code of ethics will not be breached.
13. A member shall ensure, when publishing articles or comments, that it is clear whether he/she is representing the profession or an employing agency or whether he/she is making personal comment.
14. A member shall recognise and manage issues relating to conflicts of interest.
15. A member shall not, for reason of commercial purpose, transfer public service users to his/her private practice.



5. Professional Competence and Standards

1. A member shall keep up to date with relevant knowledge, research and continuing education activities in order that his/her work benefits and does not harm clients, colleagues or others.
2. A member shall base service delivery on accurate and current evidence based information in the interests of best quality interventions. The maintenance and development of professional competence is a requirement of continued practice.
3. A member must acknowledge the boundaries of his/her competence. He/she shall provide services and use interventions for which he/she is qualified by training, knowledge and experience.
4. A member has a responsibility to actively seek and engage in an appropriate level of supervision and utilise professional support and to ensure that these needs are communicated to employing organisations.
5. A member's level of professional knowledge and expertise shall be continually reviewed by self-assessment and by regular updating in the interests of high quality Occupational Therapy. Where required the member shall seek the support of his/her manager or appropriate others to improve level of skill and knowledge.
6. A member has professional responsibility to participate in the education of Occupational Therapy students, particularly in the area of fieldwork education and to contribute to the learning of others.
7. A member must accept responsibility for all his/her professional activities and for all actions undertaken under his/her supervision. The Occupational Therapist will retain ultimate responsibility for the client at all times, while engaged in occupational therapy intervention.
8. A member shall promote an understanding of Occupational Therapy and contribute to the strengthening of its evidence base by critical evaluation and relevant research.
9. A member undertaking research shall gain ethical approval from relevant bodies prior to commencement.
10. A member shall be committed to the improvement and development of the profession in general, and will promote the profession to the public, other professional organisations, commissioners of services and governing bodies at regional, national and international levels.



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11. A member shall recognise and accept his/her responsibility to the profession and to professional organisations, and shall do everything within his/her means to provide for the growth and development of Occupational Therapy.



AOTI

Association of Occupational
Therapists of Ireland

Suite 2.20,
Smithfield Business Centre,
The Distiller's Building, Smithfield,
Dublin 7.
T: 01-874 8136 E: info@aoti.ie
W: www.aoti.ie