

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY IN MENTAL HEALTH

What mental health Occupational Therapists help with:

Occupational therapy's distinct value is to improve health and quality of life through engagement in the meaningful, necessary and familiar activities of everyday life. These include education, play, leisure, work, social participation, activities of daily living (including self-care, care of others, chores, community mobility and transportation), sleep and rest.

Occupational therapists are committed to the recovery model focusing on enabling persons with mental health challenges to live a meaningful life in their community. Our aim is for our clients to reach their potential through a client-centred therapeutic relationship with a practical and functional approach.

Who do mental health Occupational Therapists help?

People across the lifespan (from infants to elderly) including:

- Individuals with identified mental, emotional, behavioural and cognitive disorders
- Persons at risk of developing mental health challenges including:
 - Emotionally distressing experiences: trauma/abuse
 - Situational stressors/ transitions: newly acquired or chronic physical disability or medical condition; bullying; alienation due to death, divorce, work-related, emigration, retrenchment, social regulations (e.g. Covid19), etc.; change of roles & responsibilities e.g. becoming a parent or caring for an ageing parent, change of job
 - Genetic factors

How do mental health Occupational Therapists work?

Occupational Therapists address functioning using an integrated approach. This includes occupation-based psychosocial, self-management and environmental interventions.

Where do mental health Occupational Therapists work?

- Inpatient mental health (public and private)
- Community clinics
- Private practices
- Public, private and alternative schools
- Residential facilities (group homes, nursing homes)
- Home-based services
- Workplaces



What are typical mental health Occupational Therapy services in the community?

- Functional assessments
- Individual treatment
- Therapeutic groups
- Support groups for clients and families
- Interventions aimed at engagement to promote mental health, diminish early symptoms and foster recovery.
- Assess fitness to drive
- Environmental modifications, accommodations and compensatory strategies to overcome challenges, enable and enhance performance in meaningful occupations
- Modification of tasks or expectations
- Skills training including social and behavioural skills for improved coping and resilience
- Identification and implementation of healthy habits, rituals, and routines to support wellness
- Community integration
- Sensory strategies to regulate nervous system and reduce environmental stress (visual, auditory, tactile, etc. sensitivities or dysfunction)
- Supported employment, reasonable accommodations at work, workplace interventions
- Behavioural strategies for developing effective relationships, tolerating distress, regulating emotions and practicing mindfulness
- Educational and coaching strategies focusing on mental health promotion and prevention
- Mental health literacy—education on mental health, mental illness, and activities and lifestyles that promote mental health

Occupational Therapists address Barriers to Mental Health in the Community in the following ways:

- **Stigma:** Facilitating self-efficacy by providing opportunities for mastery and promoting advocacy in personal relationships and the broader community.
- **Safety:** Promoting self-care, facilitate accessing services and support, and preventing victimization through healthy and meaningful daily activity.
- **Low socioeconomic status:** Addressing educational, prevocational, and vocational performance. Occupational therapists collaborate with clients and other stakeholders to help the person achieve success in the working world.

PRACTICE:

Get more information about occupational therapy at www.instopp.co.za

This document was compiled for INSTOPP by Haneke Jonas