

Abortion Law Changes & OT Practice in the United States

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This research aims to explore whether and how changes in abortion laws in the US have impacted OT practice through the direct narratives of occupational therapy practitioners (OTPs). This is a qualitative research study that used semi-structured 30-minute interviews to explore the perspectives, experiences, and needs of OTPs in US states where abortion access is now limited or banned. The participants included OTPs and OTAs currently working part-time or full-time in one of the following 18 US states: AR, AL, AZ, FL, GA, ID, KY, LA, MI, MO, NC, OK, SD, TN, TX, UT, WV, or WI. Participants were 18+ years old, spoke English, had access to Zoom or a phone for interview purposes, and consented to participate in a confidential interview on the topic of abortion access and their scope of practice. Recruitment was done through posts on CommunOT and through networking (chain referral via secure email). The data were analyzed using a rigorous, double-coding framework analysis approach to generate rich insights into OTPs' experiences, perspectives and challenges providing OT services in the current era. Given that mental health is at the forefront of occupational therapy practice, it is important to consider the effects of changes in reproductive health care availability. Areas of OT practice that may be impacted include but are not limited to neonatal occupational therapy, early intervention, maternal health practice settings, and pelvic floor therapy. The findings of this study suggest that clients disclose and discuss abortion with OTPs. OTPs require further education and resources to have evidence-informed discussion about reproductive health care options with clients.

References

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