

Incorporating OT Services Into Higher Education Disability Services

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INTRODUCTION: Students enrolled in primary and secondary education with an impairment resulting in functional limitations have access to various resources and services through their educational institution (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). Because of their ability to understand ‘capabilities, flourishing, and well-being, occupational therapy is well equipped to meet the participation and inclusion needs of students with disabilities in tertiary education settings in Western contexts’ (Pereira, 2012, p. 394). Despite this, there is currently a lack of data defining the current and potential roles and responsibilities of occupational therapists within four-year university disability services centers. Prior to this study, existing literature has addressed current perceptions related to the responsibilities held by occupational therapists in this setting but has yet to clearly define these. Aim: This study aims to identify the roles and responsibilities of occupational therapists within disability services on campuses at four-year universities within the United States.

METHOD: Researchers administered a survey with open-ended questions to understand the current and potential roles of occupational therapists in university Disability Services offices.

RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS: Participants reported fulfilling a variety of roles within Disability Services offices, including providing direct and indirect services. They identified their primary contribution as applying the unique lens of occupational therapy to both evaluation and intervention as well as indirect services. Implications for practice and future research will be discussed.

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