

Outline of Capability Framework for Occupational Therapists working with Children, Young People and Families (Paediatrics)

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This document is a brief overview of Occupational Therapy Australia’s (OTA) Capability Framework for Occupational Therapists working with Children, Young People and Families (Paediatrics). The purpose of this document is to provide an overview of the capabilities occupational therapists should demonstrate and use when working in Paediatrics at different career stages and to explain how the framework can be used.

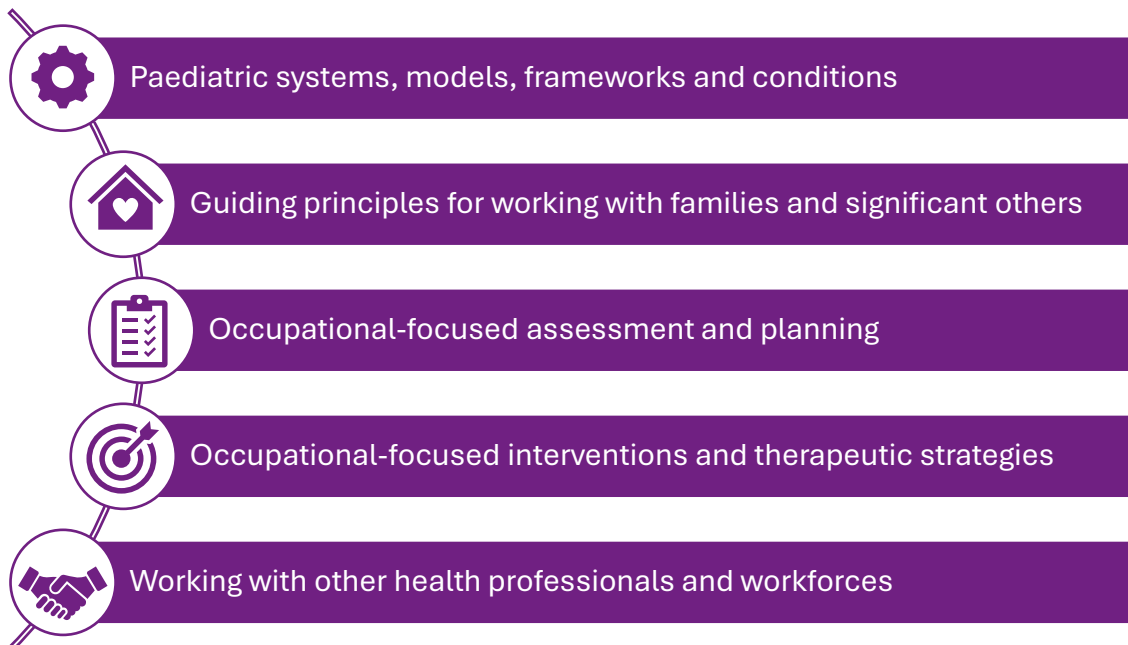
Purpose of the framework

The Capability Framework for Occupational Therapists working with Children, Young People and Families (Paediatrics) was developed for occupational therapists to:

- Support self-reflection and decision-making about their practice.
- Help identify areas for skill improvement relevant to their service setting.
- Sets expectations at different career stages.
- Advocate for the role of occupational therapy with children, young people and families.

Format

The framework sets out a series of capabilities, grouped in five key domains:



The framework also describes how these capabilities differ across the career stages of **foundational**, **intermediate** and **senior** practitioner to recognise how skills, knowledge and behaviours develop over the course of a person’s career, as they gain experience and build expertise.

Acknowledgements

The framework was developed in collaboration with an Expert Advisory Group and through multiple consultation phases with the broader occupational therapy profession. OTA acknowledges the contribution of the Expert Advisory Group and all occupational therapists who contributed their time, insights and expertise to the development of the framework.

More information about the domains for working with children, young people and families

The key capabilities for occupational therapists working with children, young people and families are described across the following five domains:

1. Knowledge of paediatric systems, models, frameworks and conditions:

This domain includes capabilities focused on understanding relevant legislation, funding and governance systems as well as the systems (e.g. education) in which paediatric occupational therapy services are provided. It also encompasses knowledge of the conditions that impact children and young people within the context of their family and support structures and the World Health Organisation and Occupational Therapy models and frameworks that guide evidence-based practice.

2. Guiding principles for working with families, care givers and significant others:

This domain includes capabilities focused on collaborative partnerships, family/child-centred practice, strengths-based approaches and capacity building to empower parents, care givers and significant others (such as educators) in their support of the child's development, goal attainment, health and wellbeing.

3. Occupational-focused assessment and planning:

This domain includes capabilities focused on implementing client-centred assessments to develop appropriate planning of supports and therapeutic interventions. Capabilities in this domain guide occupational therapists to apply assessments in the child's natural setting where possible (e.g. school), using outcomes measures to evaluate clinical approaches and goals.

4. Occupational-focused interventions:

This domain focuses on capabilities supporting parents and significant others to deliver therapeutic strategies and approaches embedded within the child's daily routines and natural environment. Occupation-focused interventions focus on motivation, leisure and play, habits and routines, meaningful roles, life skills, functional cognition, physical activity, community engagement and independence, communication and interaction, self-management, emotional regulation and environment.

5. Working with other health professionals and significant others:

This domain includes capabilities focused on engaging with others in the health, education and disability systems to provide comprehensive care. Capabilities in this domain guide occupational therapists to understand the role and contribution of different workforces, as well as the vital role of families and significant others. This domain also encourages practitioners to actively seek to develop their experience in working with others in a holistic way at all career stages, across a range of settings.

More information about the career stages

Each capability is set out across three career stages. The career stages are reflective of proficiency rather than years of practice. An experienced practitioner may be working at an intermediate or senior level in one area but have foundational capabilities in a new, less familiar area of practice.

- **Foundational Practitioners** are developing their knowledge related to the capability and can identify and apply relevant knowledge and skills with the support of senior practitioners to situations or scenarios of lower complexity.
- **Intermediate Practitioners** can apply a more analytical lens to their practice, operate more autonomously in their practice and can operate in more complex situations.
- **Senior Practitioners** can deliver services across a range of clinical complexities and situations, can evaluate and critique their practice at a high level, are expected to support the design and development of systems and structures to ensure best clinical practice, and support the skill development of foundational and intermediate practitioners.

How to use the framework

The capability framework was developed as a tool for occupational therapists to guide good practice, however it is helpful for people working with occupational therapists, those who employ occupational therapists, and people accessing the services of occupational therapists to better understand what they do, how they approach their work and what falls within their scope of practice in a specific area, such as working with children, young people and families.

- **For occupational therapists:** The framework is designed to be used alongside other standards and frameworks, ensuring a holistic approach to care. It's not meant to be prescriptive or a strict checklist with clinicians encouraged to apply relevant skills based on their specific context. Clinicians aren't expected to be proficient in all capabilities listed. Occupational therapists can use the framework to guide their professional development and training plans, to navigate conversations with their employer about scope of practice and to advocate for their services.
- **For people working with occupational therapists:** The framework can provide other professionals with a better understanding of the unique role that occupational therapists play in a multi-disciplinary team and the ways occupational therapists can work with clients to improve their ability to participate in meaningful activity (occupation).
- **For organisations that employ occupational therapists:** The framework will provide employers with insight into the scope of practice of occupational therapists and the reasonable expectations of employees at various career stages or in new areas of practice, as well as appropriate supports for occupational therapists (such as professional supervision).
- **For clients accessing the services of occupational therapists:** While the framework has not been developed for a consumer audience, it is available to the general public and can be used by clients to understand what occupational therapists do and the services that may be of benefit to them or their loved one.

Occupational Therapy Australia will also use its suite of capability frameworks to advocate for the profession, ensuring the scope of practice and vital role that occupational therapists play in multi-disciplinary teams is understood by funding bodies and relevant government departments.

Reference

[Capability Framework for Occupational Therapists Working with Children, Young People and Families – June 2024 v1](#)



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