

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Title: **Job Descriptions and Salary Upgrades for Occupational Therapist Assistant and Physical Therapist Assistant**

Type of Executive Summary:

Action Action on First Reading Discussion Information

Policy Implications:

- Constitution _____
 General Statute # _____
 SBE Policy #QP-C-009
 SBE Policy Amendment
 SBE Policy (New)
 APA # _____
 APA Amendment
 APA (New)
 Other _____

Presenter(s): Mr. J.B. Buxton (Deputy Superintendent) and Mrs. Mary N. Watson (Director, Exceptional Children Division)

Description:

Occupational therapist assistants (OTAs) and physical therapist assistants (PTAs) perform vital roles in the education of children in North Carolina Public Schools. These paraprofessionals serve students who have, or are suspected of having, disabilities in a variety of areas and also serve these students' therapists, teachers, schools and families to promote improved educational outcomes. The job descriptions for these positions have been updated with input from a variety of stakeholders to be reflective of the current nature of work and the requisite knowledge, skills, training and licensure necessary for these positions in North Carolina Public Schools. In addition, it is requested that these positions be upgraded from salary grade 64 to 67 to be congruent with similar positions in other areas of State government. In other State agencies, there are two levels of related service assistant positions, Level I and Level II. The previous and proposed job descriptions for school OTAs and PTAs are in line with their respective OTA and PTA Level II positions. Attached current position vacancy announcement illustrates this. The current salary grade disparity makes it difficult for LEAs to compete with other State agencies for OTAs and PTAs.

Resources:

No additional resources are requested.

Input Process:

The job descriptions were written by NCDPI staff within the Exceptional Children Division, with input from university program faculty, related service personnel in local educational agencies (LEAs) and professional organization representatives.

Stakeholders:

LEAs, university and community college programs, current and prospective related service personnel in North Carolina Public Schools, children with disabilities and their families, schools and teachers.

Timeline For Action:

This item is presented for discussion at the August State Board of Education meeting and will be presented for action at the September State Board of Education meeting.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the State Board of Education adopt the job descriptions and salary upgrades as listed.

 Audiovisual equipment requested for the presentation:

- Data Projector/Video (Videotape/DVD and/or Computer Data, Internet, Presentations-PowerPoint preferred)

Specify: _____

POSITION: Occupational Therapist Assistant

SALARY GRADE: 64 67

NATURE OF WORK

~~An employee in this class administers occupational therapy to students to assist a therapist in providing living skills. The work is guided by individual plans with the assistant planning exact sequences of various activities. The employee is expected to initiate minor changes in the plan and make adaptations of equipment and therapeutic environment. Errors in treatment could cause serious harm to students and potential liability for the school system. The employee receives limited supervision.~~

An employee in this class assists in the process of screening and evaluation, and the development and implementation of intervention services under the supervision of a licensed occupational therapist. The occupational therapy assistant works with students identified with or suspected of having disabilities that interfere with their ability to perform daily life activities and participate in necessary and desired occupations. The assistant is expected to implement individually designed interventions based on occupational performance deficits in the areas of personal care, student role/interaction skills, process skills, play, community integration/work, and graphic communication. The interventions are planned with the supervising occupational therapist. The occupational therapy assistant is expected to review outcomes and modify intervention programs in coordination with the supervising occupational therapist. Errors in service could result in serious harm to students and potential liability for the school system, the supervising occupational therapist, and the assistant. The supervising occupational therapist defines the level of supervision required in the work environment based on recommendations by The North Carolina Board of Occupational Therapy.

ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES OF WORK

- ~~• Evaluates students to determine the extent of their limitations.~~
- ~~• Administers a variety of activities to accomplish the planned improvement in functioning.~~
- ~~• Analyzes and measures students' behavior.~~
- ~~• Prepares records and reports of students' progress.~~
- ~~• Designs and adapts equipment to meet the needs of individual students.~~
- ~~• Instructs students and families in care and use of adaptive equipment.~~
- ~~• Requisitions equipment and materials.~~
- ~~• Consults with therapist and school staff to schedule students for treatments.~~
- May contribute to the occupational therapist's evaluation of student's abilities through a variety of functional, behavioral, and standardized assessments, data collection, checklists, and interviews with family, student and educational personnel, and observations once competency has been demonstrated.
- May contribute to the occupational therapist's development of individualized intervention plans.
- Based on the intervention plan, selects and implements therapeutic interventions to enhance student performance in areas of occupation, safety, and social participation within the school environment.
- Based on the intervention plan modifies environment including equipment, materials, devices, and adapts processes including the application of ergonomic principles.
- Explains intervention techniques to student, parents, and educational personnel.
- Continuously monitors through observation and consultation student progress and the effect of intervention and need for continuation, modification, or termination. Communicates this information to the occupational therapist.
- Documents occupational therapy intervention services and maintains administrative records in accordance with state guidelines, school policy, and reimbursement standards.
- Participates in multi-disciplinary team meetings to communicate student progress.

- Maintains inventory of therapeutic equipment and projects needs for budget planning.
- Maintains, organizes, and prioritizes workload and treatment environments including inventories.
- Uses professional literature to make informed practice decisions.
- Uses good time management skills.

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND ABILITIES

- ~~Working knowledge of the theory and methods of occupational therapy and their application.~~
- ~~Skill in modifying and constructing adaptive equipment and devices.~~
- ~~Skill in applying and using therapeutic equipment.~~
- ~~Ability to communicate with students, parents and teachers.~~
- ~~Ability to prepare and maintain accurate records.~~
- Knowledge of basic features of main occupational therapy theories, models of practice, principles, and evidence-based practice.
- General knowledge of human development throughout the life span.
- Ability to articulate the role of the occupational therapy assistant and the occupational therapist in the evaluation, intervention planning, intervention process.
- Ability to articulate difference between occupation and activity.
- Ability to analyze tasks relative to areas of occupation, performance skills, activity demands, context (s), and student factors to implement the intervention plan.
- Ability to recognize occupational performance deficits in the areas of personal care, student role/interactive skills, process skills, play, community integration/work, and graphic communication.
- Ability to articulate the influence of socio-cultural, socioeconomic, and diversity factors on student occupational performance.
- General knowledge of the federal, state, local legislation, regulations, policies and procedures that mandate and affect school-based occupational therapy services.
- Skill in gathering screening and evaluation data, completing checklists, histories, and interviews.
- Ability to select, adapt, and sequence relevant occupations and purposeful activities that support intervention goals.
- Ability to provide occupationally based interventions to achieve student participation in school environment.
- Skill in effective oral and written communication.
- Ability to maintain safe environments, equipment, and materials.
- Ability to prepare and maintain accurate records and progress notes.

SUGGESTED TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE

~~Completion of an accredited educational curriculum for occupational therapist assistants and two years of experience or an equivalent combination of education and experience.~~ Successful completion and graduation from an accredited associate's degree Occupational Therapy Assistant program recognized by NBCOT and completion of all fieldwork requirements.

Two years of experience as an occupational therapy assistant, preferably in pediatrics.

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS

~~License as an occupational therapist assistant in North Carolina.~~

Initial certification as an occupational therapist assistant by the National Board for Certification of Occupational Therapy (NBCOT)

Current license as an occupational therapist assistant by the North Carolina Board of Occupational Therapy

POSITION: Physical Therapist Assistant

SALARY GRADE: ~~64~~ 67

NATURE OF WORK

~~An employee in this class administers physical therapy treatments to students to assist the therapist in relieving disabilities and improve the students' functional activities. The work is guided by individual prescription with the employee planning exact sequences of various activities. The employee is expected to make minor adjustments as needed with medical problems referred to the therapist for solution. Errors in treatment could cause serious harm to students and potential liability for the school system. The employee receives limited supervision.~~ The school physical therapy assistant, as a member of the educational team, supports the education of students suspected of and/or diagnosed with a disability in their least restrictive environment. The school physical therapy assistant administers physical therapy interventions guided by an Individualized Education Program (IEP) delegated by a physical therapist in order to improve the students' functional independence at school. The school physical therapy assistant may make minor adjustments in intervention delivery as needed that are consistent with the established IEP. Medical problems or modification to intervention will be referred to the school physical therapist for solution. The school physical therapy assistant receives supervision at least every 30 days by the physical therapist.

ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES OF WORK

- Adheres to professional, ethical and legal standards of practice.
- Participates with physical therapist in developing individual treatment programs.
- Implements the physical therapy program within the Local Educational Agency (LEA), including philosophy, vision, departmental procedures and goals.
- ~~• Tests and evaluates each students strengths, weaknesses and ability to function.~~
- Administers a variety of exercises and interventions treatments as prescribed.
- ~~Evaluates students progress.~~ Observes and records the effectiveness of intervention, and documents students' progress.
- ~~• Prepares records and reports of student's response to treatment.~~
- Proposes modification of specific treatment procedures to physical therapist.
- Confers with physical therapist, school staff, parents and community and school staff to evaluate student information implement student program.
- Coordinates treatment schedule with therapists and school staff.
- Explains treatment techniques to students, parents and school staff.
- Processes orders for equipment and supplies.

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND ABILITIES

- ~~Working k~~ Knowledge of physical therapy principles, theory, methods and their application in an educational environment.
- Skill in providing a variety of ~~treatments~~ interventions.
- ~~Ability to communicate effectively, orally and in writing~~ Skill in effective oral and written communication.
- Ability to prepare and maintain accurate records.
- Knowledge of areas of practice specific to pediatrics, including child development and precautions when working with specific diagnoses.

SUGGESTED TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE

Two years of experience as a physical therapist assistant or an equivalent combination of education and experiences (pediatric experience, especially in an educational setting, is preferred). Completion of an approved two year program for physical therapist assistants and two years of experience as a physical therapist assistant or an equivalent combination of education and experiences.

SPECIAL REQUIREMENT

~~License as a physical therapist assistant in North Carolina.~~

- Graduation from an accredited program for physical therapist assistants
- Current licensure as a physical therapist assistant by the North Carolina Board of Physical Therapy Examiners