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# OTAC Government Affairs Committee

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# GAC Chair

- Lead GAC, a standing OTAC committee with the purpose of ensuring a proactive and timely response to legislative activity which many impact the practice of OT in California and which may impact the clients that OT practitioners serve.
  - Two year appointment.
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# What does the GAC Chair do?

- Stays informed by receiving and seeking information:
    - California legislation and regulations (Capital Advocacy)
    - CBOT activity
    - California PT Board and PT Association activity
    - State Departments: Workers Compensation, Mental Health and Health and Human Services
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# Receive and Seek Information

- Key Governmental and Advocacy Groups (California Coalition for Mental Health, National Alliance for the Mentally ill, Autism Speaks, California Association of Hospitals Special Education Work Group, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services).
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# Receive and Seek Information

- We do not miss much, but need help to get the information out and mobilize OT practitioners to act.
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## Role of Chair (cont.)

- Advocates at the state capital, CBOT and state departments to support OT and OTA practice and the clients that we serve in California.
  - Forms close relationships with own state legislators.
  - Attends small events and dinners with key legislators (usually members of Health Committees and Business and Professions Committees of both California Senate and Assembly).
  - Writes “Calls to Actions,” newsletter articles, updates web site.
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## Role of Chair (cont.)

- ❑ Provides education about California legislature: how to find your legislator, how a bill becomes a law etc.
  - ❑ Tracks legislations.
  - ❑ Finds people knowledgeable regarding specific areas of legislation.
  - ❑ Provides oral and written testimony.
  - ❑ Attends meetings of key regulatory and advocacy groups.
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## Role of Chair (cont.)

- ❑ Plans and implements projects and activities to meet the needs of OTAC strategic plan-OT representation on external advisory groups or regulatory boards.
  - ❑ Maintains an informed GAC committee.
  - ❑ Mobilizes and activates OTAC members to advocate directly with their local legislators generally on OT issues and more specifically on specific legislative and budget issues.
  - ❑ Assures the availability of adequate written and oral responses to legislative and regulatory concerns of OTAC.
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## Role of Chair (cont.)

- Does that sound like a big role?
  - We need your help to be effective.
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# Why is this important?

- OT practitioners need visibility and to exert influence.
  - Policy makers need to know who we are and what we do.
  - Policy makers need to know that we are a cost conscious, evidence-based, client- centered profession that produces good outcomes.
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# Why is this important?

- Political action represents an essential investment in the future of the profession.
  - Critical for survival in our government-dominated market place.
  - Magnifies overall impact by pooling individual contributions.
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# Oversee the Work of GAC members

- Seeks active committee members for all five OTAC Regions
    - Variety of practice areas
    - Students and seasoned clinicians
    - Intern from Sac City College
    - Doctorate student from USC
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# Role of Committee Members

- Review legislation.
  - Educate other members in regions.
  - Develops relationships with legislators in region.
  - Contacts local State Senator and State Assembly person-ideally every 2 months.
  - Attends all major OTAC events in region.
  - Maintains communication with others in specialty area.
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# Legislative Priorities for 2009

- Support OTA being licensed and other helpful changes to OT act
    - SB 819
    - SB 821
  - Track CBOT regulatory action to ensure that requirements are fairly enforced.
  - Track PT bills-all significant bills “died” in committee.
  - Tracked 60 bills with special importance on PT bills, autism bills, Medi-Cal changes, healthcare reform.
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# What You Can Do to Help

- Respond to all Calls to Actions.
  - Attend OTAC regional meetings/teleconferences.
  - Share GA information with colleagues.
  - Put GA as standing topic on staff meeting agendas.
  - Find the name of your state legislators.
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# What You Can Do

- ❑ Keep yourself informed on political issues related to your field of interest.
  - ❑ Pass on information to GAC Chair.
  - ❑ Join like minded advisory and regulatory groups and keep OTAC informed of your activities.
  - ❑ Occasionally attend a fund raiser or legislative special event.
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# What You Can Do

- Get angry or at least channel your frustration.
  - Advocate for change.
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# Conclusion

- We have great lobbyists who work hard for us.
  - We have a great partnership with AOTA.
  - We have an exquisite OTAC President and Executive Director.
  - We have an active group in Region 2.
  - We are partnering with Autism Speaks for this conference.
  - Learn how government works.
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