

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY SCHOOL-BASED CREDENTIAL IN THE CALIFORNIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS ISSUE STATEMENT

RECOMMENDATION

The Occupational Therapy Association of California (OTAC) supports authorization that would allow occupational therapists to obtain a Clinical or Rehabilitative Services Credential through the Commission on Teaching Credentialing (CTC). The Credential would ensure continued and future high quality occupational therapists who can impact the education and future of California's diverse students, schools, and communities.

BACKGROUND

Occupational therapists have been providing educationally related services to students in public schools since the 1970s. Occupational therapy (OT) services are mandated under Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004) and designed to help children develop, improve, or restore functional and academic skills, to support access and progress in their educational environment. OT services can be essential for students promoting function and engagement in everyday routines preparing children to be college and career ready. There are approximately 16,000 occupational therapy practitioners currently licensed in California, of which over 19% are estimated to practice in school-based settings.

Section 44210 of the Education Code authorizes the Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) as the governing body to grant credentials in the state of California. Examples of credentialed personnel are teachers, school psychologists, school counselors, social workers, nurses, audiologists, and speech and language pathologists. General requirements in order to obtain these credentials include: a) baccalaureate degree or higher, b) specialized and professional preparation, c) possession of a valid license, certificate, or registration, and d) mentored practical experience. These requirements are met in occupational therapy professional preparation through accredited programs.

PROBLEM

The California Commission on Teacher Credentialing offers a wide variety of credentials to ensure high quality instruction, intervention, and opportunities to serve students. Under Education Code provisions occupational therapists do not have an option to obtain a credential and have not been included in the credentialing process. Credentialing affords the professional status that is commensurate with the knowledge base and education of occupational therapists.

In order to pursue an administrative credential, educators need to have a prerequisite credential. Under current law, occupational therapists do not have a prerequisite credential option thus limiting opportunities to assume leadership roles, which would be of benefit to schoolwide student outcomes.

SOLUTION

The Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) has the authority to include occupational therapists under the Clinical or Rehabilitative Credential (Education Code 44268). The Credential would provide the necessary reconciliation between the level of education, preparation, and licensure occupational therapists currently undergo to provide occupational therapy services. Occupational therapists have proven ability to augment student outcomes within the school-based setting while serving as integral and collaborative team members at all levels.

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OTAC VISION STATEMENT:

A world where
all people participate
in meaningful occupations
to optimize their life experience.



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