



About OTAC

The Occupational Therapy Association of California (OTAC) is a nonprofit 501(C)(6) established in 1976 and governed by a volunteer board of directors with support from its paid team.

In addition, OTAC's vision, mission, core values, and strategic plan are guided and supported through the work of its volunteer committees.

There are currently more than 18,000 current licensed occupational therapy practitioners in California.



P.O. Box 276567
Sacramento, CA 95827

Phone: 916/567-7000
Fax: 916/567-7001

E-mail: info@otaonline.org
Web site: www.otaonline.org

7/16/20

OTAC PRESIDENT'S TAKE 10

President Bryant Edwards, OTD, MA, OTR/L, BCP, MPH
VLOG MESSAGE SCRIPT – Thursday, July 16, 2020

Hello everyone. I hope you and your loved ones are all staying safe and well during this challenging time. I'd like to start today by thanking Heather Kitching (OTAC president 2016-2020) for her service and leadership to the profession and to OTAC during her two terms as president. I have a lot of updates to share with you today!

Racial Justice

First and foremost, I want to reflect back on the statement that OTAC released at the beginning of June related to racial justice in the wake of the murder of George Floyd. Since that statement, OTAC has taken several actions. We have acknowledged our complicity through inaction and are committed to addressing racial injustices through a sustained and ongoing effort. Of note, OTAC has:

- Added a core value focused on building community by appreciating and advancing diversity throughout our profession, our association, and within practice.
- Engaged in an open dialogue with several Black practitioners and have taken feedback from that forth to the OTAC Board of Directors. Based upon some of the feedback, we will be facilitating DEI (diversity, equity, inclusion) training with our OTAC Board of Directors and committee chairs. Another suggestion that came from that dialogue was around the creation of a Black Occupational Therapy Association of California affinity group, and so we are continuing to discuss how that can be created.
- Approved a motion to create an Ad Hoc Committee on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI), and an announcement on the formation of that committee will be forthcoming.
- Planned several professional development opportunities:
 - ⇒ Monday, 7/20/2020 – “Begin Here: Fostering a Culture of Occupational Justice.” (In partnership with several state occupational therapy associations)
 - ⇒ Tuesday, 7/21/2020 – “Racial Bias and Occupational Therapy” hosted by OTAC Region 2 Director with guest Alaa Abou-Arab (monthly town hall webinar series)
 - ⇒ Track on racial justice as part of Annual Conference

As I alluded to, this is not a quick fix. OTAC's approach on this is intended to sustain and foster meaningful change. We will continue to provide updates on our efforts to address system racism and racial inequities throughout our practice.

Honoring Susan Harris

Earlier this year, we lost a true leader and inspiration to our profession when Susan Harris of Therapy Specialists passed away. She had always been an active supporter of OTAC and OTAC efforts. To honor her legacy and her contribution to the profession and the association, the OTAC Board of Directors has renamed the OTAC Entrepreneur Award in her name. It is now the *OTAC Susan Pool Harris Entrepreneur Award*.

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Advocacy Efforts

Our advocacy efforts yielded two substantial wins here in California. First, I am happy to report that our outreach to our elected officials supported the creation of a revised budget that has been approved which preserved MediCal reimbursement for OT services.

We also saw a win with the Department of Consumer Affairs and extending waivers for newer practitioners.

- For individuals who complete the education and experience requirements necessary for licensure between March 31 and June 1, 2020, it extends by two months (to six months) the period within which such persons must apply to take the licensing examination in order to qualify for a limited permit; and,
- For individuals issued a limited permit between March 31 and June 1, 2020, it extends by three months (to six months) the validity of such permits.

Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, the California legislature prioritized bills that related primarily to the pandemic. Therefore, the collaborative school-based bill supported by OTAC and the California Physical Therapy Association was not heard. This bill would have approved a work group to explore a pathway that would allow OTs and PTs to assume leadership positions within the school district setting. Currently, because of the California Educational Code, many of those roles are not accessible to OTs and PTs, but are available to teachers, speech therapists, social workers and psychologists. Both OTAC and CPTA feel that OTs and PTs have the capacity to excel in those leadership roles, and this bill is intended to explore how to create that parity. We intend to continue to move forward in the next legislative cycle.

Educational Offerings

- We will continue to offer Monthly Virtual Town Halls, which will be a combination of either OTAC updates or educational offerings.
- We are excited to again partner with Cedars Sinai Occupational Therapy OT Practice Issues Forum on 7/29/2020.
- In addition, we will once again be hosting our annual School-Based Symposium on 9/12/2020 in a virtual format.

Annual Conference

Finally, we are excited to announce that our Annual Conference will be held in October; however, we will be going to a virtual format. This will allow OTAC to provide the high-quality professional development opportunities, while promoting the safety for all involved. I am excited to welcome our keynote speaker, Dr. Gordon Giles. I also want to highlight that our theme for the past few years' Conferences, Building Capacity and Leading Transformation, ties in beautifully with this year's Conference theme: **CommUNITY**. With all that is happening in our world, it is imperative that we come together as an OT Community to support one another and the profession, to ensure we are creating a world where all people participate in meaningful occupations to optimize their life experience. We look forward to partnering with you in building community, and we also look forward to seeing you at this year's Conference.

In the meantime, stay safe, be well, take care of yourself and one another. Thank you!

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