

Vermont Occupational Therapy Association

Celebrate OT Month!

APRIL 2021

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY
PASSION. PURPOSE. POSSIBILITY.



#OTMonth
www.AOTA.org

Spring Quarterly

2021

Happy Occupational Therapy Month!

Thank you for all you do for your clients each day.

Please spread the word:

- Use #OTMonth when using social media to help link your OT information and celebrate you and your colleagues accomplishments.
- Publish an article in your local paper about OT services and how OTs help members of your community.
- Share a video: What Can Occupational Therapy Do For You? Found at aota.org.
- Post some fun facts about OT in your employer's newsletter.

Thank you to those who presented and participated in our Virtual Focus Groups!

VOTA ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING will be held virtually by Zoom meeting on **Thursday, May 20, 2021**, during the regularly scheduled VOTA BOARD MEETING time.

Beginning at 6:30, VOTA Board members will present updates on activities and progress since last year's conference.

Also, returning this year, there will be a presentation of *awards to VOTA members, as nominated by your peers. Following a short break, for a total of two hours of CE credit, optional breakout rooms will be facilitated by VOTA leadership. This meeting is required by our by-laws and does not preclude an in-person VOTA conference from happening at a later date.*

Watch your email for more details.



VOTA Officers:

- President: Caren Maslowsky
- Vice President: Chelsea Vaillancourt
- Secretary: Nicole DeVoid
- Treasurer: Karen Downey
- Newsletter Chair: Kristen Jackson
- Membership Chair: Viki Delmas
- Legislative Chair: Todd Patterson
- Public Relations: Patty Thomas

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AOTA Vision 2025

As an inclusive profession, occupational therapy maximizes health, well-being, and quality of life for all people, populations, and communities through effective solutions that facilitate participation in everyday living.

A WORD FROM YOUR PRESIDENT



Happy O.T. Month, Vermont! So much has happened in the past year that it's difficult to summarize in a brief update. I remember writing to you last spring during a freakish April blizzard, as the first wave of the pandemic crept into Bennington and Burlington. Many of us were in quarantine as schools closed on March 18. We were immersed in distance learning as learners ourselves, as teletherapy was a new medium for most. Some O.T. clinicians were thrust into the frontlines in full PPE battle gear, in hospitals, home health and skilled nursing facilities.

I wonder, now as we reflect upon the past year, what we have learned, and how these experiences have shaped us. Amidst recent dynamic social and political unrest in our country, our healthcare teams have remained solid reminders of the power of collaboration and compassion shared by the committed.

Now, as the COVID-19 vaccination rate approaches 35% in our state, we have evidence of policy and practice changes as a result of the pandemic. I bring to your attention the following:

1. Occupational therapy is included in the Federal Government's definition of essential healthcare worker. Any Vermont O.T. or O.T.A. is eligible to receive the vaccine, regardless of age. School-based therapists and educators can feel assured they are equally protected. Per Governor Scott's order, this week will open registration for adults 50 yrs and older - many of our client population - with all adults eligible by April 19.

2. Home Health Care Occupational Therapists will become permanently eligible to open SOC (Start of Care) cases, as of January 1, 2022, or before. Refer to the Medicare Home Health Flexibility Act (H.R. 3127 / S. 1725), certified December 27, 2020. Currently, O.T.'s are able to streamline patient access to our services, bypassing a sometimes unnecessary nursing evaluation, via an emergency, yet temporary, CMS ruling. Through the voices of clinicians and beneficiaries of O.T., CMS and Congress have realized the importance of our services. Advocacy works!

3. We, as a collective, are resilient, and we will emerge from the forest on the other side of this crisis. Our heartfelt sympathy goes out to any member who has been directly affected by loss caused by this pandemic. Some adaptations (i.e. telehealth) and coping strategies we have taught ourselves and our students, patients, and families may well become long-lasting. Some, such as endless video conferences and social distancing, will hopefully be logged as a pensive period of history.

Until then, I wish you well. Optimistically, let's make plans to see each other in person this fall for an educational and much needed networking event. Although your VOTA Board has decided to postpone the spring conference, we do need to hold the Annual Meeting and elections virtually on May 20, 6:30 pm. We need new VOTA leaders and District Representatives to step up and help pave progress. Watch your email for instructions on how to nominate, volunteer, and vote.

Be well,
Caren
OTVERMONT@GMAIL.COM



2021 VOTA ELECTIONS

Your VOTA Board is a cohesive, supportive group of dedicated O.T. peers who need your talents! The following positions are open for nominations, each for a two-year term:

Treasurer

Newsletter Chair

Public Relations Chair

District Chairs - (5) new positions: Northwest, Northeast, Central, Southwest, Southeast regions

To nominate yourself, or a member you believe would be an asset to Occupational Therapy practice in Vermont, contact VOTA Board President, Caren Maslowsky, at OTVERMONT@GMAIL.COM by April 17.



New Developments for OTs in Vermont-

Pediatric Feeding Therapy Collaboration Group- There is a working group of OTs, SLPs and Registered Dietitians who are exploring how to improve pediatric therapy services for children and teens in Vermont who have significant feeding and eating challenges. If you are an OT with extensive experience working with children with feeding/eating challenges or are interesting in learning more about future continuing education opportunities in this area, please contact Karen Downey, OTR/L at votatreasurer@gmail.com

Vermont OT Positions in Mental Health Programs- There has been recent news from the Commissioner of the Vermont Department of Mental Health about plans to increase inpatient, transitional and residential services for adolescents and adults with mental health needs here in Vermont. Are you presently practicing in the area of mental health or are actively involved as a volunteer or member of a Board serving clients with mental health needs? We have an opportunity to increase OT positions as well as future student fieldwork placements in various aspects of mental health services across our state. If you would like to join with other OTs to explore how we can increase OT mental health services in Vermont, please contact Karen Downey, OTR/L at votatreasurer@gmail.com

Exploring OT Involvement in Adaptive Sports in Vermont- Do you have experience or are presently involved in adaptive sports groups here in Vermont or in other states? If you are and want to share your experiences and knowledge, please contact Karen Downey, OTR/L, MS at votatreasurer@gmail.com

Entry-Level OTD Program Update

The entry-level OTD program received final approval through UVM in February, 2021. The program remains on target to start opening up admissions in August, 2021 for a fall 2022 student start date. Information about the program can be found on the following website.

<https://www.uvm.edu/cnhs/rms/entry-level-occupational-therapy-doctorate-otd>.



Any questions can be directed to Victoria Priganc at Victoria.priganc@med.uvm.edu.

Job Opportunity for COTAs!



is Expanding
at the **Brattleboro Retreat!**

The Brattleboro Retreat's Adolescent Inpatient Unit is seeking a skilled occupational therapy assistant (OTA) to assist in the rehabilitation and recovery of adolescents suffering from mental illness.

As an OTA on this unit, you will facilitate groups to help patients develop skills and grow. Using your training in cognitive, physical, and social-emotional performance factors, you will help patients ages 12--18 break through barriers and regain function.

The Brattleboro Retreat is a private psychiatric and addiction treatment hospital nestled in the southernmost foothills of Vermont's Green Mountains. A five-minute walk to the vibrant town of Brattleboro, the Retreat is easy to reach from NY, NH, MA, and the rest of New England.

To apply for this rare opportunity, visit:
www.brattlebororetreat.org/careers



Brattleboro Retreat



AOTA Representative Assembly update

Hello to all! I'm Ela Dupont, your AOTA RA representative for Vermont.



During the month of March, the RA was working on numerous requests for action in our 4 task groups. My task group focused on a position paper on obesity and transitioning the information to a paper forthcoming on chronic conditions, a statement on the role of occupational therapy in pain management, and a task force recommendation on the role of dry needling in occupational therapy. We worked in task groups March 15-19 and convened as a RA group March 23 to talk about and form the motions to be put forth for our RA meeting May 10, 2021.

Be on the lookout for a member input survey on RA motions and requests for actions being sent to RA members in April. The timeline for response is April 11-30.

Our Spring RA meeting is May 10, 8:30-10:30 pm ET. If you are ever interested in watching a RA meeting, you are welcome to join us. The AOTA always posts a link to our Zoom meeting for interested parties to watch us work.



The AOTA conference – AOTA INSPIRE - is virtual this year, and registration is now open! Choose from two different registration options: the AOTA INSPIRE All-Access Pass or the AOTA INSPIRE Kick-Off Week Pass. Both options give you the opportunity to view both live online and on-demand content for the registration option chosen. All registered attendees will receive an email with their unique login just prior to the start of AOTA INSPIRE 2021 to access the attendee platform.

This event will be online only--live and on demand (April 6-June 30, 2021). For more information, or to register, check out this website: <https://www.aota.org/Conference-Events/inspire/registration.aspx>

Registration Rates	Kick-Off Pass	All-Access Pass
Member OT/OTA	\$145	\$235
Non-Member OT/OTA	\$195	\$285
Member Student	\$65	\$155
Non-Member Student	\$115	\$205



From Todd Patterson, Legislative Chair

FEDERAL: Medicare COVID-19 Flexibilities Granted to OT: Home Health Gains Will Be Permanent In response to COVID-19 needs, CMS waivers have made allowances for OT to open Home Health cases. In a massive year end legislation, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) will now have 1 year to implement a new rule to enable occupational therapists to perform the initial and comprehensive assessments required to open home health therapy cases.

<https://www.aota.org/Advocacy-Policy/Congressional-Affairs/Legislative-Issues-Update/2020/Win-Massive-Year-End-Legislation.aspx>



CONGRESS: Proposed Medicare Part B Cuts for 2021 Reduced from 9% to Roughly 3%

Congress reduced proposed cuts to Medicare Part B Services from a proposed 9% to approximately 3% for 2021.

<https://www.aota.org/Advocacy-Policy/Congressional-Affairs/Legislative-Issues-Update/2020/Congress-Passes-Legislation-Mitigate-Scheduled-Cuts-Medicare-Part-B.aspx>

STATE: HHS Secretary Renews Public Health Emergency The Acting Secretary of Health and Human Services indicated to governors that the public health emergency (PHE) is anticipated to continue until at least the end of 2021. This allows the waivers that have been in place for the past year to continue, some examples of those including home health and telehealth.

<https://www.aota.org/Advocacy-Policy/Federal-Reg-Affairs/News/2020/HHS-Secretary-Renews-Public-Health-Emergency.aspx>

HEALTH CARE REFORM IMPLEMENTATION AOTA and coalition partners ensured that when the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) created the Benefit and Payment Parameters for 2016 final rule, they used a uniform definition of habilitative services and devices. AOTA had expressed concerns related to the way some states were interpreting these services when implementing the Affordable Care Act's (ACA) Essential Health Benefits (EHBs). AOTA lobbying ensured both habilitation (learning for the first time) and rehabilitation (relearning after a period of illness, injury or disabling condition) were included.

<https://www.aota.org/-/media/Corporate/Files/Advocacy/Health-Care-Reform/Essential-Benefits/A-Uniform-Definition-of-Habilitative-Services-March-2015.pdf>

In a review of 2019 habilitation and rehabilitation for qualified plans, it was shown that coverage was significantly clearer than prior years (9% to an increase of 48/70%) in relation to:

Whether occupational therapy was covered

The number of visits covered

Whether the deductible applies to occupational therapy

<https://www.aota.org/Advocacy-Policy/Health-Care-Reform/News/2020/Analysis-2019-Rehabilitation-Habilitation-Qualified-Health-Plans.aspx>



VOTA

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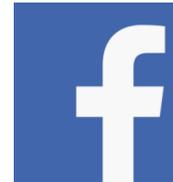
Twitter: @802OT <https://twitter.com/802OT>

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The mission of the Vermont Occupational Therapy Association (VOTA) is to promote and advance occupational therapy practice, research, legislation, and education, and to support occupational therapy practitioners in Vermont. The Association serves its members by providing support services, acting as a public advocate of occupational therapy, and participating in cooperative interaction to meet the needs of the professional and the public.

Please visit our website:

www.vermontot.org



VOTA Membership

Continue your VOTA Membership! Join any time of the year with our rolling membership!

Encourage co-workers and friends who are Occupational Therapists and Occupational Therapist Assistants to consider becoming a member of our organization.

Please sign up on our website or request an application form from our membership chair to sign up for a 1 or 3 year membership with VOTA.

Questions?

Please contact:

Viki Delmas

email: votamembership@gmail.com

OT 3 Years: \$110

OTA 3 Years: \$70

Student/Retired/Non practicing: \$15

OT 1 year: \$40

OTA 1 year: \$25





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