

Fall Quarterly
October, 2022

Vermont Occupational Therapy Association



President's message

Greetings Vermont OTs and OTAs!

I hope you're squeezing all the fun out of these last few days of summer. The days are already getting noticeably shorter and I can feel fall coming right around the corner. There is a lot of exciting news to report this quarter! First, the University of Vermont welcomed its first class of occupational therapy doctoral students to campus this semester. The creation of this program is such an exciting achievement, and there is an enormous list of people who have worked for many years to get this program launched. There are far too many people to list here, but THANK YOU ALL for your dedication and perseverance over the years; your efforts have finally paid off! A special thanks goes out to Victoria Priganc, Occupational Therapy Program Director at UVM (and VOTA board member), for her leadership in building this program. In related news, UVM received a [\\$5.75 million grant](#) through Senator Leahy's office to renovate labs and classroom space and purchase equipment and technology. We appreciate Senator Leahy's commitment to furthering the occupational therapy profession in Vermont and are excited to see students make use of this new space.

On a different subject, VOTA recently sent out a poll about the inter-state licensure compact that is under consideration for OTs and OTAs across the country. We are still interested in hearing how you think this might affect your practice; you can read more about the compact [here](#) and if you have not yet responded to the poll, please do so [here](#).

Your VOTA board members are busy working on setting up our annual conference and meeting and participating in various committees to advance OT/OTA practice around the state, and we held a strategic planning meeting on September 24th to identify priorities for the coming year. As always, we welcome your input and engagement on any of these topics. Do not hesitate to reach out to your district representatives or any board member if you have ideas of how VOTA can better serve its members.

I am constantly hearing stories about the great work that OTs and OTAs are doing around the state, so thank you for the work you do each day in serving Vermonters!

Sincerely,

Lindsay Thrall, MOT, OTR/L
President

VOTA Executive Board Officers

President: Lindsay Thrall

Vice President: Chelsea Vaillancourt

Treasurer: Karen Downey

Secretary: Johanne Champigny

Membership Chair: Nicole Devoid

Legislative Chair: Linda Riddle

Newsletter Co-Chairs: Victoria Priganc & Thomas Hartigan

Representative AOTA: Ela Dupont

Public Relations: Kristen Jackson

District Chairs:

Central District, Aimil Parmelee

Northwest District, Gretchen Daly

Southwest District, Patty Thomas

Inside this issue

Community updates

Committee updates

New logo contest

Strategic planning meeting

Fall Quarterly

Community and committee updates:

UVM OTD program:

A heartfelt thank you to Senator Leahy and Provost Prelock for securing 5.75 million dollars to build the Occupational Therapy labs at the University of Vermont. Construction for these labs is scheduled to begin in Spring, 2023. Below are the links to the funding announcement.

<https://www.uvm.edu/news/cnhs/university-vermont-receives-575-million-build-occupational-therapy-labs>

<https://www.wcax.com/2022/09/27/uvm-gets-575m-build-state-of-the-art-occupational-therapy-labs/>

PIZZA PARTY

Please join us for a pizza party on Oct 24th, from 5:00 –6:30. You can see the UVM OT space and meet the OT faculty and students.

Please rsvp by Oct 17th to Victoria.priganc@med.uvm.edu.

Pediatric committee:

9/22 Pediatric Committee report:

1. [Guidelines for Related Services OT and PT in VT public schools](#). The last voluntary VT Guidelines for Related Service were created in 1998 by a committee including Agency of Education staff, UVM I-Team, and a group of school-based OTs and PTs. If anyone knows of more recent guidelines please contact Karen Downey, votatreasurer@gmail.com

2. [Who/Where are OTs employed in VT public schools?](#)- Including those full or part-time on school staff or self-employed contractors. If you have information to help identify all the school-based OTs in Vermont, please contact Karen Downey.

3. [Best Practice Pediatric Resources that can be easily accessible digitally for school-based OTs](#)- presently many VT OTs have access to past in-services, trainings, workshops and conferences on the VOTA website (for VOTA Members), on the Center on Disability and Community Inclusion PedsProVT website, and All Brains Belong website. Additional resources will be identified at future committee meetings.

4. [Discussion of Guidance to Rule 2392 \(g\)](#) from VT Agency of Education Special Education to include [Functional Skills](#) into Special Education Evaluation Gate 2-Basic Skills list.

5. Discussion of salary scale, benefits, malpractice protection, and whether school-based OTs could benefit from joining teachers union.

Next meeting will be October 27, 2022 at 7PM via Zoom- contact Karen Downey at votatreasurer@gmail.com

Aging-in-place committee:

9/6 Aging in Place Committee report:

1. CAPS Training Oct 21, 22, 23,24 at UVM

2. VOTA's involvement with the Falls Free Vermont Coalition meeting on Sept. 20, 2022

3. Discussion of educational materials that were provided for the Falls Prevention Awareness month to be included on the Falls Free Vermont Facebook page and website.

Next meeting will be late October, date TBD. Contact Karen Downey is you would like to participate in this committee.

Fall Quarterly

Happenings!

New logo competition!

Happy colorful fall! Your board is soliciting your input for a new logo for our organization. A refresh, an update. If you or someone you know and love have graphic design skills, an idea, a burning desire to participate and engage your creative muscles for YOUR organization, please submit your suggestions and/or designs by December 31, 2022 to informationvota@gmail.com The chosen designer and design will win a year membership to VOTA. Happy Creating!

Pediatric OTs! Two conferences!

Everything's Measurable for OTs, OTAs, PTs and PTAs being offered October 24-25 in Burlington by UVM Center on Disability and Community Inclusion Pediatric Professionals Collaborative of Vermont (PedsProVT). Registration Information <https://www.applyebp.com/live-workshop-topics/everythings-measurable/>

Interested in expanding your pediatric skills? Coming this fall **AOTA has a professional certification program for school-based therapists**. In these three courses you'll learn about public policy, the role of OT in schools, and about best practices under IDEA, as well as OT's contributions to IEP decision making. Earn .15 AOTA CEUs (1.88 NBCOT PDUs/1.5 contact hours) **AOTA Members: \$29.95**, Nonmembers: \$34.95 (CEUs and pricing per each course)

CEUs and pricing are for each course.

Continue your 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.

Membership updates needed?

Please log in to our website: www.vermontot.org via the top right log in link on our webpage.

Click on your name in the top right corner of the home page to view your profile.

Use the Edit profile button to update your information including address, county and area of practice.

Fall Quarterly

Strategic planning

Your VOTA held a strategic planning meeting on September 24. We worked on the following items:

- ⇒ Updates to VOTA bylaws, to be voted on by VOTA membership at our next annual meeting. Updates included the addition of a Student Representative position to the Board of Directors. The next step is for the bylaws to be reviewed by an attorney, and then they will be made available to the membership for comment.
- ⇒ Changes to membership dues, to go into effect January 1, 2023. Membership fees will be modestly increasing to bring us in line with other states of similar size.
- ⇒ Next steps on the inter-state licensure compact. We received 8 responses to our compact survey which were largely in favor of implementing the change. Pursuing this compact will require further planning, as it will likely involve a significant financial investment for VOTA. We will be holding an information and Q&A session about the compact at our annual conference.
- ⇒ We decided to stop printing the VOTA newsletter and use an electronic format going forward.



~Submitted by Lindsay Thrall, VOTA President

Fall Quarterly

VOTA conference update

Vice President report—

- CAPS conference; Susan Grueber is handling registration and payment; capped at 20; scholarship has contacted SD Ireland to see if they would sponsor for the course—if so, the check would be signed to VOTA and the rest would be split into scholarship opportunities— participants may get some money back
- Annual conference; two planning meetings—planning it for Nov 19th; keynote speaker is not available due to travel; may do the compact as our keynote if we can't move the dates; AOTA is interested in doing a q/a session virtually if we do that as the keynote; Susan Yebra is presenting (from Phoenix PT); Chelsea will be contacting Jane Kaufmann; OTs support in homelessness and opioid crisis; motor learning and related to neuro deficits; neuroaffirming practices and interoception; panel on starting a private practice;

VOTA book scholarship recipients

The VOTA Book Scholarship recipients for 2022 are Molly Tobin, Erynn Ferraro and Addie Irvin, all attending their first year of the UVM Entry Level OT Doctorate program. This year VOTA was able to award 3 scholarships of \$500 each, in celebration of the start of Vermont's first Entry Level OTD program. Congratulations to All!

2021 Diana Aja Scholarship recipient article

I had the opportunity to attend the 2022 AOTA Conference by receiving the Diane Aja Scholarship. Outgoing President Wendy Hildenbrand gave her final presidential address and introduced and welcomed Vice President Arameh Anvarizadeh, the youngest and first African American/Iranian to hold the position. There were very interesting and specific webinars on a wide variety of topics including mental health treatment planning, community-based interventions, nature-based interventions and changes in the role of Occupational Therapists in home care. Of all the topics presented, what struck me most was the theme of work/life balance. My daily practice changed by simple and thoughtful phrase "the power of pause." While we attend to patients, co-workers and the interprofessional team we have a tendency to overlook the impact that two minutes can make. As Occupational Therapists we are expected to shift tasks with efficiency and accuracy, meaning we accomplish a lot in one day! Balancing the tasks between renewing activities for ourselves and challenging tasks allows us to leave at the end of the day feeling prepared for the next day. There is less daily wear and more ease in the Occupational Therapy that we provide. How I let this change my practice is that I walk outside every day and end my day with Yoga. I hope for you to evaluate your own daily practice to include the power of pause and stop now and then for yourself.

Submitted by Jodi Veeder, OTR/L

Cigna update

Cigna released a new therapy policy update imposing a 4-unit/visit limitation & a 15% payment reduction for services provided by OTA/PTA. These changes will be effective October 15th for most states. AOTA & APTA are collaborating on advocacy efforts with Cigna. For the 4 unit per visit limit, be aware that if billing more than 4 units, Cigna will pay the units as listed on the claim, i.e., the first 4 units will be the 4 they will pay. Cigna informed AOTA & APTA that it cannot sort units by dollar amount. Thus, the therapist must list the procedures in descending dollar order.

Cigna has also indicated that there will be an exception to the 4-unit limit under limited circumstances, AOTA & APTA have requested additional guidance from Cigna.

AOTA expects to hear back on possible mitigation for the 15% OTA/PTA payment cut soon after Labor Day. Cigna has indicated as recently as September 23rd that a response is forthcoming. As we are now w/in 30 days of the October 15th implementation, **we are asking providers to tell Cigna how the OTA/PTA differential will impact their practices and clients and ensure their voice is heard.**

Providers can write a letter to Cigna addressing how this new policy will affect their clinic setting and their ability to deliver care to Cigna beneficiaries.

Some other steps that can be taken:

1. Patients can write to Cigna expressing their concern, encourage them.
2. Patients can speak to their employer HR department to express their concern about potentially losing access to OTA/OT services.

Notify legislators making them aware of this Cigna policy change and how it will impact enrollees, the delivery of occupational therapy services, and the other adverse downstream effects.

The collective strength of our members matters if we advocate for our profession and the health of our patients. Please encourage any non-member colleagues to act.

Please send communications to Cigna to the following address:

Joseph DiRienzo, AVP

Strategy & Solutions

National Ancillary & Non-Par Management

Cigna



Vermont Occupational Therapy Association

VOTA

informationvota@gmail.com

PO Box 925

Richmond, VT 05477

Follow us on:

Facebook:

[Vermont Occupational Therapy Association](#)

Instagram:

<https://www.instagram.com/vermontoccupationaltherapy/>

Twitter:

@802OT

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.