

Timeline of Project Guidelines for Occupational Therapy in Connecticut Schools

1997 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Reauthorization Amendment

1999 Draft Guidelines

Draft Guidelines for Occupational Therapy in Educational Settings posted by the State of Connecticut Department of Education. These draft guidelines were never fully vetted by the State Department of Education.

2001 No Child Left Behind

2004 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Reauthorized

2008 Section 504 of Rehabilitation Act, Amendments of 2004: Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act of 2008

2010 Position Statement Omitting Therapy Support Services

Position Statement on Student Support Services published in April by the State of Connecticut Department of Education made zero reference to school occupational therapy or physical therapy support services in the document <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/LIB/sde/pdf/board/stusuptserv.pdf>. This omission was the impetus for a local movement in advocating for the profession of occupational therapy and physical therapy in Connecticut schools in order to align with what was occurring across the nation and federal level.

2010 Connecticut State Department of Education Announcement

In December 2010, a collaborative partnership was formed between the State of Connecticut Department of Education, the Connecticut Occupational Therapy Association, and the Connecticut Physical Therapy Association to initiate work on developing current guidelines for occupational therapy and physical therapy in Connecticut schools. Sharon McCloskey and Pam Roberts moved forward as Co-chairs for this project on a volunteer basis.

2011 Revision Project Begins

Eight forums that represented 172 school districts were held across Connecticut with 200 school occupational and physical therapy practitioners along with various stakeholders (e.g., school administrators, higher educators, birth to three representatives). Data was gathered on the perceived knowledge and skills required for Connecticut school therapy practitioners to provide best practice and address the needs within their perspective schools and districts. In addition, participants identified trends, practices, and pressing challenges that they face everyday in Connecticut schools.

2012-2013 Request to Place Guidelines Project on Hold

The Connecticut State Department of Education requested that volunteer hours be shifted away from the guidelines project in order to focus on the Performance Evaluation Advisory Council's (PEAC) Student and Educator Support Specialists (SESS) workgroups. These workgroups were formed to develop content for documents that would guide school administrators and support specialists on the application of Connecticut's System for Educator Evaluation and Development (SEED). At the culmination of these meetings, the Connecticut State Department of Education determined not to release guidance documents that explicitly centered on occupational therapy or physical therapy practitioners in schools. This decision centered on the principle that therapy practitioners are licensed by the Department of Public Health and are not certified by the State Department of Education.

2014-2015 Strategic Planning Committee & Writing Groups Formed

A conscious decision was made to move forward with the guidelines project and separate occupational and physical therapy in order to represent and support the distinct value that each profession brings to school practice. Volunteer writing groups were formed to develop content for the occupational therapy guidelines. These groups met and worked diligently to produce a draft document that promotes best practice, aligns with laws and regulations, and addresses the needs identified from the 2011 forums.

2015 CSDE:BSE Received Draft Revision

On December 9, 2015, a draft document was given to the Connecticut State Department of Education: Bureau of Special Education. This was a culmination of the work completed by the Strategic Planning Committee and Writing Groups.

2015 Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA), a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act

2017 CSDE:BSE & Strategic Planning Committee Meeting

A meeting was held on April 4, 2017 and a determination was made to return the Draft Guidelines Project back to the Strategic Planning Committee. The purpose in doing so was to place the ownership of the document in the hands of the subject matter experts of school occupational therapy in Connecticut schools. A decision was made to house this document on the Connecticut Occupational Therapy Association (ConnOTA) website. Moving in this direction allows greater flexibility in revising the document as changes in laws, regulations, and practices evolve. In addition, supporting resources can be made more readily available to various stakeholders of school therapy practice. The Bureau of Special Education in turn acknowledges and advises stakeholders to refer to this document and additional resources available through the ConnOTA website.