The Definitive Guide to Online Occupational Therapy
Some children find handwriting, catching a ball, or even tying shoes difficult. Although their visual acuity and perception are excellent, and there's no issue with hand strength or ability, integrating the hands and eyes may be the problem. This is but one of many areas where an Occupational Therapist (OT) can help.

**OTHER AREAS INCLUDE**

- **COORDINATION SKILLS** Coordinating movements between the two sides of the body, “crossing the midline.”
- **EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING SKILLS** Problem-solving, sequencing, higher level thinking
- **PLAY/SOCIAL SKILLS** Appropriate social interactions, e.g., eye contact and voice volume
- **FINE MOTOR SKILLS** Maintaining proper pencil grasp to perform handwriting tasks successfully
- **SELF-CARE SKILLS** For example buttoning a shirt or zipping a jacket
- **GROSS MOTOR SKILLS** Addressing core strength to improve coordination for both and fine motor activities
- **SENSORY PROCESSING** Proscribing sensory modifications to help maintain control over stimulation from the environment
- **VISUAL MOTOR SKILLS OR VISUAL-MOTOR INTEGRATION** Helping to coordinate and integrate visual perception and motor skills

Occupational Therapists help to maximize a child's active engagement in the meaningful activities of daily living. However, most people think that Occupational Therapy is only for students with disabilities. What they don't realize is that it can also be helpful to children who are having difficulties in school.

Since the source of many difficulties in school may be traced to visual or perceptual problems, motor skills, cognitive processing, difficulties staying on task, disorganization, or inappropriate sensory responses, Occupational Therapy may be the best solution to improve the child's behavior or learning.

Evaluations and assessments can determine the student's strengths and weaknesses in a variety of areas. Based on those results, the OT, trained to look at the “whole child,” can craft interventions tailored to the child's skills, the specific activity, and its particular demands.

**There Aren’t Enough Onsite Occupational Therapists**

However, there is a silent but growing problem. According to The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Employment of occupational therapists is projected to grow 24 percent from 2016 to 2026.” The less cheery side of this is that the rapidly growing demand for OTs will leave many needy and deserving children without a therapist to deliver services.

And the pain is already being felt. As a result of the worsening shortage, schools are increasingly unable to provide sorely needed OTs for their students. Inflated costs press upon already overstrained budgets, and school personnel is forced to devote inordinate amounts of time and effort hunting down scarce resources.

However, let's suppose for a moment that there was no OT shortage. Let's even imagine that there was a healthy surplus. Would that make the problem disappear? The answer is no! That's because of an equally imposing hurdle—money, or not enough of it.

Aside from budget shortfalls, there are the higher recruitment fees charged by staffing agencies to find “distant and elusive” OTs, and then once the OT is found, those OTs must be reimbursed for their transportation expenses inflating the cost even further. The sad reality is this: there isn't enough money available to provide many deserving children with the needed therapy.

Further exacerbating the problem is that these shortages are unequally distributed geographically. The problem in rural areas is even worse than in the rest of the country. Salaries are not competitive, and the rural regions are far from urban cultural centers and universities, which often prevents therapists from participating in training and development programs that would enhance them professionally.
The growing OT shortage means higher caseloads for therapists in rural districts which results in inferior therapy sessions for the children, leads to OT burnout on an unprecedented scale, causes unexpected recruiting and turnover expenses, and students are making slower—or no—progress against their IEP goals.

The Collateral Damage of Too Few Therapists

But don’t think that the problem is limited to just denying children adequate Occupational Therapy. There are many potentially more dangerous consequences to this silent but tragic problem that is mushrooming in Rural America.

LOW SELF ESTEEM
A developmental delay or sensory processing difficulty lacking the requisite Occupational Therapy could eventually erode a child’s self-confidence. Kids know when they aren’t functioning like their peers. When a child is young, awkwardness, clumsiness, or even some compulsiveness may be adorable, but as the child matures, it is no longer cute and is practically guaranteed to undermine the child’s confidence.

ACADEMIC STRUGGLES
When a child can’t fully participate in school activities such as being unable to pay attention in class, focusing on the task at hand, or even holding a pencil correctly, there are bound to real problems. Anything that is going to hamper a child’s ability to succeed in the early years of school weakens the foundation for future academic success.

SOCIAL ANXIETY
Anxiety disorder has become the most diagnosed mental disability identified in children under age six. And sensory integration issues have become one of the culprits. Maybe it’s that their socks are bunched up, or they don’t like the feel of clothing labels. The child feels too cold or too hot or too itchy. Any of these sensory inputs could become a cause of anxiety the child.

Many times when children are struggling in school, or at home, most parents and educators think attention deficit disorder is the culprit, but quite often the reason that the homework is late or that the child is acting out either in school or at home is grounded in some sensory dysfunction.

LONELINESS AND ISOLATION
Children that do not reach developmental milestones when they should tend to feel out of place around their peers. Due to the stress that comes with developmental delays, it is more likely that a child will not be able to devote the time or effort required to cultivate social relationships. And as a child gets older, this inability to function in social situations will make school and life, in general, increasingly difficult.

Occupational therapists by assisting children to regain their normal development trajectory accomplish much more than helping with that development. Their intervention can often spell the difference between a child becoming socially adjusted and socially misfit.

What will become of the growing numbers of children, predominantly in Rural America, who have no access to the Occupational Therapy they so desperately need?

Online Occupational Therapy is the Obvious Solution

Enter Online Occupational Therapy. Online Occupational Therapy is the online delivery of Occupational Therapy services. Online Occupational Therapy sessions are very similar to traditional Occupational Therapy sessions with one major exception. Instead of sitting in the same room, students and therapists interact via high-resolution live video conferencing.

During therapy sessions, the student and therapist can see, hear, and interact with one another in real time, using webcams, headsets, and a live, synchronous online learning environment. If you’ve ever used Skype on your computer or FaceTime on your iPhone, you’ve used a similar type of technology.

The distinct advantage of online Occupational Therapy is that now any school anywhere can access top-quality therapists at competitive rates and ensure that their students will receive excellent uninterrupted services. Geography, mobility, and time have ceased to be the barriers they once were.
By extending top-quality clinical services to remote, rural, and underserved populations, online Occupational Therapy holds the promise of reducing the devastating consequences impacting the children due to the OT shortage and alleviating severely strained school budgets.

Best of all, online Occupational Therapy is highly engaging for today’s students. By utilizing fun and engaging digital technology, online Occupational Therapy is exceptionally kid-friendly. Today’s children are comfortable with computers and love game-based activities such as video interactions and digital learning.

**TOP BENEFITS OF ONLINE OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY:**

**ONLINE SPEECH AVAILABILITY** Districts no longer need to depend on local therapy agencies, worry about interruptions in therapy when OTs are absent, are on vacation, or move away. Instead, they can enjoy “Anytime, Anywhere Access” to licensed, credentialed OTs.

**BUDGET** Online Occupational Therapy maximizes the therapist’s time by eliminating traveling, which translates into significant savings for the school. What’s more, there are fewer expenditures related to recruitment, screening, contracting, training, and the managing of OTs.

**CONVENIENCE** Online Occupational Therapy redefines flexibility and convenience while improving staff efficiency. While traditional face-to-face therapists may lock the school into a rigid schedule, the online delivery model allows for therapy when it is convenient for the student, even outside of school hours.

**DIVERSITY** Schools have better access to culturally and linguistically diverse therapists as well as clinicians with specialties. Better targeting produces more effective outcomes.

**EXCELLENCE** Online Occupational Therapy affords schools previously unprecedented access to top-notch therapists, as they are no longer limited to locally-based clinicians, but can draw from an extensive nationwide network of highly qualified, certified and licensed therapists.

**OTHER KEY ADVANTAGES:**

**CONSISTENCY** Since the attrition rate of therapists is often linked to travel time, eliminating travel translates into a marked rise in the therapist’s consistency with the child.

**UNINTERRUPTED** The child is guaranteed sessions even when OTs are sick, on vacation, or move away as the agency can draw upon a large pool of therapists to substitute.

**AUTOMATION** Scheduling, tracking, reporting, auditing are digitized to bring clarity to the administrator’s fingertips and reduce compliance issues.

**RECORDING** All sessions are recorded for parents to monitor, therapists to review, and administrators to reference if necessary.

**INDEPENDENCE AND PRODUCTIVITY** Therapists enjoy flexible hours from the comfort of their home increasing productivity and allowing more time with the kids.

**MATERIALS** Clinicians can access an ever-expanding array of creative, and highly motivating materials. Global Teletherapy provides a duplicate “kit” of fun materials for the student and therapist. This provides an engaging interaction that helps with the student’s progress.

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### Online Occupational Therapy Myths Debunked

**MYTH #1** Teletherapy is Not an Adequate Substitute for Onsite Therapy

There is a myth that online Occupational Therapy is somehow inferior when compared to face-to-face Occupational Therapy. However, there is no evidence in the research supporting this assertion.

Over the past twenty years, the numerous studies that have been conducted, most notably by The Mayo Clinic and Kent State University, have shown that online therapy is on a par with onsite therapy. The American Occupational Therapy Association supports the online delivery of Occupational Therapy.

What must be understood is that the online venue and the fantastic digital tools utilized by clinicians aren't meant to replace the one-on-one therapeutical interaction between clinician and child. They are merely available to enhance it. Occupational Therapy was initially designed and is intended to remain within the domain of the therapist working intimately with the child; never to be given over to digital substitutes.
Studies aside, ask the clients, the kids, what they think of online Occupational Therapy. Having experienced the wonders of digital technology from a tender age, they love online video interactions. Their motivation, enthusiasm, and success speak volumes.

**MYTH #2 The Online Modality Compromises the Client’s Privacy**

There are voices out there complaining that the risk of compromising client confidentiality and their private information undermines the many benefits mentioned above. Their objection goes something like this. “Being that technology in general, and electronic communications in particular, are more vulnerable to be exploited, the privacy of clients will more likely be exposed.”

And the truth is that they are correct. Being worried about privacy leaks and hacks in the online transmission of information is a legitimate concern. Just look at how the field of cybersecurity continues to explode and grow in sophistication. Take something as simple as email. There is no way to ensure complete safety and confidentiality.

But to focus on the online venue is to miss the point. Being human means that privacy is at risk. People are people, and there are plenty of security breaches out there in the “offline world” as well. It's always been that way, and it will continue to be that way. So is it reasonable to institute a standard for the “online world” that is unattainable in the “offline world?”

In other words, the privacy concern isn't really about “online” but is more about human integrity or the lack thereof. It often boils down to strict adherence to regulations that have been established to protect client privacy.

So what is a responsible caring school administrator to do?

The only answer is to work with a high-quality, reputable agency that can assure that all of the industry regulations of privacy are being followed and that everything is being done to satisfy all HIPAA standards, ensuring the confidentiality of all sessions and data.

Bottom line, receiving Occupational Therapy online is no riskier than face-to-face. Both are very confidential; neither is 100% perfect. So when you consider the many benefits of teletherapy and weigh them against your confidentiality concerns, rest assured that you are probably much safer than you think.

**MYTH #3 The Technology is Vulnerable and Untrustworthy**

A significant objection to, or let's face it, “fear,” of online Occupational Therapy is that since it is computer-based, the entire success or failure of the session rises or falls on the flawless performance of the technology. And many responsible school administrators ask, “How can I take that chance with my students?”

While this fear indeed reveals the concern and profound sense of responsibility of the administrator, at the same time it also exposes a fundamental misunderstanding of the technology itself, as well as an ignorance of the care taken by quality online agencies in ensuring the smooth and uninterrupted delivery of the therapy.

Truthfully the technical requirements of online Occupational Therapy are relatively modest compared to the many other online activities that most of us engage in daily. The only elements of the video communication involved in online Occupational Therapy are a webcam, video conferencing software, secure web-based programs, a headset or speakers, and an internet connection.

And yet that “fear” often boils down to one thing—connectivity. If anything could jeopardize the session, it is weak or erratic connectivity. To assuage that fear, consider the following in determining an appropriate connection strategy.

If the download speed is calibrated correctly, the connection should be optimal for the session and screen sharing. As a precaution, establishing an alternative connection (e.g., telephone, email) enables troubleshooting the connection or rescheduling the session. What's more, a hard-wired connection is optimal in a shared Wi-Fi environment.

**MYTH #4 Online Occupational Therapy Compromises Client Engagement**

Many schools considering online Occupational Therapy are scared away by the fear that online Occupational Therapy will compromise student engagement during the session. Is there a way to ameliorate this concern? More specifically, what can an Occupational Therapist do to ensure the optimal participation needed for a high-quality session?

Truthfully many of the problems afflicting client engagement in the online venue are unrelated to the fact that the therapy is delivered online. They exist even when the therapy is face-to-face. And many of these challenges can be solved by following some simple guidelines that will enhance client engagement.
To name but a few, these guidelines include removing distractions at the outset of the session, taking short breaks, connecting with the child on a personal level, keeping the activities relevant to the skills being worked on, and supplying heavy doses of positive reinforcement. Ironically, the online venue can often help to engage the student. For some kids, it is easier to focus on the computer than when the therapist is in the room. Distractions such as the way the therapist is sitting or peripheral movements don’t exist during when the therapy is delivered online.

And of course, the plethora of games, video interactions and imaginative digital learning creations afforded by the online venue assures that the student will enjoy an endless array of exciting choices which will enhance engagement in the therapy.

Global Teletherapy: Your Best Online Occupational Therapy Option

Over the past few years, Global Teletherapy has played a pivotal role in helping children, regardless of geographic location, who otherwise would have no access to OTs to get the therapy they need to lead successful lives.

Global Teletherapy has formed a large and expanding team of highly qualified occupational therapists, fully credentialed, and with a minimum of 2 years of clinical experience who deliver top-quality teletherapy in 27 states. We invest much more time and energy than other companies in personalizing each session to ensure your satisfaction. And often that “personal touch” can make all the difference!

SOME OF THE BENEFITS INCLUDE:

FOR SCHOOLS

EXCELLENCE The mission of Global Teletherapy is to staff schools with top-quality therapists who will deliver exceptional value through excellent, flexible, and affordable Online Occupational Therapy. We provide a high-resolution, crystal-clear image, and follow best practices according to the general industry standards.

COMPLIANCE All Global Teletherapy occupational therapists are certified and are seasoned with a minimum of two years of professional experience. They are fully trained in teletherapy techniques before providing services. We maintain complete compliance with federal mandates, including IDEA, which means reduced liability regarding potentially painful punitive legal or financial consequences.

FULL-SERVICE Global Teletherapy handles recruitment and management of clinicians and ensures that they are appropriately licensed and credentialed in the school district’s state. Global Teletherapy assures that therapists are available when needed and handles session scheduling. The school district provides an onsite paraprofessional to facilitate logistics during therapy sessions.

SECURE Global Teletherapy ensures that sessions are extraordinarily reliable and in compliance with HIPAA, FERPA, and COPPA guidelines. Sessions are conducted over video conferencing, a trusted technology used by millions of users worldwide with 24/7 support to ensure the success of every therapy session.

FOR THERAPISTS

SUPPORT Administrative staff acts as a knowledgeable liaison and advocate for Global Teletherapy clinicians, stewarding the relationship between therapist and school. In an interview that can be found at Glassdoor.com, an employee shared, “Administrative staff within GT (Global Teletherapy) is *phenomenal* at clearly communicating expectations and providing training and *support* for therapist responsibilities.”

MATERIALS Once a new therapist is professionally trained to deliver onsite Occupational Therapy, Global Teletherapy opens the door to the trove of materials available in their extensive library of resources and activities. These resources and activities can be utilized as is or modified to meet specific student needs. Also, Global Teletherapy shows therapists how to gain access to even more excellent resources available for free.

COMMUNITY While you might deliver therapy in the comfort of your home, you are never alone with Global Teletherapy. We have developed an active work community that encourages clinicians to share ideas and troubleshoot problems. Sharing is at the core of our philosophy to provide every student with the best possible Occupational Therapy experience. Three times
a year OTs join “The Huddle” to share their knowledge and expertise, share problems, brainstorm solutions, and grow professionally.

**TECHNICAL SUPPORT** Utilizing a renowned video conferencing platform has many benefits. With a stellar reputation for being stable and reliable, in the unlikely event a technical problem arises, the dedicated and professional technical support is available to you 24/7.

**FOR FAMILIES**

**TOP-NOTCH THERAPISTS** Global Teletherapy ensures that each child will work with a top-notch therapist. They meticulously screen every clinician with a comprehensive interview and an exhaustive review of clinical experience, licenses, and qualifications to assure that the prospective therapist has all the necessary credentials for your state or region.

**QUALITY CONTROL** Upon acceptance, the therapist is trained in online therapy technology, and every therapist’s subsequent performance is closely monitored. Global Teletherapy’s policies promote consistency. Although the flexible nature of online Occupational Therapy allows for a child to have multiple therapists, every child is assigned to a particular clinician, who assumes responsibility for that child’s therapy.

**RELATIONSHIP** This arrangement of one therapist per child promotes continuity and a trusting and consistent relationship between the online therapist, child, parents, and teacher. If the child needs a new therapist for any reason, Global Teletherapy will ease the transition with minimal disruption to the child’s therapy.

**SUPERVISION** Global Teletherapy provides supervision. An onsite paraprofessional (or a parent/learning coach for virtual school students) supervises and handles any hands-on requirements, especially for younger students. Some older students may not require supervision, depending on the policy of the school.
Experience The Global Difference™

Contact Global Teletherapy to learn more and schedule a demo.