

# NEW GRAD GUIDE

SAOT   
Society of Alberta Occupational Therapists



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# PURPOSE OF THIS RESOURCE

Welcome new graduate! We at the Society of Alberta Occupational Therapists (SAOT) remember the excitement, anxiety and sometimes outright fear we felt as we concluded our academic program and began our working careers. Here is what some of our members had to say when reflecting back on that time:

*“As a new grad, I was full of hope and passion, but wondered if I knew enough to do my job well. I was apprehensive when applying for jobs in areas I had not had fieldwork placements.”* - Christina, Edmonton

*“I was excited, a little nervous, but really motivated to learn and develop my skills. I felt exhilarated to be done with school and able to earn some money while doing something important and fun.”* - Heather, Calgary

*“I was terrified and felt unprepared. Everyone else I worked with was an expert and knew all kinds of things that I didn’t know, but felt like I should. I felt like an imposter.”* - Penny, Edmonton

*“I was excited to take the next step and proud of myself for making it through a demanding program. I felt sadness about our class splitting up.”* - Calvin, Sherwood Park

Many of our members remembered feeling lost and confused, and wishing that there had been a resource to guide them:

*“I wish I had known more about making a resume, searching for a job, and interviewing skills”* - Renee, Calgary

*“Information on how to maintain work life balance. More resources on maintaining competence, renewing my registration, and what kind of insurance I needed.”*  
- Candi, Red Deer

*“A ‘how to’ guide on what needed to be completed after graduation.”* - Sarah, Edmonton

Some of the quotations above may echo what you are feeling. That is why we made this resource; to help make the transition from student to practicing occupational therapist easier.

# CERTIFICATION EXAM

## ■ I just graduated, what are my next steps?

The next steps you take will depend on your own personal goals. If you plan to work in Alberta, you must:

- ▶ Write and pass the National Certification Exam
- ▶ Obtain liability insurance
- ▶ Register with the [Alberta College of Occupational Therapists \(ACOT\)](#)

## The Certification Exam

- The National Occupational Therapy Certification Exam (NOTCE) is administered by the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists (CAOT)
- You must pass the NOTCE to obtain a general OT license in Alberta, which is required before you can practice as an occupational therapist
- You can find general information of the NOTCE [here](#)

## When is the certification exam and how do I register?

- The NOTCE is offered twice per year, usually in July and November
- Exact dates, registration procedure, and fee schedule can be found on the [NOTCE](#) website. Always refer to the website for the most up to date information.

## What happens if I fail the certification exam?

- You can re-write the NOTCE during any subsequent exam sitting
- CAOT will allow you to write the NOTCE a total of 3 times

## How to prepare for the certification exam

- Everything you have learned during your degree is exactly what you need, but to be successful it is important to understand the format and procedures
- It is recommended you review the following [resources](#):
  - ▶ NOTCE Resource Manual
  - ▶ NOTCE Study Guide with practice questions

For more information refer to CAOT [FAQs about the NOTCE](#)

## Acknowledgements

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# LIABILITY INSURANCE

## ■ **What is professional liability insurance (PLI) and why do I need it?**

Your clients could hold you responsible for damages resulting from a negligent act, error, omission or malpractice. The Health Professions Act (HPA) requires all registered OTs to hold PLI. Starting in 2022, [ACOT](#) will require all registering OTs to personally hold a minimum of \$5 million in PLI – employer's insurance coverage will not be sufficient. In fact, ACOT requires proof of insurance for registration on both the provisional and general register permits.

Professional Liability Insurance covers your expenses in case:

- A client/colleague files a complaint about you to ACOT.
- A client sues you, claiming you are guilty of malpractice.
- The police issue you a criminal charge (i.e. resulting from fraud, theft or sexual abuse claims).

## ■ **Where do I get PLI?**

Professional liability insurance may be purchased through:

- [SAOT](#)
- [CAOT](#)
- [An independent insurance broker.](#)

Note that if you are purchasing liability insurance through SAOT or CAOT, you will need to purchase a membership first.

## ■ **How much does PLI cost?**

- To alleviate the financial burdens of being a new graduate, SAOT offers a 50% discount on SAOT membership fees and a 50% premium discount on PLI for those entering their first year of practice. New grads starting their second year are eligible for a 25% premium discount on PLI.
- PLI covers you for one year (March 1 to March 1 of the following year) and must be renewed annually. Generally, people renew their PLI with their membership.
- Refer to Appendix A: SAOT Professional and Commercial Liability Insurance for details

## ■ **How much PLI is enough?**

- As per ACOT, the PLI offered through SAOT is all you need to practice in Alberta. Reach out to your insurance provider to discuss the amount and types of coverage you will need.
- If you are planning to be self-employed, you may wish to consider additional coverage, such as Commercial General Liability. ACOT has a helpful [Q&A resource on private practice](#) that addresses some of these concerns.



# REGISTRATION WITH THE COLLEGE

In order to practice as an OT in Alberta, you need to first register with the [ACOT](#). ACOT is the regulatory/licensing body for OTs in Alberta. ACOT's mandate of regulating competent and ethical OTs is done under the direction of the [Health Professions Act \(HPA\)](#) and the [Occupational Therapists Profession Regulation \(OTPR\)](#). OTs registered in Alberta are expected to practice in accordance with the HPA, OTPR and ACOT's [Standards of Practice \(SoP\)](#) and [Code of Ethics \(CoE\)](#). If you intend to practice in another province, you will need to register with the College of that province.

## ■ Can I work as an OT before I pass the NOTCE?

- A new graduate of a Canadian University can apply for provisional registration while waiting for conferment of their degree, prior to completion of the national certification exam, or while waiting for submission of examination results to ACOT.
- ACOT will grant you a Provisional Register Permit if you:
  - ▶ Register with ACOT and meet all their [eligibility requirements](#)
  - ▶ Are registered to write the next available NOTCE
  - ▶ Have an offer of employment where you will be [supervised by an OT](#)
- After you meet all the registration requirements and passed the NOTCE you will be eligible to apply for a [General Register Permit](#) through ACOT

## ■ How do I find a supervisor as a provisional OT?

It is the responsibility of the employer to assign a qualified OT to the applicant. Supervised practice must be provided by an OT on the General Register of the College with a minimum of one year work experience. The supervisor should be available to you if you need help, and this can be accomplished in person or virtually. Your supervisor is accountable for services provided by you as per Standard of Practice 1.4. Although your supervisor is not required to co-sign your chart notes/documentation, they may wish to do so at first until they have established your competence in the practice area.

## ■ What happens if I fail the NOTCE?

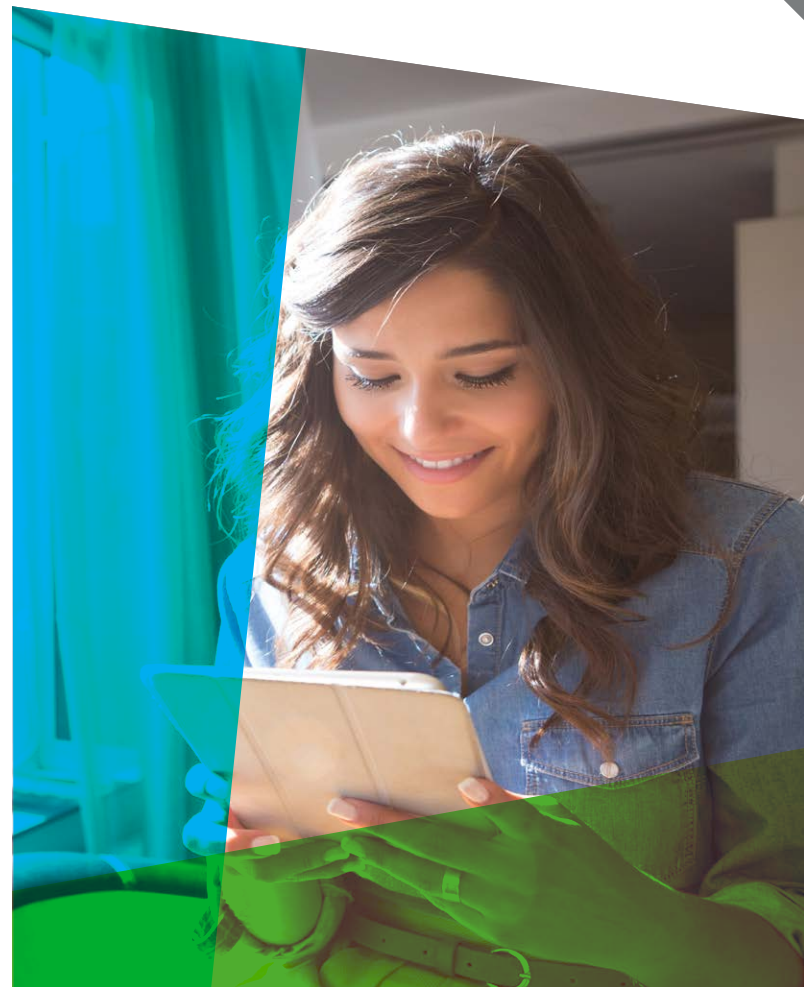
- You can re-write the NOTCE during any subsequent exam sitting. The exam is offered twice a year, typically in July and November.
- CAOT will allow you to write the NOTCE a total of 3 times (i.e. you can retry the exam twice)
- A Provisional Practice Permit is valid for one year but can be extended once if the next available exam date is beyond the one year time period.

## ■ What title can I use for myself right after I finish all my schoolwork and fieldwork?

- If you have not registered with ACOT, or you are waiting for your registration status to be confirmed by ACOT, you cannot call yourself an occupational therapist. You may call yourself an "Occupational Therapy Student" or "MScOT Student".
- If you have a Provisional Register Permit, you can use the title "Provisional Occupational Therapist" or "Provisional OT"
- If you are on the General Register, you can call yourself a "Registered Occupational Therapist (AB)", "Occupational Therapist (Registered AB)", or "OT (Reg. AB)"

## ACOT's Tips and Tricks for Registration

- Use the "Registration Checklist for New Grads" table below to prepare your application
- Apply for Registration and Permit online by visiting the [ACOT website](#)
- Don't register too early (i.e., there is no student category of registration with ACOT), but don't leave it too late (apply as soon as you have the required checklist items gathered);
- Allow up to 10 business days for application processing;
- Check out the [Registration page](#) of the ACOT website for more details; and,
- Contact [registration@acot.ca](mailto:registration@acot.ca) with any questions.



## ■ Registration Checklist for New Grads

Note: Refer to [ACOT](#) for the most up-to-date information

	Requirement	Details & Action Required	Notes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Identification and current contact details	Provide a copy of any government issued ID such as a birth certificate or driver's license.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Education	Arrange for your university to send ACOT a copy of your official (final) transcript of academic record stating that "degree requirements have been met", <b>OR</b> An original copy of your written notice from your university that you have obtained your degree and are eligible to convocate, <b>OR</b> If you were internationally educated, there are additional steps to complete through <a href="#">Association of Occupational Therapy Regulatory Organizations (ACOTRO)</a>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Professional experience as an OT	This requirement is met if you completed an education program approved by the College within the past two years	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Exam	You must successfully complete the <a href="#">NOTCE</a> ◆ Provide a copy of your NOTCE exam results letter and certificate, <b>OR</b> Be eligible to sit the examination ◆ Contact CAOT and ask them to send directly to ACOT a "Statement of Candidacy" notice indicating the date you will sit the NOTCE exam.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Professional Liability Insurance	You must hold current professional liability insurance in the amount of five million dollars ◆ Provide a completed professional liability insurance declaration	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Proof of being lawfully permitted to work in Canada	If you are not a Canadian citizen, please provide a copy of your: ◆ Canadian work permit or visa; <b>OR</b> ◆ See <a href="#">ACOT website</a> for alternative means of meeting requirement	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Suitability to practice/ good character	Provide answers to registration application questions about your suitability to practice.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Criminal record check, including vulnerable sector check	Provide an original or notarized copy of the results of your criminal record check, including a vulnerable sector check dated within the six months before submitting your application for registration. Note that this is often a requirement of employment as well. This can be obtained through your local police or RCMP detachment.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Protecting Patients from Sexual Abuse and Misconduct	Provide certificate of completion for online modules. You can access the module here. For more information, visit the <a href="#">ACOT website</a> .	
<input type="checkbox"/>	English language proficiency	Provide proof of graduation from a Canadian occupational therapy, English language education program; <b>OR</b> , See <a href="#">ACOT website</a> for alternative means of meeting requirement	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Employment (for new grads)	Provide information on employer and projected employment start date	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Supervised Practice Agreement (for new grads)	Provide name and contact information for your occupational therapist supervisor	

## ■ What expenses can I anticipate in my first year as a new grad?

Note: The below is an example only as of 2021; refer to the specific website for up-to-date information and details. Taxes are not included.

Expense	Optional or Mandatory	Estimate
NOTCE Exam	Mandatory	\$755
NOTCE Online Prep Class	Optional	\$385
CAOT Membership <i>(Includes first year PLI and NOTCE Study Guide and Practice Exam)</i>	Optional	\$265
SAOT Membership	Optional	\$75
SAOT Professional Liability Insurance	Mandatory	\$75
Criminal Record Check with Vulnerable Sector Check	Mandatory	\$60
ACOT Registration Application fee	Mandatory	\$150
ACOT New Permit Application fee <i>(fees are prorated for new registrants depending on when they will begin practice)</i>	Mandatory	\$550



# FINDING A JOB

## ■ *How can I be successful in finding a job as an occupational therapist?*

There are many resources and job boards available online to help you in the job search process, but securing a job is more than just submitting your application. Below you will find tips and tricks on how to secure the job you want, including:

- Finding job postings
- Writing your resume
- Succeeding in the interview
- Choosing the job you want

## STEP ONE: Searching for a job

Finding your first job seems daunting, but you've come to the right place for help.

### Begin your search BEFORE you graduate

- Many jobs are found by reaching out to contacts. Who are your contacts? The best ones are former and/or current preceptors. Ask about positions that may be opening up or if they know of any positions in your area of preferred practice. Practicum sites and preceptors are excellent resources for future employment.
- While there is no "right" time to start looking, many students begin this process sometime during their last placement. Some students choose to focus on their placement and studying for the exam and don't start looking until later. Consider your own unique circumstances as you decide what timing will be right for you.

### Where should I look to find OT job postings?

- [Alberta Health Services \(AHS\)](#)
  - ▶ For specific information related to applying for jobs at AHS, visit their [FAQ](#) page
- [CAOT: Careers in Occupational Therapy](#)
- [Covenant Health Careers](#)
- [ca.indeed.com](http://ca.indeed.com)
- [LinkedIn](#)

### What wage can I expect for my first job?

- Your wage will vary depending on which sector you choose to work in
- If the position is unionized, you can look at the collective agreement to see the pay scale
- Check out the [Government of Alberta ALIS](#) website for an employment profile

## STEP TWO: Applying for your job

I have found a job I want, how do I begin?

### Carefully read the job posting

- What does the prospective employer require?
  - ▶ Driver's license?
  - ▶ BCLS certification?
- Postings will list "required" and "preferred" qualifications. Required means applicants must have these certifications/skills/experience, while preferred is more of a wish list. When you are writing your resume and cover letter, clearly indicate how you meet their required and preferred qualifications.
- Consider if you meet the requirements of the position. Remember that depending on the candidates that apply for the position, the employer may be willing to compromise on some of the qualifications they are looking for, such as number of years' experience in the field. You can consider reaching out to the hiring manager to discuss what they are looking for, or if you have questions about what the position entails.
- Highlight words in the posting that relate to soft skills, these are often more important to the employer

### Prepare your resume

- Highlight your experiences that show you are the best fit for the job
- Focus on your skills and achievements, not the event that allowed you to gain them. Examples include:
  - ▶ Strong communicator
  - ▶ Team player
  - ▶ Independent worker
  - ▶ Excellent time management
- Keep your resume organized and concise, no more than 2 pages. Many online resources exist to help you write your resume if you are not sure where to begin.
  - ▶ [UofA Career Centre](#)
  - ▶ [Resume.oi](#)
  - ▶ [Indeed.com](#)
- Proofread and then proofread again
- Ask your fellow students, friends, or family to review your resume and cover letter

### Write a cover letter

- Always include a cover letter with your resume
- Customize it to suit the position you are applying for
- Highlight and match your skills to the position
- Be thorough, but concise
- Many basic cover letter templates are available online:
  - ▶ [Basic cover letter](#)
  - ▶ [OT focus](#)
- More: [AOTA JobLink](#)

## STEP THREE:

### Preparing for the interview

I have scheduled an interview, what should I do to make the best impression:

#### Watch these presentations:

- [Preparing for a Job Interview as an Occupational Therapist](#)
- [Interviews - Your First OT Job](#)

#### Research your employer

- The organization (mission, vision, purpose, values)
- What the job entails in this particular setting
- Why do you want to work for this employer?

#### Write down all your strengths and areas of improvement

- You want to sell yourself as the best candidate for the job, this includes knowing your strengths and understanding you always have room to grow

#### Write down at least three questions to ask

- Note questions you think of during the interview, but it is always good to be prepared with other questions as this shows you are interested and keen. Examples of questions:
  - ▶ Mentorship opportunities
  - ▶ Continuing education, is this offered on site or pursued independently
  - ▶ Performance evaluations, frequency and structure
  - ▶ Company culture
  - ▶ Hours of work

#### Practice answering questions

Behavioural interviews are commonly used in the healthcare industry. The interviewer is not interested in your grades or what courses you took; they want to know more about how you have reacted previously to situations, your critical thinking skills, and your ability to work on a team.

The questions can be grouped into the following types:

- **Technical Questions:** Demonstrate your knowledge of rehabilitation, the job you are applying for, and the organization.
  - ▶ “What do you know about the advertised position?”
  - ▶ “What style of communication would you expect to use with your supervising therapist?”
- **Behavioural Questions:** Tell the interviewer about a ‘real’ situation. A situation is described and you are asked to give an example which shows what you did in that situation
  - ▶ “Please give me an example of a situation when you experienced a conflict in the workplace and explain how you dealt with the conflict.”
- **Situational Questions:** describe to the interviewer how you would deal with a hypothetical problem/situation. The interviewer is evaluating your problem solving skills.
  - ▶ “You are working on a busy rehabilitation unit where there are only 2 OTs. Your co-worker calls in sick that morning. What do you do?”
- **Unacceptable Questions:** There are certain questions you should never be asked and you are not obligated to answer, including those related to marital status, sexual orientation, nationality, religion or cultural background. If you are asked these questions, try these responses:
  - ▶ “I prefer not to answer that question.”
  - ▶ “I don’t feel that that has any bearing on my ability to be a therapist, next question please.”

If you are repeatedly asked any of these questions, you should inform the Human Resources department of the facility or the Human Rights Commission. The Alberta Human Rights Commission website provides information about discrimination and the complaint process [www.albertahumanrights.ab.ca/PreEmpllnq.pdf](http://www.albertahumanrights.ab.ca/PreEmpllnq.pdf). For more information, refer to [14 Interview Questions You Should Never Answer](#).





Answering behavioural and situational questions is successfully done using STARS approach:

**S Situation:** describe a specific situation that relates to the question asked.

**T Task:** explain the task you were trying to achieve and why.

**A Action:** summarize the specific action(s) you took to address the situation.

**R Result:** explain the impact of your actions, whether the impact was positive or negative. Remember even if the result of your actions was negative, you can then explain what you learnt from this situation and what you would do differently the next time.

**S Skills:** what were the specific skills you used to accomplish the task or that you have since developed to help you deal with a similar situation again in the future.

The easiest way to prepare for an interview is to develop answers for typical questions. Use the prompts below to develop your own answers to these common questions:

#### ● Tell me about yourself

The answer should reflect your assessment of your qualities as an employee. You may be using some cliché statements (I am an enthusiastic team player) but you must back that up with a qualifying statement, such as:

- ▶ I always try to ensure my contribution to team success is well done and provided on time.
- ▶ Pulling your weight on a team can be hard work, but it is always easier to approach the work with a positive attitude
- ▶ I share my positive attitude despite obstacles so I can support the entire team.

#### ● Tell me about what you know of the advertised position

This is where your prep work comes in: reading the employer's website, identifying the Mission and Vision Statements, and understanding the organization's values. With this knowledge, you can use these words or phrases throughout the interview to demonstrate your fit within the organization. You should know the job description, qualities they are looking for, anticipated tasks, patient population, acuity of the unit/facility, and if the job is full time, part time or casual and permanent or temporary.

#### ● What do you consider to be your greatest strength or accomplishment?

The accomplishment does not have to relate directly to occupational therapy. Instead, you should describe the qualities that allowed you to reach that goal. Your answer should include behaviours or values common to successful healthcare professionals. Where possible use actual feedback you have received from coworkers or supervisors.

#### ● What do you consider to be your greatest weakness?

Turn a negative into a positive. It is important to be able to identify your own weaknesses or areas for improvement. Everyone has room for growth. Yours could be charting, scheduling, or



completing assessments in a timely fashion. Always tell the interviewer what you have or will do to overcome this weakness as part of your answer.

### Update your social media

It is common for potential employers to 'search' your name online before meeting you. You want to have a public profile that will not negatively affect your chances of getting an interview or a job.

While some social media sites are meant to be personal, you should ensure your security settings reflect this. Your public social media accounts, such as Twitter and LinkedIn, should be a positive reflection on you. Nothing on the public profile, both current and from the past, should call your judgment into question.

For more information on professional social media use, see the guidelines from [CAOT](#)

### Secure references

- Ensure you have at least 3 references
- You can speak to previous employers, practicum preceptors, volunteer supervisors, and/or instructors and ask if they would be willing to act as a reference for you
- You may list "References available upon request" on your resume
- Generally employers will ask for references during/following an interview
- References should know you well and speak to your credentials as both an OT and a desirable employee
- It is good etiquette to contact your references before your prospective employer does, to confirm that they are still willing to be a reference for you and to provide them with the job posting. Your preceptors may also ask for a copy of your CBFE to refresh their memory.
- Letters are not required, unless asked for prior to the interview, but a well organized reference list is necessary
- Follow up with your references after you find out if you were the successful candidate or not. You can let your reference know the outcome and thank them for their support.

## STEP FOUR: Attend the Interview

- Arrive early. Be sure to allow yourself at least 15 minutes before the interview is set to start to organize yourself and your papers.
- Dress professionally and ensure a tidy appearance
- Avoid fidgeting and other distracting behaviours such as playing with your hair, tapping fingers on the table, shaking your leg/foot, etc.
- Do not avoid eye contact. Maintaining appropriate eye contact demonstrates confidence.
- Relax and remember to smile
- Ask when you can expect a response from the employer

## STEP FIVE: Follow-up

### Responding to a Call Back

Congratulations! You have received a job offer. Now what?

- Be selective, but be flexible. Your first job may not be your dream job and it may not be perfect, but willingness to compromise may provide you with valuable experience you would not otherwise have had.
- Throughout your OT career you will change practice settings, eventually landing in your “dream” job. Where you start does not indicate where you will be in 10 years.
- If you choose to accept the position, be sure to confirm the start date, salary, work hours, and days of work.
- If you choose not to accept the position, be gracious. Express your appreciation for the opportunity and for the time they spent with you. Try to keep the door open for future opportunities.

## Setting up Your Own Practice

Is it risky for me to start my own private practice or enter a private sector in my first year?

- Before pursuing private practice it is important to consider your level of experience in your practice area and working alone or with minimal support
- ACOT has developed practice guidelines to assist OTs interested in setting up their own practice
  - ▶ [Legislative and Regulatory Considerations](#)
  - ▶ [FAQs for Private Practice](#)
- Remember all OTs are required to adhere to ACOT’s Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics, regardless of practice setting.
- SAOT offers a platform for [listing your practice](#)

Here are some recommendations from OTs:

*“Be open to opportunities outside of urban areas... these positions offer a huge opportunity to increase your skills and knowledge in a relatively short period of time.”*

- Suzanne, Edmonton

*“Try to start your job search early on, before you graduate. Do your research on prospective employers. If they don’t seem like a good fit, don’t struggle to try and make a bad fit a good one.”* - Sean, Okotoks

*“Don’t be disappointed if you don’t land a position in your preferred area right away. OTs offer so many options and I have worked in many different settings and each brought its own challenges and rewards.”*

- Heather, Calgary



# PRACTICE SUPPORTS AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

■ *There are so many different organizations out there! I feel confused by all the acronyms... what do they mean?*

## Society of Alberta Occupational Therapists (SAOT)

- Voluntary, non-regulatory body that provides networking, education and advocacy for **Alberta OTs**
- Offers [workshops](#) at discounted rates for members
- Free [practice resources](#)
- Volunteer and networking opportunities
- Coming Soon: Mentorship Program
- New grads receive a 50% discount on membership fees and PLI
- Offers different membership categories to meet your needs
- Follow SAOT on [social media](#) for news, events, and updates directly related to OTs in Alberta

## Alberta College of Occupational Therapists (ACOT)

- Mandatory, regulatory body for Alberta OTs; ACOT protects and serves the public interest
- Continuing Competence Program Resources and Information
- Practice Resources including applicable legislation, standards of practice, position statements and practice guidelines (including documentation, information privacy and disclosure



legislation, private practice, electronic communication with clients, providing OT services during COVID-19 pandemic etc.)

- Understanding the rules, guidelines, and suggestions from the college is essential to practicing as an informed, regulated professional.
- See below for more details on ACOT

## Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists (CAOT)

- Voluntary, non-regulatory body that provides networking, education and advocacy at a **national** level
- Membership with CAOT includes access to [OT Now](#), [CJOT](#), and several scientific journals from other countries
- Free and paid resources to prepare for NOTCE and support you in your practice
- Annual National Conference

## Professional Organizations at a Glance

Acronym	SAOT	ACOT	CAOT	WFOT	ACOTRO
<b>Full name</b>	Society of Alberta Occupational Therapists	Alberta College of Occupational Therapists	Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists	World Federation of Occupational Therapists	Association of Canadian Occupational Therapy Regulatory Organizations
<b>Membership or Registration</b>	Membership voluntary	Registration is required for practice in Alberta	Membership voluntary	Membership voluntary	N/A
<b>Primary Role</b>	Support Albertan OTs in their practice. Promote and advocate for OT services.	Protect Albertans by ensuring competent and ethical practice	National organization to support OTs in their practice. Promote and advocate for OT services.	International organization to support OTs in their practice. Promote and advocate for OT services.	National organization to ensure that OTs in Canada meet the same competencies.



## Occupational Therapists in Alberta must maintain competence and enhance provision of their professional services. This is mandated by the HPA and OTPR requirements.

### Alberta College of Occupational Therapists (ACOT)

The primary role of ACOT is to protect and serve the public interest by regulating/licensing competent and ethical occupational therapists in Alberta.

- To practice as an occupational therapist in Alberta, registration with ACOT is compulsory under the *Health Professions Act* (HPA)
- Completion of the [Continuing Competence Program \(CCP\)](#) is required under the *Health Professions Act* (HPA) and the *Occupational Therapists Professional Regulation* (OTPR) prior to a registrant renewing their practice permit
- The CCP uses a reflective approach to guide OTs to assess and reflect on how their practice adheres to the College's [Standards of Practice](#) and [Code of Ethics](#).
- Refer to the [ACOT website](#) for *CCP Resources and Practice Resources* for registered occupational therapists. These are found under the [Continuing Competence](#) tab.
  - ▶ **CCP Resources:** quarterly continuing competence meet ups, CCP guides, FAQs, submission rubric, submission examples, video tutorials, reflective practice
  - ▶ **Practice Resources:** applicable regulatory and professional legislation, standards of practice (SoP) and code of ethics (CoE), public protection legislation, mandatory sexual abuse and sexual misconduct resources, essential competencies for OT practice, and practice guidance (practice guidelines, FAQs, position and advisory statements) on topics such as: use of protected title, documentation, safe delivery of OT services during the pandemic, information privacy and disclosure legislation, electronic communication with clients, private practice, etc.)
- Understanding and complying with the regulatory and professional legislation, SoP, CoE and guidelines, is essential to practicing as an ethical and competent regulated occupational therapist in Alberta.

### ■ How do I stay registered with ACOT and prove my continuing competence?

- You must renew your practice permit with ACOT every year.
  - ▶ The registration year runs from March 1st to February 28th every year.
  - ▶ Renewal opens in January
- A regulated member who applies for renewal of a practice permit must comply with the legislative requirements and the continuing competence requirements provided for in the regulations (HPA, Section 40(1)(b)(i)).

- You will need to complete your CCP through [ACOT's online portal](#).
  - ▶ You are obligated to create a learning plan and reflect on **why** the learning indicator (ACOT's SoP, CoE, Bylaws) is important for your area of practice and clientele and **how** the learning activities undertaken will enhance your practice.
  - ▶ Throughout the registration year, you will:
    - ◆ gather learning records and reflect on progress towards your goals.
  - ▶ During the renewal period, you will:
    - ◆ Reflect on your learning plan and goals from the **current registration year** and indicate if you have achieved the goal.
    - ◆ Complete your self-assessment and start your learning plan for the **upcoming registration year**
- Completion of the CCP demonstrates that you are continually reflecting on and improving your skills, and are providing safe and ethical services, consistent with the professional regulations, SoP and CoE.
- A CCP is one of the ways regulatory Colleges in Alberta ensure that the public receives safe, competent, and ethical services from their regulated health professionals.
- Refer to the [ACOT website](#) for CCP requirements and resources, including:
  - ▶ Quarterly Continuing Competence Meet Ups
  - ▶ Guide to Registration Renewal
  - ▶ CCP Submission Rubric, examples of CCP Submissions and FAQ
  - ▶ Video tutorials to assist navigating the online registration/continuing competence platform and information on reflective practice

### ■ How important is it to keep Professional Development related materials?

- Keeping track of your PD activities is key for:
  - ▶ Determining personal needs for PD
  - ▶ Transitioning between jobs
  - ▶ Renewing your practice permit with ACOT
    - ◆ Maintaining a *Competence Portfolio* as part of the CCP. Registrants are encouraged to keep a portfolio that includes the date and activity undertaken, and supporting documentation such as certificates of formal training, mentorship or thank-you notes, copies of course outlines or content etc. Uploading supporting documentation to the *Learning Activity Records* in the online portal is *optional*. The *summary of the learning and impact on practice* (reflection) is the component required for your CCP Learning Activity Records.



Participating in on-going professional development (PD) and networking is the best way to keep yourself evidence-informed. Here are some recommendations from current OTs:

*“Check with ACOT, SAOT, AHS or your employer for OT contact supports like special interest groups, mentorship, or other OT-related networks.” - Robyn, Calgary*

*“There is always so much more to learn. Take advantage of all the PD that comes your way, especially webinars or online courses as those can be cheaper.” - Mina, Edmonton*

### ■ **Participating in conferences, webinars and advanced training is expensive... How can a new graduate afford to participate in these?**

- See **Appendix B: Keeping Up To Date** for specific suggestions.

### ■ **How do I find meaningful mentorship opportunities?**

Mentorship is a partnership between someone willing to share their experience and someone who wants to learn. It can be beneficial to have a seasoned OT with relevant experience in your area of interest or practice to talk to. These relationships can be structured and formal, or they can be more open and informal.

The SAOT Mentorship Program facilitates a member's access to member occupational therapists who are willing to assume a mentorship role with the goal of enabling a meaningful mentorship relationship. Through a member-protected on-line portal, OTs seeking mentors can search the SAOT database to find potential mentors with the skills and experience they are looking for. The program provides a framework for a self-directed approach to mentorship. Collaboratively, mentors and mentees may decide to either engage in a more informal partnership – i.e.: ad-hoc emails, calls, etc., or something more formal whereby a contract is signed, a meeting schedule is established, expectations are communicated, etc. Regardless of which option you choose, SAOT has some resources that can help during this process. Refer to [SAOT's website](#) for further details.

### ■ **How do I build my network without feeling like I'm taking advantage?**

Networking is forming and maintaining meaningful relationships with people who can help you in your career. This could be in the form of helping you gain exposure to new experiences or skills, new people, or new job opportunities. They can also be an important source of social and emotional support. Networking relationships are reciprocal; not only do your network connections benefit you, but you also support and benefit them. A strong networker is someone who treats people respectfully, learns what others need, connects people, shares their skills/ talent/ knowledge, and is thoughtful about making relationships worthwhile.

### ■ **What are the best ways to connect and engage with practicing OTs?**

Get involved in organizations and causes that are relevant to you. This could be through joining a voluntary professional organization, participating in PD activities, joining a community of practice, volunteering your time, applying for a position with the College, taking students, staying in contact with preceptors, engaging with social media, attending conferences... the list is endless! Here are some examples to get you started:

- SAOT
  - ▶ Mentorship and volunteer opportunities
- Your [university career centre](#) may have resources and information on networking

### ■ **I'm a new grad... what could I possibly offer my network of value?**

Don't sell yourself short! You just finished your program and have up-to-date evidenced based knowledge across many practice areas. Many OTs have been out of school for a long time and are keen to keep their own practice current. You are passionate about OT, eager to learn new things, and excited to make a difference. You bring a fresh perspective to the workforce and may have new ideas about how to solve existing problems. You have connections to the University and to researchers working in the field (they may even have taught some of your classes). You know many other new (or soon-to-be) OTs who have the qualifications and skills that employers are looking for. When you think about it, you actually have a lot to offer, and your value will only grow with time.

# MENTAL HEALTH & RESILIENCY

The transition from student to practicing OT is significant and can stir up a lot of emotions. Job hunting and beginning your career can be a scary and overwhelming time. If you are feeling like this, know that you are not alone and there are resources available to help you.

## ■ *I understand the theory behind OT assessment and intervention, but feel I don't have the skills to provide interventions.*

As a new grad you may feel you do not have adequate skills. The good news is that learning to think like an OT is the hard part and you already have that! Skills can be learned at the job site. Finding a mentor or taking professional development courses are great ways to develop your skills. It takes time and a lot of practice. Ensure you are only providing services you are competent in. If something is outside your current skill set, direct clients to a co-worker or community service who has the required skills.

## ■ *I'm worried I don't know enough to help my clients. I feel like a fraud. Is this normal?*

You may be experiencing imposter syndrome or the feeling you are not a competent professional, despite evidence to the contrary. This feeling is common and not unique to OT, and most people experience imposter syndrome at some point in their career. Imposter syndrome is uncomfortable, but you can develop skills and strategies to manage it. The following may be helpful:

- Acknowledge your feelings, but don't assume your self-perceptions are correct
- Speak with someone you trust such as a colleague, close friend, mentor, or mental health professional
- Know you are not alone
- Resist comparing yourself to others
- Keep perfectionistic tendencies in check
- Write down your feelings and accomplishments

Learn more about imposter syndrome and how to combat it:

- The University of Alberta Counselling and Clinical Services has these resources:
  - ▶ An [article](#) on risk factors for imposter syndrome and tips to overcome it
  - ▶ A [workshop](#) on Imposter Syndrome for UAlberta students
- This [TED Talk](#) outlines symptoms of imposter syndrome and offers strategies to help overcome this feeling.

## ■ *I'm under a lot of stress at work and it is starting to affect other areas of my life. I want to understand what I am experiencing.*

You probably chose OT as a profession to help people. That is a wonderful and noble thing, but too much caring can negatively impact your health and your ability to help. You may be experiencing burnout, compassion fatigue or even vicarious trauma.

**Burnout** is a state of physical and emotional exhaustion experienced when job satisfaction is low and feelings of being overwhelmed and powerless at work are high. The chronic stress you feel develops and worsens over time. Eventually, you feel empty, exhausted, depressed, detached, and disengaged from work and possibly your life. You may start to resent or dislike clients, co-workers and your employer. If you recognize the warning signs you can stop burnout before it starts:

- Unrealistic workload and/or unclear job expectations
- Spillover of work into non-work hours
- Mismatched values between you and the employer
- Dysfunctional workplace dynamics
- Feeling like you lack control, or that you are never able to get a handle on your workload
- Perfectionistic personality style
- Increased feelings of irritability, hopelessness or sadness
- Physical aches pains and fatigue
- Inadequate sleep and rest

**Compassion fatigue** is the exhaustion you feel when providing care for clients in acute distress. A lot of emotional energy and empathy is required when working with these clients. If your energy is not replenished, you may eventually feel like you have nothing left to give. Signs and symptoms include:

- Sadness and grief
- Avoidance or dread of working with some clients
- Reduced ability to feel empathy towards some clients
- Nightmares and negative thoughts
- Increased psychological arousal
- Feelings of detachment or decreased intimacy
- Fatigue and physical symptoms
- Poor concentration and judgement

**Vicarious trauma** has symptoms similar to compassion fatigue but they are not the same. Vicarious trauma is transformative and results in a shift in your worldview, sense of self, and sense of trust. You may also experience cognitive symptoms such as intrusive thoughts or memories, which are absent in compassion fatigue. Burnout, compassion fatigue and vicarious trauma can vary in their severity and it is possible to suffer from more than one at the same time.



What are the risk factors?

- Individual factors
  - ▶ empathetic personality
  - ▶ history of trauma
  - ▶ life stressors
- Situational factors
  - ▶ high workload
  - ▶ unhealthy workplace culture
  - ▶ client group

For each contributing factor or stressor, there are strategies and resources to help you recover.

### What can you do?

It can be a relief to have others listen and validate what you are going through. You have several options to help you cope and recover:

- Speak with your supervisor
  - ▶ Discuss workload expectations or changes to caseload/area of work
  - ▶ Ask what resources are available to support you. For example: Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP)
  - ▶ Ask for time away from work i.e. vacation days, personal days, or sick days. When you notice symptoms creeping in, taking a day off can be restorative and help prevent a prolonged sick leave.
- Seek support from co-workers, friends, loved ones, and mentors.
- Talk to a mental health professional. You can learn skills and strategies to help you cope, recover, and prevent future problems. You may be able to access services through your health coverage or EFAP.
- Contact WCB if you experience or witness a traumatic event at work and experience a [psychological injury](#) as a result. A traumatic event can include harassment or bullying, witnessing the severe injury of a coworker, or receiving threats from clients.

Prioritize your own health and strive for occupational balance. To help cope with stress and take your mind off work you can try these tips:

- Find relaxing or enjoyable activities
- Cultivate a mindfulness practice
- Participate in regular physical activity
- Ensure you are eating and sleeping well.
- Avoid working through lunch hours and staying late

If you do not take time to rest and recharge, you will not be effective at work. Reflect on your priorities and values: what are they and do they align with your work? If you are not living in accordance with your values and priorities, then something needs to change! Mental health is health, and by prioritizing yourself, you will be better able to serve your clients.

**■ *I'm not sure if this is the right setting for me. I can't get excited about this work. I feel bored with my interventions and worry my clients can tell.***

Your first job may not be your forever job and it might not even be a good fit. If you have tried and sought the help of your mentor and/or supervisor but nothing has changed, then it might be time to look at changing jobs. Changing jobs or practice areas can be refreshing and revitalizing.

Additional Resources:

- Workplace Health and Safety Resources for OTs, developed by OTs:
  - ▶ [OT Bounce](#) Resiliency resources and modules
  - ▶ [Fatigue in the OT Workplace](#)
  - ▶ [Psychological Health in the OT Workplace](#)
  - ▶ [Violence in the OT Workplace](#)
- ACOT
  - ▶ For questions about competent practice and relevant legislation
- Mental Health Help Line (1-877-303-2642)
  - ▶ This line is staffed 24/7 by mental health professionals. It is a confidential service that provides support, information and referrals to Alberta experiencing mental health concerns.
- [AHS Help in Tough Times](#)
  - ▶ This page contains links to various services and resources related to mental health.

Here are some final words of wisdom from practicing OTs for new grads:

*"You don't have to know everything... you just have to know where to look or who to ask. Listen to your clients, they will guide you." - Laura, Edmonton*

*"Know that there are many different areas as an OT you can work, and many different ways to be an OT. You don't have to stay in a job you aren't happy in, because there is so much an OT can do. Follow your interests and your heart and you will find meaningful work."*  
- Sandy, Edmonton

*"You have joined an amazing profession! Remember that you may have to advocate for your role at times, but OTs are a valuable resource and we change lives every day."*  
- Michelle, Lethbridge

# FINAL WORDS FROM SAOT

You did it! You made it to the end of the guide! We hope that this resource has answered some questions and made the prospect of getting registered and landing your first job a little less daunting. Just like any practicing OT, this guide aims to continually improve and develop over time... so please share your feedback with us at [info@saot.ca](mailto:info@saot.ca).

We at SAOT are excited to welcome you to this dynamic and diverse profession as you embark upon a rewarding career contributing to the health and well-being of Albertans. We look forward to being your practice partner. Dedicated to the well-being of all Albertans, SAOT is the vehicle to drive practice, shape capacity and grow the profession of occupational therapy in Alberta by bridging research, practice, advocacy and policy.

Here's what some of our current members have to say about SAOT:

*"SAOT offers a variety of resources and educational workshops that I have found highly beneficial. I have grown as an OT through my participation in SAOT activities, workshops, and AGMs."* - Candi, Red Deer

*"SAOT has helped me network with OTs in different roles; whether it's through education or the private practice listing. I feel more connected being a member of SAOT."* - Sandy, Edmonton

*"I found SAOT's support for private practice to be invaluable during the COVID-19 pandemic. There is also strength in numbers, so it's great to have such a strong organization advocating for the role of OT in Alberta."* - Michelle, Lethbridge

**Phone:**

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(855) 691-7268

**Email:**

[info@saot.ca](mailto:info@saot.ca)

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P.O. Box 53079  
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## Professional & Commercial Liability Insurance

### Society of Alberta Occupational Therapists Insurance Program



BrokerLink is a proud partner of the Society of Alberta Occupational Therapists (SAOT). We offer SAOT members exclusive insurance rates for professional liability.

### Professional Liability Insurance

Also known as errors and omissions insurance. This coverage provides financial protection in the event of a lawsuit based on negligence, errors, or mistakes allegedly made by you while providing professional services.

### Package Options

PACKAGES	SUBLIMITS
<b>OPTION 1</b> Premium: \$73	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ \$6,000,000 Professional Liability</li> <li>✓ \$300,000 Penal Legal Expense</li> <li>✓ \$300,000 Disciplinary Legal Costs</li> <li>✓ \$50,000 Security and Privacy Liability</li> </ul>
<b>OPTION 2</b> Premium: \$122	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ \$10,000,000 Professional Liability</li> <li>✓ \$300,000 Penal Legal Expense</li> <li>✓ \$300,000 Disciplinary Legal Costs</li> <li>✓ \$50,000 Security and Privacy Liability</li> </ul>

\*New graduates receive a 50% premium reduction in the first year of practice and a 25% reduction in the second year.

### Additional Program Highlights

- ✓ Coroner's inquest sublimit
- ✓ Extended reporting period – retirement
- ✓ Identity theft expense endorsement
- ✓ Loss of earnings endorsement
- ✓ Penal legal costs coverage
- ✓ Therapy and counselling extension
- ✓ Trial reimbursement endorsement

Give us a call today to get started.

**1.800.567.2048** | [dwtm.group@brokerlink.ca](mailto:dwtm.group@brokerlink.ca)



# Appendix A

## Optional Commercial General Liability

Accidents can happen and it's important to ensure you have coverage for common risks, such as a customer getting injured, or damage to a customer's property.

### Package Options

PACKAGES	SUBLIMITS
<b>OPTION 1</b> Premium: \$136	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ General Liability \$2,000,000</li><li>✓ Property Damage and Libel and Slander</li></ul>
<b>OPTION 2</b> Premium: \$213	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ General Liability \$5,000,000</li><li>✓ Property Damage and Libel and Slander</li></ul>

## Legal Guard Telephone Assistance for Professionals

Legal Guard provides the following services:

- 4/7 telephone access to a legal information service for questions you have relating to your business.
- Unlimited access
- Legal information provided by qualified lawyers in response to your questions.
- If you need full legal representation or advice, referral to a local lawyer can be arranged at preferred rates.

Call Legal Guard toll-free at **1-855-365-LEGAL (1-855-365-5342)** and you will be contacted by a qualified lawyer.

## Personal Insurance

As an SAOT member, you can receive exclusive discounts on your personal Home and Auto Insurance through BrokerLink's group insurance plan.

At BrokerLink, our job isn't just selling insurance. We're here to give our customers advice when it comes to protecting the things that are important to them. Insurance can be confusing, but you don't have to do it alone! We are here to help.



To learn more, and for a free, no-obligation quote contact us.

**1.800.567.2048**

[dwtn.group@brokerlink.ca](mailto:dwtn.group@brokerlink.ca)

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 BrokerLink  
Insurance

# Appendix B: Keeping Up To Date

Being aware of resources available in your immediate environment can be an effective way to stay informed, especially with the new and up to date information for your practice context.

## Look for free PD opportunities

- SAOT offers workshops at discounted rates to members and workshop volunteers attend for free
- Monitor relevant organizations/websites/social media for free webinars, workshops and symposia
- Be open to relevant resources developed by/for other professions

## Your Employer

- Some employers offer funding for PD activities or offer their own inservices. They may subscribe to relevant professional journals. Some, like AHS, have access to library services and research material.

## Open Access Journals

- Your university library may offer some free journals and databases for alumni.
- Many relevant journals are offered as [open access](#) for the public, this means you do not require a subscription to access articles.
- [Google Scholar](#) will list open access articles and PDFs available for free

## Vendors and Community Organizations

- Watch for presentations offered by vendors or community organizations. You can also contact vendors directly if there is an area or type of product you are interested in learning more about.

## Get Involved in Research

- Respond to requests for proposals: look for the chance to lead workshops, apply for grants, submit abstracts, develop resources or join a project funded by an outside organization.

## Social Media and Other Sources

- Follow relevant organizations on social media

## Alert/RSS Feeds

- [Google Alerts](#) - These alerts pull news stories from all over the web, and can be sent to any email account.
  - ▶ Limit your alert pulls using key terms relevant to your practice. Consider:

- ◆ Location information: Canada, Alberta, City, your organization
- ◆ Practice information: Occupational therapy, Health, Rehabilitation, Client population (e.g., veterans, pediatrics), Setting (e.g., hospitals, community)

### ▶ Policy information:

- ◆ Health Canada
- ◆ Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care

### ▶ Sample alert terms:

- ◆ Alberta + stroke + rehabilitation
- ◆ Canada + senior's health

### ● [Google Scholar](#)

- ▶ Pulls research updates according to your key terms.
- ▶ Scientific Journals

## Follow organizations on social media or subscribe to their mailing lists

Follow organizations that align with your interests. Note: Some of these organizations may also offer their own opportunities for PD.

Note: This list offers a very small sample of organizations/websites that can inform your practice. Be on the lookout for others specific to your interests!

- [Alberta Health](#)
- [CBC Health](#)
- [Mental Health Commission of Canada \(MHCC\)](#)
- [Canadian Mental Health Association](#)
- [Centre for Addiction and Mental Health \(CAMH\)](#)
- [Faculty of Rehabilitation UofA Professional Development](#)
- [Rural Health Professions Action Plan](#)
- [National Institute on Aging](#)
- [Rehabilitative Care Alliance](#)
- [Alberta Public Health Association](#)
- [Alliance for Healthier Communities](#)
- [Autism Society Alberta](#)
- [The OT Toolbox](#)
- [Alzheimer Society of Canada](#)
- [Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada](#)
- [ALS Canada](#)
- [Canadian Virtual Hospice](#)
- [World Federation of Occupational Therapists](#)
- [Royal College of Occupational Therapists](#)
- [Translating Research in Elder Care \(TREC\)](#)
- [American Occupational Therapy Association](#)

