

**“ Thanks to occupational therapists in the schools, my children have mastered skills they haven’t had before and their lives have been made easier. ”**

I have been a foster parent for 12 years. The children I take care of have conditions that range from spina bifida to cerebral palsy. My children range in age from kindergarten to high school and over the years, we’ve worked with about six different occupational therapists in the schools.

My goals include improving my children’s fine motor skills and adapting their environment so they can do various activities with less difficulty. Following a recommendation from an occupational therapist in school, my daughter, who has cerebral palsy, used adaptive scissors. Since she has the use of one hand, this tool enabled her to cut for the first time at eight years old. This was a big achievement. She said, “I can do it, Mom. I can do it!” Everyone in our family shared her joy.

An occupational therapist at school also made a recommendation for my son, who also has cerebral palsy, which improved our bathroom procedures. When he was younger, we would always lay him on a change table. As he grew bigger, we could no longer do this and since he couldn’t stand on his own, we had to lay him on the floor. At school, the occupational therapist got him a grab bar, which he can hold onto and bear weight. Then we can prepare him for the bathroom. This gives him so much more dignity and has made life so much simpler. It was a great accomplishment.

Other recommendations from occupational therapists have included using special desks or chairs for my children to improve their sitting posture, squeezing balls to improve fine motor skills, raising toilet seats and providing splints to use to prevent contractures and increase their function.

For my children, the everyday things are just as important as the major breakthroughs.

I find the occupational therapists I’ve worked with very approachable, reliable and willing to help. When I have a question or a concern, I feel very comfortable calling them to get a professional opinion that I trust. You’re getting more answers than if you go to your family doctor because they don’t deal with those specific issues. I’ve also built a rapport with my occupational therapists. If the recommendations they make work well in the schools, we adopt them at home as well. Some of them have even come to our home to see my children in their environment and have made recommendations.

When you deal with special needs children, you have a multi-disciplinary team. The teachers have their role to play, the physiotherapists have their role to play, and the occupational therapists have a very important role as part of a team that develops total care for your special needs children.

When my children graduate from high school, I’ll know that they have benefited from these services in the schools. My children have all gained abilities that they didn’t have before. Their lives have been made easier, which is wonderful.



**Occupational Therapy – Skills for the job of living!**



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