

Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists What is the Workforce Integration Project?



International graduates often find it difficult to work as occupational therapists in Canada. Despite being eager to work in this country, many face barriers to entering the workforce. At the same time, there is a demand for occupational therapists across Canada, with many areas reporting shortages.

The Workforce Integration Project is an 18 month initiative that is gathering information from international graduates, educators, regulators, professional associations and other groups. Funded by the Government of Canada's Foreign Credential Recognition Program, the purpose of this Project is to identify issues that enable or prevent international graduates to integrate into the Canadian workforce. Project findings will be used to develop recommendations for future action to address identified issues.

A national advisory committee has provided input into the Project objectives, methods and recommendations. The advisory committee has representation from a wide group of individuals and organizations that are concerned about the workforce integration of international occupational therapy graduates.*

Analyzing the issues

The Workforce Integration Project involves a multi-stage process:

- An analysis of recent documents relating to the occupational therapy workforce in Canada and factors that may influence the acculturation of international occupational therapy graduates.
- Interviews and discussions with regulators, educators and professional associations at the provincial, federal and international levels, employers and provincial settlement agencies regarding workforce entry processes, challenges and available resources for international occupational therapy graduates when they come to Canada.
- A survey of international occupational therapy graduates who registered to practice in Canada in the last five years to gain an overview of who is coming to Canada, as well as the issues they face and their experiences following their arrival.
- Speaking with individual volunteer international occupational therapy graduates to develop an in-depth understanding of the issues and experiences they faced when coming to Canada to work. The volunteers were selected to provide as diverse a range of issues as possible. Volunteers differed in relation to where they were living in Canada as well as their country of education, language of instruction and work experiences.
- Consultations with relevant stakeholder groups to determine actions that address the priority issues identified by the Project to reduce barriers to the workforce integration of international graduates of occupational therapy in Canada.

Deliverables

The Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists will submit the final Project report and recommendations to the Government of Canada Foreign Credential Recognition Program by October 2006.

For more information

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* Representatives of the Association of Canadian Occupational Therapy Regulatory Organizations, Association of Canadian Occupational Therapy University Programs, Professional Alliance of Canada, Canadian Occupational Therapist Assistant/Physiotherapist Assistant Educators' Council, Canadian Health Professionals Secretariat of the National Union and the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists as well as occupational therapy employers and international graduates are members of the national advisory committee.

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