

CAOT COVID-19 Q&A FACT SHEET

Provision of OT Services: Telehealth	
What are the practical considerations for me in the provision of telehealth services?	There are several practical considerations for the safe and effective provision of OT services through telehealth. CAOT has posted a telehealth fact sheet to provide you with links to other resources to support your decision whether to transition to telehealth. We advise OTs to pursue a thorough assessment of their options and clients' needs before transitioning to telehealth and not allow the “panic” associated with the COVID-19 crisis lead you to make decisions that would put your practice at risk in the long term.
We have been advised to use platforms with end to end encryption, but our College has not listed any specific platforms. I am confused as to which one I should choose.	The choice of a telecommunication technology to support your telehealth services is an important and strategic one. Multiple platforms are available and providers are now articulating more information about encryption, archiving, and privacy issues. CAOT has compiled a short list of existing platforms and basic features in the telehealth fact sheet , for you to investigate further. We encourage OTs to consider which providers may work for them both now and into the future when weighing their options.
What videoconferencing or telepractice platform does CAOT recommend for OTs to provide virtual or remote services?	CAOT does not recommend or endorse any particular telecommunication platform. The choice of a telecommunication technology to support your telehealth services is an important and strategic one that needs to consider issues such as accessibility, encryption, archiving, and privacy. CAOT has compiled a short list of existing platforms and basic features in the telehealth fact sheet , for you to investigate further. We encourage OTs to consider which providers may work for them both now and into the future when weighing their options.
Which platforms meet the privacy legislation in effect in my jurisdiction?	Members should consult the policy set by their local health authority, institution and their provincial regulatory body (i.e. College or Ordre). For instance, in Ontario, the College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario has issued a guideline that may help you get the answer to your question: College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario. (2017). Guidelines for Telepractice in Occupational Therapy .
I saw something about Sun Life Canada is covering OT virtual services, do you know about other insurances?	CAOT is doing its best to post the most current information to support the practice of OT in Canada. Sun Life Canada has directly reached out to CAOT to inform us about this extension of coverage. It is highly probable that other insurance providers are also covering virtual services. We advise that your clients communicate with their insurers to find out if telehealth services by occupational therapists are covered. There may be an announcement on the insurer's website.
My employer is asking me to conduct initial assessments (for community clients) over the phone. I am concerned with conducting my assessment over the phone (need to see environment, observe client etc.). Do you think it is appropriate to say that I cannot responsibly assess clients over the phone?	Whenever there is a concern about the quality of services offered to clients and/or about a potential risk to the clients, it is important to discuss the issue with appropriate stakeholders. Telehealth has its limits and cannot be applied to all situations and all clientele. We invite you to consult the BMS and Gowling WLG document on virtual health care services . You may also wish to consult your regulatory body (i.e. College or Ordre) for guidelines on informed consent and tools to help you assess risk and implement telehealth according to best standards.

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Provision of OT Services: Telehealth

Can OTAs provide telehealth services under the supervision of a registered OT?	This question needs to be taken to the supervising OT as the OT is the professional that is ultimately liable for the services of the OTA. Guidelines for assignment of any other task to an OTA would apply here, such as
As a contractor for a local health service, I need to establish and advocate for a fair payment of my services now delivered through telehealth. Does CAOT have any supporting documents?	We would advise you to consult the " Private Practice Occupational Therapy Services in British Columbia " published in 2019 by our CAOT-BC Chapter. This document provides information on the prevailing range of fees being charged for occupational therapy services across the province in community and clinic settings of British Columbia. Caution is required when using this survey in other jurisdictions. CAOT has also published a short article in OT Now on the parameters to consider in setting fees for practice. It may be consulted in the September/October 2018 issue of OT Now.
Do you have any suggestions regarding assessment, interventions or resources that would fit a virtual mode of service delivery?	CAOT is holding weekly Exchange Forums on different topics. The topic of Telehealth is on April 2nd at noon (Eastern time). This forum will be recorded and posted on the CAOT COVID-19 page. CAOT will pursue its weekly forums and will facilitate knowledge exchange. For specific client populations or for specific practice areas, CAOT has created Practice Networks which may provide support in addressing your particular situation. Do not hesitate to contact the chair(s) of a relevant Network.
If a client declines attending in-clinic sessions due to COVID-19 and declines telemedicine options (e.g. not technology savvy), what strategies are OTs using to ensure continuity of care?	Each situation is unique and must be addressed carefully with an appropriate answer or action to support safe and effective services. You may wish to participate on one or several of our weekly exchange forums to pose your specific questions to your peers. Consult the CAOT COVID-19 page to register for the forums.

Provision of OT Services: Safety Concerns and Liability insurance

How do I ensure my safety and the safety of my clients throughout this pandemic?	CAOT has compiled a table of resources to support the work of frontline OTs on the CAOT COVID-19 page under the section "Information and resource sharing: Protect yourself and your clients". This table is revised twice a week. You might also wish to consult and monitor the COVID-19 information posted by the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) . If you are aware of other credible resources to support the work of frontline OTs, please share them with Julie Lapointe at jlapointe@caot.ca
I work in a multi-site organization. The hospital site, which is on the same campus as my long-term care workplace, has one COVID-19 case. Should I stop going to this long-term care workplace?	Please consult your manager or institutional policy regarding whether you should report to work, and if so, ensure you are informed of and follow the institutional or public health infection control practices. In certain jurisdictions, emergency health measures have been implemented which allow the health authority to determine who is deemed a non-essential worker, and to redeploy those workers.

Provision of OT Services: Safety Concerns and Liability insurance

As a private practice OT who is in the community, how may I get the necessary safety equipment such as masks to provide services in the home to clients that would meet the "essential" definition? As we are not employed in hospital or public health, these resources are not easily obtained but I still have the same professional obligation to maintain infection control to myself, client and community.

Your safety and your clients' safety should be an absolute top priority. It is important that you become knowledgeable of the proper safety equipment and the proper techniques to avoid contamination. Access to the supply may be difficult in some areas. You may wish to establish partnerships with your local health care institutions or advise your provincial/territorial professional association of your needs. They may be able to link you to sources for personal protective supplies.

I have been very surprised at how fragile my mental health has become through the current COVID pandemic. I think CAOT should put in a Wellness forum in the COVID-19 section.

CAOT has included a link to the [Wellness Together Canada portal](#) to the Information and resource sharing table. This portal provides tools and resources to help get Canadians address low mood, worry, substance use, social isolation and relationship issues. To inspire your OT spirit, we have also created a "[Member Contributions](#)" section on our COVID-19 page to share their reflections, tips, and expertise during the COVID-19 pandemic.

How to navigate work situations in which employers are making us come into the office, even when the work can be done from home?

The current situation is unprecedented and has profound and multiple impacts on the workplace. Ideally, a conversation between the employer and employee would enable the team to come to the best solutions possible to ensure the safety of people and the efficient delivery of the work. If your health authority continues with in-home services, and you have legitimate reasons to feel unsafe to work, you have the right to decline work. Each situation is unique and will be answered on a case by case basis by CAOT's insurance partners

Am I covered for business interruptions, loss of earnings, claims of malpractice related to the COVID-19 or recourse from an employee who contracted the virus?

BMS and Gowling WLG. Important information has been posted on the [CAOT COVID-19 page](#) under the section "CAOT Insurance: Managing practice risk during COVID-19". A 40-min [webinar](#) addressed these issues, sharing available information as of March 26th. If you have CAOT Professional Liability Insurance coverage, you also have access to a [pro bono consultation](#) with a Gowling WLG lawyer.

What are the steps I should be doing if I am redeployed?

Emergency health measures allow health authorities to redeploy OTs to other areas. Please consult your manager or institutional policy regarding whether you should report to work. OTs are advised to contact their regulatory body (i.e. their College or Ordre) regarding delegation of controlled acts if they are redeployed. They can also contact their union or employer for workplace safety information.

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Advocacy: CAOT Stance and Initiatives

Is CAOT going to take a stance on OTs and working on the front-line/in-person during the COVID-19 crisis?

CAOT is advising members to consult the policy set by their local health authority, institution and their provincial regulatory body (i.e. College or Ordre). If you have specific practice questions that are not addressed please share them with us as we aim to keep on top of changes and share best practices where possible. OTs are providing care where it is deemed essential and adhering to universal standards for preventing infection (personal protective equipment, disinfecting, hand-washing, etc.). Where appropriate, OTs are connecting with clients remotely, by phone, email, and videoconference.

Do we have a committee on advocating for OT services to be integrated as a standard coverage into the group policy insurance?

CAOT is a member of the Extended Health Professionals Coalition (EHPC) and we work collaboratively with other health care professions to advocate for the inclusion of occupational therapy as part of extended health benefits plans. A working group of EHPC is tasked with the responsibility of working closely with the Canadian Life and Health Insurance Association (CLHA) with 65 large insurance companies as members – to continue to advocate for the inclusion of occupational therapy as part of extended health benefits plans. CAOT has and continues to have direct discussions with CLHA regarding coverage. Additionally, CAOT's "Ask for OT" campaign encourages members to contact insurance companies, employers and unions requesting that their plans be revised to include occupational therapy. If you wish additional assistance please contact Havelin Anand at hanand@caot.ca Finally, we have been recently informed that SunLife, a major insurance provider is now covering the virtual services of OTs for appointments where there is no need for direct (in-person) therapies.

What are CAOT current advocacy efforts?

A letter has been sent to [Minister Qualtrough](#) to request that the federal government quickly announce student grants to enable summer and fall planning for completion of professional education. CAOT has joined members of the Canadian Society for Association Executives (CSAE) in requesting that the federal government allocate a portion of the recently announced fiscal support to address business impacts to the not-for-profit sector in a letter addressed to [Minister Morneau](#). Through our active participation in the Health Action Lobby (HEAL), CAOT has sent a letter to [Minister Hadju](#) offering assistance with the federal COVID-19 response and proposing the formation of a special COVID-19 Response Task Force.

This pandemic could be a way to promote our professional capability to help with mental health. Is this something that has been expressed in the letters to the ministers?

We have a number of letter templates to employers, unions and insurance companies to include OTs in a number of arenas including mental health. We have and continue to promote OTs with Federal departments such as Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) & Canadian Armed Forces (CAF), we work with professional associations e.g. Canadian Medical Association in the context of Health Action Lobby and Extended Health Professions Coalition to which CAOT belongs. We have also been working with Sun Life to include OTs in mental health.

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Advocacy: CAOT Stance and Initiatives

How can OT students play an advocacy role during these times?

Students can write to Minister Qualtrough, Minister of Employment, Social Development and Disability Inclusion, stating that occupational therapy students are facing a predicament because they cannot graduate. Why? Because they cannot complete their placements due to closures. Students therefore need financial support until graduation which will be delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. They will have to pay additional living expenses for unknown periods of time, extended beyond their current graduation date. Student grants to manage this situation which was beyond the students' control need to be announced by governments quickly to enable planning into the summer and fall for completion of professional education. Mechanisms such as the Canada Student Grants and Loans System currently exist to make it possible for the federal government to forgive loans and enact other measures to assist students under the provisions of the Canada Student Loans Act. Students can also write to Ministers of Education & Health at the provincial level.

What advocacy efforts have been made towards marginalized populations in Canada to help mitigate the effects of occupational deprivation during and after COVID-19?

CAOT is currently consulting different national and international stakeholders to address the needs of marginalized populations. More information will be communicated in the near future.

Is CAOT also communicating with provincial associations to ensure consistency?

CAOT shares information with provincial organizations via the Alliance of Canadian Occupational Therapy Professional Associations (ACOTPA). We monitor provincial newsletters and websites to make sure we stay abreast of the rapidly evolving situation. If you are aware of resources that you believe we could share, please forward them to Julie Lapointe at jlapointe@caot.ca

I am interested in guidance about determining 'required essential services' vs services that could be delayed or addressed remotely.

Each jurisdiction will define the areas of services which will be deemed essential. We advise that you consult and/or communicate with your institutional and college policies about this specific issue of services.

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Students: Fieldwork Placement and Contribution

I am currently an OT2 student. I was supposed to begin a fieldwork placement in mid April; however, it was cancelled. Will my graduation be delayed?

CAOT, as a member of the Health Action Lobby (HEAL) has this issue forefront in their emerging COVID-19 response plan. Given the health human resource demands in a pandemic, it may be a consideration to minimize the delay in graduation of health professionals who are so close to completing their education, however, universities, regulatory organizations, and CAOT's academic credentialing council need to be engaged in the decision about entry-to-practice standards.

My department is now stating that we must participate in "online" fieldwork placements that may be case-based or program evaluation-type in nature. I am however wondering how these online placements will enable us to achieve the relevant OT competencies? Have these online placements been approved by CAOT?

Through the accreditation program, the universities are requested to inform the Academic Credentialing Council (ACC) about any changes to fieldwork before they are implemented. Please view the [letter](#) of requesting this information on the CAOT Accreditation web page. The ACC will be meeting to make decisions on the types of fieldwork that are acceptable. When decisions are made, programs will be informed and we will make the information public for students to access as soon as possible. If you have specific concerns about the types of fieldwork/competencies, please email the Director of Standards: adouglas@caot.ca

Do you have suggestions on how I can help students who were supposed to do their final fieldwork placement in my clinic?

We advise that you contact the university's academic fieldwork coordinator. There will be an [CAOT Exchange Forum](#) to share ideas on April 9, 2020 at noon. We hope you (and other fieldwork sites) can be flexible and accommodate fieldwork placements upon request from universities as soon as it is safe and feasible to do so.

Is there any way students who have class/practicums cancelled could support OT's in the field during this time?

Several university student societies have organized volunteer registries to meet local needs. We encourage students to consult their local community association and municipality for initiatives related to addressing the COVID-19 multiple impacts. For instance, in some areas, food banks are in great need of further volunteers.

Will the SEAS process be delayed for incoming internationally accredited OTs?

We advise that you consult the SEAS program (ACOTRO [website](#)) about this issue.