

Re: Occupational therapists (OTs) offer essential mental health services during and after COVID-19.

Now more than ever, we need “all hands-on deck” to help Canadians with the mental health care they need following the unprecedented disruption that COVID-19 has wreaked on everyday lives. The Mental Health Commission refers to an ‘echo pandemic’ of mental health impacts in the wake of COVID-19 – a critical societal issue where OTs should be considered essential to the solution.

Unfortunately, most Canadians cannot access occupational therapy services as occupational therapy is not covered under most public and private health care plans.

We ask that you increase coverage for mental health services by recognizing OTs as mental health providers and including occupational therapy services in your health care plan.

Addressing mental health issues is central to occupational therapy training and skills; a client-centred approach to physical, emotional and spiritual well-being that can provide a low cost, high impact solution to the multitude of emerging cases of anxiety, depression, stress and, worse, suicidal thoughts. OTs can assess clients and customize an immediate care plan, delivering services in homes, communities, hospitals, schools, long-term care and private clinics – interventions to help Canadians regain a sense of calm, normalcy and resilience despite the upheaval to so many everyday lives.

Read and share our case studies below to better understand the role OTs can play as essential mental health service providers.



[Download Family Disruption case study.](#)



[Download Social Isolation case study.](#)



[Download Returning to Work case studies.](#)

OTs are a regulated health profession that work alone or in collaboration with other allied health professionals to provide a number of critical services that directly assist individuals whose lives have been upended by crisis and trauma; many who have never experienced mental health issues before. These interventions include:

- Teaching children, youth, adults and seniors, practical ways to cope with anxiety, PTSD and dysregulated routines that impact mental health;
- Providing trauma-informed therapy and facilitating cognitive behavioural therapy;
- Helping implement short/long-term goals and outline activities that facilitate return to routines of study or work i.e. participation in their everyday activities;
- Working with at-risk populations such as the homeless, disabled, seniors and Indigenous communities to identify strengths, optimize abilities and restore engagement in daily life that has been disrupted due to physical distancing measures and prolonged social isolation.

Now is the time to include OTs as mental health care providers.

We ask again that you increase coverage for mental health services by recognizing OTs as mental health providers and including occupational therapy services in your health care plan.

We're all in this together. Your attention and willingness to act now will result in an accelerated recovery process bringing positive health and wellness outcomes for the many Canadians currently affected by disruption and fear.

I look forward to your response.