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Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists
Association canadienne des ergothérapeutes

Private Practice Occupational Therapy Services in British Columbia (2021): Survey Results and Suggested Fee Guide

Introduction

Every two years, the British Columbia chapter of the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists (CAOT-BC) conducts an anonymous survey of occupational therapists in British Columbia working in private practice. CAOT-BC then summarizes the results, and uses this information to generate a suggested fee guide. The suggested fee guide is issued by CAOT-BC for professional information purposes only and provides occupational therapists in British Columbia with aggregate information on the prevailing range of fees being charged for occupational therapy services across the province in community and clinic settings outside of the public health system. The following survey results and suggested fee guide are based on survey data collected in June 2021.

The Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists (CAOT) does not require its members to adjust or amend their service pricing in order to conform with the suggested fee guide. Moreover, membership in CAOT is not conditional in any way on occupational therapists adopting the suggested fee guidelines in their practices. CAOT encourages occupational therapists to evaluate and set their individual service fees based on their own business models and local market conditions. Occupational therapists should consider a variety of factors when determining their fees, including, but not limited to: the availability and cost of treatment equipment, training and registration of staff, office space, local market conditions, and travel. CAOT does not support setting service fees based on an occupational therapist's number of years of service delivery. Lastly, it should be noted that many parties that fund occupational therapy services set their own reimbursement rates and that these parties did not collaborate with CAOT-BC in the administration of the survey or in the development of the suggested fee guide.

Private Practice Fees

1. Rehabilitation Services

- **Professional time**, including preparation, assessment, treatment, verbal and written consultation, and report writing is billed at an average rate of \$118/hour, with rates ranging from a low of \$50/hour to a high of \$250/hour.
- **Differential Billing:** Therapists may charge a higher rate for services that require particular expertise and/or therapeutic modalities. Practices typically do not bill differentially based on therapists' level of experience. However, the hours billed may be reduced if a new therapist takes more time than is typically reasonable.
- **Travel time** is typically billed at the full professional hourly rate with no separate mileage charge, or at half the professional hourly rate with a mileage charge. Mileage rates range from \$0.47/km to \$0.59/km. Some therapists charge a flat fee for travel to clients' homes, ranging from 25-30% of their professional hourly rate. Many therapists group clients geographically when possible so that travel fees can be prorated. Therapists may bill travel time differently for funders and 3rd party payers vs. families or individuals who are paying privately.
- **Rural travel** There is a broad range of fees charged for rural travel that varies from a mix of time and kilometres billed, flat fees, and full hourly rate. The fees are typically negotiated with the fee payer.
- **Flat fees** may be negotiated between the therapist and client/fee payer and these vary considerably depending on the service; flat fees are established using expected hours and hourly rate charges (e.g. Functional Capacity Evaluations).
- **Cancellation Policies:** Most therapists charge a cancellation fee if given less than 24 hours' notice. However, fees may be charged for cancellations ranging from same day no-show to 72 hours' notice. Cancellation fees vary from a portion to the entire cost of the visit, and may include travel costs. First cancellations fees are often billed to the funder, and any subsequent cancellations are billed to the client.
- **Discretion** may be used by therapists when applying cancellation policies. Therapists often do not bill when cancellation is due to illness or emergency, or if the time slot can be filled. The Covid-19 pandemic has changed the way that many therapists enforce cancellation policies. Many therapists do not currently charge for last-minute illness cancellation in order to encourage clients to stay home when ill.

2. Medical Legal Services and Court Attendance

- **Professional time**, including assessment, consultation, and report preparation, is billed between \$116 to \$250 per hour depending on the service provided. The majority of

practices do not bill differentially based on therapists' experience, but may bill differentially based on therapists' qualifications (e.g. Certified Life Care Planner).

- **Functional Capacity Evaluations (FCEs)** may be billed at an hourly rate ranging from \$130 to \$250 per hour, or a flat rate ranging from \$900 to \$2300 per FCE for general FCEs. Medical legal, cognitive, and FCEs for those with other catastrophic injuries can cost significantly more and require 2 - 3 days of assessment time. If an FCE is needed urgently, rush flat rates may be as high as \$3600.
- **Cost of Future Care and Life Care Planning** is typically charged at an average hourly rate of \$194 per hour, with rates ranging from \$150 to \$250 per hour. This rate may be consistent for both direct and indirect time (e.g. same rate for assessment, report writing, and court appearance), or may vary. Some therapists charge a flat fee instead of an hourly rate, with varying fee levels depending on clients' needs and conditions. Rates vary depending on therapists' experience and qualifications.
- **Other legal consultation** costs average \$194 per hour, with rates ranging from \$116 to \$250 per hour. Rates vary based on the service provided and individual therapists' experience and qualifications, and typically cover assessment, consultation, and report preparation.
- **Rush rate fees** are typically charged when there is a short turnaround between referral and report due date, and are typically applied when a report is needed within 5-10 days of referral. Rush rate premiums range from a 25% to 50% increase on hourly rates, a higher hourly rate ranging from \$250 to \$300 per hour, or a flat fee of \$350 to \$500 added to the price of services.
- **Half-day court attendance** is charged at either a flat rate ranging from \$400 to \$1300 per half day, or an average hourly rate of \$180 per hour. **Full day court attendance** is billed at a flat rate ranging from \$500 to \$2025 per day, or at an average hourly rate of \$167 per hour. Therapists may have a minimum number of hours they will bill for, ranging from 2 to 4 hours, and will then charge an hourly rate for each hour incurred beyond the minimum. Therapists may charge different rates depending on the capacity in which they are attending court (e.g. lay witness vs. medical legal capacity).
- **Cancellation fees** vary with the amount of notice provided and service cancelled. Most therapists charge cancellation fees if less than 48 to 72 hours' notice is provided. Given that many medical legal appointments are booked weeks to months in advance, cancellation fees are differentially charged on cancellations ranging from 24 hours' to 30 days' notice. These fees range from \$200 to \$500 depending on the timeframe of advance notice. Additional costs that cannot be recovered (e.g. airfare, hotel bookings, or cancellation fees for these services) are also billed at cost.
- **Travel time** is billed at 100% of the medical legal hourly rate by the majority of respondents. Some bill at 50% of the hourly rate. The average is \$180 per hour, with

rates ranging from \$112 per hour to \$250 per hour. Therapists may charge mileage in addition to travel time rates. Other travel expenses such as flights, ferries, and accommodations are billed at cost

3. Rehabilitation Assistant Services

- **Subcontracting:** Most occupational therapy companies provide rehabilitation assistant services while some sub-contract services to independent companies or independent assistants. Some occupational therapy companies use a combination of both internal and external rehabilitation assistant services. Some organizations do not utilize rehabilitation assistant services.
- **Rehabilitation assistant time,** including treatment, reporting, and charting, is typically charged hourly. Rates range from \$40 to \$80 per hour, with an average of \$58 per hour, but can vary depending on insurer, experience and training level.
- **Travel time** is generally billed at 50% - 100% of the hourly rate and may or may not include an additional mileage charge. Mileage charges range from \$0.47/km to \$0.59/km, with an average of \$0.54/km. Travel time may be billed differently based on funder policies, or policies of the organization that rehabilitation assistants are contracted from.
- **Cancellation fees:** For most organizations, there is a cancellation fee for cancelled appointments with less than 24 hours' notice; fees vary by company and notice period and are charged ranging from 30 minutes to one hour of rehabilitation assistant time. Some practices have temporarily suspended cancellation fees due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

4. Expenses and Administrative Fees

- **Service provider mileage** is charged between \$0.47/km and \$0.59/km.
- **Administrative fees** may be applied to requests for copies of files, reports or other information pertaining to a file. Fees may be applied for the retrieval and copying of discharged file records. Long-term file storage fees, file retrieval fees, paper, equipment, and administrative staff costs appear to be offset with these charges. Parking is charged at certain organizations.
 - Document copying/scanning fees range from \$0.25/page to \$2.00/page copied, or a flat rate per file copied ranging from \$130 to \$150. A declining fee per page may be charged for large files and this varies among practices.
 - Therapists may set flat administration fees for office expenses. Therapists may charge an hourly rate for file review and prep, with .50 cents per page

- Rates for report retrieval, copying and preparation for mailing range from \$30 to \$55 per hour.
- Some therapists charge a flat administrative fee rate of \$130 to \$250 for preparing FCE files as well as an hourly rate for report writing ranging from \$80 to \$99 per hour. Some companies also charge referral management fees for FCE files at a flat rate of \$100 - \$250.
- Skype and Google meetings are billed at rates ranging from \$100 to \$120 per hour.
- Incidental office expenses including postage, courier, word processing, accessing files offsite, supplies and parking are occasionally charged and appear to vary with the payer group and practice type; fees and billing parameters for these services vary widely. Some therapists bill photocopying for \$.25/page.

Service Agreements

Many occupational therapists work under specific contracts where fees and reimbursement policies are highly structured. However, many therapists also contract with funding parties outside of these structured contracts. In the interest of transparency, CAOT-BC suggests that occupational therapists and funding parties be aware of all the costs (rates, deposits, cancellation policies, fees for expenses) *before* entering into a relationship. This will ensure that each party's expectations are clearly understood, and will facilitate a more positive business relationship.