

Expanding Your OT Practice

A GROWING AREA WHERE CLINICAL EXPERTISE MEETS
CONSULTING, ANALYSIS, AND MEDICO-LEGAL APPLICATION



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EMPOWERING FUTURES

Occupational therapy has always evolved to meet the needs of individuals, systems, and society. Today, many occupational therapists are exploring ways to apply their clinical expertise beyond traditional practice settings.

These opportunities do not replace clinical practice—they extend it.

This guide provides an introduction to emerging areas of occupational therapy practice, including consulting, expert roles, and life care planning.

The Evolution of Occupational Therapy Practice

Occupational therapists are uniquely trained to assess function, understand the interaction between individuals and their environments, and develop practical, individualized solutions.

These core competencies translate naturally into a range of non-traditional roles where clinical reasoning, communication, and analytical skills are essential.

As healthcare and legal systems become increasingly complex, there is growing demand for professionals who can evaluate functional impact, consider potential future needs, and provide objective, evidence-informed opinions.

Emerging Areas of Practice

Occupational therapists are increasingly contributing to:

- Consulting roles within healthcare and legal systems
- Expert witness work in complex injury and disability cases
- Life care planning, which involves evaluating long-term needs following injury or illness

These roles allow OTs to apply their expertise in new contexts while maintaining a strong foundation in occupational therapy principles.

What is Life Care Planning?

Life care planning is a specialized area of practice focused on evaluating and organizing the reasonably anticipated future care needs of an individual with injury or illness.

This process may include:

- Review of medical and related records
- Functional assessment, when performed
- Consideration of the individual's condition, clinical course, and reported limitations
- Identification of care, services, and supports that may be required over time

The resulting life care plan:

- Organizes care across medical and non-medical domains
- Reflects clinical judgment informed by available data and, when applicable, provider input
- Applies cost estimates using standardized, transparent methodologies
- Is developed for use in clinical, planning, or legal contexts

Life care plans are utilized by both plaintiff and defense professionals and are intended to provide a structured, medically grounded framework for understanding future care considerations.

Occupational therapists are particularly well-suited to this work due to their:

- Functional assessment expertise
- Understanding of activities of daily living (ADLs and IADLs)
- Ability to evaluate environmental and contextual factors
- Whole-person, participation-focused perspective

Skills That Translate Well

Occupational therapists who transition into these roles often have strengths in:

- Clinical reasoning and problem-solving
- Written communication and documentation
- Functional assessment and analysis
- Interdisciplinary collaboration
- Professional presentation and communication

Is This Path Right for You?

This area of practice may be a good fit if you:

- Are interested in expanding beyond traditional clinical roles
- Enjoy complex, analytical work
- Have strong writing and communication skills
- Are comfortable working in structured, professional environments
- Value objective, evidence-based practice

A Thoughtful Transition

Transitioning into emerging areas of practice is a professional progression that builds on your existing training and experience as an occupational therapist.

It is not a departure from occupational therapy—it is an expansion of its application.

Continuing the Conversation

As occupational therapy continues to expand, new applications of clinical expertise are emerging across healthcare, consulting, and medico-legal settings.

We welcome inquiries from occupational therapists and related professionals interested in learning more about this area of practice. Due to the specialized nature of this work, opportunities vary based on experience, training, and current case needs.

For those interested in exploring these areas further, additional resources and insights are available through Turning Point Life Care Planning.

Training and Certification Considerations

Occupational therapists who pursue this area of practice often seek additional training in life care planning methodology.

Professional certification is available through organizations such as the International Commission on Health Care Certification, which offers the Certified Life Care Planner (CLCP) credential.

Educational resources, publications, and professional literature—including the *Journal of Life Care Planning*—provide further insight into standards of practice and methodology.

As with any emerging area, training pathways may vary, and clinicians are encouraged to evaluate programs and resources based on their individual goals and experience.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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Dr. Travis has experience in the development of life care plans and the application of occupational therapy principles within medical-legal contexts. Her work focuses on functional assessment, long-term care considerations, and the integration of clinical findings into structured planning frameworks.

SELECT PUBLICATIONS & PRESENTATIONS

Travis, T.L., Transitioning to New Areas of Practice.
In Jacobs, K., & McCormack, G. (Eds.),
The Occupational Therapy Manager
(6th ed., AOTA Press)

Life Care Planning: An Emerging Area for
Occupational Therapists.

Presented at the American Occupational
Therapy Association Conference