

Occupational Therapist: Alternative Careers

A guide for newcomers to British Columbia



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1. Occupational Therapist: Alternative Careers

In BC, occupational therapists develop programs for people affected by illness, injury or disability in order to improve their ability to look after themselves and engage in work or leisure activities. Occupational therapists work in a variety of settings, such as hospitals, rehabilitation clinics, home-care programs, schools and industry.

You may find that your international training and experience as an occupational therapist are not immediately accepted in B.C. The skills you have acquired (good communication, analytical and problem solving skills, compassion, ability to work with ill, disabled or injured people) can be used in these alternative careers:

- rehabilitation assistant (NOC 3414)
- recreational therapist (NOC 3144)
- rehabilitation counsellor (NOC4153)

Alternative Careers:

Rehabilitation Assistant (NOC 3414)

Also look for these job titles: occupational therapy assistant, physiotherapy assistant, physical therapy assistant

You work under the direction of health-care professionals such as physiotherapists and occupational therapists to reduce patients' pain and help them gain mobility. You work in rehabilitation clinics, hospitals, long-term care facilities, physiotherapists' offices, and sometimes in private homes and fitness centres.

Duties include:

- prepare and maintain equipment and supplies
- help patients as directed by health-care professionals
- teach exercises to patients, and help them walk or stand up
- routine office duties

Requirements:

- completion of a recognized Rehabilitation Assistant Program *or an equivalent combination of education, training and experience*

Skills:

- strong interpersonal and communication skills are essential; you must be patient and keep your clients motivated
- organizational and time management skills
- strength and stamina, as you often need to perform physical tasks such as helping clients to walk and demonstrating exercises

Wages:

- median hourly wage: \$20.00

Source: WorkBC <https://www.workbc.ca/Job-Seekers/Career-Profiles/3414>

Recreation Therapist (NOC 3144)

You use leisure activities to help people who are emotionally or physically ill, injured or disabled. You work in hospitals, rehabilitation centres, long-term care facilities, and park and recreation departments.

Duties include:

- develop treatment plan based on recreational therapies
- lead clients through treatment
- watch and analyze patients during treatment sessions
- record findings, write progress reports and consult with other health-care professionals to evaluate treatment plan

Requirements:

- a bachelor's degree in recreation with a specialization in therapeutic recreation is usually required
- supervised practical training is usually required

Skills:

- strong communication and problem solving skills
- comfortable working with people who are ill or disabled
- patient and tactful
- manual dexterity
- physical stamina
- able to work independently and as part of a team

Wages:

- median hourly wage: \$23.44

Sources:

WorkBC <https://www.workbc.ca/Job-Seekers/Career-Profiles/3144>

Career Cruising (Profile for "Recreation Therapist")

<http://www.vpl.ca/digital-library/career-cruising>

Rehabilitation Counsellor (NOC 4153)

You help injured people adjust back into the workplace and resume their normal daily activities. You work in counselling centres, group homes, government agencies, health-care and rehabilitation facilities, workers' compensation boards, and other organizations

Duties include:

- assess clients' injuries or disabilities; prepare case histories
- work with therapists, doctors, and social workers to develop rehabilitation programs
- provide information on overcoming obstacles, funding, and other services
- monitor clients' progress; maintain records to be used in hearings or trials

Requirements:

- bachelor's degree, preferably in rehabilitation services or a related field
- Certification *may* be required as Registered Rehabilitation Professional (RRP) through the Vocational Rehabilitation Association of Canada (VRA). Certification requires relevant undergraduate degree (e.g. *occupational therapy*) and two years relevant work experience.

For details on certification and assessment process, see:

- <http://vra-canada.com/vra-canada-professional-designations>

Skills:

- patience and compassion
- ability to deal with clients who are under stress
- self-motivated and organized

Wages:

- median hourly wage \$25.83

Sources:

WorkBC <http://www.workbc.ca/Job-Seekers/Career-Profiles/4153>

Career Cruising (Profile for "Rehabilitation Counsellor")

<http://www.vpl.ca/digital-library/career-cruising>

2. Employment Outlook

Changes in the economy have little or no impact on the health care industry, as occupations in this industry group generally provide essential services. Jobs in this industry are mainly affected by demographics and government policy.

Rehabilitation Assistant (NOC 3414)

Job Openings Outlook in BC

% of job openings from replacement	55%
% of job openings from expansion	45%
Average annual growth rate of employment (2014-2024)	1.9%
Expected cumulative job openings (2014-2024)	1,990

Source: <http://www.workbc.ca/>

Recreation Therapist (NOC 3144)

Job Openings Outlook in BC

% of job openings from replacement	50%
% of job openings from expansion	50%
Average annual growth rate of employment (2014-2024)	2.1%
Expected cumulative job openings (2014-2024)	630

Source: <http://www.workbc.ca/>

Rehabilitation Counsellor (NOC 4153)

Job Openings Outlook in BC

% of job openings from replacement	67%
% of job openings from expansion	33%
Average annual growth rate of employment (2014-2024)	1.4%
Expected cumulative job openings (2014-2024)	2,330

Source: <http://www.workbc.ca/>

3. Retraining

You may want to consider upgrading your skills to increase your employment options in this field. The following courses may improve your current skills:

Kwantlen Polytechnic University: Professional Communications for Internationally Educated Health Professionals (IEHP)

Improve your communication in order to gain employment in the Canadian health care system.

http://www.kpu.ca//_shared/assets/IEHP_Brochure_June_201326208.pdf

Thompson Rivers University (TRU) Open Learning: *Medical English*

Strengthen your understanding of medical terminology as it is used in a Canadian health care context. 30 week program, web-based instruction

<http://www.tru.ca/distance/courses/hlth1061.html>

Rehabilitation Assistant / Occupational & Physical Therapist Assistant Diploma Programs

Programs include physiotherapy and occupational therapy and range from four to five semesters (up to two years); full time attendance and practicum placements required

- **Capilano University, Rehabilitation Assistant Diploma**
<http://www.capilanou.ca/radp/>
- **Okanagan College, Therapist Assistant**
http://www.okanagan.bc.ca/Programs/Areas_of_Study/health/therapist-assistant/
- **Vancouver Community College**
<http://www.vcc.ca/programscourses/program-areas/health-sciences/occupationalphysical-therapist-assistant-rehab-assistant/>

Douglas College: Employment Supports Specialty Advanced Certificate

Online program that focuses on specialized knowledge of employment supports and disability management services for people with disabilities

<http://www.douglascollege.ca/programs-courses/faculties/child-family-community-studies/employment-supports-specialty>

4. Searching for Jobs

B.C. Health Authorities

Regional services including publicly funded hospitals and residential care facilities
www.health.gov.bc.ca/socsec/ (select link for each region and then go to 'Careers')

B.C. Provincial Health Services Authority Job Postings

Lists jobs available in specialty institutions such as BC Transplant, Women's Hospital, BC Children's Hospital
<http://jobs.phsa.ca/>

Providence Health Care

www.providencehealthcare.org/careers

BC Public Service Agency Jobs

https://search.employment.gov.bc.ca/cgi-bin/a/searchjobs_quick.cgi

WorkSafe BC

<http://www.worksafebc.com/careers/>

Indeed.ca

www.indeed.ca

Neuvoo

<https://neuvoo.ca/>

5. Volunteering in the Field

Volunteering can help you to explore a new career and learn more about the health care system in BC. You will meet new people and build a network of contacts that can lead to information on job openings and inside connections with potential employers.

Canadian Red Cross

<http://www.redcross.ca/where-we-work/in-canada/british-columbia-and-yukon>

Vancouver Coastal Health Authority

<http://www.vch.ca/get-involved/volunteer/>

Fraser Health Authority

<http://www.fraserhealth.ca/about-us/volunteer/>

Providence Health Care

www.providencehealthcare.org/volunteers

Volunteer BC

www.volunteerbc.bc.ca/

Privately funded residential care facilities

<http://www.bcsla.ca/careers/job-posting/>

6. Helpful Resources

Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists BC

<http://www.caot.ca/default.asp?pageid=4125>

BC Rehabilitation Therapist Assistant Network

<http://members.shaw.ca/rehabtherapistassistnetwork/>

Therapy BC

<http://www.therapybc.ca/>

Public sector therapists working with children

Vocational Rehabilitation Association of Canada (VRA)

<http://vraCanada.com/>

HealthMatch BC

<https://www.healthmatchbc.org/Allied-Health/Occupational-Therapists>

Health Match BC is a health care recruitment service funded by the Government of British Columbia. It recruits on behalf of over 100 health care facilities across the province.

Click on 'Job Search Resources' at <http://skilledimmigrants.vpl.ca> for help on:

- resumes & cover letters
- getting Canadian work experience
- networking for employment
- online social networks
- Canadian workplace culture

Questions? Please ask the Information Staff in the Central Library, Vancouver Public Library or telephone 604-331-3603.

Please note that the information in this guide is also available online through the Skilled Immigrant InfoCentre website at <http://skilledimmigrants.vpl.ca/>.