

Occupational Therapists

A guide for newcomers to British Columbia



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1. Working as an Occupational Therapist [NOC 3143]

Job Description

Occupational therapists develop programs for people affected by illness, injury or disability to help them improve their ability to look after themselves and engage in work or leisure activities.

You develop health promotion programs with individuals, community groups and employers.

As an Occupational Therapist, you perform the following duties:

- Analyze clients' capabilities and expectations related to life activities
- Develop programs to address clients' needs related to self-care, work, and leisure activities
- Establish personalized care plans
- Consult and advise on health promotion programs
- May supervise support workers and provide training
- May specialize in working with specific populations such as children or older adults

Source: <http://www5.hrsdc.gc.ca/noc/english/noc/2011/Profile.aspx?val=1&val1=3143>

Industry Overview

Occupational therapists are currently in high demand throughout British Columbia. At present, there are more jobs than number of new graduates to fill them. As a result, you may have opportunities to practice in areas that typically would have required a higher level of experience. More opportunities for on-the-job training and mentorship will also likely become available.

The trend for occupational therapists moving to community practice (private practice) is expected to continue.

Some practices have adopted technologies for consultations province-wide. You may be asked to participate on teams delivering services through tele-health technologies.

Source: WorkBC Career Profiles <http://www.workbc.ca/Careers/> [Occupational Therapists, NOC 3143]

Job Outlook in BC

Occupational Therapists



Chart from WorkBC

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The **Employment Outlook for British Columbia** provides job openings projections for *Occupational Therapists* within BC regions:

| Region | 2010 Estimated Employment | 2015 Estimated Employment | Avg Annual % Change, 5 Years, 2010 to 2015 |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|--|
| Vancouver Island / Coast | 290 | 330 | 2.5% |
| Lower Mainland / Southwest | 950 | 1,060 | 2.2% |
| Thompson- Okanagan | 150 | 160 | 2.3% |
| Kootenay | 40 | 50 | 3.2% |
| Cariboo | 40 | 50 | 3.9% |
| North Coast / Nechako | 30 | 30 | 3.2% |
| Northeast | 20 | 20 | 4.1% |

Source: Regional Employment Projections, BC Stats. Projections for development regions.

<http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/StatisticsBySubject/LabourIncome/EmploymentUnemployment/RegionalEmploymentProjections.aspx> [accessed October 2014]

You can learn more about working as an occupational therapist in BC from:

- **WorkBC Career Profiles** [Search Occupational Therapists OR NOC 3143]
<http://www.workbc.ca/Careers/>
- **Career Cruising** (Profile for Occupational Therapist)
<http://www.vpl.ca/digital-library/career-cruising>

Types of Employers

Occupational therapists work in many settings including:

- Hospitals
- Schools
- Residential care facilities
- Community care
- Employment & training centres
- Mental health facilities
- Child development centres
- Private clinics & offices

Salary

The average salary for occupational therapists working full-time in BC is between \$53,000 and \$66,000 a year. If you work in private practice you may earn more than if you work for hospitals.

In addition to a salary, most full-time occupational therapists receive health and dental benefits, paid sick days, and paid vacations.

Job Bank Canada provides hourly wages for Occupational Therapists in BC regions:

| Location | Wage (\$/hr) | | |
|---|--------------|--------|-------|
| | Low | Median | High |
| British Columbia | 16.00 | 36.76 | 43.00 |
| Lower Mainland - Southwest Region | 15.00 | 37.29 | 48.00 |
| Vancouver Island and Coast Region | 16.00 | 36.76 | 43.00 |

Source: Job Bank Canada <http://www.jobbank.gc.ca/>

Working Hours

You generally work 35 to 40 hours per week during standard office hours; however, evening, weekend and shift work may also be required.

Sources: Work BC & Career Cruising

2. Skills, Education and Experience

Skills

- excellent communication and interpersonal skills
- advanced critical thinking
- empathy and compassion
- good judgment
- creativity
- ability to analyze and apply research to everyday practice
- self-sufficient
- ability to work as part of a team
- patient

Education and Experience

To work as an occupational therapist in BC you require:

- a Master's degree in Occupational Therapy
(minimum educational requirement)
- a Bachelor's degree
- completion of a minimum of 1000 hours of supervised on the job training
- registration with the College of Occupational Therapists of BC

Sources:

Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists, <http://www.caot.ca/default.asp?pageid=292> ;

WorkBC Career Profile

Qualifications

This occupation is regulated in British Columbia.

You must be registered with the **College of Occupational Therapists of BC** (COTBC) to work as an occupational therapist in British Columbia.

Registration with the College of Occupational Therapists of BC requires:

- Completion of a Masters degree in occupational therapy from an institution accredited by the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists
- Supervised clinical internships in a variety of health care settings
- Successful completion of the National Occupational Therapy Certification Exam
- Consent for a Criminal Record Check
- Proof of professional liability insurance

For more information about registration see the COTBC website:

- <http://www.cotbc.org/Registration/Registration.aspx>

Internationally Educated Occupational Therapists

If you are an internationally trained occupational therapist you must complete a multi-step process to work in BC. This includes an assessment of your educational credentials, completion of the National Occupational Therapy Certification Exam, amongst other requirements. You must also demonstrate a minimum level of English language proficiency.

While completing these steps, it is possible to apply for registration with the College in the "provisional" category.

- *Provisional registrants must practice under the supervision of a full registrant until all requirements for full registration have been met.*

To register as an internationally trained therapist, apply directly through the **Association of Canadian Occupational Therapy Regulatory Organization's Substantial Equivalency Assessment System (SEAS)**.

For more information see:

- **Substantial Equivalency Assessment System (SEAS):**
<http://www.acotro-acore.org/registering-canada/were-you-educated-outside-canada>
- **Occupational Therapy Examination and Practice Preparation Program OTEPP for Internationally Educated Occupational Therapists in Canada**
<http://otepp.mcmaster.ca/>

3. Finding Jobs

You'll find job advertisements in local newspapers, trade journals, and electronic sources, as well as through professional association publications.

Local Newspapers

You can look at the *Vancouver Sun* & *The Province* at Vancouver Public Library for free. Check the job postings daily and the careers section in the *Vancouver Sun* on Wednesdays and Saturdays and in *The Province* on Sundays.

Job White Pages

- Available in print at the Central Library or online at <http://www.vpl.ca/digital-library/jobfreewaycom>

NOTE: You can only access this database from the Central Library or VPL branch libraries. Access is NOT available from home or outside the Library.

Online Job Postings

- **BC's Provincial Health Authorities**

BC's health authorities provide health services to British Columbians in all BC regions

- **Vancouver Coastal Health Authority**
<http://www.vch.ca/careers/>
- **Fraser Health Authority**
<http://careers.fraserhealth.ca/Search-Jobs.aspx>
- **Interior Health Authority**
<http://www.interiorhealth.ca/sites/Careers/Pages/default.aspx>
- **Northern Health Authority**
<http://careers.northernhealth.ca/>
- **Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA)**
<http://www.phsa.ca/Careers/default.htm>
- **Vancouver Island Health Authority**
<http://www.viha.ca/careers/>

- **Indeed.com**

<http://ca.indeed.com/>

Find jobs posted on a multitude of company career sites and job boards

Professional Associations' Career Resources

- **Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists BC**

<http://www.caot.ca/default.asp?pageid=4189>

- **Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists (CAOT)**

http://www.caot.ca/CAOT_career_listings.asp?pageid=1001

- **Therapy BC**

http://www.therapybc.ca/job_search_results.php

Public sector therapists working with children from birth to age 19

Identifying the Right Position

When you browse job advertisements, you'll find a range of different job titles that are relevant.

For occupational therapists, look for these and other related job titles:

- Clinical occupational therapy specialist
- Community occupational therapist
- Occupational therapist, case manager
- Occupational therapist, research and development
- Occupational therapist rehabilitation consultant

Source: <http://www5.hrsdc.gc.ca/noc/english/noc/2011/Profile.aspx?val=1&val1=3143>

Creating a List of Potential Employers

You can use directories to produce lists of potential employers in the Lower Mainland or BC. Contact them directly to find out if they're hiring.

- **Directory of Canadian healthcare personnel**

Available at the Central Library

362.11025 C21a

- **Guide to Canadian health care facilities**

Available at the Central Library

362.105 C212ca

- **Reference Canada**

<http://www.vpl.ca/digital-library/reference-canada>

Click on "Start Search" beside Canadian Businesses, then select the "Advanced Search" button. Select both "Keyword/SIC/NAICS" under Business Type and "City" under Geography. In the top search box enter "Occupational Therapists" and click SEARCH. Select the appropriate headings. Lower down, select the Province, choose the cities, and click the "View Results" button.

Available from the VPL Digital Library | Explore our Digital Library page

NOTE: *You can access this database from a Library computer. If you are using a computer from outside the Library, you will need a Vancouver Public Library card to login to this database. After clicking on the database name, you will be asked to enter your library card number and PIN (usually last four digits of your telephone number).*

4. Applying for a Job

In Canada, employers usually expect to receive a resume or curriculum vitae and a cover letter. These should identify the position you are applying for and summarize your relevant experience.

Use the library catalogue, <http://vpl.bibliocommons.com/> to find books on writing resumes and cover letters specific to your industry.

To learn about applying for jobs in Canada, use the following guides which are available in print at the Central Library or online at <http://skilledimmigrants.vpl.ca/>

- **Writing Resumes and Cover Letters**
Go to <http://pwp.vpl.ca/siic/career-advice/>

- **Getting Canadian Work Experience**
Go to <http://pwp.vpl.ca/siic/career-advice/>

- **Networking for Employment**
Go to <http://pwp.vpl.ca/siic/career-advice/>

- **Learn More About Working in BC and Canada**
Go to <http://pwp.vpl.ca/siic/career-advice/>

5. Getting Help from Industry Sources

Industry Associations

Associations for occupational therapists in BC and Canada can provide information and assistance. Registration and fees are required for membership.

- **Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists (CAOT) – BC Chapter**
<http://www.caot.ca/caot-bc>
- **College of Occupational Therapists of British Columbia (COTBC)**
<http://www.cotbc.org/>
- **Association of Canadian Occupational Therapy Regulatory Organizations**
<http://www.acotro-acore.org/>

Industry Journals

Search the Vancouver Public Library catalogue for journals related to your profession or browse these journals online:

- **InStep**
The College of Occupational Therapists of British Columbia Official Newsletter
<http://www.cotbc.org/Library/Instep-Newsletters.aspx>
- **Occupational Therapy Now (OT Now)**
Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists practice magazine
<http://www.caot.ca/default.asp?ChangeID=25&pageID=7>

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>