



IOTA's 2021 Policy Agenda

IOTA is a membership-based organization that works to build the capacity of its members through education, research, and communication. IOTA acts as a public advocate for occupational therapy to promote the viability of the profession and access to services.

Legislative Priorities

OT Compact

Occupational Therapy Licensure Compact will increase access to health care for rural Iowans and make it easier for people to work in Iowa. At least 10 states, including the neighboring states of Missouri and Nebraska, will be introducing OT Compact legislation this year. Implementing the OT Compact will benefit all Iowans by increasing access to occupational therapy services, especially to those in rural areas and through telehealth. The Iowa Workforce Development identified OT services on the Hot 50 Jobs List¹. This high-salary occupation remains in high-demand, and the compact will help address the shortfall of this much needed therapy provider. The OT Licensure Compact is consistent with the Physical Therapy, Nurse Licensure, and Interstate Medical Licensure Compacts, which have increased access to these critical services for all Iowans. The basis of the compact is to authorize in-person practices and telehealth services for providers that have a valid unrestricted license, enabling them to practice in other compact membered states. This will remove the need for practitioners to get an individual license in each state where they want to practice. **ASK: Please support legislation relating to an OT Licensure Compact. (NOTE: There is currently no bill or legislation directly connected to the OT compact).**

Telehealth

Telehealth has long been a growing health care access tool, with increased popularity throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. With most appointments and activities moved online and continued rural health care provider shortages, Iowans need access to telehealth professionals now more than ever. With OT reimbursement rates at 60% for their appointments, it is not feasible to continue practicing telehealth services. These services generally take more preparation and client communication than in-person appointments. Providing full reimbursement for therapy telehealth services will increase access to care for all Iowans, but especially those living in rural communities. **ASK: Please support legislation that allows for full reimbursement of therapy delivered through telehealth service. HF88 and HF89 (?). SF92.**

HF 88 – Allow for healthcare services provided via telephone if the professional can meet the standards of care for in-person visit.

- Rural areas may not have appropriate access to internet services.
- This will increase access to care for most isolated people in Iowa.

¹ <http://www.iowaemploymentsolutions.com/top50jobs.asp>

HF 89 – Reimbursement for Telehealth services required to be the same as in-person reimbursement.

- **Prohibits requirement for healthcare professionals to be in the same room as the person.**
- **Would expand services to allow greater access to critical services for rural Iowans.**

SF 92 – Similar to HF 88 & 89: Reimbursement for telehealth provided via telephone. Requires same reimbursement for telehealth services as in-person health care.

Rural Workforce Shortage

Iowa Workforce Development recently outlined the High Demand-High Growth Occupations in the 2020 Iowa Wage Report. OTs/OTAs ranked among the highest for health-related occupations with OTs estimated annual growth rate of 2.2% and OTAs at 3.7% which are both higher than the 0.7% overall statewide rate for all occupations². There is a shortage of occupational therapists in Iowa, especially in rural areas. Inclusion of OT as one of the recognized professions eligible for the Health Care Loan Repayment Program, as other surrounding states have done, would address a critical workforce shortage and improve access to care. **ASK: Please support legislation to include OT in eligible services for loan repayment.**

HF 5 – Expands eligibility for loan repayment for graduates willing to work in specified rural areas.

- **This will directly address the workforce shortages in rural Iowa by incentivizing business to recruit healthcare workers to their rural communities.**
- **This is NOT OT-specific, but is will benefit OT directly.**

² <https://www.iowaworkforcedevelopment.gov/occupational-projections>