



Advocate: What YOU Can Do

Contact Your Legislators

- To find your current elected officials & Senate/House District Numbers, go to The Iowa Legislature website and enter your address: <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislators/find>
- Contact via email/phone/forum
Contact information –
Senator: <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislators/senate>
Representative: <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislators/house>
- Report back to IOTA, share how the communication went or any feedback you received
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It is **critical** that you contact YOUR state legislators (Representative and Senator) and ask them to support IOTA's legislative agenda: inclusion of OTs among the health care providers who can access the Rural Iowa Loan Repayment Program, reduce barriers to Medicaid Managed Care, and to ensure occupational therapists are recognized as mental health providers. Please see the sample email below.

WE HIGHLY ENCOURAGE you to personalize the email message with the number of years you have been practicing, identify the center/community you work in, and the patients you serve as an occupational therapist.

SAMPLE Email Message:

SUBJECT LINE: Help Ensure Access to OT Services in Iowa

Dear *Representative/Senator (Last Name)*,

I am a practicing occupational therapist in your district providing services..... (name the location/facility or organization) If you are not aware, there is a shortage of OTs across the state of Iowa, especially in our rural areas. Occupational therapists like myself provide services in a variety of settings including hospitals, clinics, schools, nursing homes and home health settings. We provide necessary therapy services to patients of all ages. A few of the services we provide include treatment for injured, ill, or disabled patients to develop, recover, and improve skills needed to function in at home, in school, at work, or in the community. A few things we do are help children with disabilities to participate fully in school and develop social skills; assist older adults to support themselves through physical/cognitive changes, address physical, psychological, and cognitive aspects of a patient's well-being; and evaluate a client's abilities and environments, create customized goals and intervention, recommend equipment and deliver training for adaptation, and provide guidance and education for family members and caregivers. With OT services patients can get back to work sooner, excel in their learning environment, and help older adults regain their independence sooner. All of these functions of OT services reduce long-term costs to our health care system.

It is absolutely essential to improve access to OT services across the state of Iowa. We are doing our part by increasing the number of education institutions preparing professionals to provide these services. Currently there are 3 programs graduating OT professionals with a Masters of Doctoral degree and 4 programs graduating OT Assistants who are a critical provider of services.



There are three items I would like to ask for your support of going into the 2017 legislative session. 1. Include occupational therapists on to the list of providers eligible to receive Rural Iowa Loan Repayment Program funds. 2. Reduce the barriers from Medicaid Managed Care to ensure patients can continue to receive care without delays in care and providers can continue to deliver services without additional burdens. 3. Ensure OT providers are recognized as providers of mental health services. Occupational therapists work with patients to build or restore their abilities to perform the daily tasks of life. With our aging demographic in Iowa, the need and demand for OT services continues to grow at an alarming rate. Without your help on these three policy items, we will not be able to meet the demands for OT services across that state.

Currently there are only 1,000 licensed OTs, compared to three times as many Physical Therapists, to provide services for the entire state of Iowa with the majority providing services in urban areas. Residents in 11 rural counties currently do not have a practicing OT in their area and do not have access to OT services without having to travel long distances. The ability to recruit and retain OTs in rural parts of Iowa are difficult today and will continue to be a significant challenge.

I'm writing to ask for your support of and help to ensure access to the essential health care services provided by occupational therapists for Iowans in need. Thank you for your consideration of this request. Addressing these three items will ensure patients across Iowa are getting access to the health care services and treatments they need. Please let me know if I can provide additional information. I look forward to your response.

YOUR NAME
CITY | PHONE/EMAIL

Thank you once again for adding your voice to this cause and taking action! Please feel free to contact your leaders at IOTA for additional information.