

REVISTA OT

A NEWSLETTER OF THE TEXAS OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ASSOCIATION

VOL 38 NO. 2 / Spring 2025 EDITION

Happy OT month



TOTA

TEXAS OCCUPATIONAL
THERAPY ASSOCIATION, INC.



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JUNE 13-14

TOTA 2025 OT and PT Service Delivery in Schools: Policy, Research, and Best Practices

AUSTIN COMMUNITY COLLEGE EASTVIEW CAMPUS



This conference is for OT and PT school-based practitioners serving in Texas public schools. The content supports developing practitioner knowledge base regarding service delivery for all struggling learners. Planned sessions will alert attendees to the latest developments in education policy, research, and evidence-based practice.

Location: Austin Community College - Eastview Campus
3401 Webberville Rd location in building 8000
Austin, TX 78702

Price: Practitioners (and students) who are a current member of their professional association (TOTA or TPTA), will be eligible for a discounted price.
\$180 Members \$230 Non-Member

Tentative Schedule: Friday 8:15 AM - 4:30 PM
Saturday 9:00 AM - 12:30 PM

Anticipated CE/Contact hours: 10.0

Registration: IS OPEN

**CLICK HERE
TO REGISTER**

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340 Neuroplasticity for Children and Includes Primitive Reflex Integration

Friday-Saturday April 25-26, 2025, Houston, TX

329 Gail Ritchie's Pediatric NDT Intensive Handling Intervention

Friday-Saturday June 20-21, 2025 Dallas, TX

Friday-Saturday August 1-2, 2025, Addison, TX

316 Pediatric Myofascial Release and Its Application to Neuro-Developmental Treatment

Friday-Saturday June 6-7, 2025 Dallas, TX

306 CAN-EAT Approach ...Using medical, motor, & therapy strategies in pediatric feeding

Friday-Saturday, October 3-4, 2025 San Antonio, TX

357 Mastering Pediatric Postural Control: Foundations and Strategies for Balance Development and Treatment

Saturday, October 11, 2025, 8:00 AM – 3:30 PM Houston, TX



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TOTA 2025 Annual Conference

San Marcos, Texas
November 14-15, 2025

Embassy Suites by Hilton
San Marcos Hotel
Conference Center



Call for Proposals Closes May 31

CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFO:

<https://www.tota.org/2025-annual-conference>

The Texas Occupational Therapy Association (TOTA) is now accepting proposals for the 2025 Annual Conference. Proposals may be submitted by occupational therapists, occupational therapy assistants, and occupational therapy students (Note: student submissions must include a faculty or clinician co-author). Proposals from related professions are also welcome. Proposals must meet the TBOTE definition for Continuing Education (§367.1 and §367.2): **professional development activities that ensure the health, safety, and welfare of the public and directly concern the maintenance or enhancement of knowledge and proficiencies relevant to occupational therapy practice (as defined in §362.1) or the pedagogy, education, ethics, or theory development of occupational therapy.** Selections are made at the sole discretion of TOTA.

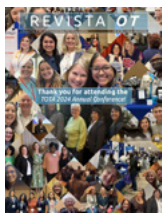
Instructions for Submission

- Proposals may be submitted until 11:59 PM CST on **May 31, 2025**.
- Proposals will only be accepted through the online process.
- If you are submitting multiple proposals, please use the same email address for all submissions.
- Click on the "Save" button to save any information you have entered.
- Incomplete proposals will be deleted after the deadline.
- The TOTA Continuing Education Review Committee completes a blind review of all conference proposals. Submissions must avoid any reference to persons and facilities.
- Avoid providing any protected health information (PHI) as it may be a HIPAA, FERPA, or state medical records statute violation.

For complete instructions: <https://tota.memberclicks.net/call-for-proposals-2025>

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Revista OT is posted online three times a year by the Texas Occupational Therapy Association, Inc., 2323 Clear Lake City Blvd. Suite 180-197 Houston, TX 77062.

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832-915-9238
email: judith.joseph@tota.org
Web: www.tota.org

REVISTA OT: Spring Edition 2025

TOTA 2025 ANNUAL CONFERENCE EXHIBITOR AND ADVERTISING INFORMATION

Exhibitor and Advertising Information

Live Exhibit Dates:

November 14-15, 2025

(with a Virtual-Only option)

Embassy Suites by Hilton
San Marcos Hotel Conference Center
1001 E. McCarty Lane
San Marcos, TX 78666

Exhibit Hall Schedule:

Friday 11/14 - 11:00 am - 4:00 pm
(unopposed lunch 12:15 pm - 1:45 pm)

Saturday 11/15 - 10:00 am - 2:00 pm
(unopposed lunch 12:00 pm - 1:30 pm)

The TOTA Annual Conference provides the ideal place and time to promote your products/services to the OT community. The event is being held in person in San Marcos, Texas..

Review the prospectus for exhibitor and advertising options (Virtual-Only option for those who cannot join us in person). Once you have read the details and decided on the booth and sponsorship you would like, click on the Exhibitor/Advertising Registration Form to begin your online registration process.

Questions? Contact Kami Lusson 832-915-9239

**CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFO AND
TO ACCESS THE 2025 PROSPECTUS**



Always Trust Your Cape: The Superpower of Occupational Therapy

John S. Luna, OTR – TOTA President



John S. Luna, OTR

*(Clark, Clark, Janosky, 1995, 3:08)

Guy Clark's (1995) song *The Cape* tells the story of an eight-year-old boy with dreams of flying. With his trusty cape tied around his neck, he climbs to the top of his garage, gets "a runnin' start, and bless his heart" (Clark, Clark, Janosky, 1995, 0:43), takes a leap of faith. The song follows him as he grows into a man—one who, regardless of age, continues to see life as "just a leap of faith; He spreads his arms, holds his breath" (Clark, Clark, Janosky, 1995, 0:48), and continues to take the leap.

While the song lends itself to various interpretations, I can't help but think of the profession of occupational therapy—its practitioners and students—every time it shuffles through my playlist.

The song is called *The Cape*, a title that may evoke images of comic book heroes like Superman, Batgirl, and Thor. Without the power of the mythical cape, would the boy have dared to imagine flying? Would he have climbed to the top of the building? Would he have taken the risk and leap?

When we think about a day in the life of an occupational therapy practitioner, we see the same willingness to take leaps for the client we serve. We drive long distances to bring therapy into people's homes. We memorize the schedules of multiple school campuses, grade levels, and every available therapy space to serve students in their schools. We arrive before our clients get out of bed on their first morning in a rehab unit, often being the first person they see as they begin their recovery. We use therapeutic activities as psychologists use words—to bring healing to those with mental and behavioral health conditions. We even stand before the next generation of practitioners in the classroom, translating our everyday skills into practice lessons to prepare tomorrow's practitioners.

What transforms the person standing at the edge of the garage into the superhero who can fly? Their cape. It is the power of the profession of occupational therapy. Just like the sticker on my water bottle says: **"My superpower is OT."**



And while there are no eight-year-old occupational therapy practitioners, there remains an undeniable, indomitable spirit—an ability to see the world through the lens of possibility, always seeking a better tomorrow for the clients we serve. Much like the boy's unwavering belief in his ability to fly, OT practitioners and students look beyond constraints of injury, illness and disability asking not why we cannot, but how we can. Through evidence-based interventions practitioners create the adaptations, modifications, rehabilitation, and habilitation (AOTA, 2020), we facilitate the possibilities of participation where others may see limitation.

When we wrap ourselves in the cape of occupational therapy, we gain the courage to overcome our fears and take leaps for the clients we serve and the profession we love. We take these leaps knowing that we may not always reach the goals we envisioned, but we are never alone. The profession is more than just evidence, history, and practice—it is a living, breathing community of practitioners, always ready to help dust ourselves off and take the next leap.

As we celebrate Occupational Therapy Month this April, take a moment to recognize your superpower—not just the incredible skills and unique perspective you bring to the table, but the transformative power of the cape you put on every day to serve clients across the lifespan. You help empower them to live their best tomorrows, today.

Happy OT Month, and remember: "Always trust your cape".

References

American Occupational Therapy Association (2020). Occupational Therapy Practice Framework: Domain and Process—Fourth Edition. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy* August 2020, Vol. 74(Supplement_2), 7412410010p1–7412410010p87. doi: <https://doi.org/10.5014/ajot.2020.74S2001>

Clark, G., Clark, S. and Janosky, J. (1995). The Cape [Song]. *On Dublin Blue*. EMI April Music; BMG Bumblebee.

OpenAI. (2025). *A young female child wearing a cape made from a towel, joyfully jumping from right to left against the backdrop of an autumn day* [AI-generated image]. DALL-E. [Figure 1]

OpenAI. (2025). *Elderly woman receiving occupational therapy assistance with a sock aid in a rehabilitation gym* [AI-generated image]. DALL-E. [Figure 2]





CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

The Annual Awards Ceremony recognizes our colleagues' contributions to our profession. Honoring each other is a valuable part of our professional duty. The award categories have been expanded to include more opportunities to recognize our occupational therapy assistants.

[< CLICK TO VIEW AWARD CATEGORIES >](#)

**Nominations for 2025
TOTA Awards will close
on April 30, 2025**

Award Ceremony:
Friday November 15, 2025

**Submit a
Nomination>**

CLICK HERE

ADVOCACY

“A” is for Advocacy

Judith Joseph, OTR, MA, CDRS –TOTA Executive Director



Judith Joseph, OTR,
MA, CDRS, TOTA
Executive Director

April is a good time to consider advocacy for occupational therapy practice, as it is OT month. This year, more than 250 OT practitioners and students participated in our advocacy day, TOTA Day at the Capitol. Notably, 44% of the participants were not TOTA members.

Why are people not members of their professional associations? Recent articles suggest that professional associations' benefits are undervalued and not well-known. In addition, there are opportunities for professionals to create something on their own that aligns with their personal goals without an associated membership fee. If you search Facebook for occupational therapy groups you will find a long list of private and public groups that address areas such as exam preparation, research, home health, private practice, and telehealth, the list seems endless.

What these public and private groups cannot address adequately is advocacy. Advocacy is **NOT** complaining about low therapy reimbursement rates from Medicare and Medicaid. Advocacy is **NOT** complaining about the absence of occupational therapy as mental and behavioral health service providers. Advocacy is **NOT** complaining about the lack of funding for programs such as SHARS, ECI, and IDEA. Advocacy is **NOT** complaining about high caseloads and productivity standards. Advocacy is **NOT** about complaining but acting.

Effective advocacy necessitates a cohesive and robust voice to influence policy, advance the profession, and support the clients we serve. Your membership in TOTA allows us to employ a lobbyist, both during and between Texas Legislative Sessions, to either support or oppose legislation, TOTA requires the services of a lobbyist and the associated expenses.

As an OT, I recognize that not all complaining is bad. It can release frustrations, validate emotions, and highlight problems that need solving. As your professional association, our goal is "To inspire, inform, and connect our members to make a greater impact on the occupational therapy profession". Policy influences practice. The Texas Occupational Therapy Association is focused on addressing legislative issues that affect practitioners and their clients.

I am hopeful that although membership might not be desirable for many OTPs and students the desire to advocate for the profession is there. But we need you!!!! Join TOTA, the only professional organization that advocates for occupational therapy in Texas.

Best,

Judi

Officers

| | |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------|
| President: | John Luna |
| Vice President: | Keegan McKay |
| Secretary: | Laurie Stelter |
| Treasurer: | Jason Perez |
| Executive Director | Judith Joseph (<i>employee</i>) |

District Chairpersons

| | |
|--------------------|------------------|
| Alamo South: | Thelma Ochoa |
| Capital Centex: | Lacey Spark |
| Great Plains West: | Chris Lasek |
| Gulf Coast East: | Chanae' Jones |
| Rio Grande: | Grisel Contreras |
| Trinity North: | Angela Duell |

Appointed Committee Chairs

| | |
|--|-----------------|
| Committee on Conference: | Evie Harness |
| Committee on Development: | Sue Ram |
| Committee on Education: | Megan Taylor |
| Committee on Legislative & Political Affairs: | Emily Navarro |
| Committee on Membership: | Patricia Bowyer |
| Committee on Standards and Practice: | Michelle Atanu |
| Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: | Dahlia Castillo |

Adhoc Committee Chairs

| | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Social Media Committee | Tamara Traber & Amanda Elsner |
| Awards and Recognition Committee | Carol Regli & Gloria Jeffrey |
| Mentorship Program | Monica Clark |

Appointed Board Members

| | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Historian | Esther Bell |
| Parliamentarian | Lynda Jennings |
| OTA Representative | Layman Darnell Miller |
| OT Student Representative | Annabeth Dorris |
| OTA Student Representative | Kimberly Garcia |

Consultants

| | |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|
| Legislative Advisors | Denise Rose, JD - Lobbyist |
| TOTA Legal Advisor | Richard Y. Cheng, JD, OT, CHC |

Newsletter

| | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|
| Editor: | Rachelle Elliot |
| Design and Production: | Justine Boyer |
| Vendor Services | Kami Lusson |
| Continuing Education Services | Paula Cook |

Shaping the Future of OT



Evie Harness, OTR

Evie Harness, OTR – TOTA Conference Committee Chair

We have a theme! Shaping the Future of OT. Recent decisions and changes that we have heard broadcast through various media outlets may have an impact on the services we provide our clients. The theme reflects the commitment we have as clinicians-- to advocate for our clients to be able to shape our and their future services for Occupational Therapy. Please consider the theme for your submissions to this year's open Call for Proposals which runs through May 31st.

Plans are well underway for this year's conference being held November 14th and 15th at the Embassy Suites by Hilton San Marcos. It is never too early to mark that date on your planners. We hope to see you there!

This year we have made some changes based on feedback we have received from you, the attendees. We will open the conference this year on Friday morning from 8:00 to 9:00 with our Keynote Speaker Erik Johnson, OTD, MS, OTR, who has spent more than 15 years as an occupational army therapist caring for veterans. He has been recognized for his dedication and compassion and innovative services and has held several key positions allowing him to shape the services provided to the military. We know it will be a great way to energize us for the weekend of education, networking, and celebration. Speaking of celebration. The Awards and Recognition Ceremony will return to Friday night to honor and celebrate our colleagues who have been chosen to receive an award. Please take the time to send in nominations for deserving OTs or OTAs who characterize the qualifications for any of the TOTA awards. We know there are many clinicians out there who are deserving but who will go unrecognized until someone takes a few moments to nominate them.

We will continue to offer a variety of short and long courses from proposals received. Based on popular demand, the Student Knowledge Challenge Bowl will return on Friday night. We hope you join in the fun and competition!

Read your Revista and check the TOTA Tidbits to keep up to date on what is going on in your districts and for Conference! Wishing you a healthy and happy Spring!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

LOOK WHAT'S NEW

Mental Health Facts in Texas

- 3 million Texans are living with mental health conditions
- Many are struggling to get help they need
- Large reason is financial strain and increased cost of healthcare
- 45% of the 800,000 Texas who did not receive needed mental health care did not do so because of the cost, based on a Kaiser Family Foundation analysis
- 1 in 5 adults, experience a mental health concern every year

(Greg Hansch (executive director for the National Alliance of Mental Illness in Texas) Published in Dallas Morning News Feb 24, 2024)

Call for Proposals

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION:
11:59 PM CST MAY 31, 2025

[CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFO](#)

Award Nominations

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION:
April 30, 2025

The Annual Awards Ceremony recognizes our colleagues' contributions to our profession. Honoring each other is a valuable part of our professional duty. The award categories have been expanded to include more opportunities to recognize our occupational therapy assistants.

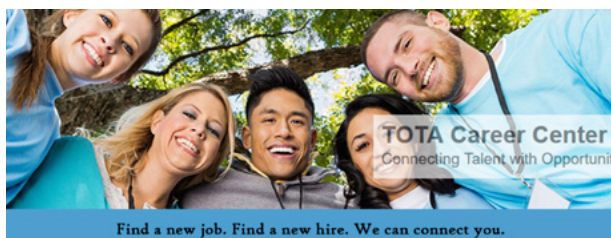
Click the link below to view the category definitions
<https://www.tota.org/award-categories>

- Texas OT and Texas OTA of the Year (2 awards)
- Roster of Merit
- Distinguished Service Award
- Letter of Appreciation
- Award for Clinical Excellence
- Clinical Fieldwork Educator of the Year OT/OTA Award (2 awards)
- Honorary Life Member
- OTA/OT Collaboration Award
- Interdisciplinary Team Award
- OT/OTA Academic Educator of the Year Award (2 awards)
- OT/OTA Student Leadership Award (2 awards)
- Horizon Award

Occupational therapy practitioners and students must be current TOTA members at the time of nomination and throughout the selection process to be considered for association awards. Self-nomination is not allowed.

Connecting Jobs and Employers

Are you looking for a new job? Employers, are you looking for a new hire? Visit our TOTA Career Center where we connect talent with opportunity.



The TOTA Board of Directors Annual Strategic Planning and Board Meeting

The TOTA Board of Directors held their annual strategic planning and board meeting from January 24-26, 2025, to revise the strategic plan, set the annual budget, provide board member training, and establish organizational goals. Members are encouraged to review the strategic plan and submit any questions or comments through the provided link.

<https://tota.memberclicks.net/ask-the-bod>



TOTA Strategic Plan

Strategic Area 1: Serve the Membership

CLICK HERE TO SUBMIT
QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS

| How | What | Goal | Results |
|-------------------|--|---|---------|
| Educate & Empower | We provide professional development activities and awards and recognition programs. | 1. Educate and empower the membership through events, professional relationships, social media, awards, and recognition in the following ways: a. By the June Board Meeting, at least four professional developmental events will be scheduled. The Development Chair will report on the status of events in October. b. Each district chair will organize and execute at least one annual event geared toward students. c. The Mentorship Committee will develop and implement at least three activities for program participants in 2025, to enhance career growth, leadership skills, and clinical expertise across various practice areas. d. Each TOTA district membership chair will ensure that at least one nomination is submitted for annual awards to be recognized at the conference. | |
| Educate & Empower | Provide continuing education through conferences, webinars, meetings, and lectures both live and through our learning management system. | 1. Educate and empower the membership through continuing education events in the following ways: a. The DEI Committee will deliver a minimum of two (2) continuing education opportunities for members in 2025. b. The DEI committee will conduct at least one (1) targeted training for the TOTA Board in 2025 to enhance leadership awareness and alignment with the organization. c. District Chairs will coordinate a minimum of two (2) continuing education opportunities for members in 2025. | |
| Educate & Empower | 3. We provide transparency in communication through business meetings, bi-weekly and quarterly newsletters, and social media. | 1. Enhance member engagement and organizational visibility by leveraging feedback-driven strategies, increasing contributions to TOTA's Revista publication, and expanding social media content creation to effectively address member needs, promote professional development, and strengthen TOTA's presence within the occupational therapy community. a. The Membership Committee will develop and distribute a biannual member and practitioner feedback survey, accessible through the TOTA website, to gather insights on member needs and preferences. The committee will analyze survey results, make recommendations, and implement targeted marketing changes to attract new members and enhance member engagement by the end of Q1 2026. b. TOTA Board members will increase the number of Revista submissions to 1 per district and committee chair or delegated person per issue for consideration for publication. | |
| Create Leaders | 1. We provide professional development activities and awards and recognition programs. | 1. Foster leadership development and engagement within TOTA in collaboration with the Membership Chair and Student Representative, to promote leadership opportunities and encourage participation from members, students, and early practitioners during the election nomination period. a. Create an informational recording on leadership opportunities within TOTA for 2026. | |
| Network | We connect with our members through networking at local and state events, mentorship programs, and community events. | 1. Enhance member engagement and professional collaboration by supporting students and practitioners through district-led events and establishing standardized processes for Communities of Practice to foster connection, knowledge sharing, and sustained professional growth within the TOTA community. a. Each district chair will organize and execute at least one annual networking event specifically designed to connect and support students and practitioners. b. By the end of Q4 2025, the Development Chair will finalize and implement a standardized process for establishing and supporting Communities of Practice, including guidelines for formation, operation, and sustainability to foster collaboration and professional growth among members. | |

Strategic Area 2: Serve the Profession and the Consumer it Serves

| How | What | Goal | Results |
|---------|---|--|---------|
| Network | We connect our members through networking at local and state events, mentorship programs, and community events. | 1. Each district will host or coordinate participation in at least one community event (e.g., Relay for Life, Special Olympics, or local health fairs), in 2025, aligned with a population served by occupational therapy to promote awareness, provide education, and demonstrate the impact of occupational therapy services. 2. By the end of Q4 2025, TOTA will interact with 50% of OT/OTA academic programs to exchange information and develop professional connections. 3. TOTA will sponsor an event to increase knowledge and awareness about the OT profession/services among the community and potential stakeholders. | |

Strategic Area 3: Maintain a viable organization which supports its purpose, objectives, and functions, through improved processes and use of a diverse pool of volunteers.

| How | What | Goal | Results |
|----------------|---|---|---------|
| Create Leaders | We provide transparency in communication through business meetings, bi-weekly and quarterly newsletters, and social media | 1. Strengthen organizational infrastructure, transparency, and engagement by standardizing processes, enhancing communication strategies, and implementing efficient systems. This includes refining SOPs for social media and district operations, completing a centralized folder system, streamlining vacancy advertising and recruitment, and launching a targeted marketing and membership campaign to ensure consistent and effective outreach across all levels of TOTA. a. By the end of Q2 2025, the Social Media Ad Hoc Committee Chair will expand and implement standardized operating procedures (SOPs) for social media management, ensuring consistent district involvement, and provide recommendations for updates to policies and procedures to enhance organizational outreach and engagement. b. By the end of Q4 2025, District and Committee chairs will create (2) district processes, including the expansion of tasks outlined in job descriptions that are currently undefined in existing SOPs. This will ensure clarity, consistency, and accessibility for current and future organizational leaders. c. By the end of Q3 2025, complete implementation of the centralized folder system owned and managed by TOTA, ensuring all state and district processes, documents, and resources are systematically stored and easily accessible to organizational leaders and committees. d. State, district, and committee chairs will advertise vacancies for open positions within 14 days of becoming aware of the vacancy for unfilled positions to ensure transparency and timely recruitment. e. TOTA will develop and implement a social media membership campaign in association with OT month by the end of April 2025. | |

Strategic Area 4: TOTA will be proactive to internal and external influences and changes

| How | What | Goal | Results |
|----------|--|---|---------|
| Advocate | We coordinate and engage in advocacy and provide legislative updates and action alerts for anything that impacts our profession. | 1. Advance advocacy efforts and member engagement by hosting impactful events like "Day at the Capitol" to raise awareness of legislative priorities and publishing regular legislative updates to keep members informed and actively involved in supporting the occupational therapy profession. a. TOTA will host a "Day at the Capitol" event in 2025, engaging at least 150 attendees, to promote advocacy, raise awareness of legislative priorities, and strengthen member involvement in supporting the occupational therapy profession. b. By the end of Q2 2025, TOTA will publish at least three legislative updates to keep members informed about policy developments, advocacy opportunities, and actions impacting the occupational therapy profession. 2. Collaborate with the statewide behavioral coordinating council and HHSC: a. To be recognized as providers of mental and behavioral health services in Texas to ensure comprehensive care for all Texans. b. For OT to be included in legislation referencing school, community, and inpatient mental health services. c. Modify the language in the Texas Medicaid Therapy Provider Procedures Manual to align with the language in the Texas OT Practice Act and include psychological and social dysfunction d. To be included as providers of mental and behavioral health services in the Texas Behavioral Health Case Management Handbook. 3. Communicate with key stakeholders regarding therapy Medicaid reimbursement rates. | |

Celebrating Acts of Kindness, Benevolence & Goodwill

Reggie Michael Campbell, OT, MS, FAOTA



Reggie Michael Campbell, OT, MS, FAOTA



Kyle Ogden, (president and CEO of Thanks-Giving Foundation) acknowledges kindness as a “core virtue that must be integrated into our cultural, educational and institutional framework.” He states:

“Kindness is a cornerstone of thriving societies. It enriches individual lives and strengthens communal ties. When kindness becomes a collective value, it not only improves life for individuals but ***transforms communities into more inclusive and collective spaces.*** ***“Kindness catalyzes positive change*** that ripples through our lives and communities in countless ways: ***It improves mental and physical health, it reduces stress, enhances happiness and promotes overall wellbeing for both the giver and the receiver”*** (Ogden, 2025)

Dr. Kathrine Lawson and Dr. Eugenia Gonzalez in the Fall of 2024, demonstrated ***a true act of kindness*** when they reached out to the Boards of TOTA and Occupational Therapy Benevolence Foundation (OTBE). They were in search of a way to donate to honor the memory of an OT colleague, whose life was tragically cut short. Their desire to make a difference served as a catalyst for positive change, challenging the leaders of OTBE and TOTA to explore/transform a new way to serve the OT community with kindness, benevolence, and goodwill.

Individually both TOTA and OTBE practices are directed by their nonprofit status. TOTA, as a 501(c6) nonprofit organization, cannot receive donations. OTBE was established in 2018 as a 501(c3), to receive donations to support Texas OT colleagues impacted by Hurricane Harvey. Over the years, the mission of OTBE has expanded. OTBE provides funding for benevolence grants to Texas occupational therapists when their ability to deliver occupational therapy services is disrupted by natural disasters or other significant life crisis. (see otbe.org for OTBE grant policy and procedures information).

Kindness and benevolence are similar in meaning and often be used interchangeably. Others ***see kindness as a quality of being generous and benevolence as a quality of well meaning.*** Whereas goodwill involves an attitude of friendliness, helpfulness, and cooperation. TOTA and OTBE though separate organizations are both committed to working collectively to strengthen community ties to support occupational therapy practitioners and the clients they serve.

As an act of kindness, benevolence and goodwill, Dr. Lawson, and Dr. Gonzalez, in collaboration with TOTA and OTBE Boards elected to sponsor the symposium in May 2025 to acknowledge Mental Health Month, the important role occupational therapists play in promoting mental health wellness while providing CEU's to support the delivery of OT services.

The Occupational Therapy Benevolence Endowment (OTBE), in collaboration with the Texas Occupational Therapy Association (TOTA), is pleased to present a Virtual Maternal Mental Wellness Symposium. The symposium aims to bring awareness and education about this emerging area of practice, in service to their OT colleagues and their clients as new mothers.

This virtual symposium will be available FREE to occupational therapy practitioners and was made possible by the generous act of kindness donation of two special OT colleagues and their friends.

Reference

Ogden, 2025 ([dallas/https://www.dallasnews.com/opinion/commentary/2025/02/14/today-we-celebrate-kindness-in-dallas/](https://www.dallasnews.com/opinion/commentary/2025/02/14/today-we-celebrate-kindness-in-dallas/)).

Save the Date May 17, 2025

OT-BE OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY BENEVOLENCE ENDOWMENT

TOTA Mental Health

Maternal Mental Wellness Symposium

May 17, 2025
10:00 AM - 2:30 PM CST

FREE to all Texas occupational therapy practitioners and students

Pending TOTA approval for 3.5 CE/Contact Hours

TOTA 2025 Day at the Capitol

Judith Joseph, OTR, MA, CDRS –TOTA Executive Director

We cannot be more proud and thankful for such a great turnout. This would not have been possible without your support, dedication, and commitment to occupational therapy. To all of the academic programs that adjusted their class schedules to allow their students to participate, ****THANK YOU****. To everyone who flew in, drove in, and rode the bus, ****THANK YOU****. To our capstone student, Abrianna Pellegrino, who created the big spreadsheet, ****THANK YOU****. To Jackson/Walker's Denise Rose, Taylor Cummins, and Eliza Martinez, for scheduling appointments, getting the recognitions, and opening doors, ****THANK YOU****.

I want to share these quotes because I cannot say it better. "I want to give a huge shout out to all the students, you represented our profession well" (Gloria Jeffery); "Thanks to all the clinicians and professors who lead by example and demonstrated that advocacy works" (Sue Ram).

It's amazing what we can accomplish together. I encourage you to stay engaged, get involved, and join TOTA, the only profession that advocates for occupational therapy in Texas.



A Journey of Voice and Purpose

Sue Ram, OTR, OTD
TOTA State Development Committee Chair



Sue Ram, OTD, OTR

Advocacy has always been at the heart of my journey as an occupational therapy practitioner. From the moment I was a student in an occupational therapy doctorate (OTD) program, I understood the importance of being a voice for our profession—whether through personal advocacy, local and state involvement, or at the federal level. Advocacy is not just about speaking up; it is about making a difference.

I vividly remember my first AOTA Capitol Hill Day in Washington, D.C., almost ten years ago. It was my first glimpse into the power of collective voices coming together to champion occupational therapy. Over the years, I have learned that advocacy means being a voice not just for myself but for others who may not have the opportunity to speak up. It is about sharing our stories—stories of resilience, recovery, and empowerment.

One of the most impactful ways I advocate is through personal narrative. By sharing my experiences—whether it is a funny story from the clinic that illustrates the creativity of occupational therapy or a moment of triumph with a client—I connect with people on a human level. These narratives help others see the heart of our profession and understand the impact we have on individuals' lives.

I also aim to advocate for occupational therapy through my scholarly research. By contributing to the body of knowledge in our field, I hope to inform policy, shape practice, and inspire future practitioners. Whether presenting at conferences or writing for professional publications, I use my research to elevate the voice of occupational therapy.

Advocacy does not always have to be about knocking on the doors of representatives, although it is a powerful experience I encourage everyone to try. Sometimes, advocacy is simply about sharing how occupational therapy has helped someone regain a skill they thought was lost or celebrating a client's success. These stories are powerful tools that highlight the impact of our profession.

Fast forward to 2025: I found myself at my first Texas Occupational Therapy Association (TOTA) Day at the Capitol, surrounded by over 250 passionate occupational therapy practitioners and students. Watching students experience

advocacy for the first time, knocking on doors and courageously sharing their stories, I was reminded of where I started and inspired by where our profession is headed. It was a full-circle moment—a reminder that advocacy is not a one-time event but an ongoing commitment.

Advocacy is about ensuring that we have more days to come in this incredible profession. It is about protecting and advancing occupational therapy for future generations. Whether through legislative action, community engagement, sharing a laugh, or conducting research, each of us has a role to play.

Thank you, TOTA, for giving me the platform to inspire others and for supporting the voices of our profession. This OT Month, I encourage everyone to find their way to advocate—big or small—and continue using their voice to make a difference.

Happy OT Month and happy advocating!



Education Chair Report

Megan Taylor, OTR, OTD
TOTA Education Chair



Megan Taylor,
OTR, OTD

The 2025 Annual Conference in San Marcos is approaching! Here is what you need to know:

Call for Conference Proposals – Move Beyond the Basics!

We're looking for dynamic, in-depth conference proposals that go beyond the surface and dive deep into the **OT Process**. This year, we encourage presenters to elevate their sessions by incorporating **specific examples of clinical reasoning, intervention “ingredients,” dosages, and mechanisms of action** that drive occupational therapy outcomes. Whether you are exploring assessment strategies, innovative intervention techniques, documentation and reimbursement, or ethics, we want sessions that offer **practical application, research-informed insights, and real-world case examples**. Let us push the boundaries of knowledge and bring meaningful, evidence-based discussions to the forefront of our profession! **Submit your proposal by May 31st and help shape the future of OT practice!**

Call for Conference Reviewers

TOTA needs experienced practitioners to review conference proposals and CE Events! If you have **at least five years of clinical experience**, hold an **active or retired TBOTE license in good standing**, and are a **current or retired TOTA member**, apply today on the TOTA website!

Conference Registration – Coming Soon!

Network, learn, and grow at conference! **Early Bird Registration opens in September**. Check the TOTA website for rates, group discounts, and venue details.

Education in the Districts and TOTA's LMS

Stay up to date with TOTA's ever-evolving library of online education courses! Explore some of the latest offerings below and help us expand our educational opportunities! We are looking for more presenters and diverse topics to enrich our learning community. If you are interested in presenting a course, contact me or your District Education Chair – we are happy to help you submit a CE application.

Featured Courses:

- *Neurosequential Model of Therapeutics—But Make It OT!*
- *A Holistic Perspective of Post-Amputation OT Interventions & Education Across Settings*
- *DIR-Floortime: All the Time with Everyone*
- *Understanding the Impact of Childhood Trauma for Healthcare Providers*
- *The Integrated School OT: Supporting Students Through*

Intentional Collaboration

Find even more learning opportunities and district-specific events on the TOTA website under **“Upcoming Events.”** Stay informed, stay engaged, and keep growing with TOTA!



Human Factors in the Context of Professional and Personal Interactions

Dahlia Castillo, OTR, OTD,
TOTA DEI Committee Chair



Dahlia Castillo,
OTR, OTD

During daily interactions as occupational therapy practitioners, we typically consider the personal factors of individual clients. While it is expected to accept differing points of view of an individual client within the context of OT services, do we do the same for those human encounters outside our professional contacts with other humans?

The occupational therapy practice framework (OTPF-IV) describes personal factors as a “broad construct that encompasses environmental factors and personal factors. Personal factors are the particular background of a person’s life and living and consists of the unique features of the person that are not part of the health condition or health state.” Personal factors consist of all the following: age, sexual orientation, gender identity, race and ethnicity, cultural identification and cultural attitudes, social background, social status, and socioeconomic status, upbringing and life experiences, habits and past and current behavioral patterns, individual psychological assets, education, lifestyle, and other health conditions and fitness (AOTA, 2020).

While these concepts seem simple to consider, it is during times when we are most challenged that we must remind ourselves that our training and professional resources can help us navigate difficult personal situations.

American Occupational Therapy Association (2020). Occupational therapy practice framework: Domain and process (4th ed.) American Journal of Occupational Therapy, 74 (Suppl. 2), 7412410010. <https://doi.org/10.5014/ajot.2020.74S2001>



TOTA 2025 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Shaping the Future of OT

November 14 - 15, 2025
San Marcos, Texas



TOTA 2025 Call for State and District Board of Directors Nominations

2025 TOTA Elections

State Board:

Vice Chair
Secretary

[CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFO](#)

District Positions:

| Alamo South | Capital Centex | Great Plains West | Gulf Coast East | Rio Grande | Trinity North |
|-------------|----------------|-------------------|-----------------|------------|---------------|
| Vice-Chair | Chair | Vice-Chair | Chair | Vice-Chair | Chair |
| Secretary | | Secretary | | Secretary | |

The newly elected officers will take office following the 2025 Annual Business meeting to be scheduled in October 2025. The Nomination form will consist of offices for which we are seeking candidates.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

STATE OFFICERS

- Any candidate for the office of President, President-Elect or Vice President of TOTA must have been a member of the Association for three (3) years immediately prior to the nomination deadline.
- State officers may reside in a border state, but must be licensed to practice in Texas.
- All officers shall maintain membership in good standing with TOTA and AOTA during their terms of office.
- No state officer can concurrently hold a position as an elected officer in AOTA, a district division of TOTA, or another state's OT membership organization.

DISTRICT OFFICERS

- Nominees for District Chair must have been a member of the district for a minimum of one year prior to the nomination deadline.
- Officers must be licensed to practice in Texas and have chosen to be a member of that geographical district.
- All officers must remain TOTA members in good standing throughout their term.
- No District Officer shall concurrently hold more than one elected position in AOTA, a state office of TOTA, or another state's OT membership organization.

Elections Candidate Application - 2025

2025 Nominating Committee

Amber B. Armstead, DrPH, OTR/L, BCPR (Gulf Coast East)
Kim Broussard, OTR, OTD, PhD (Trinity North) - Committee Chair
Elizabeth Deluca-Berg, OTR, OTD, CAPS (Capital Centex)
Tiffany Green, COTA, M.Ed. (Gulf Coast East)
Ricky Joseph, Ph.D., MA-HRM, OTR, FAOTA (Alamo South)
Donna Walls, OTR, OTD, CHT (Great Plains West)

If you any questions about running for an elected position, contact elections@tota.org

A Capstone Student's Reflection from TOTA's Day at the Capitol

Abrianna Pellegrin, OTS



Abrianna Pellegrin, OTS

As part of my capstone experience, I had the opportunity to help plan the Texas Occupational Therapy Association's (TOTA) Day at the Capitol. This biennial event brings together Texas occupational therapy practitioners and students to advocate for our profession and the clients we serve. After weeks of coordinating with my wonderful mentor, Judi Joseph, TOTA board members, and the lobbying team- Over 250 practitioners and students gathered at the Texas State Capitol on February 4, 2025.

Though engaging with legislators and their staff felt intimidating, I found inspiration in both the enthusiasm of the students eager to advocate and the experienced practitioners who led by example. Throughout the day, we had the opportunity to meet with legislators and their staff to discuss the critical role of occupational therapy in addressing mental and behavioral health, improving access to healthcare, and securing policies that ensure the long-term success of our profession. Seeing policymakers and their staff actively listen and engage in meaningful conversations reaffirmed that advocacy is about building relationships and cultivating dialogue that leads to real change.

One of the most memorable moments for me was standing in the Senate and House galleries as our profession was formally recognized. Senator Tan Parker and Representative Armando Walle took a moment to acknowledge our contributions to the health and well-being of Texans, highlighting the dedication and expertise that define our work. As we stood there during both gallery sessions, the room filled with applause. For me, it was a powerful affirmation that our efforts are recognized, valued, and make a lasting impact on the lives of those we serve.

From a student's perspective, understanding the professional responsibility of political advocacy within

the classroom can be challenging without hands-on experience. However, a phrase I often hear in relation to political advocacy in our field is, "You can't remove the 'O' and the 'T' from politics." While the exact origin of this phrase remains undocumented, it captures the essential link between our profession and political action. Whether we like it or not, our ability to practice, expand our scope, and remain relevant in the evolving community, school, and healthcare systems is directly shaped by legislative decisions. Therefore, it is crucial that we stay actively involved.

As I conclude, I want to encourage both practitioners and students who have not yet joined TOTA to consider becoming members and contributing to shaping the future of occupational therapy. While we had an impressive turnout of over 250 practitioners and students, it is worth noting that only about half of the attendees were TOTA members. A strong membership not only enhances our collective influence but also provides the essential financial support necessary for ongoing advocacy efforts. Policy work is costly, and membership dues directly fund the initiatives that protect and advance our profession.

And with that, I look forward to seeing everyone at the Capitol in 2027 for the 90th Texas Legislative Session!

Growth, Community, and Student Connection

Annabeth Dorris, OTS State Student Representative &
Kim Garcia, OTAS State Student Representative



Annabeth Dorris, OTS



Kim Garcia, OTAS

The end of our time as the State Student Representatives for TOTA is quickly approaching, and we wanted to reflect on our year in this role. When we started, our goal was to enhance the experience for students in TOTA, which began by streamlining communication among the student leaders of TOTA and creating the student Instagram account. In January, we attended the Board of Directors Development Meetings. We represented the students of TOTA as we discussed the past year and our goals for this year to help develop the strategic plan.

Not only was holding this position a fun experience, but we also found a support system with each other. We enjoyed hosting the Chat and Chew at conference and meeting so many students. Being able to witness the excitement and, of course, competition between students during the Student Knowledge Bowl truly made the conference a fun experience for us.

We are both in Fieldwork and as we know, this time comes with some personal and professional challenges. Still, with routine check-ins, we have been able to encourage one another and lift each other up when things get challenging. This kind of support system makes being a TOTA member so meaningful and impactful.

As our time ends as Student State Reps, we thank all the board members for their support, and a big thank you to Judi Joseph and Sue Ram for their guidance and encouragement through this entire experience. For the

incoming Student Reps, we are so excited to be your mentors and help you in your role. We want to pass along the same support and encouragement provided for us during our time!

Annabeth Dorris-OT State Student Representative & Kim Garcia- OTA State Student Representative



Texas Occupational Therapy Association Endowed Scholarship Recipients

www.tota.org

Two scholarships are awarded each year, one to an entry-level occupational therapy student (MOT, MSOT, OTD) and one to an entry-level occupational therapy assistant student currently enrolled in an accredited program in the state of Texas. Eligible applicants reside in Texas and are members of the Texas Occupational Therapy Association.



Maya Landgrebe
Texas Woman's University Institute of Health Sciences -
Houston Center

TOTA Involvement:

Attended TOTA Day at the Capitol 2025, TOTA student member

Where are you currently in your academic process (fieldwork, capstone)?

3rd Semester coursework

Anticipated Graduation Date:

May 2027

Interests/Professional Goals:

I am deeply passionate about advocating for access to occupational therapy services, particularly in rural communities, and ensuring that patients receive the care they need to thrive. I am also dedicated to advancing OT involvement in prosthetic development, Focusing on improving functional independence and tailoring solutions to support patients' daily lives and activities.



Cam La
Texas Woman's University
at Houston

TOTA Involvement:

Member

Where are you currently in your academic process (fieldwork, capstone)?

I am currently in my first Level II fieldwork!

Anticipated Graduation Date:

May 2026

Interests/Professional Goals:

I am currently interested in research, hand therapy, and pediatrics. One of my professional goals is to publish a research paper during my career!



Darlene F. Brooks,
 Dr.OT, OTR

The University of the Incarnate Word (UIW) and Children’s Rehabilitation Institute TeletonUSA (CRIT) partnered to host a community summer camp, offering occupational therapy doctorate (OTD) students a hands-on opportunity to design occupation-based activities that promote social inclusion.

Rooted in CRIT’s holistic model of care, their Buddy Program fosters meaningful connections by pairing participants with volunteers—typically local high school and college students or members of community organizations. Through shared activities, outings, and events, the program encourages friendship, social engagement, and a sense of belonging. As part of their lifespan development course, in 2024, OTD students took an active role in the annual CRIT Summer Buddy Camp, applying their knowledge in a real-world setting. Objectives and ACOTE Standards composed of analyzing human development across the lifespan and understanding developmental milestones as a foundation for assessment and intervention when addressing atypical development in conditions. Students developed a presentation and project of occupation-based and activity-based group activities for campers for curriculum needs. The final presentation and project included superhero-themed activities addressing handwriting skills, gross motor, and fine motor development within a fun context.

Students presented proposed camp activities to the CRIT staff. They provided students with important feedback about their activity, possible modifications for client populations and context. Students planned activities for a specific developmental age, then modified, graded, and adapted the activities to meet the needs of the campers. CRIT staff discussed the physical context and flexibility for shifting to camper needs depending on attendance.

Each day began with a welcome session to transition into the camp environment. During this time, campers were paired with their OTD student, “buddies.” Then, campers rotated through a series of engaging, play-based activity stations designed to support skill development. The OTD students were divided into two groups: one group working Monday through Wednesday and the other Wednesday through Friday. Each group of students led six activities during their time at the camp: three gross motor (GM) activities, two handwriting-focused activities, and one fine motor (FM) activity.

Social inclusion goals of the Buddy Summer Camp guided all activities, emphasizing group participation through both parallel and cooperative engagement. Activities targeted handwriting, fine motor, and gross motor skills while also addressing foundational areas like sensory processing and visual perception.

A camp highlight was an excursion to Morgan’s Inspiration Island, an ultra- accessible waterpark located in San Antonio, Texas. Campers enjoyed a sensory-rich and aquatic experience, promoting physical activity, social interaction, and a splash of fun in a fully- inclusive environment.

UIW OTD students played a key role in planning and executing the camp activities. They incorporated their understanding of developmental levels, activity analysis, and professional reasoning to plan activities. As the OTD students observed how the campers responded to different activities, they quickly adapted their approaches, ensuring that each task was accessible and achievable. The OTD students demonstrated an ability to individualize activities to the developmental levels of each camper. The Buddy system ensured that every camper felt supported and included.

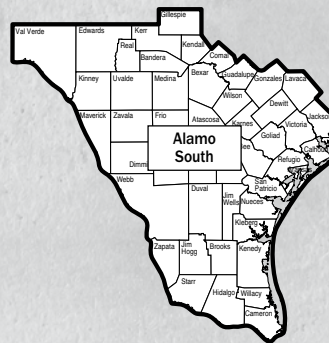
Campers benefited from social inclusion, enriched occupation-based opportunities, and adjustments for accessibility and participation. OTD students graded the activities in real-time for campers’ needs. Through meaningful interactions with campers of different ages and abilities, the students had the opportunity to observe a top-down approach for a wide range of development and learned how client factors influence growth and everyday functioning. These insights helped students to analyze activities, incorporate therapeutic use of self, and understand the person and environment interaction in occupations or activities.

University of the Incarnate Word’s 1st OTD cohort with Dailen Castillo, OTD, MBA, OTR, Christene Maas, PhD, OTR & Darlene Brooks, , Dr.OT, OTR in front of Children’s Rehabilitation Institute TeletonUSA.



Grief, Love, and Healing Through Occupational Therapy: Honoring My Mother's Legacy

Thelma Ochoa, OTD, OTR, C/NDT
Alamo South District Chair



Thelma Ochoa,
 OTD, OTR, C/NDT

Losing my mom, my best friend, was a pain unlike any other. Fourteen years have passed, yet grief still lingers—it does not disappear; it evolves. I have learned that grief is not just about loss; it is about love that refuses to fade. And so, I choose to live my best life, not just for me, but for her, for my family, and for everyone she touched.

My career as an occupational therapist has been a source of healing. Every day, I work with patients facing life-changing challenges, and in them, I see resilience—the same resilience my mom embodied. My loss has deepened my ability to empathize, connect, and truly understand the emotional weight of recovery. It has shaped the way I teach my OTD students, instilling in them the importance of compassion, patience, and human connection.

As we celebrate Occupational Therapy Month, I reflect on what it means to be part of this incredible profession. OT is more than restoring function, it is about restoring hope, dignity, and purpose. It is about walking alongside people in their most vulnerable moments and helping them rebuild their lives. My grief has shaped me, but OT has given me a way to transform that pain into purpose.

To my fellow OT practitioners, I encourage you to bring your personal experiences, your grief, your struggles, your love into your work. Our profession is not just about function; it is about humanity. When we channel our own stories into the way we treat, teach, and support our patients, we create deeper, more meaningful care.

But most of all, I honor my mom's legacy through my greatest role: being a mother. She was the very definition of love—selfless, unwavering, and full of grace. She was my guide, my foundation, and the heart of our family. I strive every day to live up to the example she set—to love fiercely, lead with kindness, and create a home filled with warmth and laughter, just as she did.

This OT Month, I celebrate not only our profession but also the personal journeys that shape the way we care for others. Grief has shaped me, but it does not define me. Love does. My mother's love lives on in me, in the way I care for my patients, inspire my students, and raise my family. She is with me in every moment, and through me, her legacy of love continues.

To every OT out there—your experiences, your hardships, and your heart make you the incredible therapist you are. Let them guide you. Let them strengthen you. And most importantly, let them remind you why we do what we do: to help others live their best lives, even in the face of loss and adversity. Happy Occupational Therapy Month—may we continue to heal, uplift, and inspire.



My mom's happiest moments were always surrounded by family.

[illegible]

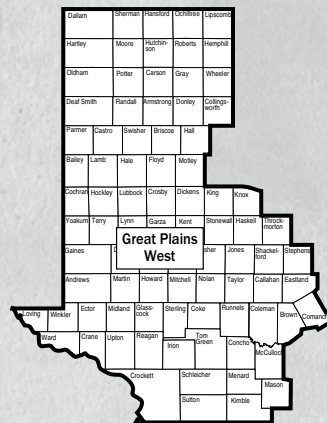
A large group of students and staff posing for a photo in front of a building entrance decorated with blue and silver balloons. A sign in the background reads "HOCKEY".

SAVE THE DATE: TOTA ANNUAL CONFERENCE NOV. 14-15, 2025

DISTRICT ZONE

Great Plains West

Chris Lasek, OTR
Great Plains West District Chair



Chris Lasek, OTR

The Great Plains West District (GPWD) had several exciting CEU's this spring. On January 30, Selina Elder at West Texas Rehab Center in San Angelo presented on "Understanding Traumatic & Non-traumatic Brain Injuries and Treatment Considerations" where we learned about different types of brain injuries and ways to effectively treat them.

We also had our annual Bubba Klostermann series. This year we decided to do a Lunch & Learn focusing on pediatrics with the following presentations, 1)

"Neurosequential Model of Therapeutics but Make it OT!" on Feb 20th; 2) "DIR Floortime – Everywhere with Everyone!" on March 20th; 3) "The Integrated School OT – Supporting Students Through Intentional Collaboration" on April 17th. These courses are available to view n TOTA's LMS website. Our district will also be celebrating OT Month in April by participating in several events throughout our region. Check TOTA's calendar to see when and where these will be taking place. As always, if you are interested in getting more involved, please let me know. We can always use more help!

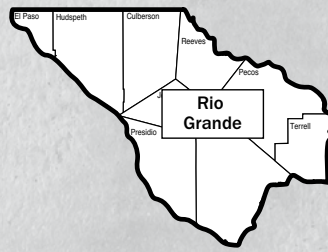


GPWD CEU on January 30, 2025

DISTRICT ZONE

Rio Grande District

Grisel Contreras, OTD, OTR
Rio Grande District Chair



Grisel Contreras,
OTD, OTR

The Rio Grande District is starting the year with exciting developments. The district is pleased to announce that it has successfully filled three key positions: Vice Chair, Standards and Procedures Chair, and Education Chair. These outstanding occupational therapy practitioners will be formally appointed at the next board meeting. Let's meet them!

Maria Solis, OTR, OTD – Rio Grande Vice Chair

Vice Chair Maria Solis earned her bachelor's degree in occupational therapy from the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) in 2006. With extensive experience across various settings, she has dedicated the past decade to pediatric occupational therapy. In 2024, she completed her Post-Professional Doctorate in Occupational Therapy with a Pediatric Specialty concentration at Rocky Mountain University of Health Professions. Passionate about advocacy and advancing the profession, Maria is eager to serve as Vice Chair of the Texas Occupational Therapy Association (TOTA) Rio Grande District. She looks forward to fostering collaboration across disciplines within her community and state.

Kaleigh Stevens, OTD, OTR – Rio Grande Standards and Practice Chair

A dedicated TOTA member since returning to Texas in 2016, Kaleigh Stevens has actively contributed to the organization in multiple leadership roles. She previously served as Secretary of the Great Plains West District and later as Secretary and District Chair for the Rio Grande District. Expressing her enthusiasm for her new role, Kaleigh stated, "I am happy to continue my service to TOTA as Standards and Procedures Chair in the Rio Grande District."

Sandra Gutierrez, COTA – Rio Grande Education Chair

Sandra Gutierrez serves as the Program Director of the Occupational Therapy Assistant (OTA) program at Pima Medical Institute (PMI) in El Paso, Texas. With over a decade of experience in OTA education, including more than a year and a half in her current leadership role, Sandra is deeply committed to advancing occupational therapy education in the El Paso community. Excited to take on the role of Education Chair, she shares, "I am committed to facilitating evidence-based continuing education for occupational therapy practitioners in El Paso."

The Rio Grande District eagerly anticipates the contributions of these dedicated professionals as they work to enhance occupational therapy practice, education, and advocacy throughout the region.

DISTRICT ZONE

Trinity North District

Angela Duell, OTD, MS, OTR
Trinity North District Chair



Angela Duell,
OTD, MS, OTR

In Times of Challenges, Resiliency

If anyone had told me a year ago that the OTA program, which I built, would be closed a year later, I would have responded with an emphatic, “No Way.” And yet, here we are. The process of navigating this unexpected and difficult change has reinforced a crucial lesson: resiliency in the face of challenges. As occupational therapy educators, practitioners and students, our ability to adapt, persevere, and grow through adversity is essential— not only for ourselves but also for the individuals we serve.

Building Resiliency as OT Educators, Practitioners, and Students

Resiliency is not just about enduring hardships; it is about learning from them and emerging stronger. As we face professional challenges whether it be program closures, staffing shortages, or changes in healthcare policies, how can we maintain our resiliency?

1. Cultivate a Growth Mindset

Adopting a mindset that views challenges as opportunities for learning and development allows us to reframe obstacles as steps toward personal and professional growth. By embracing change, we can remain adaptable and open to new possibilities.

2. Seek Support and Foster Community

No one should navigate difficulties alone. Connecting with colleagues, mentors, clergy, and professional networks can provide emotional and practical support. Engaging in conversations with peers who have faced similar challenges can offer new perspectives and solutions.

3. Prioritize Self-Care and Well-being

Burnout is a real concern in healthcare and education. Maintaining balance through self-care practices, whether through mindfulness, exercise, hobbies, or simply taking a moment to breathe to recenter, can help sustain our ability to handle stress effectively.

4. Stay Anchored in Our Core Values

Remembering why we entered the occupational therapy profession in the first place can provide a guiding light during uncertain times. Our commitment to client-centered care, holistic healing, and improving quality of life should continue to drive our efforts, even when faced with professional setbacks.

Supporting Our Patients Through Their Challenges

Just as we cultivate resiliency in ourselves, we must also help our patients develop resilience in their own lives. Occupational therapy is uniquely positioned to empower individuals by:

- **Encouraging Problem-Solving and Adaptability:** Teaching clients to find alternative ways to engage in meaningful occupations despite physical, cognitive, or emotional barriers fosters resilience.
- **Promoting Emotional Regulation and Coping Strategies:** Addressing the psychological aspects of recovery is as important as the physical aspects. Techniques such as mindfulness, guided imagery, and cognitive-behavioral strategies can be integrated into therapy.
- **Providing a Supportive and Empowering Environment:** By fostering a therapeutic relationship built on trust, collaboration, and encouragement, we create a space where patients feel safe to navigate their challenges.

Moving Forward with Resilience

Although the closure of my OTA program has been deeply challenging, it has also been an opportunity to reflect on the power of resiliency. This experience has reinforced the importance of adaptability, community support, and a steadfast commitment to our profession. As OT educators, practitioners, and students, we will continue to face obstacles, but by strengthening our own resilience, we can better serve and support our patients in overcoming their own challenges.

Resilience is not about avoiding hardships, it is about facing them head-on, learning from them, and moving forward with strength and purpose. And that is what will sustain us, no matter what challenges come our way.

TOTA HONORARY LIFE MEMBERS

Esther Bell, OTR, FAOTA (1998)
*Robert K. Bing, EdD, OTR, FAOTA [b. 1929-d. 2003]
O. Jayne Bowman, OT PhD (2020)
*Lenore Brannon, OTR [b. 1898-d. 1986]
Cindy Brosig, OT, CHT (2021)
Reggie Michael Campbell, OTR, MS, FAOTA (2016)
*F. Catherine Currie, OTR [b. 1915-d. 1998]
Donald Davidson, OTR (2001)
Harriett Davidson, MA, OTR (2015)
*Dorothy Jocelia Denn, OTR [b. 1912-d. 1999]
Ruth Dodds OTR (2020)
*Virginia Chandler Dykes, OTR (1989) [b. 1930-d.2022]
Grace Gilkeson, PhD, OTR, FAOTA (1995)
*Nancy Griffin, EdD, OTR (2000) [b. 1936-d. 2014]
Mary Leary Hennigan, OTR (2022)
Gayle Hersch, PhD, OTR (2017)
*Margaret Hope Keeney, OTR [b. 1913-d. 2003]
*Lucile Land Lacy, OTR [b. 1901-d. 1994]
Jaclyn F. Low, OTR, PhD, FAOTA (2014)
*Cruz Antonia Mattei, OTR [b. 1924-d. 2011]
*Eileen S. McKee, OTR [b. 1923-d. 2010]
*Lillian Hoyle Parent, MA, OTR, FAOTA [b. 1921-d. 2016]
Suzanne Peloquin, OTR, PhD, FAOTA (2012)
*Ruth Whipple Pershing, OTR [b. 1923-d. 1998]
Jean Polichino, OTR, MS, FAOTA (2020)
Terri Powers, OTR (2022)
Kathlyn L. Reed, PhD, OTR, FAOTA, MLIS (2010)
*Irene Greer Robertson, OTR [b. 1921-d. 1996]
*Sophie Lin Rydin, PhD, OT [b.1950-d.2020] (2020 Awarded posthumously)
Gretchen M. Schmaltz, OTR (2002)
*Jane Foliart Sims, OTR [b. 1900-d. 1990]
*Geraldine Ann Skinner, OTR [b. 1924-d. 1991 (1989)
Caroline Ann Smalley Polliard, OTR (2000)
*Patricia Ann Truchon Ramm, OTR (1990) [b. 1928-d. 2007]
Leonard Sobel, OTR, MOT (2020)
*Pearl Jones Tennyson, OTR [b. 1904-d. 1993]
*Lynn C. Tupper, OTR, MPH, MOT (2013) [b. 1947-d. 2015]
*Luanna S. Vana, OTR [b. 1918-d. 2008]
*Fannie Vanderkooi, OTR [b. 1894-d. 1990]
*Cary Starke Westhause (1994) [b. 1932-d. 2001]
*Virginia White, PhD, OTR, FAOTA (2008) [b. 1921-d. 2018]
*Rena Worthington, OTR [b. 1909-d. 2002]

*Deceased

Updated: 12/10/2018, 3/13/2020, 11/15/2020,
3/16/2021, 2/22/22, 3/17/23, 2/19/24, 2/12/25

TOTA PAST PRESIDENTS

| | |
|-----------------------|-----------|
| Jane Myers | 1936-1938 |
| Marjorie Woodward | 1939-1940 |
| Beatrice Cooney | 1940-1942 |
| Edna Vehlow | 1943-1945 |
| Lenore Brannon | 1946-1948 |
| Lucile Lacy | 1949-1951 |
| Mary Britton | 1951-1955 |
| Irene Greer | 1955-1958 |
| Mary Alice Coombs | 1958-1961 |
| Louise McMillan | 1961-1962 |
| Mary Lee Kaylor | 1962-1964 |
| Patricia King | 1964-1966 |
| Mary Joyce Newsom | 1966-1970 |
| Robert K. Bing | 1970-1974 |
| Patricia Ramm | 1974-1976 |
| Joy Boone | 1976-1978 |
| Georgiann Laseter | 1978-1980 |
| Cynthia Jones | 1980-1984 |
| Donald Davidson | 1984-1987 |
| Rita Handley | 1987-1990 |
| Cary Westhause | 1990-1994 |
| Paul Ellsworth | 1994 |
| Esther Bell | 1994-1998 |
| Sheree Jerrell | 1998-2000 |
| Gary Wade | 2000 |
| Evie Harness | 2000-2004 |
| Mack Ivy | 2004-2008 |
| Lynda Jennings | 2008-2012 |
| Judy Robinson Skarbek | 2012-2016 |
| Robin Clearman | 2016-2020 |
| Jason Stark | 2020-2024 |