

General Scope of Practice—Kaiwhakaora Ngangahau Occupational Therapist

Introduction

The Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 (“Act”), section 11, requires Te Poari Whakaora Ngangahau o Aotearoa Occupational Therapy Board of New Zealand (“Board”) to describe the contents of the profession of occupational therapy in terms of one or more scopes of practice. A scope may be described in any way the Board thinks fit, including (but not limited to) by a name or reference commonly understood by other health practitioners, by reference to an area of science or learning; by reference to tasks commonly undertaken; or by reference to illnesses or conditions to be diagnosed, treated or managed.

Under section 12 of the Act, the Board must also prescribe the qualifications required to practise within each scope.

This scope of practice sets out what is required for occupational therapists within the general scope of practice.

To be able to practise occupational therapy in New Zealand, a registered occupational therapist must hold a current practising certificate, thereby meeting any recertification or competence and ethics requirements set by the Board and available on the Board’s website: www.otboard.org.nz

This notice sets out the requirements of the general scope of practice for an occupational therapist, and the qualifications required for that general scope of practice.

General Scope of Practice—Kaiwhakaora Ngangahau Occupational Therapist

The core aim of occupational therapy is to support people and whānau to have a life they value through enabling occupation and inclusion in society. Occupational therapists assess, diagnose and work together with people and whānau to engage in the meaningful activities they need, want and are expected to do in their everyday life. They work with people at all stages of life who have health conditions, disabilities, injuries or risks to health and/or are encountering social or environmental barriers to carrying out meaningful occupation.

Engaging in meaningful occupation is essential for strengthening mana, whānau health, wellbeing and prosperity, and the wellbeing of communities. This denotes the concept of occupation being used therapeutically to promote and support health and wellbeing.

Occupational therapists advocate for the rights, responsibilities and opportunities of all people and whānau to engage in occupations. Human rights, occupational and social justice, equity and sustainability are core principles of the profession. Practice is responsive to social, cultural, historical, economic and environmental influences on occupation, including discrimination, systemic disadvantage, poverty, conflict and natural disasters.

Occupational therapy practice, education and research in Aotearoa New Zealand is conducted in a manner that enables and advances the equal and respectful partnership between tangata whenua and tangata Tiriti as laid out in te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Occupational therapists work collaboratively, safely and skillfully with the aim of enhancing tino rangatiratanga. They work in leadership and in emerging roles including policy, governance, management and education to lead self, others and/or organisations to enable health and wellbeing of people. They apply professional reasoning, research evidence and practical knowledge, coupled with the experience of people and whānau receiving services.

Occupational therapists practise as generalists and specialists, autonomously and within teams and in public, Māori, private, virtual, civic, community and corporate contexts, in accordance with the Occupational Therapy Board of New Zealand Code of Ethics and Competencies for Registration and Continuing Practice.

Qualifications for the General Scope of Practice—Occupational Therapist

To practice within the General Scope of Practice: Occupational Therapist, the person will have a minimum of a bachelor’s degree in occupational therapy from an accredited educational institution, or qualifications, competence and experience assessed by the Board as equivalent.

Dated this 13th day of December 2021.

ANDREW CHARNOCK, Chief Executive and Registrar, Occupational Therapy Board of New Zealand, Te Poari Whakaora Ngangahau o Aotearoa.