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## Animal Assisted Interventions in OT

Occupational therapists have become increasingly involved in the field of animal-assisted interventions (AAIs). Animals have long been proven to enhance recovery and promote wellness, and pet care is noted to be an instrumental activity according to the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA)'s *Framework* (AOTA 2014). The objective of AAI is to provide goal-directed intervention that intentionally includes animals in health and human services for the purpose of human therapeutic gain. Assistance animals also facilitate a person's ability to engage in purposeful activity. Education and training are critical when determining if animals will play a role in your clinical practice (AOTA 2018). There are many classifications for the use of animals in the area of AAIs.



Continued on page 2

### License Statistics (then and now)

#### Occupational Therapists

Oct. 2020	3931
May 2021	4023

#### Occupational Therapy Assistants

Oct. 2020	1171
May 2021	1191

### Board Members

**Walter Gruenwald, OT**  
Chair  
**Mary Spores, OT, Vice-Chair**  
**Sunny Anderson, OTA**  
**Ning Barfield, OT**  
**Di Irons, Public Member**

## Updated Telehealth Training Info

Health care professionals, including occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants, are now required to obtain telehealth training if providing clinical telehealth services. RCW 43.70.495 tasked the Collaborative for the Advancement of Telemedicine (collaborative) with designing a training program to teach health care professionals about telemedicine and proper billing.



Substitute Senate Bill (SSB) 6061, passed in 2020, amended the law to require health care professionals who provide clinical services through telemedicine to complete the telemedicine training designed by the collaborative or an alternative telemedicine training, as defined by RCW 43.70.495 (4)(a), beginning Jan. 1, 2021. When a health care professional completes training, they must sign and retain an attestation. The law does not apply to allopathic or osteopathic physicians.

Learn more about the different training options available and access additional resources on the [Washington State Telehealth Collaborative Training](#) page. Complete the free and publicly available telemedicine training on the [Washington State Healthcare Professional Telemedicine Training](#) website.

## Animal Assisted Intervention in OT (cont. from page 1.)

Classifications include:

1. **Animal-Assisted Therapy (AAT)** Practitioners as well as the animals receive continuing education, training, and the skills to participate in the specialty practice of AAT (Winkle and Ni, AOTA 2019).
2. **Animal-Assisted Education (AAE)** Provides goal-directed activity to promote cognitive function and educational goals. An example may be a dog-assisted reading program.
3. **Animal Support (AS)** Use of animals trained by organizations to work in facilities or alongside healthcare, social service, or educational providers with formal education in their respective disciplines.
4. **Animal-Assisted Activity (AAA)** Typically completed by volunteers who have completed introductory training for visitation in social institutions for motivational, educational, and or recreational objectives.

Currently, there is no certification for practicing AAT that is similar to how the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy (NBCOT) certifies occupational therapists. Animal Assisted Intervention International (AAII) is an organization that offers standards of practice, an accreditation process, and continuing education specific to AAI. Pet Partners has training and accreditation requirements, and liability insurance. Pet Partners is creating an affiliated organization called Association of Animal-Assisted Intervention Professionals (AAAIP). AAAIP will launch in January of 2022. The organization will serve the needs of AAI professionals and be a home for health care providers, educators and others to gain the knowledge needed to safely and ethically practice animal-assisted interventions while advancing the field. (Pet Partners 2021)

Content provided by Mary Spores, OT, Vice Chair



[Click here to apply to become a board member](#)

## We Need You!



The Washington State Department Occupational Therapy Practice Board is currently recruiting for board members. The mandate of the Occupational Therapy Practice Board is to protect the public’s health and safety and to promote the welfare of the state by regulating the competency and quality of professional healthcare providers under its jurisdiction. We are recruiting for one professional member and one public member. [Click here to apply to become a board member](#)

The next Occupational Therapy Practice Board Meeting is scheduled to be held July 23, 2021. Updated meeting information can be found on the program’s webpage at:

<https://www.doh.wa.gov/LicensesPermitsandCertificates/ProfessionsNewReneworUpdate/OccupationalTherapist/BoardMeetings>

## Frequently Asked Questions

**May I renew my limited permit?** Limited permits aren't renewable. One 90-day extension of this permit may be granted if the applicant has failed the examination.

**What if I didn't receive my renewal notice?** The renewal notice is a courtesy reminder. You must renew your license on or before the date of expiration with or without a renewal notice. Be sure to [contact Customer Service Center](#) at 360-236-4700 to make an address change or verify correct address is on record.

**How much is my renewal fee?** See [Occupational Therapist Fee webpage](#). If you renew after your birth date/expiration date, there is an additional late penalty fee. It's important to plan ahead. With more than 3,000 licensed occupational therapy practitioners in Washington, the board isn't able to fax copies of licenses or provide written verification for those who renew late. [Internet or online verification](#) is available online.

**What if I'm not practicing? (inactive status)** There is an inactive status available for individuals not currently practicing. A written request along with renewal fee must be received. You may not practice while you have this type of license. You'll be required to renew the inactive license every two years. When you choose to return to active practice, you'll be required to verify continuing competency and pay the current active status renewal fee.



## Reader Input

We want to hear from you. If you would like to read about something specific, [please let us know](#).

## Meet Walter Gruenwald, OT, Board Chair



My name is Walter Gruenwald and it is my privilege to serve on the Washington State occupational Therapy Practice Board. I became an occupational therapist because I enjoy problem solving and finding unique solutions to complex problems. This has never been so necessary as in this past year when traditional interventions have had to be modified due to COVID-19. I have witnessed some brilliant adaptations over the last year and applaud the hard work and dedication of my fellow occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants.

This past year has been very difficult, so please take time to self-reflect and acknowledge your achievements. I ask each occupational therapist and occupational therapy assistant to reach out to a colleague this week and let them know that they are appreciated and recognize the wonderful accomplishments they have noted.

Currently, I am a school based occupational therapist on Whidbey Island. After school, I coach a 4th grade robotics team that competes in the FIRST Lego League. I also volunteer with the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy. I enjoy the enthusiasm and energy students bring to our occupational therapy sessions. My personal philosophy is that students "get to go to occupational therapy", they "never have to." My greatest joy is watching students succeed and grow academically and become more confident as they master skills and display them in the classroom.

Content provided by: Walter Gruenwald)