AOTPAC: SHAPING THE FUTURE OF OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

Kansas Occupational Therapy Association 2016 Annual Conference

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Why I Am Here
Why the Focus on Advocacy?

• Advocacy: support for a cause
  – What are we supporting and promoting?
  – Why do we need to do it?
  – What are the consequences if we don’t do it?
  – What are the current priorities?

Advocacy Changes Policy
Where The Decisions Are Made

- Medicare and Medicaid coverage for therapy
- Americans with Disabilities Act
- Payment for therapy
- School system law (IDEA)
- Home health benefits
- Access to health care
- Mental health parity
- Student loan forgiveness
Three Avenues for Advocacy

• AOTA educating legislators and staff

• Grassroots lobbying by OTs, OTAs and students as well as OT recipients

• AOTPAC – the American Occupational Therapy Political Action Committee
AOTA Public Policy Priorities

• Health Care Reform/the Affordable Care Act
• Medicare Therapy Cap Fix and Manual Medical Review (MMR)
• Home Health
• Mental Health Expansion Including School-Based Mental Health Needs
• Multiple Procedure Payment Reduction (MPPR)
• Scope of practice expansions by other professions
AOTPAC: 
Influence on Policies Affecting our Profession

• Policies affect payment, access to occupational therapy services, and employment (jobs)

• AOTA cannot contribute to legislative campaigns; no membership dues can be utilized for this purpose

• Only AOTPAC can make campaign contributions to support the election and re-election of key allies to further AOTA’s legislative goals.
Our Message:

*Occupational Therapy Is Part Of The Healthcare Solution*

- Our profession is dedicated to the improvement and maximization of function and performance
- People can live healthier, more productive and satisfying lives
- With therapy, people will often need less assistance, saving time and money
- We have a role in prevention and chronic disease management
Lobbying by AOTA: How Do They Do It?

• Research and analyze legislative and/or regulatory proposals

• Provide testimony in legislative and regulatory hearings

• Work with coalitions on similar issues

• Education and persuasion of:
  o Government Officials and Legislative Staff
  o Agency Staff
  o AOTA Leaders and Members
  o Employers
  o Insurance companies
AOTA Public Policy Advocacy

• 1976 AOTA had 5 full time lobbyists
• Today AOTA has 3 full time lobbyists
• There are over 500 United States Representatives and Senators and countless number of committees, public agencies, etc.
• Increased recognition through the political process is a major step to make occupational therapy thrive and to prevent being shut out
• They need our help!
AOTPAC

Relevance for Your State

• AOTPAC provides a means to bring key races in your state to our board for possible campaign contributions

• We often seek AOTPAC supporters in each state to attend local political events and fundraisers

• Many federal policies impact delivery of services at the state level (e.g., Medicaid, IDEA, Affordable Care Act)
Why You as a Constituent Should Be Involved in Educating Your Legislators

• Policymakers listen to constituents
• The recipients of your services may not be able to speak for themselves
• Clear policies will limit others’ ability to encroach on occupational therapy practice areas
• Other professionals will be advocating for their role and if we are silent, we lose out
• Grassroots lobbying is needed to communicate with our legislators or WE WILL BE LEFT OUT
What It Takes to be an Advocate

• A love of occupational therapy
• Confidence and a solid belief that what you do is worthwhile, necessary, and life changing
• An understanding of current “hot topics”
• The ability to see things as they are, yet imagine them as they could be
It Is Our Future!

If we don’t stand up for our profession, who will?

• If not you, then who?

• If not now, then when?

• We can’t look at where we are, but where we want to be.
AOTPAC: A Vital Component

• AOTPAC is the American Occupational Therapy Political Action Committee

• A political action committee is a group formed by an industry or an issue-oriented organization to raise and contribute money to the campaigns of candidates likely to advance the group's interests

• AOTPAC is the political action arm of AOTA that complements AOTA’s public policy agenda & supports its lobbying efforts

• By law, AOTA cannot give any financial support to a candidate running for office, none of your AOTA membership dues can be used to support political candidates
Why is a PAC essential for OT?

• Occupational therapy is not fully understood in the political arena where health care, education, and funding decisions are being made.

• We want to elect and retain legislators that are supportive to our causes.

• Occupational therapy must have an advocacy presence to protect the practice of occupational therapy and access to services for our clients.
How does AOTPAC differ from AOTA?

- Federal Affairs Department monitors the U. S. Congress and selected federal agencies
- Establishes the legislative agenda in conjunction with association leaders
- Lobbies for and against public policy initiatives based on the association’s established legislative agenda.

- The only legal means for an organization like AOTA to raise and disburse funds to candidates for public office
- Provides occupational therapy practitioners with a collective voice to keep OT before Congress.
- Provides funds to elect or re-elect candidates who support the profession of occupational therapy and its policy initiatives.
- Provides funds to support OTs or OTAs that are running for office
## How AOTPAC Stacks Up to the Physical and Speech Therapy PACs

<table>
<thead>
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<th>2010</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2015</th>
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<td>APTA</td>
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In 2013, APTA-PAC had more than 3 times as much in donations from 2 times as many APTA members.
$5.00 per week at Starbucks
$260.00 per year

$25.00 for a movie and treats
10 per year = $250.00
“Insurance” for your Job

• What would happen if your position was lost due to legislation?

• $75,000 per year ($36.76/hour)
• In ONE DAY you would have lost $294.12!
• In ONE WEEK you would have lost $1,470.59!

How much are you willing to spend on your profession and ability to work?
AOTPAC Contributions

How are they distributed & utilized?

• AOTPAC board decides who to support
  – Requests from AOTA Federal Affairs team and local practitioners

• Campaign support for our allies
  – We support legislators who know what we do as occupational therapy practitioners and why our services are so important for our clients

• Connect AOTA members and staff with legislators at fundraisers and events
AOTPAC Supported Candidates

Kansas

• U.S. Senate
  – Jerry Moran (R-KS)

• U.S. House of Representatives
  – Lynn Jenkins (R-KS-02)
  – Mike Pompeo (R-KS-04)
Contribute to AOTPAC Today

• A Dollar A Day Campaign or monthly donation – AOTPAC makes it easy

• Contributions of every size make a difference, especially when you encourage others to do the same

• AOTA currently has just reached 60,000 members, so if each member contributed $10 a year, AOTPAC would have $600,000 to focus on political action – about double what we have

• Contributing to AOTPAC is the best way to insure the profession will grow and be recognized in public policy
AOTA at Conventions

From Cleveland to Philly, we represented occupational therapy at both national conventions.

I'M FOR OT! Advocating for Occupational Therapy at Republican & Democratic Conventions!

AOTA staff and NJOTA leaders meeting with NJ DOE Special Ed staff to clarify OTA qualifications to work in schools.
AOTA Capitol Hill Day
September 19, 2016
hillday@aota.org

Advocacy & Policy Section of new AOTA Website
Resources

• AOTPAC: aotpac@aota.org
• AOTA Federal Affairs: fad@aota.org

• Legislative Action Center at aota.org
• Issues and Advocacy page at aota.org
Resources

• Yvonne M. Randall, EdD, OTR/L, FAOTA  
  – AOTPAC Chairperson  
  – ymrandall@aol.com

• Laura Robinson, OTR/L  
  – AOTPAC Region IV Director – Kansas  
  – lauramills24@gmail.com
Take Action!

Actions for all OTs, OTAs, and students

1) **PARTICIPATE:** Be an AOTA & state OT association member so there is greater support for legislative action

2) **ADVOCATE:** Grassroots communications by members to their senators and representatives – call, write, email or visit – use the AOTA Legislative Action Center

3) **CONTRIBUTE:** Donate to AOTPAC so we can elect and retain legislators who support our priorities

P*A*C
Join Our Efforts!

Shaping the Future of Occupational Therapy

AOTPAC