



## Connecting Classroom Learning to Real-World Advocacy

ConnOTA is committed to supporting educators and students in linking academic instruction with active engagement in advocacy. Explore the following timely, real-world examples and teaching tools designed to elevate learning and meet ACOTE standards related to advocacy and policy issues.

Let us know how you're using these resources in the classroom and how we can help—we're here to support your students' growth as future leaders and advocates in occupational therapy.

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### **Mental & Behavioral Health Resource Guide**

This working tool supports teaching, clinical planning, and systems-level advocacy. The guide includes practical strategies, billing insights, and advocacy tools that promote access and equity in mental and behavioral health services.

**Access it through ConnOTA's Practice Center:**

[Mental & Behavioral Health Resource Guide](#)

### **Student Discussion Prompts:**

- What role can occupational therapy play in promoting mental and behavioral health across practice settings?
- How can occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants advocate for equitable access to mental health services, especially in schools and underserved communities?
- What are the barriers to billing for mental health-related OT services, and how can these be addressed through advocacy?
- How can occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants use systems-level thinking to influence broader policy and practice in mental health?

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### **Advocacy Works: Section 504 Remains Protected**

A federal lawsuit threatening Section 504 was recently withdrawn due to strong advocacy from AOTA and state associations. While Connecticut was not directly involved in the lawsuit, ConnOTA stood in solidarity to protect access for individuals with disabilities—demonstrating the importance of unified professional advocacy.

**Read:** [Victory! Section 504 is Safe! \(AOTA Advocacy News, 05/13/2025\)](#)

#### **Student Discussion Prompts:**

- Why is Section 504 vital for ensuring access and equity for individuals with disabilities?
- What could have been the impact on clients if Section 504 protections were weakened?
- How do state and national OT associations work together to influence federal policy outcomes?
- In what ways does this advocacy effort align with the occupational therapy code of ethics and our responsibility to uphold client rights?

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### **Advocacy in Action: ConnOTA's Role in Payment Reform**

In July 2024, Anthem BCBS of Connecticut announced a cap on OT reimbursement. ConnOTA and AOTA collaborated on a formal advocacy response, which led to meetings with Anthem and widespread education for private practice clients. In October 2024, Anthem reversed course and paused implementation.

**Read:** [Commercial payers need advocacy too \(OT Practice, AOTA, 04/01/2025\)](#)

#### **Student Discussion Prompts:**

- How do reimbursement policies affect access to OT services and professional sustainability?
- Why is it important for OT & OTA students to understand payer systems, including commercial insurance?
- What advocacy strategies were used in this example, and how can they be applied to future challenges?
- How can students become involved in payer-related advocacy and policy monitoring?

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## **National Advocacy Example: Nevada Policy Paused**

A proposed Medicaid policy in Nevada would have allowed ABA providers to bill for ADLs and IADLs—areas central to occupational therapy. AOTA and NOTA worked quickly to educate policymakers, and the proposal was paused. This case highlights how rapid, informed advocacy can protect the integrity and scope of OT services.

**Read:** [Nevada pauses proposal to allow ABA providers to address ADLs and IADLs \(AOTA Advocacy News, 03/19/2025\)](#)

### **Student Discussion Prompts:**

- How do policy proposals like this one threaten the occupational therapy scope of practice?
- What are the risks of role overlap when other professionals are permitted to address core OT domains?
- How can associations and individuals mobilize quickly to respond to urgent policy issues?
- What lessons can students take from the Nevada example about the power of informed, collaborative advocacy?

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## **A Message for Students: Why Your Voice Matters**

Membership in ConnOTA and AOTA connects you to a larger purpose. By engaging early in your career, you help:

- Safeguard the rights of your future clients
- Keep occupational therapy at the policy table
- Respond to challenges with collective strength
- Build networks and leadership experience

Every voice counts—and collective action drives change.

### **Student Discussion Prompts:**

- What advocacy opportunities are currently available to OT and OTA students?
- How can early membership in ConnOTA and AOTA support your professional development and policy knowledge?
- What is one advocacy issue you care about, and how might you begin addressing it?
- How does participation in professional advocacy build your confidence and leadership potential?