



## **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) on Use of Title in Retirement**

**HERE ARE SOME QUESTIONS THAT YOU, AS A RETIREE OR POTENTIAL RETIREE, MAY HAVE.**

The purpose of this document is to address questions about communicating your experience as an occupational therapist once you decide to retire from practice. It is a privilege to use the title “Occupational Therapist” and this title is intended to help the public understand your accountabilities to be a competent and ethical professional. Understanding the importance of the context in which you are communicating is critical to ensure that you are not misleading anyone or misrepresenting yourself.

Should you have additional questions about how best to communicate your occupational therapy knowledge and experience after retirement you may find it helpful to seek assistance from your provincial regulator.

### **What are we talking about when we refer to “Use of Title”?**

The ability to use title is a privilege granted to registrants /members of a regulatory organization (college, board, etc.) who have demonstrated they possess the required educational qualifications, knowledge, skills and attributes to practise their profession.

In all Canadian provinces, only registered members of a regulatory organization are permitted to:

- use the title of occupational therapist, OT, or O.T.;
- hold out or represent oneself as an occupational therapist; and
- work as an occupational therapist.

Each provincial regulator is operating under government approved laws in the form of legislation and regulations. A reference document accompanies this FAQ which provides you with the relevant provisions of acts, regulations, by-laws, and any future plans for each of the 10 provinces.

### **What is the purpose of a title such as “Occupational Therapist”?**

There are five main purposes:

- Privilege - the title is a protected one; no one else can use it or a version of it.
- Distinction - the title distinguishes regulated from unregulated professionals.
- Transparency - the title helps to represent oneself to one’s clients in an open manner.
- Complaints – if the occupational therapist does not practise competently, the title helps clients recognize that they can file a complaint and directs them to the regulatory organization.
- Expectations – the title helps the professional inform clients about the scope of practice so that they understand what the professional does and how; it also conveys that the professional meets the requirements for competent practise.

## **When should someone not use the title Occupational Therapist?**

The misuse of title occurs when an individual is:

- using a protected title and is not an occupational therapist
- practising in a manner which would lead someone to believe she or he is a registered occupational therapist and is not an occupational therapist
- practising occupational therapy and not duly registered with an occupational therapy regulator.

## **I am considering retirement, what do I need to know?**

If you will not be practising occupational therapy in any manner, you are not obliged to be registered. Prior to any return to practice you will need to apply for re-registration.

If you are contemplating a return to practice in the future, it is advisable that you have contemplated how your absence from practice will affect your ability to meet currency or quality assurance requirements at the point of returning to practice.

If you plan on engaging in professional activities during your retirement from OT practice, you are encouraged to explore whether any of your paid or unpaid activities constitute the practice of occupational therapy.

## **Can I communicate my education even if I am not registered?**

You are indeed entitled to communicate your education: however, it is also essential to consider the regulatory provisions that address the area of misrepresentation as it relates to use of title. It is critical to consider presenting your education in a way that does not lead others to believe that you are providing services as an occupational therapist or imply that you are registered as an occupational therapist. Transparent communication is essential. For example, presenting your profile in a narrative with your academic background and experience, in addition to your current non registered status, is preferable to the use of abbreviations or credentials.

## **I have retired from practice, can I still communicate that I am an occupational therapist?**

The key in this question is context. When deciding what you are going to communicate and to whom, you want to ensure there is no possibility that you are leading others to believe that you are providing services as an occupational therapist or implying that you are registered as an occupational therapist. For example, in most social situations there is no risk of the audience thinking they are receiving professional services from an occupational therapist.

## **I am a member of CAOT; are there limitations on my use of O.T.(C)?**

The CAOT Bylaws state: *CAOT members are entitled to use the initials O.T. (C) or Erg (C) after their names when not prohibited by provincial or territorial law; it is the responsibility of each member to determine his/her eligibility to use the above designations.*

Although you may wish to promote your membership in professional associations, designations such as OT(C) may be misinterpreted. The public might consider OT(C) to mean “certified” occupational therapist rather than a member of the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists. Consider the goal of using such a designation. It is clearer to state on a business card: Member of the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists. This then provides the public with enough information to determine more about CAOT and its mandate.

### **How do I determine if what I want to do in retirement requires that I remain registered?**

This can be a somewhat complex question. We know that there is much to be considered in making this decision.

Retired occupational therapists, regardless of preretirement employment, may be called upon to share knowledge with service groups, the general public, other professionals, students, etc. through presentations, articles, chapters in books, etc. Is it sufficient for the retired occupational therapist to inform the “audience” that she or he is no longer registered and are retired from practice? Is *transparency* of current registration status enough or is the *accountability* that comes with professional regulatory registration also needed?

The key is to be transparent. In many cases it is adequate that you clearly communicate that you were educated and worked as an occupational therapist but do not currently provide services as an occupational therapist.

In some circumstances, it may be critical that the recipient of the service has the assurance that the occupational therapist is accountable to the regulator for ongoing competence and registration which includes a process for professional review if there are matters of concern.

### **If my questions do not appear in this document, what do I do?**

It is advisable that you speak with the regulator in your jurisdiction if you have questions about the potential impact of your retirement from your job or retirement from practice on your future registration or activities.

### **Useful Reference Documents**

Backgrounder on Use of Title in Retirement, 2016

Provincial Use of Title Provisions prepared by the Association of Canadian of Occupational Therapy Regulatory Organizations, 2016