

NOTE: This slide deck has been prepared for guidance and convenience of reference for OTs registered to practice in Alberta. The official Acts and Regulations referred to in this slide deck should be consulted for all purposes of interpreting and applying the law.

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Alberta College of Occupational Therapists – ACOT (2021). Occupational Therapist (OT) Participation in Feeding, Eating and Swallowing in the Alberta context. Accessed (insert date) at <https://acot.ca/practice-resources/>



# OT Participation in Feeding, Eating and Swallowing in the Alberta Context



**REGULATING COMPETENT  
AND ETHICAL  
OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS**

Prepared April 2021

(amended Nov 2022 to reflect changes to applicable legislation effective  
January 1, 2023)

# Questions commonly fielded by ACOT

- What aspects of feeding, eating and swallowing activities (e.g., assessment, interventions, therapeutic diet orders, follow-up, etc.) are within the “OT Scope”?
- What competence is required to perform these activities?
- Whose responsibility is it to ensure an OT (and the support personnel they supervise) acquire and maintain the required competence?

# OT Scope – what does the legislation say?

Legislation Name/Type	What it says
<a href="#"><u>ACOT Position Statement</u></a>	<i>In Alberta, occupational therapy's scope of practice includes management of feeding, eating and swallowing and is compliant with all regulations of the provincial Health Professions Act.</i>
<a href="#"><u>Health Professions Act</u></a> – Schedule 15	<p><b>Section 3 describes what is considered OT practice.</b></p> <p>In their practice, occupational therapists do one or more of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) in collaboration with their clients, develop and implement programs to meet everyday needs in self care, leisure and productivity,</li> <li>(b) assess, analyze, modify and adapt the activities in which their clients engage to optimize health and functional independence,</li> <li>(c) interact with individuals and groups as clinicians, consultants, researchers, educators and administrators, and</li> <li>(d) provide restricted activities authorized by the regulations.</li> </ul>
<a href="#"><u>Government Organization Act</u></a> – Schedule 7.1*	<p><b>Outlines what health services are considered “restricted activities.”</b></p> <p>Activities of daily living (an activity that individuals normally perform on their own behalf to maintain their health and well-being) are not restricted activities</p>
<a href="#"><u>Occupational Therapists Profession Regulation</u></a> – Section 17**	<p><b>Outlines which of the restricted activities OTs (and the support personnel they supervise) are permitted to perform if competent to do so.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Insert or remove instruments, devices or fingers beyond the pharynx, where the nasal passages narrow or into an artificial opening into the body</li> <li>- Administer diagnostic imaging contrast agents</li> </ul>

# OT Scope – continued

Legislation Name/Type	What it says
<a href="#"><u>Operation of Approved Hospitals Regulation</u></a>	<b>Section 14(1)</b> All health practitioners' orders for patients shall be in writing and shall be dated and signed by the attending health practitioner...
<a href="#"><u>Nursing Homes Operations Regulation</u></a>	<b>Section 15(8)</b> Therapeutic diets for a resident shall be ordered in writing by a regulated member.
<b>ACOT <a href="#"><u>Standards of Practice</u></a> (SoP)</b>	<b>Indicator 1.4</b> – <i>The occupational therapist shall be responsible for the OT services provided by oneself and demonstrate accountability for services provided by other personnel who are under the therapist's supervision.</i> <b>Indicator 2.2</b> - <i>The occupational therapist shall determine if requests for OT services fall within the scope of OT practice, are consistent with the code of ethics, and more specifically, determine if requests fall within his/her/their skill level or competence.</i>
<b>ACOT <a href="#"><u>Code of Ethics</u></a> (CoE)</b>	<b>Indicator 3.2</b> – <i>Occupational therapists shall strive to achieve high standards of competence. This commitment to competence is indicated by providing services only in areas of competence</i>

# OT Scope – in summary

- Feeding, eating and swallowing are considered activities of daily living.
- Clinical (bedside) swallowing evaluation is not a restricted activity; some activities associated with VFSS or FEES are restricted activities (insertion or removal of instruments, devices or fingers beyond the pharynx or where the nasal passages narrow; and the administration of diagnostic imaging contrast agents).
- OTs are permitted to write orders for therapeutic diets (although, they also need to follow/consider employer policies and procedures for order writing where applicable)
- It is appropriate and in alignment with OT practice for OTs to participate in the assessment of and intervention for the feeding, eating and swallowing issues that a client experiences – *as long as the OT is competent to do so.*

# Acquiring and Maintaining Competence

- In Section 1(1)(f) of the *Health Professions Act*, competence is defined as *the combined knowledge, skills, attitudes and judgment required to provide professional services.*
- Each OT is responsible to determine whether they are competent to perform any clinical practice skill whether it is a restricted activity or not
- Competence should be acquired/maintained through participation in a combination of (but not limited to):
  - Review of materials (textbooks, journal articles, etc.)
  - Participation in learning sessions
  - Seeking out shadowing or mentorship opportunities to acquire clinical experience
  - Ongoing networking and consultation with colleagues

# Links to References

- ACOT Standards of Practice
- Code of Ethics
- Position Statement on OTs' Role in Feeding Eating and Swallowing
- [Government Organization Act \(GOA\) - Open Government \(alberta.ca\)](#)\*
- [Health Professions Act \(HPA\) - Open Government \(alberta.ca\)](#)
- [Nursing Homes Operation Regulation - Open Government \(alberta.ca\)](#)
- [Occupational Therapists Profession Regulation \(OTPR\) - Open Government \(alberta.ca\)](#)\*\*
- [Operation of Approved Hospitals Regulation - Open Government \(alberta.ca\)](#)

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## **Effective January 1, 2023:**

\* The full list of Restricted Activities will be moving from the GOA to Part 0.1 of the HPA

\*\* The list of Restricted Activities OTs can perform will be moving from the OTPR to the *Health Professions Restricted Activity Regulation (HPRAR)*