Health Care Therapy Career Guide

A guide for occupational therapists, physical therapists, occupational therapist assistants and physical therapist assistants.
Finding Your Way to a Career: Health Care Therapy

Health care organizations rely on a wide variety of skilled therapists who specialize in various medical disciplines. These therapists can work short term with acute patients or long term with patients with chronic conditions who require continued therapeutic support. Health care therapists can work in a traditional hospital setting, in dedicated therapy outpatient offices, or in patients’ homes or places of work.

How to use this document to learn more.

As one of the Top 100 Hot Jobs for 2022, health care therapist is a promising occupation for job seekers in West Michigan. To find out if this might be a good career choice for you, use this Career Map to examine:

- Who might enjoy this kind of work.
- Qualifications needed in this career field.
- Growth potential and levels of pay.
- Valuable skills for this type of work.
- Common tools and technology used in this work.
- Occupations, responsibilities, and other job titles.

This information is drawn from national data and insights from West Michigan employers. It is meant as a starting point for job seekers and career coaches to work together in the exploration of meaningful and fulfilling careers.

Exploring Occupations in Health Care Therapy

Health care therapists play an essential role in the care and overall well-being of their patients. As a health care therapist, you might administer screening tests to determine patient abilities and treatment needs and establish treatment plans and goals for your patients. You may also collaborate with other health care professionals to provide treatment and communicate detailed medical information to patients and family members.

The Path to Success

Who might enjoy this type of work?

People who work in the health care therapist field tend to enjoy:
- Working with, communicating with, and teaching people.
- Helping or providing service to others.
- Mental problem solving.
- Working with ideas and using cognitive (thinking) skills.
- Practical, hands-on problem solving.

People who do well in this work generally perform well in such areas as:
- Responsibility
- Achievement
- Teamwork
- Decisiveness
- Adaptability

Qualifications needed in this career field.

Sample certifications include:
- Occupational Therapists credential sample:
  - Occupational Therapist Registered, Certified
  - Occupational Therapy Assistant, Certified
- Physical Therapists credential sample:
  - Certified
  - Nursing Assistant, Registered

Valuable skills for this type of work.

Tasks and functions performed by health care therapists include:
- Assisting and caring for others.
- Documenting/recording information.
- Communicating with supervisors, peers or subordinates.
- Getting information.
- Making decisions and solving problems.

Common tools and technology used in this work.

Tools: ventilators, orthopedic devices, braces, household appliances
Technology: appointment scheduling software, medical health information software, computer-based training software

Growth potential.

In the West Michigan counties of Allegan, Barry, Ionia, Kent, Montcalm, Muskegon and Ottawa, there were 2,945 jobs in 2020. That number is projected to grow by at least 7% to 3,161 by 2025.
Mapping a Career: Health Care Therapy

- Rehabilitation Counselor
  - Less than 2 years
  - Wage range: $14.11 - $18.50

- Occupational Therapy Assistant
  - 2-4 years
  - Wage range: $18.13 - $26.05

- Physical Therapy Assistant
  - 2-4 years
  - Wage range: $21.87 - $28.32

- Occupational Therapist
  - 5-9 years
  - Wage range: $28.08 - $38.45

- Physical Therapist
  - 5-9 years
  - Wage range: $34.76 - $46.02

Wage ranges represent 25th - 75th percentile. Timeframes represent the typical education and experience combined. See page 6 for detailed description of occupations.
Health Care Therapy: A Field Guide

Occupations, responsibilities and other job titles.

Occupational Therapist
These individuals assess, plan, and organize rehabilitative programs that help build or restore vocational, homemaking, and daily living skills, as well as general independence, to persons with disabilities or developmental delays.

Examples of locally used job titles: assistive technology trainer, certified hand therapist (CHT), early intervention occupational therapist, home health occupational therapist, industrial rehabilitation consultant.

Physical Therapist
Physical therapists assess, plan, organize, and participate in rehabilitative programs that improve mobility, relieve pain, increase strength, and improve or correct disabling conditions resulting from disease or injury.

Examples of locally used job titles: acute care PT (physical therapist), doctor of physical therapy (DPT), home care PT.

Occupational Therapy Assistant
These individuals assist occupational therapists in providing occupational therapy treatments and procedures. Many, in accordance with state laws, assist in development of treatment plans, carry out routine functions, direct activity programs, and document the progress of treatments. Generally requires formal training.

Examples of locally used job titles: acute care occupational therapy assistant, certified occupational therapist assistant (COTA), certified occupational therapist assistant/licensed (COTA/L).

Physical Therapist Assistants
These individuals assist physical therapists in providing physical therapy treatments and procedures.