



American  
Occupational Therapy  
Association

# Effective Advocacy Through Trade Associations

Kristen Neville  
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# About Me

- 15 years in Maryland state government
  - Various roles in Maryland General Assembly
  - Legislative liaison and regulations coordinator for healthcare licensing boards and commissions
- Responsibilities
  - Monitor state agency regulations/rules
  - Support state association advocacy projects
  - Liaison to state regulatory agencies

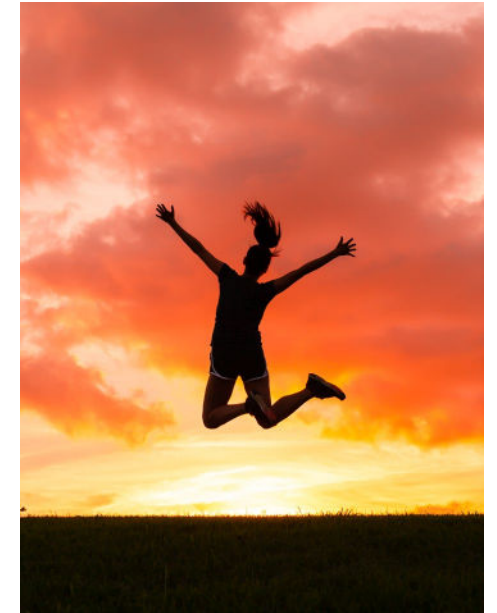


# What is occupational therapy?

- “Occupation” = meaningful everyday activity
- Use everyday life activities (occupations) to promote health, well-being, and your ability to participate in the important activities in your life
- Occupational therapy assistants work under supervision of an occupational therapist
- Work with clients (individuals, groups, or populations) across the lifespan in a variety of settings (home, school, health care facilities)
- Healthcare profession regulated in all 50 states, Washington, DC, Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, Northern Mariana Islands
- Covered by Medicare, Medicaid, private payers

# Who are we?

- AOTA represents more than 230,000 occupational therapists, occupational therapy assistants, and occupational therapy students in the United States and beyond, to advance occupational therapy practice, education, and research.
- Key Issues
  - Expanding the Occupational Therapy Licensure Compact
  - Fighting back against Medicare cuts
  - Advocating for federal policies that will help workforce diversity
  - Supporting expansion of OT telehealth services
  - Protecting scope of practice



# State Advocacy

- Working closely with state associations is a priority
- State occupational therapy associations in 50 states, Washington, DC & Puerto Rico
  - Affiliates, not chapters
- Affiliated State Association Presidents (ASAP) group
  - Steering committee of past presidents
    - Chair is liaison to Board of Directors
    - Vice Chair is liaison to Representative Assembly
  - Staff liaison is Vice President of State Affairs & Health Policy

# State Advocacy

- Communicate policy priorities & reports of legislative & regulatory issues being tracked to state presidents, advocacy leaders, & lobbyists
- Host periodic webinars on major issues
- Zoom calls on state-specific issues
- ASAP Annual Meeting
- Email listserve for ASAP members
- Online message board community



## Advocacy Mantra

**“ When you got skin in the game,  
you stay in the game  
But you don’t get a win unless  
you play in the game...  
I wanna be in the room where it  
happens.”**

**- Aaron Burr in *Hamilton***

**State regulatory agencies issue state licenses, set and enforce practice standards.**

**How do I build relationships with state regulators?**





# How do I get in “The Room Where it Happens”?

- Boards might meet regularly, might not
- Staff work for multiple boards or Board might regulate multiple professions
- Natural adversarial relationship
- Staff aren't occupational therapy practitioners
- Need to request time on a meeting agenda in advance
- Board counsel might discourage communication

# How I Got “In The Room Where it Happens”

## Get informed.

Asked to be added to email distribution list or how to know about upcoming meetings.

## Share/create resources.

Official documents, licensing resources, webinars, etc.



## Reach out.

Identified staff contact, introduced myself, & briefly described my role

## Attend meetings.

Showed up in person or remotely, even if it's just to listen.

# How I Got in “The Room Where it Happens”

- Be patient
  - It’s not going to happen overnight
- Be tenacious
  - But not pesky
- Be assertive
  - Don’t be afraid to show up
- Be a resource
  - How can I/AOTA help you do your job?



# Results

- Invitation to present in licensing board's timeslot at state association conference
- Licensing board members/staff reach out when revising regulations/statutes or about scope of practice questions
- I contact them for help with member issues, ask what resources they need
- Webinars on ethics, working with state association
- Helped with OT Compact questions/presentations





**Thank you!**

[kneville@aota.org](mailto:kneville@aota.org)



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