



Occupational Therapy

TWO PATHS, ONE GOAL



What is School-Based Occupational Therapy?

School-based occupational therapy helps children join in school activities, like learning, making friends, and managing daily tasks.

Occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants support students by working on:

- **Academics** (writing, organizing, using learning tools)
- **Self-care** (keeping track of materials, using school tools)
- **Social skills** (making friends, working with classmates)
- **Self-advocacy** (setting goals, asking for help)
- **Positive mental health promotion** (emotional regulation, handling stress, changes in routine)
- **Life skills** (getting ready for the future)

What is Medically-Based Occupational Therapy?

Medically-based occupational therapy helps children with health issues or disabilities become more independent in their daily life. Occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants work on:

- **self-care** (getting dressed, grooming, eating)
- **Physical skills** (movement, strength, coordination)
- **sensory processing** (understanding and responding to sights, sounds, movement)
- **Thinking skills** (memory, problem-solving, focus)
- **Emotional support** (finding ways to manage stress and emotions)
- **Adaptive equipment** (using tools to make tasks easier)
- **Pain management** (reducing discomfort so they can join in activities)



How do I know if my child needs school-based or medically-based occupational therapy?

Think about where your child needs help:

- If they have trouble with daily tasks like dressing, eating, or movement due to a medical condition, medically-based occupational therapy may be best.
- If they struggle with school activities like writing, organizing, or making friends, school-based occupational therapy may be best.

Some children need both types of therapy. When that happens, school and medical occupational therapy providers can work together to make sure your child gets the support they need in both areas.

While both school-based and medical-based OT aim to help children develop independence and improve their quality of life, their goals, settings, and methods differ. School-based OT focuses on helping children thrive within the school environment and achieve academic and social success, while medical-based OT works to support a child's daily living skills and recovery from medical conditions. Understanding these differences can help parents make informed decisions about the services their child may need to succeed both in and out of school.