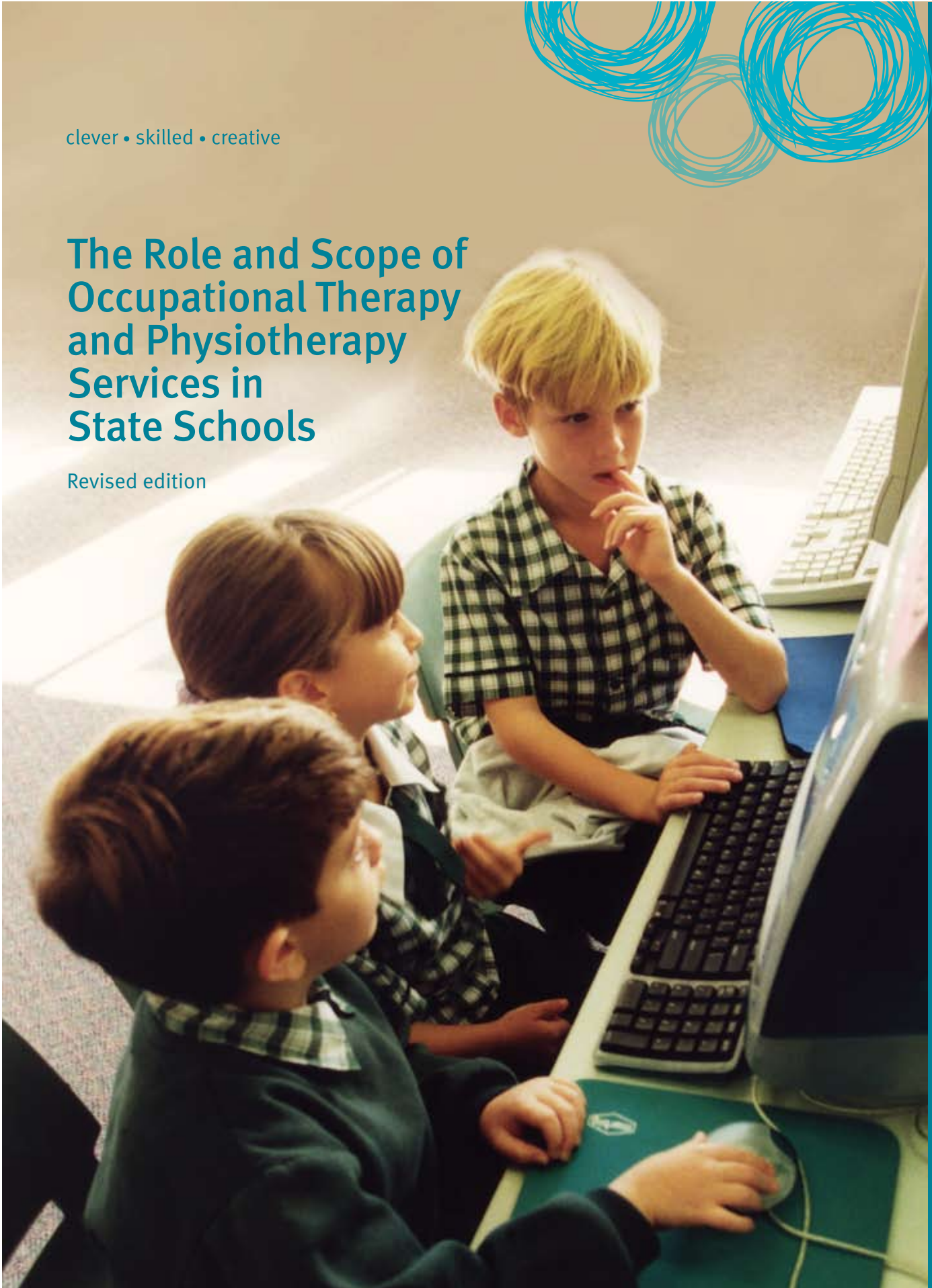


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The Role and Scope of Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy Services in State Schools

Revised edition



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Physiotherapy Services in
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Purpose

The Department of Education and Training provides physiotherapy and occupational therapy services to students enrolled in state education facilities by employing physiotherapists and occupational therapists. The focus of the department's services is to enhance educational programs and outcomes for students with intellectual, physical, vision, hearing, speech-language impairment, autistic spectrum disorder or multiple impairments.

These procedures provide direction for the organisation and practice of occupational therapy and physiotherapy services in the department and are also flexible enough to meet diverse regional or across regional circumstances.

1. Definitions

Occupational therapy

Occupational therapy services in the department aim to meet the needs of students with intellectual, physical, vision, hearing, speech-language impairment, autistic spectrum disorder or multiple impairments that influence their occupational performance. The purpose of occupational therapy is to enhance or support students' educational goals facilitating students' participation in the educational process.

Occupational therapy for children and young people aims to promote optimal well-being, function, independence and productivity within the context of their lifestyle and environments. This is achieved through the development and application of a plan of purposeful, goal-directed activities specifically related to occupational performance and occupational performance components.

Occupational performance refers to a student's occupation or participation in life tasks, and includes activities of daily living, student or vocational skills, play and leisure. Occupational performance components are considered to be the foundations for learning, and include sensory-motor, cognitive and psychosocial components.

Physiotherapy

Physiotherapy services in the department aim to meet the needs of students with intellectual, physical, vision, hearing, speech-language impairment, autistic spectrum disorder or multiple impairments who have posture and movement disorders or delayed neuro-sensory motor development.

The purpose of physiotherapy is to develop motor competencies to enhance or support students' educational goals, facilitating students' access and participation in the educational process. Physiotherapy aims to develop students' physical performance and prerequisite skills for functional posture and movement. This is achieved through goal focused assessment, interventions, equipment advice and/or environmental adaptations to enhance student performance in all aspects of the curriculum to enhance educational outcomes.

The Australian Physiotherapy Association, Queensland Branch, states in its Policies/Guidelines: Physiotherapy develops, restores and maintains human function and prevents or minimises human dysfunction of posture and movement. This is achieved through therapeutic interventions, education and related psychosocial support for people of all ages with acute, prolonged or potential disorders of posture, movement and function, and with problems such as pain associated with physical disability.

Relationship between occupational therapy and physiotherapy

Occupational therapy and physiotherapy are two distinct and different professions, with each profession having specific expertise. Occupational therapy and physiotherapy services are complementary but not interchangeable. While there are some commonalities in philosophy and practices, occupational therapists and physiotherapists in the department undertake specific and different roles (see preceding paragraphs).

2. Students

Regional/district personnel should establish and document a process for the identification of students who may be eligible for occupational therapy and/or physiotherapy services. Departmental occupational therapy and/or physiotherapy services are focused on supporting educational goals and facilitating students' access and participation in education, and may be available for:

- (a) students with a verified disability under the Education Adjustment Program
- (b) students with disabilities enrolled in special schools who are awaiting verification through the Education Adjustment Program
- (c) students with disabilities enrolled in Prep who are eligible for an early childhood development program or service
- (d) students who are registered for an early childhood development program or service.

Identification of student needs

Regional/district personnel have responsibility for establishing a process for needs identification in order to allocate occupational therapy and physiotherapy services in and across regions/districts.

Prioritisation of student needs

Individual schools have a role in the prioritisation of student needs through the operations of appropriate consultative school-based structures. Priority setting on the regional/district level occurs in conjunction with line managers and occupational therapists and physiotherapists.

A statewide prioritisation process is available and includes the following factors which should be considered in setting priorities for occupational therapy and/or physiotherapy:

- (a) educational implications of the student's disability
- (b) goals identified in the student's individualised planning process
- (c) outcomes of the occupational therapy and/or physiotherapy assessment
- (d) health and safety of the student
- (e) impact of critical stages on need for occupational therapy and/or physiotherapy services
- (f) school community concerns
- (g) need for specialised equipment or environmental modification
- (h) resource base (e.g. equipment, space, time available)
- (i) involvement of other agencies in providing occupational therapy and/or physiotherapy services.

3. Organisation of departmental services

Allocation

Occupational therapy and physiotherapy services within the department are funded from the State budget. If schools choose to employ an occupational therapist or a physiotherapist on a temporary basis using other funds, the relevant professional supervisor should be involved in recruitment, selection and professional supervision. Schools should also plan for resourcing and other issues that impact on the implementation of a quality occupational therapy and/or physiotherapy service.

Components of the occupational therapy and/or physiotherapy services provided

Occupational therapists and physiotherapists undertake a wide range of activities to ensure a quality service to students identified as requiring occupational therapy and/or physiotherapy services, including:

- (a) assessment of student needs
- (b) occupational therapy and/or physiotherapy with students
- (c) program planning, development and review
- (d) assessment, prescription and review of aids and equipment at schools and other locations

- (e) consultation and meetings with other members of the team
- (f) writing reports, letters and other administrative activities
- (g) involvement in the student's individualised planning process
- (h) inservice training for others
- (i) liaison with, and education for, parents/carers
- (j) professional training and development
- (k) networking with other occupational therapists and physiotherapists, educators and other agencies
- (l) involvement in professional supervision and performance appraisal
- (m) involvement in the Education Adjustment Program process
- (n) community liaison
- (o) resource development
- (p) research projects
- (q) travel
- (r) operational planning activities
- (s) representing occupational therapy or physiotherapy in school-based committees
- (t) supervising occupational therapy and physiotherapy students from tertiary institutions and work experience students.

Time should be allocated proportionally to these activities where appropriate, as all can contribute to the provision of an effective occupational therapy or physiotherapy service. Time allocation should occur regardless of the number of physiotherapy or occupational therapy hours available.

The range of activities undertaken by occupational therapists and physiotherapists does not include rostered bus/taxi or playground duties or general supervision of students in class, at sport or on school camps or excursions. Occupational therapists and physiotherapists have a duty of care for students receiving occupational therapy and/or physiotherapy services.

A flexible and appropriate balance of direct service provision to students (including time spent with students, preparation and documentation) and activities needed to support the provision of occupational therapy and/or physiotherapy services to students (including activities such as team meetings and liaison) should be incorporated into the organisation of occupational therapy and/or physiotherapy services. Variations in the activities of occupational therapists and physiotherapists will occur according to the needs of individual schools and students.

Occupational therapists and physiotherapists are responsible for negotiating adequate time both for direct service provision to students and for completing activities necessary to support the provision of the service. The negotiation process should involve the team, the line manager and, if necessary, the relevant professional supervisor.

Determination of workload

Workload refers to the number of students seen in any week or year, and all other activities required to provide an effective physiotherapy or occupational therapy service. Determination of an appropriate workload should acknowledge the variety of tasks required within the service provision process and the conditions of employment.

The workload of an individual occupational therapist or physiotherapist is dependent on factors such as:

- (a) number of students
- (b) number of facilities
- (c) nature of the educational needs arising from the disability
- (d) the number of educational teams across facilities, of which itinerant occupational therapists and physiotherapists are required to be members
- (e) distance and travel time between those facilities
- (f) model and frequency of occupational therapy and/or physiotherapy service delivery used.

Workload is determined by the occupational therapist and/or physiotherapist in conjunction with the line manager, the relevant professional supervisor, and the other members of the educational team. Where the occupational therapist or physiotherapist is working across facilities, negotiation regarding workload is the responsibility of the line manager, in conjunction with relevant regional/district personnel.

Determination of workload is a complex process dependent on the issues identified above. There is no ideal number of students to be serviced by an occupational therapist or physiotherapist. Provision of an efficient and effective service is dependent on prioritising student needs, matching these with the available resources, and determining an appropriate model of service provision.

4. Industrial issues

Occupational therapists and physiotherapists are employed as public service personnel. They are engaged under the Public Service Award - State and operate under different working conditions to teachers. Occupational therapists and physiotherapists may be employed as part-time or full-time employees, and may be employed on a permanent or specified term basis.

5. Ensuring quality

The appointment of suitably qualified personnel who meet the selection criteria of departmental occupational therapy or physiotherapy positions contributes to the development of quality occupational therapy and physiotherapy services. Provision of induction, ongoing professional development, training and support opportunities are also essential.

Recruitment and selection

Human Resources personnel are responsible for the coordination of recruitment and selection of occupational therapists and physiotherapists. The line manager, relevant professional supervisor and/or an occupational therapist or physiotherapist designated by the professional supervisor should be involved in recruitment and selection of occupational therapists and physiotherapists to ensure that personnel with appropriate expertise and competencies are selected.

Induction

Induction should occur for newly-appointed occupational therapists and physiotherapists who, in addition to consolidating specific physiotherapy or occupational therapy skills, need to learn about the educational setting and working as a member of the educational team.

Induction of occupational therapists or physiotherapists should occur as soon as possible after appointment and is the responsibility of the line managers in conjunction with the relevant professional supervisor. Induction may involve local, district, regional and statewide personnel.

Formalised, profession-specific induction is the responsibility of personnel within the Disability Services Support Unit. Formalised regional/district or school-based induction is the responsibility of the line manager.

The Principal Advisor - Occupational Therapy and the Principal Advisor - Physiotherapy contribute to induction of the Disability Services Support Unit occupational therapy and physiotherapy staff.

Professional training, development and support

Occupational therapists and physiotherapists have a responsibility for participating in ongoing appropriate professional training and development activities to maintain an acceptable level of professional competence and improve and update their knowledge and skills. These activities may be formal, such as participation in workshops and seminars, or less formal, such as seeking access to peer support for

exchange of information or on-site coaching.

It is the responsibility of the relevant professional supervisors to identify the need for, advocate for and assist in developing strategies for accessing profession-specific training, development and support for the occupational therapists and physiotherapists.

It is the responsibility of Occupational Therapy Advisers and Physiotherapy Advisers at Disability Services Support Unit, and the Senior Occupational Therapists and Senior Physiotherapists based in schools to provide professional development and support to occupational therapists and physiotherapists. This responsibility is undertaken in collaboration with the relevant professional supervisors.

It is the responsibility of the line manager to support occupational therapists' and physiotherapists' participation in appropriate and ongoing professional training, development and support in line with departmental policy.

The Disability Services Support Unit may assist in training, development and support for occupational therapists and physiotherapists. Cross-regional or statewide training and development activities may be necessary since occupational therapists and physiotherapists constitute small professional groups within the department.

Networks

Occupational therapists and physiotherapists may work in isolation from their professional peers. Schools, districts, regions and statewide structures should foster and maintain appropriate networks. Occupational therapy and physiotherapy networks are essential to:

- (a) enhance quality services
- (b) provide professional support
- (c) provide opportunities for profession-specific training and development.

Undergraduate occupational therapy and physiotherapy students

The Department of Education and Training contributes to the undergraduate training of occupational therapists and physiotherapists to foster the development of the additional skills required in educational settings. This contribution may include the supervision of occupational therapy and physiotherapy students within educational settings, involvement in the undergraduate course and participation in research projects.

The Principal Advisor - Occupational Therapy and the Principal Advisor - Physiotherapy or their delegates are responsible for ongoing liaison with tertiary institutions, with regard to occupational therapy and physiotherapy student training.

6. Management of occupational therapy and physiotherapy services

Regional/district personnel should ensure the management of occupational therapy and physiotherapy services by nominating line managers and establishing a process for the coordination of services across regions/districts. The process used to nominate line managers should include consultation with relevant stakeholders

Line management

The line manager is responsible for the local organisation of occupational therapy and physiotherapy services and for ensuring access to appropriate resources. The line manager is generally the administrator at the base location ensuring regular contact between the line manager and the occupational therapist or physiotherapist, which enhances the management process.

Where occupational therapists and physiotherapists work across a number of facilities, the line manager acts as a network manager, collaborating with personnel in all facilities serviced.

The line manager works collaboratively with the professional supervisor. Contact should occur regularly as well as when profession-specific issues arise.

Where an occupational therapist or physiotherapist provides services across districts/regions, inter-district/regional consultation should occur with the assistance of the line manager, Principal Education Officer (Student Services) and the professional supervisor.

Professional supervision

On 3 July 1989, Queensland Cabinet decided (Cabinet Decision no. 56998) that the department would be permitted to employ occupational therapists and physiotherapists and to institute appropriate quality control measures for these services. To ensure appropriate quality control of occupational therapy and physiotherapy services, profession-specific supervision and monitoring must be provided.

The Principal Advisor - Occupational Therapy and the Principal Advisor - Physiotherapy provide profession-specific supervision to the professional supervisors of occupational therapists and physiotherapists and the occupational therapy and physiotherapy staff based at the Disability Services Support Unit

The professional supervisors based at the Disability Services Support Unit provide ongoing professional supervision of occupational therapists and physiotherapists employed by the department to work in schools.

Professional supervision includes profession-specific support to occupational therapists and physiotherapists, and may include quality assurance activities, identification of and assistance with training and development needs, contribution to performance appraisal and the developing performance framework process. Professional supervision can assist an occupational therapist or a physiotherapist to identify his or her own support needs, in addition to identifying how that support may be provided.

As part of the professional supervision process, the supervisor should work collaboratively with the line manager/other regional/district personnel and other departmental occupational therapy or physiotherapy personnel designated to provide professional support.

7. Resources

Materials and facilities

Occupational therapy and/or physiotherapy services should be identified within the appropriate resourcing processes. The appropriate resourcing processes at central, regional and school levels should identify, negotiate and prioritise how funds will be provided for:

- (a) travel (remuneration should be in accordance with departmental policy)
- (b) facility costs including telephone, photocopying and general maintenance
- (c) provision of specialist equipment to individual students as identified by the physiotherapist or occupational therapist.

Specific-purpose grants are provided each year to support the provision of occupational therapy and/or physiotherapy services in all locations serviced. These grants are allocated to regions and schools and are provided to cover additional costs to those outlined above. These additional costs may arise from the need to purchase profession-specific resources such as copyrighted assessment forms, assessment materials, stock and requisites; and to participate in training and development activities.

To facilitate an effective and appropriate service, the line manager, in collaboration with the occupational therapist and/or physiotherapist, should provide access to funding for occupational therapy and/or physiotherapy services.

Occupational therapists and physiotherapists require adequate facilities for therapy assessment and program implementation in all locations serviced. Where required, access to office space, facilities for

storage of resources and filing of confidential information, and access to telephone (including STD facility), photocopying, fax, computer, internet access and consumable materials for the production of programs and administration, should be negotiated with the administrator in each location.

Administrative support

Administrators in facilities should establish processes to assist in the implementation of occupational therapy and/or physiotherapy programs. These processes may include allocation of time for collaborative program planning among team members and flexible time-tabling of teacher aide or volunteer time.

Administrative support will be required at the base location and other facilities serviced. It is the responsibility of the line manager to negotiate how this administrative support will be provided.

8. Relationship between departmental occupational therapy and physiotherapy services and other providers

Occupational therapy and physiotherapy services to children and young people in Queensland are provided by a number of government departments, non-government agencies and private practitioners.

Regional/district personnel should identify the range and scope of occupational therapy and/or physiotherapy services provided by departments and agencies other than the Department of Education and Training. These service providers may be involved in:

- (a) sole provision of occupational therapy and/or physiotherapy services to students; or
- (b) provision of occupational therapy and/or physiotherapy services which complement occupational therapy and/or physiotherapy services provided by the department.

Personnel at all levels are responsible for communication between departmental occupational therapy and/or physiotherapy services and other service providers, in order to ensure an effective and efficient service. The line manager is responsible for facilitating this process at the local level.

The Department of Education and Training is not responsible for the professional supervision of occupational therapists and physiotherapists employed by other service providers.

9. Responsibilities

Schools and regions/districts

The position description of the school-based occupational therapist or physiotherapist states that these officers are responsible for:

- (a) providing an occupational therapy and/or physiotherapy service to the designated target group
- (b) identifying, assessing and implementing occupational therapy and/or physiotherapy programs for students in the designated target group
- (c) providing a consultative and resource service to teachers, parents and other members of the educational team
- (d) assuming responsibility for the documentation of student data and service information
- (e) sharing occupational therapy and/or physiotherapy models, practices and resources with other occupational therapists and/or physiotherapists within the department
- (f) monitoring and reviewing occupational therapy and/or physiotherapy services across designated education facilities in consultation with the relevant professional supervisor
- (g) participating as a team member in the provision of occupational therapy and/or physiotherapy services to achieve established goals and objectives
- (h) contributing to and participating in professional development and supervision activities to develop and maintain relevant levels of knowledge and skills
- (i) consulting with the line manager regarding administration procedures relating to the occupational therapy and/or physiotherapy service

- (j) participating in specialised projects and research activities in consultation with the relevant professional supervisor
- (k) supervising occupational therapy and/or physiotherapy student placements in consultation with the relevant professional supervisor.

The Senior Occupational Therapists and Senior Physiotherapists based in schools have responsibilities in addition to those outlined above, including:

- (a) providing collegial support to occupational therapists and physiotherapists
- (b) providing professional development to occupational therapists and physiotherapists.

The line manager is responsible for:

- (a) the administration and monitoring of the occupational therapy and/or physiotherapy service
- (b) supporting occupational therapists and/or physiotherapists as members of the educational team to provide services to students with disabilities
- (c) following statewide procedures for the identification and prioritisation of student needs for occupational therapy and/or physiotherapy services
- (d) supporting networks that involve occupational therapists and/or physiotherapists;
- (e) facilitating access to relevant professional development for occupational therapists and/or physiotherapists
- (f) providing access to funding for the occupational therapy and/or physiotherapy service
- (g) liaising with the relevant professional supervisor regarding professional issues for occupational therapists and physiotherapists
- (h) providing local induction for occupational therapists and physiotherapists.

The regional/district management team members are responsible for:

- (a) establishing a process for the coordination of occupational therapy and/or physiotherapy services in and across regions/districts
- (b) ensuring that a regional/district process is developed and followed for identification and prioritisation of students who may be eligible for occupational therapy and/or physiotherapy services
- (c) representing each region's/district's need for occupational therapy and/or physiotherapy services in the statewide allocation process
- (d) establishing a process for determining the base location and line manager for occupational therapists and physiotherapists
- (e) collaborating with the professional supervisors in the recruitment, selection and appointment of appropriate occupational therapists and physiotherapists
- (f) providing human resource advice and services to occupational therapists and physiotherapists
- (g) establishing a process for the identification of, and negotiation with, occupational therapy and physiotherapy service providers other than the department in the region/district
- (h) supporting the professional supervisor

Central Office (Student Services and Corporate Services)

The role of central office is to provide an organisational structure that assists schools to meet their responsibilities, including the provision of occupational therapy and/or physiotherapy services, to students with disabilities by:

- (a) coordinating the development of departmental procedures on the role and scope of occupational therapy and physiotherapy services, and monitoring and reviewing the implementation of the procedures
- (b) disseminating the budget allocation for occupational therapy and physiotherapy services to all regions and schools
- (c) collaborating with regions in providing statewide human resource advice and services for occupational therapy and physiotherapy services
- (d) liaising with government and non-government providers of occupational therapy and physiotherapy services.

The Principal Advisor - Occupational Therapy and the Principal Advisor - Physiotherapy are responsible for:

- (a) providing strategic leadership for occupational therapy and physiotherapy services statewide
- (b) providing expert advice to key stakeholders on all issues relating to occupational therapy and physiotherapy services
- (c) initiating, leading and managing teams and projects designed to focus occupational therapy and physiotherapy resources on achieving the departmental inclusive education priorities
- (d) advocating for, promoting and developing system-wide occupational therapy and physiotherapy services, processes and resources to support students with disabilities
- (e) coordinating the identification of emerging issues in the provision of occupational therapy and physiotherapy services within state schools
- (f) establishing performance and accountability frameworks, including indicators, measures and reporting regimes related to occupational therapy and physiotherapy services
- (g) providing professional supervision to the Senior Advisors - Occupational Therapy, Senior Advisors - Physiotherapy, Senior Occupational Therapy Officers, Senior Physiotherapy Officers, Occupational Therapy Advisers and Physiotherapy Advisers based at Disability Services Support Unit
- (h) representing the department in a variety of forums and liaising with relevant agencies and stakeholders about issues relating to inclusive education and occupational therapy and physiotherapy services.

The Senior Advisors - Occupational Therapy/Senior Occupational Therapy Officers and the Senior Advisors - Physiotherapy/Senior Physiotherapy Officers, Disability Services Support Unit are responsible for:

- (a) the professional supervision of occupational therapists and physiotherapists
- (b) planning the management of policies to ensure the provision of quality occupational therapy and physiotherapy services to students with disabilities, in collaboration with the Principal Advisor - Occupational Therapy and the Principal Advisor - Physiotherapy
- (c) coordinating and monitoring departmental occupational therapy and physiotherapy services statewide, in collaboration with the Principal Advisor - Occupational Therapy and the Principal Advisor - Physiotherapy
- (d) liaising with line managers regarding occupational therapy and physiotherapy services
- (e) liaising with regional/district personnel
- (f) contributing to the recruitment, selection and induction of occupational therapists and physiotherapists
- (g) identifying the need for, advocating for, and assisting occupational therapists and physiotherapists to access relevant professional training, development and support
- (h) promoting the role of occupational therapy and physiotherapy services in the provision of quality education for students with disabilities
- (i) providing professional leadership and advocacy for occupational therapy and physiotherapy services
- (j) providing advice on matters pertaining to the occupational therapy and physiotherapy services in collaboration with the Principal Advisor - Occupational Therapy and the Principal Advisor - Physiotherapy
- (k) communicating with committees, other service providers, professional associations, educational and tertiary institutions and community representatives.

Senior Advisors - Occupational Therapy and Senior Advisors - Physiotherapy have responsibilities in addition to those outlined above, including:

- (a) collaborating with designated regions through active involvement in regional committees to determine needs based resourcing for occupational therapy and physiotherapy services.

The Occupational Therapy Advisers and Physiotherapy Advisers, Disability Services Support Unit are responsible for:

- (a) providing specialised training and development for occupational therapists and physiotherapists
- (b) producing and disseminating specialist occupational therapy and physiotherapy resources and publications
- (c) facilitating occupational therapy and physiotherapy networks
- (d) providing professional support services to occupational therapists and physiotherapists.

10. Information sources

Policies/Guidelines, Australian Physiotherapy Association, Queensland Branch

Queensland Cabinet Decision no. 56998

Position Descriptions: Occupational Therapist (PO2/PO3); Physiotherapist (PO2/PO3);

Occupational Therapist (Advanced Practitioner) (PO3); Physiotherapist (Advanced Practitioner) (PO3)

Principal Advisor - Occupational Therapy (PO6), Principal Advisor - Physiotherapy (PO6);

Senior Advisor - Occupational Therapy (PO5), Senior Advisor - Physiotherapy (PO5);

Senior Occupational Therapy Officer (PO4), Senior Physiotherapy Officer (PO4);

Senior Occupational Therapist (PO4), Senior Physiotherapist (PO4)

Occupational Therapy Adviser (PO3); Physiotherapy Adviser (PO3);

Public Service Act 2008

11. Contacts

People requiring further information about occupational therapy services or physiotherapy services in state schools are invited to contact the Principal Education Officer (Student Services) at the relevant Regional/District Office; or Disability Services Support Unit tel. (07) 3240 9333.