

# Occupational Therapists

A guide for newcomers to British Columbia



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## 1. Working as an Occupational Therapist [NOC 2021: 31203/ NOC 2016: 3143]

### ***Job Description***

Occupational therapists develop programs for people affected by illness, injury or disability to help them improve their ability to look after themselves and engage in work or leisure activities.

You develop health promotion programs with individuals, community groups and employers.

As an Occupational Therapist, you perform the following duties:

- Analyze clients' capabilities and expectations related to life activities
- Develop programs to address clients' needs related to self-care, work, and leisure activities
- Establish personalized care plans
- Consult and advise on health promotion programs
- May supervise support workers and provide training
- May specialize in working with specific populations such as children or older adults

Source: <https://noc.esdc.gc.ca/>

### ***Industry Overview***

Occupational therapists are currently in high demand throughout British Columbia. At present, there are more jobs than number of new graduates to fill them. As a

result, you may have opportunities to practice in areas that typically would have required a higher level of experience. More opportunities for on-the-job training and mentorship will also likely become available.

The trend for occupational therapists moving to community practice (private practice) is expected to continue.

Some practices have adopted technologies for consultations province-wide. You may be asked to participate on teams delivering services through tele-health technologies.

## **Job Outlook in BC**

### **Occupational Therapists**

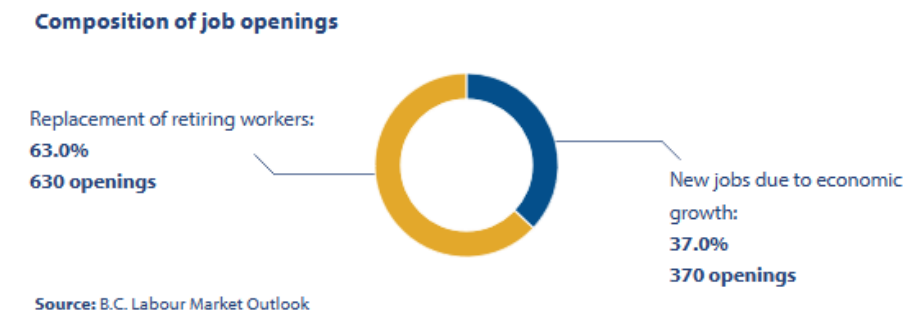


Chart from WorkBC

**WorkBC** provides job openings projections within BC regions from 2021-2031:

<b>Region</b>	<b>2021 Estimated Employment</b>	<b>Average Annual Employment Growth</b>	<b>Expected Number of Job Openings 2021-2031</b>
Vancouver Island / Coast	410	1.3%	160
Lower Mainland / Southwest	1,550	1.5%	630
Thompson- Okanagan	400	1.3%	160
Kootenay	50	0.3%	10
Cariboo	70	0.4%	20
North Coast / Nechako	50	0.6%	20
Northeast	N/A	N/A	N/A

You can learn more about working as an occupational therapist in BC from:

- **WorkBC Career Profiles** [Search Occupational Therapists]  
<https://www.workbc.ca/plan-career/explore-careers>
- **Career Cruising** (Profile for Occupational Therapist)  
<https://www.vpl.ca/digital-library/career-cruising>

### ***Types of Employers***

Occupational therapists work in many settings including:

- Hospitals
- Schools
- Residential care facilities
- Community care
- Employment & training centres
- Mental health facilities
- Child development centres
- Private clinics & offices

### ***Salary***

The median salary for occupational therapists working full-time in BC is \$87,595 a year. If you work in private practice you may earn more than if you work for hospitals.

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In addition to a salary, most full-time occupational therapists receive health and dental benefits, paid sick days, and paid vacations.

In BC's regions, you can expect to earn:

Community/Area	Wages (\$/hour)		
	Low	Median	High
<a href="#">British Columbia</a>	25.00	42.00	50.00
<a href="#">Lower Mainland–Southwest Region</a>	25.00	42.56	45.00
<a href="#">Thompson–Okanagan Region</a>	35.00	42.83	50.00
<a href="#">Vancouver Island and Coast Region</a>	25.00	42.00	50.00

Chart from: Job Bank Canada <https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/trend-analysis/search-wages>

### **Working Hours**

You generally work 35 to 40 hours per week during standard office hours; however, evening, weekend and shift work may also be required.

Sources: Work BC & Career Cruising

## **2. Skills, Education and Experience**

### **Skills**

- excellent communication and interpersonal skills
- advanced critical thinking
- empathy and compassion
- good judgment
- creativity
- ability to analyze and apply research to everyday practice
- self-sufficient
- ability to work as part of a team
- patient

## ***Education and Experience***

To work as an occupational therapist in BC you require:

- a Master's degree in Occupational Therapy
- completion of a minimum of 1000 hours of supervised on the job training
- registration with the College of Occupational Therapists of BC

Sources:

Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists & WorkBC Career Profile

## ***Qualifications***

***This occupation is regulated in British Columbia.***

You must be registered with the **College of Occupational Therapists of BC (COTBC)** to work as an occupational therapist in British Columbia.

Registration with the College of Occupational Therapists of BC requires:

- Completion of a Masters degree in occupational therapy from an institution accredited by the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists
- Supervised clinical internships in a variety of health care settings
- Successful completion of the National Occupational Therapy Certification Exam
- Consent for a Criminal Record Check
- Proof of professional liability insurance

For more information about registration see the **COTBC** website:

- **COTBC | Registration**  
<https://cotbc.org/registration/>

## **Internationally Educated Occupational Therapists**

If you are an internationally trained occupational therapist you must complete a multi-step process to work in BC. This includes an assessment of your educational credentials, completion of the National Occupational Therapy Certification Exam,

amongst other requirements. You must also demonstrate a minimum level of English language proficiency.

While completing these steps, it is possible to apply for registration with the College in the "provisional" category.

- *Provisional registrants must practice under the supervision of a full registrant until all requirements for full registration have been met.*

To register as an internationally trained therapist, apply directly through the **Association of Canadian Occupational Therapy Regulatory Organization's (ACOTRO) Substantial Equivalency Assessment System (SEAS)**.

For more information see:

- **Substantial Equivalency Assessment System, ACOTRO**  
<https://acotro-acore.org/registering-in-canada/were-you-educated-outside-of-canada/>
- **Internationally Educated Occupational Therapists, CAOT**  
<https://caot.ca/site/becomeanota/IEOT?nav=sidebar&banner=1>

### **3. Finding Jobs**

You'll find job advertisements in local newspapers, trade journals, and electronic sources, as well as through professional association publications.

#### ***Local Newspapers***

You can look at the *Vancouver Sun* & *The Province* at Vancouver Public Library for free. Check the job postings daily and the careers section in the *Vancouver Sun* on Wednesdays and Saturdays and in *The Province* on Sundays.

## ***Online Job Postings***

- **BC's Provincial Health Authorities**

BC's health authorities provide health services to British Columbians in all BC regions

- **Vancouver Coastal Health Authority**  
<https://careers.vch.ca/>
- **Fraser Health Authority**  
<https://jobs.fraserhealth.ca/jobs>
- **Interior Health Authority**  
<https://www.interiorhealth.ca/careers/Pages/default.aspx>
- **Northern Health Authority**  
<https://careers.northernhealth.ca/>
- **Island Health Authority**  
<https://www.islandhealth.ca/careers>
- **BC Provincial Health Services Authority**  
<http://www.phsa.ca/careers>
- **First Nations Health Authority**  
<https://www.fnha.ca/about/work-with-us>
- **BC Health Careers**  
<https://www.bchealthcareers.ca/>
- **Indeed.com**  
<https://ca.indeed.com/>

Find jobs posted on a multitude of company career sites and job boards

## ***Professional Associations' Career Resources***

- **Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists BC**  
[https://caot.ca/client/relation\\_roster/clientRelationRosterView.html?clientRelationRosterId=56](https://caot.ca/client/relation_roster/clientRelationRosterView.html?clientRelationRosterId=56)
- **Therapy BC**  
<https://therapybc.ca/ot-jobs/>

Public sector therapists working with children from birth to age 19



## ***Identifying the Right Position***

When you browse job advertisements, you'll find a range of different job titles that are relevant.

For occupational therapists, look for these and other related job titles:

- Clinical occupational therapy specialist
- Community occupational therapist
- Occupational therapist, case manager
- Occupational therapist, research and development
- Occupational therapist rehabilitation consultant

Source: National Occupational Classification <https://noc.esdc.gc.ca/>

## ***Creating a List of Potential Employers***

You can use directories to produce lists of potential employers in the Lower Mainland or BC. Contact them directly to find out if they're hiring.

- **Directory of Canadian healthcare personnel**

Available at the Central Library  
362.11025 C21a

- **Guide to Canadian health care facilities**

Available at the Central Library  
362.105 C212ca

- **Reference Canada**

<https://www.vpl.ca/digital-library/reference-canada>

Click on "Start Search" beside Canadian Businesses, then select the "Advanced Search" button. Select both "Keyword/SIC/NAICS" under Business Type and "City" under Geography. In the top search box enter "Occupational Therapists" and click SEARCH. Select the appropriate headings. Lower down, select the Province, choose the cities, and click the "View Results" button.

Available from the VPL Digital Library

**NOTE:** You can access this database from a Library computer. If you are using a computer from outside the Library, you will need a Vancouver Public Library card to login to this database. After clicking on the database name, you will be asked to enter your library card number and PIN (usually last four digits of your telephone number).

## 4. Applying for a Job

In Canada, employers usually expect to receive a resume or curriculum vitae and a cover letter that identifies the position you are applying for and summarizes your relevant experience.

Use the library catalogue, <https://vpl.bibliocommons.com/> to find books on writing resumes and cover letters specific to your industry.

To learn about applying for jobs in Canada, use the following guides which are available in print at the Central Library or online at <https://www.vpl.ca/siic/>.

- **Writing Resumes and Cover Letters**  
<https://www.vpl.ca/siic/guide/job-search-resources/writing-resumes-and-cover-letters>
- **Getting Canadian Work Experience**  
<https://www.vpl.ca/siic/guide/job-search-resources/getting-canadian-work-experience>
- **Networking for Employment**  
<https://www.vpl.ca/siic/guide/job-search-resources/networking-for-employment>
- **Learn More About Working in BC and Canada**  
<https://www.vpl.ca/siic/guide/job-search-resources/learn-more-about-working-in-bc-and-canada>

## 5. Getting Help from Industry Sources

### ***Industry Associations***

Associations for occupational therapists in BC and Canada can provide information and assistance. Registration and fees are required for membership.

- **Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists (CAOT) – BC Chapter**  
<https://www.caot.ca/site/rc/caot-bc?nav=sidebar>
- **College of Occupational Therapists of British Columbia (COTBC)**  
<https://cotbc.org/>
- **Allied Health Jobs BC**  
<https://alliedhealthjobsbc.ca/>
- **Association of Canadian Occupational Therapy Regulatory Organizations**  
<https://acotro-acore.org/>

### ***Industry Journals***

Search the Vancouver Public Library catalogue for journals related to your profession or browse these journals online:

- **The College of Occupational Therapists of British Columbia Newsletter**  
<https://cotbc.org/for-occupational-therapists/cotbc-newsletter/>
- **Occupational Therapy Now**  
Available online through the Vancouver Public Library  
<https://vpl.bibliocommons.com/v2/record/S38C8252003>

***Questions? Please ask the Information Staff in the Central Library, Vancouver Public Library or telephone 604-331-3603.***

*Please note that the information in this guide is also available online through the Skilled Immigrant InfoCentre website at <https://www.vpl.ca/siic>*