

# ADVISORY STATEMENT

REVISED: January 2020



## Use of Title Advisory Statement

*In British Columbia, only registrants of the College of Occupational Therapists of British Columbia (COTBC) can legally use the title occupational therapist.*

### Purpose

This advisory statement updates registrants regarding appropriate use of title following revisions to the COTBC Bylaws in October 2017.

### Introduction

A title can quickly impart information to the general public, clients, or other health professionals. It may confirm education and professional designation, provide information about a job role, convey professional affiliations, or represent additional qualifications.

The ability to use title is a privilege granted to registrants of a regulatory college who have demonstrated they possess the required educational qualifications, knowledge, skills, and attributes to practise their profession.

In British Columbia, an individual is required to be registered with COTBC to

- use the title of Occupational Therapist, OT, Registered Occupational Therapist, Reg. OT, Registered Occupational Therapist (BC), or Reg. OT (BC);
- hold themselves out to be an occupational therapist; or
- work as an occupational therapist.

According to the *Health Professions Act (HPA)* and the *Occupational Therapists Regulation*, in British Columbia, only COTBC registrants are permitted to use titles such as occupational therapist or its derivations as listed above, use equivalent terms in other languages, or state they are providing occupational therapy services (*HPA*, s. 12.1). These titles are referred to as “reserved titles.”

### How to Use the Reserved Title

Registrants should represent their professional designation clearly, consider the use of other credentials and job title information from the perspective of their clients, and make provisions to explain what these mean and how they relate to the registrants' occupational therapy services.

- Full and provisional registrants of COTBC must use the reserved title, abbreviations, or variations outlined above (COTBC Bylaws, 47[1]). Note that provisional registrants must still practise within the general limitations of their category.
- Temporary registrants may use the reserved title, abbreviations, or variations outlined for only the period of time when they are registered with COTBC.
- Non-practising registrants are not entitled to use the reserved title, abbreviations, or variations outlined (COTBC Bylaws, 47[2]).

### ***Use of University Degrees***

Occupational therapists may have completed other degrees before or after their occupational therapy education. These university degrees can be used by registrants following their name as long as this additional information is not misleading regarding the services that are being provided. The reserved title can be placed before or after the university degrees.

*Examples: Mary Roland, Reg. OT, MSc, BSc(OT) or Mary Roland, MSc, BSc(OT), Reg. OT (BC)*

### ***Job Titles***

Many job titles are descriptive and can provide useful information to the public about a particular role on the health team. Registrants can use their reserved title and job title.

*Example: John Smith, Occupational Therapist, Case Manager, Fraser Health Authority*

### ***Professional Memberships***

Although registrants may wish to promote their membership in professional associations, designations such as OT(C) can be misinterpreted. The public might consider this to mean “certified” occupational therapist rather than a member of the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists. Consider the goal of using such a designation. In this case, it would be clearer to state on a business card, *Proud member of my professional association CAOT.*

### ***Specialist***

Currently, there is not a regulation that allows for COTBC to maintain a specialty registry. Registrants are advised not to use the title "specialist" or any similar designation suggesting a recognized special status or accreditation on any letterhead or business card or in any other marketing (COTBC Bylaws, 89[6][a]–[b]).

## **Title for Associated Role**

### ***Students***

When clients are working with students, it is important that they understand that the individuals are students and under the supervision of a registered occupational therapist. COTBC recommends that occupational therapy students use the designation(s) listed below on a name badge and in client records. While on fieldwork placements, students should also ensure that the public and team members are clear about the students' role.

*Examples: student occupational therapist or student OT, occupational therapy student, or OT student*

### ***Support Personnel***

The same concept applies to unregulated support personnel. Occupational therapists assigning service components to support personnel should keep in mind what is represented to their clients. Support personnel should clearly indicate that they are working in the role of assistants and are under the supervision of a registered occupational therapist.

*Examples: rehabilitation assistant (RA) or OT assistant (OTA)*

## **Inappropriate Use of Title**

The misuse of title occurs when an individual

- is not an occupational therapist and uses the reserved title,
- is not an occupational therapist and practises in a manner which would lead someone to believe they are a registered OT,
- is practising occupational therapy and has not registered with COTBC,
- is practising occupational therapy and has cancelled their registration with COTBC, or
- is in the non-practising category with COTBC.

If you have any concerns about someone inappropriately using title, please contact the registrar at COTBC.

## **Use of Title When on a Leave of Absence**

Just as a reminder, a registrant taking a leave of absence from work and cancelling their registration with COTBC must reregister BEFORE returning to a position as an occupational therapist and using title. Note that it is irrelevant whether or not the registrant engages in direct client care.

## **References**

College of Occupational Therapists of British Columbia. (2017, October 2). *College of Occupational Therapists of British Columbia Bylaws*. Victoria, BC: Author.

<https://cotbc.org/wp-content/uploads/JustBylaws-NoFormsQuickPosting-10.20.2017.pdf>

Health Professions Act (1996, c. 183). Retrieved from the BC Laws website:

[http://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/96183\\_01](http://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/96183_01)

## **Websites**

College of Occupational Therapists of British Columbia [www.cotbc.org](http://www.cotbc.org)

Health Professions Act, Prohibition and limitation – use of reserve titles

[http://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/96183\\_01#section12.1](http://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/96183_01#section12.1)

Occupational Therapists Regulation

[http://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/286\\_2008](http://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/286_2008)

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Advisory statements are published by the College of Occupational Therapists of British Columbia to increase registrants' awareness of important issues relevant to the practice of occupational therapy.