

Support Medicare Beneficiary Access to Occupational Therapy Services

Please co-sponsor the EMPOWER Act (H.R. 4878/ S. 2459) to help ensure access to occupational therapy services.

Discussion Points

- Occupational therapy services are provided by either an occupational therapist (OT) – with an MA or OTD degree - or by an occupational therapy assistant (OTA) – with an associate or bachelor’s degree.
- Occupational therapists conduct evaluations, develop the plan of care, and can also implement a plan of care. Occupational therapy assistants specialize in providing treatments and carrying out the plan of care.
- Occupational therapy assistants play a key role in providing services across all practice settings and are crucial to ensuring access to occupational therapy services, particularly in rural and underserved areas.
- **The EMPOWER ACT would reduce the burdensome requirements for direct supervision of occupational therapy assistants in Medicare private practice settings, by aligning this supervision with state requirements.**
- Medicare allows for “general supervision” of occupational therapy assistants in all settings except for private practice, which requires “direct supervision.”
- Forty-nine states allow for “general supervision” of occupational therapy assistants.
- This supervision requirement places an unnecessary burden on small therapy private practices and devalues the expertise of occupational therapy assistants, limiting their presence in private practice settings.
- The bill also requires the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to conduct a study examining the impact of the 15% OTA payment cut, on access to therapy services in rural and medically underserved areas.
- A mock CBO score showed that this bill could save Medicare money - because services provided by OTAs and PTAs are now paid less than services provided by OTs and PTs.
- **Please support access to therapy services and co-sponsor the EMPOWER Act.**