

Northwood Technical College FY25 (2024-25) Occupational Therapy Assistant Program

The following is additional information about the Northwood Technical College Occupational Therapy Assistant (OTA) program. This information supplements the program webpage and district catalog.

Degree: Associate in Applied Science-Occupational Therapy Assistant

OTA PROGRAM - 64 semester credits

The Occupational Therapy Assistant program includes 45 technical core (514-xxx) and 19 general studies credits. Students may take some or all of the general education courses prior to beginning the OTA (514-xxx) courses. The program can be completed in 2 years of full-time study, or 3-4 years of part-time study. You may enroll as a pre-OTA student and complete any required courses, with the exception of (514-xxx) OTA specific courses. They must be taken in sequence. Once you begin your 514-xxx core courses, these courses must be taken in the semester indicated and in the order indicated. Semester 1 of the OTA core program has 8 (514-xxx) credits. Semester 2 of the OTA core program has 13 (514-xxx) credits. Semester 3 of the OTA core program has 12 (514-xxx) credits. Semester 4 of the OTA core program has 12 (514-xxx) credits.

PROGRAM DIRECTOR	PROGRAM LOCATIONS	FIELDWORK LOCATIONS
Becky Mika, OTR MBA-HCA Northwood Technical College 2100 Beaser Ave Ashland, WI 54806 715-319-7263 becky.mika@NorthwoodTech.edu	Northwood Tech-Ashland (Web instruction) Northwood Tech-New Richmond (Web instruction) Northwood Tech-Rice Lake (Web instruction)	Northwood Tech district, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan, Illinois, Iowa, and other states

Due to the limited availability of fieldwork sites, classes are limited to 12 students at each campus.

ACADEMIC ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

You will be admitted to the program based on the date and time the admission criteria is met.

PART-TIME (PRE-PROGRAM) STATUS

When you successfully complete the admission requirements, you will be invited to begin your course work. The following courses which apply to the OTA program may be completed prior to the core OTA courses (514-xxx). In planning your approach to these courses, please note that some of them have prerequisites as listed below.

Courses that can be taken prior to admission to the program include:

COURSE #	COURSE NAME	CREDIT	PREREQUISITE
806-177	General Anatomy and Physiology	4	None
809-198	Introduction to Psychology	3	None
801-136	English Composition I	3	None
809-196	Introduction to Sociology	3	None
809-116	Developmental Psychology	3	None
801-196	Oral/Interpersonal Communication or Speech	3	None

Northwood Technical College does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability or status in any group protected by state or local law in employment, admissions or its programs or activities. The following person has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the College's nondiscrimination policies: Amanda Gohde, Associate VP, Talent & Culture, 1900 College Drive, Rice Lake WI 54868, 715.645.7042, Wisconsin Relay TTY:711, amanda.gohde@NorthwoodTech.edu.

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE JOB OF AN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ASSISTANT

Many people assume that occupational therapy assists with employment or career guidance. Below is a video link that offers a complete understanding of what an Occupational Therapy Assistant really does on the job. The video focuses on the skills and personal qualities needed to become an OTA. It also elaborates on the pay levels and personal satisfaction a job as an OTA offers. It is highly recommended that prior to applying to the OTA program, you watch this 22-minute video. It may answer many questions you have about the profession.

Watch personal interviews with accomplished Occupational Therapy Assistants, along with a wide variety of work settings. See what skill sets, basic knowledge of human anatomy, and proper biology classes may be needed in high school to prepare you for your continued education in this field. *This video correlates to national and state board certification standards.* Click here to view this [video](#).

Disclaimer: To access this video you must either be a Northwood Tech student with access to MyNorthwoodTech where login and password information to the Learning Resource Center research databases is located; or visit one of the Northwood Tech campuses. Please contact Student Services for assistance when visiting the campus. You may also learn more about occupational therapy at <https://www.aota.org/about/what-is-ot> or <https://whychooseot.com/>

SEE WHAT THE OTA PROGRAM IS ALL ABOUT

If you are interested in the OTA program, you may schedule a classroom shadow (observation) of an OTA lab. This observation of the "real" classroom gives you the opportunity to meet an OTA Instructor and current students enrolled in the program. It is recommended that you attend a minimum of 2 hours. Please contact the Admission Advisor on the campus you will attend. The Admission Advisor will work with the OTA Instructor and you to schedule this experience.

WEB CONFERENCING

The OTA program at Northwood Tech connects to Ashland, Rice Lake, and New Richmond campuses via Web Conferencing instruction. With the use of technology, all individuals or campuses can be connected and participate in lecture in real time with the lecture instructor at the location of their choice. However, most labs are offered in person with a lab instructor at each location. Using technology for instruction can be challenging and exciting.

DISTANCE EDUCATION POLICY

A student must take an OTA course entirely at the campus they are admitted to. For example, a student admitted to the RL campus must take all OTA core classes at the RL campus. Each campus has a capacity of 12 students. Students may not change campuses during the semester. If an opening occurs at a campus, a lottery will be conducted to determine priority for any available spots. Changing from one campus to another is only possible at the beginning of a semester. The OTA Program Director will conduct the lottery. Students wishing to change campuses must contact the OTA Program Director.

CLASS COMMITMENT

The average amount of time spent in the classroom for a full-time student is between 20 and 25 hours per week. In addition to scheduled class time, it is expected that students spend at least two to three hours studying for each hour of classroom lecture they attend. This represents a significant time commitment, and most students find it necessary to reduce work hours during the program.

TRANSFER CREDIT

Official college transcripts must be submitted for any college coursework that has been completed. Official college transcripts must be sealed and sent from the sending institution.

OTA PROGRAM STANDARDS

OTA students must complete all required courses with a 2.0 or better. An OTA student may repeat a core (OTA 514-XXX) course only **once**. In addition, students enrolled in the OTA program may repeat only **two** core (OTA 514-XXX) courses in the program during their progress toward graduation. This policy also applies to coursework taken at other colleges.

COMPUTER NEEDS

As an OTA student at Northwood Tech, you are required to have 24-hour internet access. All OTA courses have a Blackboard component where PowerPoints, resources, and assignments are posted. Microsoft Office is required for completion of assignments. Students need access to a color printer. A device for taking quality photos, such as a phone, tablet, or digital camera is recommended.

FIELDWORK

OTA students will need reliable transportation to meet the demands of the program. Students are required to complete observation and fieldwork portions of the curriculum off campus. Travel for observation and Level I Fieldwork may be 3 hours (one way) from your campus. Fieldwork IIA and IIB is scheduled off campus. The fieldwork experience is "on the job training" consisting of 35-40 hours per week for 16 weeks of fourth semester.

These placements may be anywhere, including outside of the Northwood Tech district, including Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan, Illinois, Iowa, and other states. Time commitment and travel make employment difficult during Fieldwork IIA and IIB. Fieldwork IIA and IIB will be completed in two different settings under the supervision of a COTA or OTR. The two settings offer a different service delivery model. No part of Level I Fieldwork may be substituted for Level II Fieldwork. OTA students must complete Level II Fieldwork within 18 months following completion of academic preparation.

PROFESSIONAL LICENSURE AND/OR CERTIFICATION INFORMATION

Northwood Tech's Occupational Therapy Assistant program prepares students to obtain the required licensure to be employed/practice in the state of Wisconsin. The College does not guarantee its curriculum matches the requirements for preparation, examinations, or licensure for other states. To be eligible for testing and/or licensing in the state of Wisconsin, you may be required to obtain a social security number. Please click below to review more details about accreditation and licensure.

[National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy \(NBCOT\)](#)

[State of Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services](#)

ACCREDITATION

The associate-degree-level occupational therapy assistant program is accredited by the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) of the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA), located at 7501 Wisconsin Avenue, Suite 510E, Bethesda, MD 20814. ACOTE's telephone number c/o AOTA is (301) 652-AOTA and its web address is www.acoteonline.org. Graduates of the program will be eligible to sit for the national certification examination for the occupational therapy assistant administered by the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy (NBCOT). After successful completion of this exam, the individual will be a Certified Occupational Therapy Assistant (COTA). In addition, all states require licensure in order to practice; however, state licenses are usually based on the results of the NBCOT Certification Examination. Note that a felony conviction may affect a graduate's ability to sit for the NBCOT certification examination or attain state licensure.



BACKGROUND CHECK AND CONVICTION RECORD

Students who have been convicted of a felony may not be eligible for the national certification exam or state licensure. There is no automatic disqualification from licensure based on a conviction record. The Board has the authority to deny licensure to anyone with a conviction record or pending charge, the circumstances of which substantially relate to the duties of that person's licensure. In making this determination, the Board considers the following factors:

1. The nature and seriousness of the act for which convicted/arrested (as the circumstances relate to the practice of professional or practical OT);
2. The proximity in time of the conviction/arrest to the present;
3. The success of rehabilitation (if any has been indicated);
4. The record since conviction/arrest.

The Board will not offer an opinion of eligibility for licensure until the graduate actually applies. The graduate will need to provide copies of any judgments of conviction and criminal complaints. The Board will investigate and determine whether they substantially relate to the practice of OT.

Students in the OTA program will attend practical sessions in fieldwork agencies that are regulated by state and federal government. The laws state that these fieldwork agencies may not hire anyone with a history of conviction of certain crimes. Northwood Tech must contract with these agencies to provide your fieldwork experiences while in the program. In order to do so, the agencies expect Northwood Tech to adhere to the same guidelines—in other words, they view students as temporary employees.

Conviction history will be further explained at the mandatory program orientation. Having a conviction history will not necessarily stop you from entering the program. We will need to discuss the charges with you and will make every attempt to confidentially resolve the concern with the fieldwork agencies utilized for the fieldwork courses.

Ultimately, the fieldwork agencies reserve the right to determine what is an acceptable background check. The fieldwork location may deny access to their setting based on a negative background check. If this occurs, you would not be able to complete the OTA program requirements regardless of your academic standing. The costs of background checks are the responsibility of the student.

All OTA students enrolled in core (514-xxx) courses are required to complete a caregiver background check from the [Wisconsin Department of Health Services](#). Students pay a fee and submit the required documentation to the campus designee between August 1 and September 1 of the year you begin the core (514-xxx) courses. Forms and directions are located on the [OTA program web page](#). Some facilities require a National Criminal Background Check, which can be completed through [Verified Credentials, LLC](#). In addition to that, if you are a student who will complete OTA Fieldwork or course activities in another state, you will also be required to complete a Caregiver Background Check in that state. Prior to OTA Fieldwork, your Program Director or Fieldwork Coordinator will inform you if the National and/or state Caregiver Background Check is needed. All costs related to required background checks are the responsibility of the OTA student.

OTA HEALTH FORM

Prior to the start of the first (Fall) semester of core (514-xxx) courses, you must complete the Northwood Tech Health Sciences Health Form including immunizations, medical history, and physical. BLS Basic Life Support is required prior to the start of 2nd semester. Forms and directions are located on the [OTA program web page](#). This form is discussed in the online OTA Orientation.

OTA ORIENTATION

The Program Director and OTA Faculty provide a mandatory online orientation before Fall courses begin. This is required for students enrolling in core (514-xxx) courses for Fall semester. The orientation provides an overview of the OTA program at Northwood Tech including policies and strategies for success. The program and fieldwork are discussed.

GRADUATE SALARY EXPECTATIONS

Aggregated statewide graduate outcomes indicate average monthly salaries are between \$42,325-\$65,983 annually and the average yearly salary is \$55,280.

SCHOLARSHIPS AND FINANCIAL AID

Full-time students are eligible for financial aid. Scholarships are available.

FACTS ABOUT OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ASSISTANTS

WHAT DO OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ASSISTANTS DO?

Certified Occupational Therapy Assistants (COTAs) treat patients of all ages who have physical, cognitive, or psychological impairments. Occupational therapy utilizes purposeful activity to treat people who are limited in performing their daily living activities. The goal of occupational therapy is to help the individual function as independently as possible. COTAs work under the supervision of a Registered Occupational Therapist (OTR) and implement treatment; educate patients, family, and staff; document patient progress; and assist with evaluating patient performance.

WHERE DO OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ASSISTANTS WORK?

COTAs work in hospitals, schools, skilled nursing facilities, mental health centers, home health, and other community service settings. COTAs also work as activity directors in long term care, adult day programs, and senior centers. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2016) the projected percent change in employment for COTAs for 2014-2024 is 40% or much faster than average. COTAs may also be employed in specialty areas of occupational therapy such as work hardening, hand therapy, and assistive technology. Jobs exist in emerging areas of practice where supervision from an OTR is not needed.

WHAT ATTRIBUTES WOULD ASSIST ME IN BEING A SUCCESSFUL COTA?

Above average oral and written communication skills are needed to develop therapeutic relationships with patients and to work within the health care system. Therapists need to be flexible, personable, creative, and ethical in order to provide quality patient care. COTAs need to accept supervision and work closely with an OTR. An occupational therapy assistant will need to think quickly, problem solve situations, make decisions regarding patient care, and deal with stressful daily situations. Potential therapists should be dedicated to helping others while still allowing them to be as independent as possible. COTAs will have frequent contact with other health care providers, including doctors, and will need to function both independently and as a member of a team.

HOW DO I BECOME A CERTIFIED OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ASSISTANT?

To become certified, occupational therapy assistants must graduate from an accredited educational program, receive an associate degree, and pass the certification exam. Accredited programs are located in technical and community colleges. Following graduation, students take a national certification exam administered by the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy (NBCOT). The student must pay a fee and register to take the exam. The student must receive a passing score to be eligible for employment as a COTA. Most states then require state licensure or certification. Graduates may gain employment while going through the certification and licensure process.

WHAT IS UNIQUE ABOUT OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ASSISTANT PROGRAMS?

All programs require that students complete a minimum of 16 weeks of Level II Fieldwork. This is required prior to graduation. Students are assigned to 2 different settings where they work full-time, without pay, applying the skills and knowledge they have acquired in the classroom to a practical setting. Students are supervised by an occupational therapist (OTR) or an occupational therapy assistant (COTA). Fieldwork placements require travel. Fieldwork locations are within the Northwood Tech district and out of state. Work during fieldwork is difficult due to the demand and time constraints. Reliable transportation is required for fieldwork.

WHAT IS THE EMPLOYMENT OUTLOOK LIKE?

The Department of Labor has predicted that employment for Occupational Therapy Assistants is expected to grow much faster than average through 2024. Current graduates earn between \$35,357 - \$52,454 annually. The most recent graduate follow-up study indicates the average yearly salary to be \$42,848.

HOW CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

Contact the OTA Program Director: Becky Mika, 715-319-7263 or becky.mika@NorthwoodTech.edu

OR

Admissions Advisor
Northwood Technical College
2100 Beaser Ave
Ashland WI 54806
Phone: 715.682.4591 or 800.243.9482
ashland.admissions@northwoodtech.edu

Admissions Advisor
Northwood Technical College
1019 S. Knowles Ave
New Richmond, WI 54017
Phone: 715-246-6561 or 800.243.9482
newrichmond.admissions@northwoodtech.edu

Admissions Advisor
Northwood Technical College
1900 College Dr
Rice Lake, WI 54868
Phone: 715.234.7082 or 800.243.9482
ricelake.admissions@northwoodtech.edu

Jobs a COTA Can Do

Activity Program Manager
Assistive Technology Consultant
Case Manager for Clients in Supported Living
Certified Driver Rehabilitation Specialist
Community Integration Specialist
Corporate Wellness Director
Daily Living Skills Counselor for Clients with Eating Disorders
Director of Day Care for Children with Special Needs
Group Home Manager
Home Modification Consultant
Inclusion Specialist for Recreation Programs
Inclusive Apparel Seamstress
Independent Living Skills Trainer
Job Coach for Clients with Disabilities
Job Site Evaluator
Office/Factory Ergonomics Consultant
Orthotics Fabrication Specialist
Paraprofessional for Students with Special Needs
Rehab Equipment Salesperson
Specialist in Lifestyle Redesign
Vision Intervention Specialist
Web Site Designer for Consumers with Disabilities
Wheelchair Vendor

Checklist for Occupational Therapy Assistant Admission

Admission Requirements (pre)

- _____ Complete Online application form
- _____ Have earned a high school diploma or GED certificate; current high school seniors must provide both a current high school transcript and a final (official) transcript with confer date.
- _____ Review and sign Background Check Disclosure
- _____ Review and sign the Functional Abilities Disclosure
- _____ Complete Admissions meeting with a Northwood Tech counselor (academic admission requirements apply)

Students who are considering the program must meet one of the following items:

- Minimum High School GPA of 2.8
- ACT Score of 21
- Minimum College GPA 2.2 (min 3 cr)
- Associate or bachelor's degree
- Accuplacer scores

Additional measures may be considered as determined by the counselor.

Specific-Program Requirements

- _____ Submit Background Check fee
- _____ Have an acceptable Wisconsin Caregiver Background Check, National Criminal Background Check, Minnesota Caregiver Background Check (if applicable), and other states, if applicable
- _____ Pass a physical exam, have current immunizations, and demonstrate negative status for Tuberculosis (Tb).
- _____ COVID vaccination---highly recommended
NOTE: Northwood Technical College cannot guarantee clinical placement or ability to progress in the program if a student is not able to meet the clinical site requirements including but not limited to; influenza vaccine, covid vaccine, negative tb skin test or QuantiFERON®-TB Gold In-Tube test (QFT-GIT) or T-SPOT®.TB test (T-Spot), up to date acceptable background check, or any other clinical requirements required by the clinical site. Northwood Technical College cannot guarantee clinical placement if the clinical site must be changed due to students inability to meet the site specific requirements. Many sites require the student information 4-6 weeks prior to the clinical start date.
- _____ Possess current certification of "BLS Basic Life Support"
- _____ Review and sign Health Sciences Confidentiality Statement
- _____ Participate in a mandatory program orientation session