

## **World Federation of Occupational Therapists Position Statement on Human Rights**

### **Introduction**

The WFOT fully endorses the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The purpose of this Position Paper is to state the World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT) position on human rights in relation to human occupation and participation.

### **Principles:**

- People have the right to participate in a range of occupations that enable them to flourish, fulfil their potential and experience satisfaction in a way consistent with their culture and beliefs.
- People have the right to be supported to participate in occupation and, through engaging in occupation, to be included and valued as members of their family, community and society.
- People have the right to choose for themselves: to be free of pressure, force, or coercion; in participating in occupations that may threaten safety, survival or health and those occupations that are dehumanising, degrading or illegal.
- The right to occupation encompasses civic, educative, productive, social, creative, spiritual and restorative occupations. The expression of the human right to occupation will take different forms in different places, because occupations are shaped by their cultural, societal and geographic context.
- At a societal level, the human right to occupation is underpinned by the valuing of each person's diverse contribution to the valued and meaningful occupations of the society, and is ensured by equitable access to participation in occupation, regardless of difference.
- Abuses of the right to occupation may take the form of economic, social or physical exclusion, through attitudinal or physical barriers, or through control of access to necessary knowledge, skills, resources, or venues where occupation takes place.
- Global conditions that threaten the right to occupation include poverty, disease, social discrimination, displacement, natural and man-made disasters and armed conflict. In addition, the right to occupation is subject to cultural beliefs and customs, local circumstances and institutional power and practices.

**Strategies for action:**

Occupational therapists have the knowledge and skills to support persons who experience limitations or barriers to participation in occupation. Occupational therapists also have a role and responsibility to develop and synthesize knowledge to support participation; to identify and raise issues of occupational barriers and injustices; and to work with groups, communities and societies to enhance participation in occupation for all persons. Achieving this is to achieve an occupationally just society.

Challenges for Occupational Therapists and Occupational Therapy Associations lie in the following areas:

- Accepting professional responsibility to identify and address occupational injustices and limit the impact of such injustices experienced by individuals
- Raising collective awareness of the broader view of occupation and participation in society as a right.
- Learning to work collaboratively with individuals, organisations, communities and societies, to promote participation through meaningful occupation.
- Teaching and developing universal design, thereby promoting a society that is truly accessible to all.
- Responsibly addressing the issue of cultural sensitivity, and fostering cultural competency

**Footnote:**Definition Occupation

In occupational therapy, occupations refer to the everyday activities that people do as individuals, in families and with communities to occupy time and bring meaning and purpose to life. Occupations include things people need to, want to and are expected to do.