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## Tips on Becoming a Great OT Fieldwork Clinical Instructor

If you're an OT becoming a fieldwork clinical instructor for the first time, there's a lot that you may be wondering about.

You may be feeling a bit nervous, especially if you're remembering how nervous you might have been on YOUR first day as a fieldwork student.

Becoming a fieldwork clinical instructor and supervising students is a huge responsibility, but it is also a rewarding and worthwhile experience. Regardless of whether you are expecting a Level I or Level II fieldwork student, this article will provide you with a few tips to

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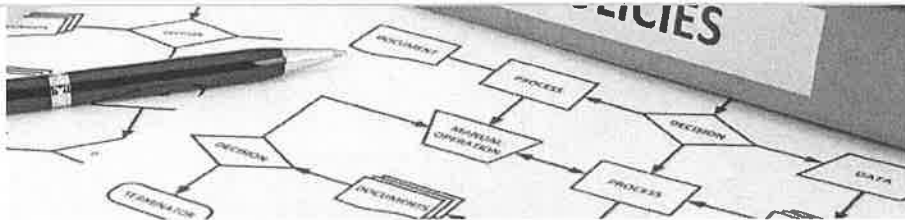
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Before your first fieldwork student arrives, you will want to become familiar with your facility's policies regarding student placements.

If your facility already accepts occupational therapy fieldwork students, a fieldwork placement manual containing the policies and procedures necessary to supervise students should already be in place.

Read this manual and become familiar with it so you can reference it later. Fieldwork placements have a general structure that must be followed for students to gain the work experience that they need, so you will want to be familiar with this structure.

The fieldwork manual should also contain updated regulations, including state and local laws as well as billing regulations related to the provision of services to patients by students.



Billing regulations, especially those stipulated by Medicare, have changed over the past 10 years and allow the supervising therapist more freedom in determining when a Level II fieldwork student is ready to provide services without direct supervision.

If your facility's supervision policies have not been updated for a while, speak with your rehabilitation department supervisor or the person in charge of developing your facility's student program to make sure that policies are up to date.

If this is the first time that your facility has accepted a fieldwork student, you may have to develop these policies and procedures yourself. It is best for facilities to have policies and procedures in place before you accepting the first fieldwork students.

Most occupational therapy schools require this, and they will communicate with what their requirements are. Also check your state and local regulations and AOTA guidelines for services rendered by students. There are



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## Your Student

Even though there are set policies and regulations regarding students, that doesn't mean that your every move must adhere to a certain curriculum.

The fieldwork supervision guidelines give the fieldwork supervisor a lot of flexibility in planning learning opportunities for students.

Think about what you do every day and why you do it. Your fieldwork student will ask you this very question, so be prepared with answers.

Here are some things to consider when preparing learning opportunities for your student.

### **Is the treatment I am providing evidence-based?**

What is the evidence? You will want to make sure that you are familiar with the body of evidence behind the treatment that you provide and that you can readily access that evidence when a student asks about it. You don't have to have every fact memorized but be able to look up and reference the research that you use to support your treatment.

## Is the treatment I am providing client-centered?

This is a very important point to consider. Being the outsiders looking in, students view treatment with fresh eyes and they ask questions when they do not see the relevance of treatment to patients' personal goals and situations.

If you are in the habit of making sure treatment is client-centered, you won't have to worry about this point much. If you are in a facility that follows specific treatment protocols that are set by physicians, however, then you might want to review what you do to make sure your patients' input is included in your treatment planning.





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want your student's fieldwork experience to be boring, after all.

Fortunately, your student's school will most likely have a set of requirements in order for them to pass fieldwork. One of which is often the requirement for an in-service project. Take advantage of these requirements and give the student projects that will help them gain knowledge in your area of practice.

Are you considering trying a new treatment technique? Offer your student the opportunity to research this technique for you and present the evidence to your department.

Do you have a specific problem that you encounter repeatedly during therapy sessions? Give your student the opportunity to look at the problem and offer solutions. There are many ways you can incorporate these extras into your student's fieldwork placement.

## **Improving Your Own Skills as a Fieldwork Clinical Instructor**

AOTA states that if you're a therapist who meets national certification and state licensure requirements and you



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your head when you get your first assignment.

Take comfort in knowing that you **are** good enough. You went through all the education and training that your student has gone through and then-some. You have valuable skills that you have learned on the job and through continuing education. You have a lot to offer to your student as their CI!

If you are still feeling hesitant, however, AOTA has additional resources to help you.

The Fieldwork Educators Certificate Workshop is continuing education that gives fieldwork clinical instructors the opportunity to develop skills in all the areas necessary to supervise fieldwork students and run successful fieldwork programs.

If this is a bit out of your budget, thankfully AOTA also offers several free, printable resources to help you develop and improve your fieldwork program.

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Supervising fieldwork students is both challenging and rewarding! Prepare yourself and your department using the available resources and be confident in knowing that you are more than capable of passing your occupational

## Additional Resources

8 Tips for Being the Best OT Fieldwork Educator You Can Be (OT Potential)

Supervision Manual For Clinical Fieldwork Instructors (San Jose State University)

OT Student Fieldwork Manual (Available for purchase via OT Potential)

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