



## Tips for Finding Observation Hours

We are so excited that you are thinking of a career in occupational therapy! Whether you want to complete observation hours to fulfill an application requirement or just want to learn more about what OT is, finding a facility to observe at may be difficult. We at NJOTA compiled some tips to help you along your way! Good luck!

### What to Expect

- Be prepared, contact more places than you originally intended.
- Hospitals and other settings may require you to go through their volunteer department and ask you for a background check, drug screen, references, etc. There may also be a limit to the number of hours allowed at a specific site.
- Expect to have a really great learning experience. Seeing various practice settings and meeting a variety of practitioners really broadens the learning experience. Observation will leave you knowing if OT is right for you & will help your learning once you are in an OT program!

### Making Calls & Sending Emails

- Remember ALWAYS be professional.
- Be clear about what you WANT & NEED from the site you are contacting. Be aware that some universities require specific documentation of hours.
- Tell them a little about yourself as well- are you in high school or college? Why are you interested in becoming an OT?
- Reach out YOURSELF.
  - If you know someone who is an OT or know someone who knows someone (sorry if that's confusing!) get their contact information and ask them personally & formally.

### Why am I Being Rejected?

- First, you may have to travel outside of your hometown, especially if you live close to a university with an OT program. Many of these facilities are flooded with fieldwork students and do not have any available practitioners (but it never hurts to try!).
- Secondly, and it's no fault of your own, many settings use OT's through a staffing agency. The bureaucracy of the contract may not allow for students.
- Lastly, some settings (especially schools) may require you to have specific background checks before being eligible to enter the facility. The amount of paperwork and HR hours can possibly be holding facilities back from allowing a student to observe.

### Additional Tips

- Say WHY you are interested in completing observation hours at that setting. Nobody wants to hear that they are the only facility five miles from your home or you were turned down at the big-name rehabilitation hospital.
- Keep an open mind! You may think you only want to work with one population, that's fine! But don't limit yourself to only observing that specific population. You're going to learn about everything in OT school regardless of where you want to work!
- The more hours and variety of settings the better! Not only will this increase your own preparedness, it also looks great on your applications!