



School Age Therapy (OT/PT) ELIGIBILITY EXPLAINED

This document summarizes eligibility and prioritization criteria for school-age therapy. It is intended to support school teams in determining appropriate referrals.

Diagnosis alone is not sufficient for therapy eligibility. There must be a clear impact on a student's functional participation or safety in school, home or the community.

School Age Therapy Mandate

- Support access to education and school participation
- Promote safety, mobility, self-care and independence
- Prevent functional deterioration related to ongoing physical or neurodevelopmental conditions

Pathway 1 –Ongoing Support (Complex Needs, refer at any time)

Students with **complex medical or neurodevelopmental conditions** who demonstrate **significant functional limitations and/or safety risks**. Without OT/PT support, these students are a high-risk of safety concerns, loss of function and exclusion.

Functional Impact:

- Significant impact on mobility, access, participation, or safety
- High risk of injury, deterioration, or exclusion without support
- Dependent on others for essential school activities

Service Provided:

- Regular monitoring and collaboration by OT/PT with school team
- Equipment provision and management
- Support for transitions (e.g., adult services)

Examples:

- Requires **mobility devices and/or alternative positioning** (e.g., wheelchair, gait trainer, orthotics)
- Requires **lifts, transfers, or positioning support**
- Significant impact on **mobility, safety, or access** at school
- Feeding concerns with **risk of choking or aspiration**
- Functional performance at risk for **deterioration** due to joint, muscle, skin, or medical conditions
- Recent **event or procedure** (e.g., fracture, surgery) superimposed on a complex condition
- Physical access limitations affecting **curriculum participation or technology use**
- Transition planning for adult services

Pathway 2 – Targeted Support (Short Term Consultation)

Students with **moderate functional challenges** related to motor or sensory differences that impact **participation across school activities**.

Functional Impact:

- Difficulty completing age-appropriate school tasks independently
- Reduced efficiency, participation, or consistency
- Challenges present across multiple environments or tasks

Service Provided

- Time-limited assessment and consultation
- Targeted strategies and recommendations
- Possible short-term monitoring

Examples:

- **Self-care:** dressing, toileting, eating, hand hygiene, managing food containers
- **Classroom motor tasks:** cutting, managing art materials, printing/typing
- Accessing Exploratories (food, music, tech-ed, etc)
- **Mobility & participation:** playground, PE inclusion, classroom seating, transitions
- **Life and community skills:** riding the bus, cooking, community access
- Movement or coordination difficulties that are impacting function
- Sensory differences impacting participation (not sensory seeking in isolation)

Pathway 3 – Universal Support (Classroom-Based)

No referral required, connect with your school therapist directly

Classrooms requiring **general strategies**, where no individual functional impairment requiring therapy is identified.

Functional Impact

- No significant impact on individual student safety or participation
- Needs can be addressed through classroom-wide or universal strategies

Service Provided

- Indirect support at the classroom or school level
- Resources, education, and strategy development for staff
- No individual therapy provided

Examples:

- Motor circuits and physical activity programs
- Inclusive physical education strategies
- Posture, pencil grasp, and classroom ergonomics
- School or class wide regulation frameworks (e.g., Zones of Regulation, Autism Level Up etc.)



School Age Therapy (OT/PT) ELIGIBILITY EXPLAINED

Exclusion Criteria

A referral to School Age Therapy OT/PT is not appropriate when:

- Concerns are primarily related to **behavior, mental health or trauma** without identified motor impacts (other services are better suited to support)
- Challenges are related to executive functioning and attention (these challenges can be met using universal supports)
- Written output concerns exist **without motor involvement**
- A typically developing student has an **isolated acute injury** requiring short-term rehabilitation (private therapy recommended)
- Selective eating without risk for choking or aspiration
- Referral is based solely on another professional's recommendation without functional justification in the school setting