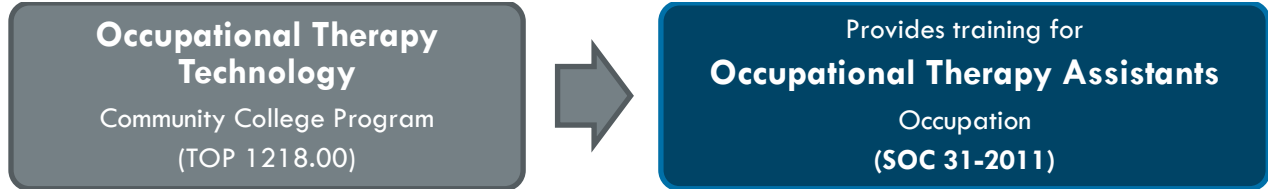


# Occupational Therapy Assistants

*Inland Empire/Desert Region (Riverside and San Bernardino counties)*

## Summary



Over the next five years (2021-2026), employment for occupational therapy assistants is projected to




**The Inland Empire/Desert Centers of Excellence**  
 **Recommends**  
Occupational Therapy Assistant Program Development  
to meet the need for more workers in the region

## Introduction

California Community College occupational therapy technology programs (TOP 1218.00) prepare students for employment through instruction related to the techniques of rehabilitation, patient evaluation, and treatment planning, under the supervision of an occupational therapist or other healthcare provider (Taxonomy of Programs, 2012). The knowledge, skills, and abilities trained by occupational therapy assistant programs lead to employment as an occupational therapy assistant.

## Occupational Therapy Assistants (31-2011)

Assist occupational therapists in providing occupational therapy treatments and procedures. May, in accordance with state laws, assist in development of treatment plans, carry out routine functions, direct activity programs, and document the progress of treatments. Generally requires formal training.

**Sample job titles:** Acute Care Occupational Therapy Assistant (Acute Care OT Assistant), Certified Occupational Assistant, Certified Occupational Therapist Assistant (COTA), Certified Occupational Therapy Assistant (COTA), Licensed Occupational Therapist Assistant (LOTA), Licensed Occupational Therapy Assistant (LOTA), Occupational Therapist Assistant (OTA), Occupational Therapy Assistant (OTA), Registered Therapist Assistant, School Based Certified Occupational Therapy Assistant (School Based COTA)

*Entry-Level Educational Requirement: Associate degree*

*Training Requirement: None*

*Work Experience: None*

*Incumbent workers with a Community College Award or Some Postsecondary Coursework: 65%*

## Job Counts and Projections

In 2021, there were 290 occupational therapy assistant jobs in the region. Regional employment for this occupation is projected to increase by 26% through 2026; 64 job openings are projected annually. Exhibit 1 displays the job counts, five-year projected job growth, job openings, and the share of incumbent workers aged 55 years and greater in the region.

*Exhibit 1. Five-year projections for occupational therapy assistants, Inland Empire/Desert Region, 2021-2026*

Occupation	2021 Jobs	2026 Jobs	5-Yr % Change	5-Yr Openings (New + Replacement Jobs)	Annual Openings (New + Replacement Jobs)	% of workers age 55+
Occupational Therapy Assistants	290	365	26%	322	64	14%

Source: Lightcast 2023.1

An online job ad search for occupational therapy assistant jobs was conducted to reveal the employers seeking these workers, including the median posting duration, earnings information, and in-demand skills. Over the last 12 months, there were 45 job ads for occupational therapy assistants in the region. To ensure that job ad information is generalizable and reliable, the job ad search was expanded to include all advertisements posted in California. Exhibit 2 shows the number of job ads posted in California over the last 12 months, from March 2022 through February 2023.

On average, California employers kept online job ads for occupational therapy assistants open for 28 days.

The average statewide online job is open for 28 days, indicating that employers face similar challenges filling occupational therapy assistant positions as other jobs.

Exhibit 2. Job ads and posting duration, California, March 2022 through February 2023

Occupation	Job Ads	Median Posting Duration (Days)
Occupational Therapy Assistants	360	28

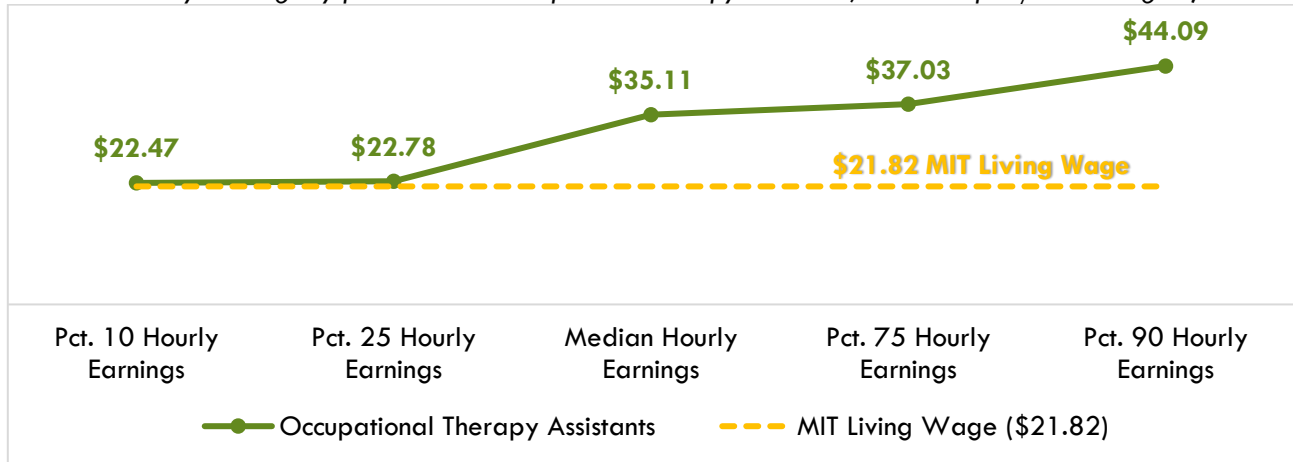
Source: Lightcast 2023.1

### Earnings and Benefits

Community colleges should ensure their training programs lead to employment opportunities that provide a living wage. The MIT living wage calculator estimates that an individual must earn \$21.82 per hour or \$45,386 annually to be self-sufficient in California (Glasmeier, 2023).

Exhibit 3 displays the hourly earnings for occupational therapy assistants. The 10<sup>th</sup> percentile hourly earnings for occupational therapy assistants are above the living wage standard, indicating that at least the top 90% of workers earn a living wage.

Exhibit 3. Hourly earnings by percentile for occupational therapy assistants, Inland Empire/Desert Region, 2021

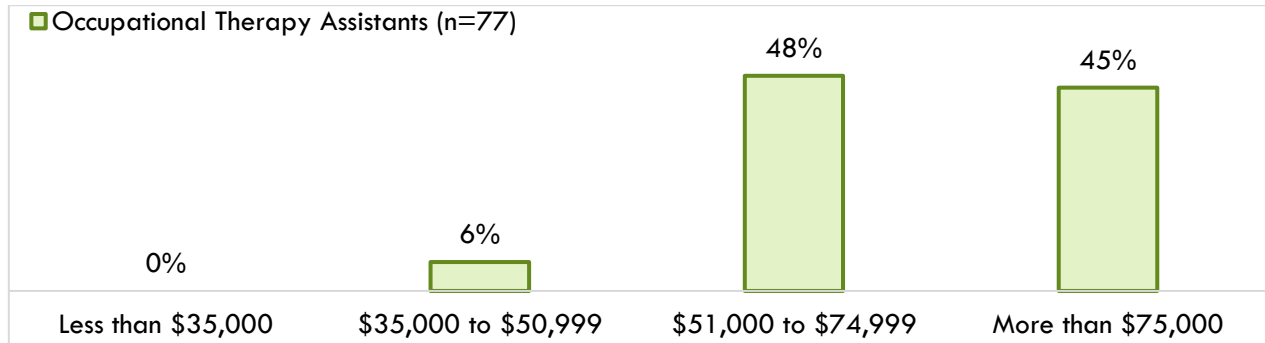


Source: Lightcast 2023.1

### Advertised Salary from Online Job Ads

Exhibit 4 displays the regional online advertised salaries for occupational therapy assistants over the last 12 months. Online job ad salary information reveals that employers are willing to pay occupational therapy assistants an annual salary of \$73,986 or \$35.57 per hour, above the region's \$21.82 hourly living wage standard. Consider the salary information with caution since only 21% (77 of 360) of online job ads for this occupation provided salary information.

Exhibit 4. Online advertised salaries for occupational therapy assistants, California, March 2022 through February 2023



Source: Lightcast 2023.1

### Job Titles, Employers, Skills, Education, and Work Experience

Exhibit 5 displays the job titles most frequently used in job ads for occupational therapy assistants during the last 12 months. Displaying advertised job titles may provide insight into the types of positions sought by employers posting ads. The most frequently requested job title in California was certified occupational therapy assistant.

Exhibit 5. Job titles most frequently used in occupational therapy assistant job ads, California, March 2022 through February 2023

Job Titles	Unique Job Ads
Certified Occupational Therapy Assistants	208
Occupational Therapy Assistants	92
Occupational Therapy Aides	29
Occupational Therapists	17
All other job titles	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>360</b>

Source: Lightcast 2023.1

Exhibit 6 displays the employers posting the most job ads for occupational therapy assistants during the last 12 months. Showing employer names provides insight into where students may find employment after completing a program. AFFIRMA Rehabilitation posted the most job ads for occupational therapy assistants in the state.

*Exhibit 6. Employers posting the most job ads for occupational therapy assistants, California, March 2022 through February 2023*

Top Employer	Unique Job Ads
AFFIRMA Rehabilitation	33
Aegis Therapies	32
WelbeHealth	21
ReMed Recovery Care Centers	15
Sharp HealthCare	14
Infinity Rehab	13
Adventist Health	11
Encompass Health	10
All other employers	211
<b>Total</b>	<b>360</b>

Source: Lightcast 2023.1

Exhibit 7 lists a sample of specialized and employability skills employers seek when seeking workers to fill occupational therapy assistant positions. Specialized skills are occupation-specific skills that employers request for industry or job competency. Common skills are foundational skills that transcend industries and occupations; this category is often referred to as "soft skills." The skills requested in job ads may be utilized to guide curriculum development.

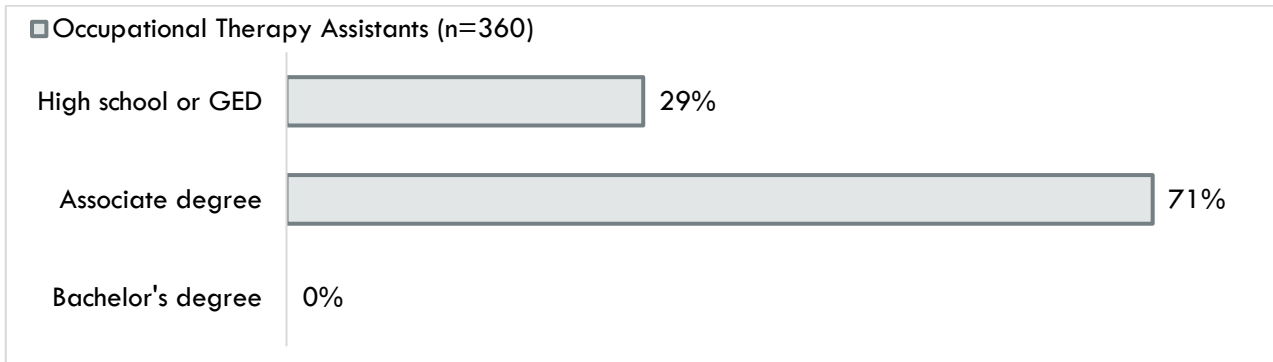
*Exhibit 7. Sample of in-demand skills from employer job ads, California, March 2022 through February 2023*

Specialized skills (n=360)	Common skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rehabilitation</li> <li>• Treatment Planning</li> <li>• Patient Safety</li> <li>• Orthopedics</li> <li>• Medical Records</li> <li>• Vital Signs Measurement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication Skills</li> <li>• Problem-Solving</li> <li>• Critical Thinking</li> <li>• Innovation</li> <li>• Coordinating</li> <li>• Scheduling</li> </ul>

Source: Lightcast 2023.1

Exhibit 8 displays the minimum advertised education requirements for occupational therapy assistants. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 65% of incumbent workers in this field hold a community college-level of educational attainment; "some college, no degree," and an "associate degree." Most employers listing a minimum education level requested a candidate with an associate degree.

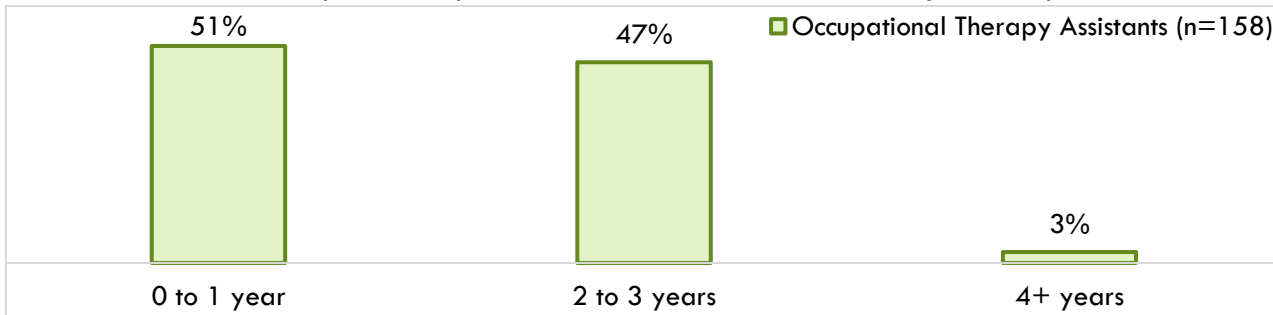
*Exhibit 8. Minimum advertised education requirements, California, March 2022 through February 2023*



Source: Lightcast 2023.1

Exhibit 9 displays the work experience typically required from employer job ads for occupational therapy assistants. More than half of employers sought candidates with zero to one year of previous work experience, while an additional 47% sought candidates with two to three years of previous work experience.

*Exhibit 9. Real-time work experience requirements, California, March 2022 through February 2023*



Source: Lightcast 2023.1

## Certifications

Exhibit 10 displays the most frequently requested certifications by employers in job ads. Nearly three-quarters of employers (74%) posting job ads sought candidates with a certification from the Department of Consumer Affairs Board of Occupational Therapy (BOT). Licensure requires the completion of education requirements and the passage of the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy exam (BOT, 2023). For more information, please visit the BOT website.

*Exhibit 10: Certifications most frequently required by employers, California, March 2022 through February 2023*

Certification	Jobs Ads
Certified Occupational Therapy Assistant	267
Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) Certification	90
Basic Life Support (BLS) Certification	79

Source: Lightcast 2023.1

## Student Completions and Programs Outcomes

Regional community colleges do not currently offer occupational therapy technology (TOP 1218.00) programs. Exhibit 11 displays awards for other postsecondary education providers reported in occupational therapist assistant (CIP 51.0803) programs. Completion data is compiled from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) for the most recent three years. One other regional postsecondary education provider issued one award in the 2017-18 academic year, or an average of zero awards annually over the last three academic years.

*Exhibit 11. Occupational therapist assistant training programs from other educational providers, three-year annual average credentials, Inland Empire/Desert Region, Academic Years 2017-2020*

51.0803 – Occupational Therapist Assistant	Academic Year 2017-18	Academic Year 2018-19	Academic Year 2019-20	Other Educational Providers Annual Average Credentials, 2017-2020
<b>Loma Linda University</b>				<b>0</b>
Associate Degree	1	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

Source: IPEDS

## Summary of Findings

The knowledge, skills, and abilities trained by occupational therapy assistant (TOP 1218.00) programs prepare students for employment as occupational therapy assistants. Occupational therapy assistants are projected to have 64 annual job openings and increase employment by 26% over the next five years in the Inland Empire/Desert Region. The 10<sup>th</sup> percentile hourly earnings for occupational therapy assistants are above the living wage standard, indicating that at least the top 90% of workers earn a living wage.

Regional community colleges do not offer occupational therapy technology (1218.00) programs. One other regional postsecondary education provider issued one award in the 2017-18 academic year, or an average of zero awards annually over the last three academic years.

The Centers of Excellence recommends developing occupational therapy assistant programs due to the increasing regional demand for occupational therapy assistants. Colleges considering this program should partner with relevant employers and confirm the skills students need to obtain employment shortly after exiting the program.

### Contact

Michael Goss  
Paul Vaccher  
Centers of Excellence, Inland Empire/Desert Region  
[michael.goss@chaffey.edu](mailto:michael.goss@chaffey.edu)  
March 2023

## References

California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office. (2023). *Chancellor's Office Curriculum Inventory (COCI), version 3.0*. Retrieved from <https://coci2.ccctechcenter.org/programs>

California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office Management Information Systems (MIS) Data Mart. (2023). *Data Mart*. Retrieved from <https://datamart.cccco.edu/datamart.aspx>

California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, Curriculum and Instructional Unit, Academic Affairs Division. (2012). *Taxonomy of Programs, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition, Corrected Version*. Retrieved from <https://www.cccco.edu/-/media/CCCCO-Website/About-Us/Divisions/Digital-Innovation-and-Infrastructure/Research/Files/TOpmanual6200909corrected12513.ashx?la=en&hash=94C709CA83C0380828415579395A5F536736C7C1>

California Department of Consumer Affairs. Board of Occupational Therapy (BOT). (2023). *Application*. Retrieved from <https://www.bot.ca.gov/applicants/application.shtml>

Carnevale, A. P., Jayasundera, T., & Repnikov, D. (n.d.). Understanding Online Job Ads Data. Retrieved from <https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/OCLM.Tech.Web.pdf>

Glasmeyer, A. K. (2022). Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Living Wage Calculator. *Living Wage Calculation for California*. Retrieved from <https://livingwage.mit.edu/states/06>

Lightcast. (2023). *Datarun 2023.1*. Retrieved from <https://www.economicmodeling.com/>

National Center for O\*NET Development. (2023). O\*NET OnLine. Retrieved from <https://www.onetonline.org/>

U.S. Department of Education. Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics. Integrated Postsecondary Education System (IPEDS). (2023). Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/use-the-data>

## Appendix: Methodology

Job ad data is limited to the information provided by employers and the ability of artificial intelligence search engines to identify this information. Additionally, preliminary calculations by Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce found that "just 30 to 40 percent of openings for candidates with some college or an associate degree, and only 40 to 60 percent of openings for high school diploma holders appear online" (Carnevale et al., 2014). Online job ads often do not reveal employers' hiring intentions; it is unknown if employers plan to hire one or multiple workers from a single online job ad or collect resumes for future hiring needs. A closed job ad may not be the result of a hired worker.



Table 1. 2021 to 2026 job growth, wages, entry-level education, training, and work experience required for occupational therapy assistants in the Inland Empire/Desert Region (Riverside and San Bernardino Counties combined)

Occupation	2021 Jobs	5-Year Change	5-Year % Change	Annual Openings (New + Replacement Jobs)	Entry-Experienced Hourly Wage (10 <sup>th</sup> to 90 <sup>th</sup> percentile)	Median Hourly Wage (50 <sup>th</sup> percentile)	Average Annual Earnings	Entry-Level Education & On-The-Job-Training	Work Experience Required
Occupational Therapy Assistants (31-2011)	290	75	26%	64	\$22.47 to \$44.09	\$35.11	\$67,100	Associate degree & None	None

Source: Lightcast 2023.1