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## **Working Together for Excellence in Fieldwork Education**

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### **Introduction:**

Ensuring high quality fieldwork experiences is a crucial goal for all occupational therapy programs; however, the reality is that there is a disconnection between what is being taught in the classroom and what is actually being practiced in the clinical settings (Brown,2007; Crist,2007; Hedgecoth, 2007; La Grossa, 2008). Other issues acting as barriers to quality fieldwork include:

- Limited communication between the academic institutions and the fieldwork educators
  - Inconsistent application of the OT Practice Framework in the clinics
  - Clinicians with limited or no experience supervising students
  - Fieldwork educators with limited knowledge of pedagogical processes and resources
  - Clinicians with limited awareness of evidence-based practice
- Lack of a forum in which academic fieldwork coordinators could collaboratively solve issues related to fieldwork education

The dilemma between curricula and actual practice lead to the formation of Florida Occupational Therapy Educational Consortium (FLOTEC) in 2004.

### **Objectives:**

1. To share the experiences and lessons learned.
2. Explore opportunities for enhancing fieldwork education.

### **Description/Report:**

This oral presentation addresses the rationale, purpose, and benefits of an organized, collaborative fieldwork education consortium; its impact on the quality of the fieldwork experiences of the occupational therapy and occupational therapy assistant students; and its availability as a resource to academic researchers and clinicians.

### **Results/Discussion:**

Benefits of forming a consortium include:

- 1. A source of support, consultation, and networking for members
- 2. Access to affordable resources for clinicians
- 3. Close relationship between the schools and local clinicians.
- 4. Partnership and networking with national and international organizations

### **Conclusion:**

Ideally, an effective fieldwork experience matches the student's learning outcomes with the performance expectations. The goal is to move the student to a desired level of competence, to increase independent behaviors, or to improve skill performance (Crist, 2007).

Organizing academic institutions into regional consortia is a viable mechanism for enhancement of fieldwork educator's roles, improvement of student's performance, and exploration of research opportunities.

**Contribution to the practice /evidence base of occupational therapy:**

- Enhancement of quality of fieldwork education through organized collaboration