

Tools to facilitate occupational goal setting with young children

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Introduction: A critical step in the occupational therapy process is goal setting. As the therapist and client(s) move from assessment and analysis of the client's occupational strengths and needs into intervention, the desired outcomes of therapy should be clearly articulated. In order to practice using a client- or family-centred approach, the occupational goals must come from the client and family. Goals need to be set by the client, not for the client. However, goal setting with young children can be challenging as it requires a degree of abstract reasoning that may be beyond some children's developmental level. Fortunately, several tools have been developed over the past few years that can facilitate goal setting with children.

Objectives: This poster will review and critique five measures that can be used with young children and families to establish occupational goals within a family-centred practice model.

Description: Five occupational goal setting tools will be reviewed: the Perceived Efficacy and Goal Setting system, the Child Occupational Self-Assessment, the Preferences for Activities of Children, the Paediatric Activity Card Sort and the Preschool Activity Card Sort. Each of these tools has been specifically designed for use with children. They include cards, drawings or photographs to be used in a self assessment process. Some of the tools have an explicit goal setting process as part of the measure. Parallel tools are also available for caregivers and teachers with some of the measures. The tools will be described and compared; their development, and psychometric properties reviewed, and clinical applications highlighted.

Discussion: Goal setting can have a powerful impact on the outcome of therapy. Research evidence shows that explicit, challenging goals can enhance and sustain motivation and lead to improved levels of performance. Explicit, collaborative goal setting between children, family members and therapists within the occupational therapy process is a critical component of a family-centred approach to therapy.

Conclusions: The tools reviewed make it possible to engage young children in collaborative goal setting.

Contribution: Use of these tools can facilitate the goal setting process and can be important additions to an occupation-based, family-centred therapist's repertoire.