

Early Intervention Through an Interdisciplinary Lens

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OTs in Early Intervention

Occupational therapy (OT) practitioners work with children birth–3 and their families to develop family-centered goals. They provide education, consultation, and direct interventions in natural environments (home, daycare, community) to address developmental and occupational performance needs.

Choosing Interventions Wisely

The American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) Choosing Wisely initiative encourages occupational therapists (OTs) to complete an occupational profile and collaborate with families before beginning intervention. Sensory-based interventions (weighted vests, sensory diets, etc.) should only be used when evaluation data supports sensory processing challenges.

Evidence-Based Sensory Interventions

| Intervention | Purpose & Findings | Evidence Source |
|--------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Qigong Sensory Training (QST) | Touch-based, Chinese-medicine-inspired program for autism; improves sensory processing and self-regulation. | Froelicher et al., 2021 |
| Therapeutic Brushing & Weighted Vests | Conflicting evidence; use only if supported by evaluation data. | Froelicher et al., 2021 |
| MealSense © | Parent-training program for sensory-based feeding issues in ASD; supports family self-efficacy. | Trewin et al., 2022 |
| Tactile Play & SOS Feeding | Teletherapy and play-based tactile activities help desensitize children to textures and increase food acceptance. | Hawkins et al., 2021–2022 |

Interprofessional Collaboration

Interprofessional Education (IPE) occurs when professionals learn about, from, and with each other to enhance collaboration, while Interprofessional Practice (IPP) involves professionals working together with families to deliver coordinated care. This collaboration improves outcomes, increases communication, and strengthens multidisciplinary teamwork.

Telehealth Collaboration Models:

- Hybrid – One therapist onsite, another virtual; both engage actively.
- Fully Virtual – Therapists collaborate before the session to plan shared goals and structure.
- Observation – One therapist leads while another observes to gain cross-discipline insights.

Therapy Bag for Interdisciplinary Goals

| Item | OT Focus | SLP/PT Integration |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| Paint | Fine & visual-motor skills in standing position | Vocabulary (colors, textures), sensory play |
| Play Dough/Clay | Strength, grasp, bilateral coordination | Descriptive language, tactile exploration |
| Blocks | Fine motor, planning, balance | Turn-taking, spatial language, gross motor play |
| Books | Bilateral coordination, visual perception | Literacy, language expansion, movement imitation |

References

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