

# Considerations for Educationally Relevant Therapy (CERT) Form Training Tool



## CERT Tool for Occupational Therapy and Physical Therapy

Florida Department of Education

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This publication is produced through the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (BEESS) Resource and Information Center, Division of K-12 Public Schools, Florida Department of Education (FDOE), and is available online at <http://www.fldoe.org/academics/exceptional-student-edu/related-services/occupational-physical-therapy-ot-pt-as.stm>. For information on available resources, contact the BEESS Resource and Information Center (BRIC).

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## **Acknowledgements**

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The CERT Tool was developed with the assistance of school-based occupational and physical therapists, educators, administrators, parents, and parent advocacy groups throughout the state of Florida.

## General Information

The Considerations for Educationally Relevant Therapy (CERT) Tool was developed to assist occupational therapists (OTs) and physical therapists (PTs) working in the educational environment in determining the need for educationally relevant therapy in the schools. The CERT Tool is not an evaluation or assessment instrument; it is a summary of educational considerations based on a review of student records, evaluations, observations, parent and teacher information, and other data.

According to section 300.34 of Title 34, Code of Federal Regulations (34 CFR §300.34), the role of a related service, such as occupational or physical therapy, is to enable the student to benefit from special education in order to receive a free appropriate public education. The OT or PT, or both, along with the individual educational plan (IEP) team, determine the need for educationally relevant therapy according to Rule 6A-6.03024, Florida Administrative Code, Provision of Occupational or Physical Therapy to Exceptional Students as a Related Service. The CERT Tool can also be used to assist Educational Plan (EP) teams and Section 504 plan teams to assist in determining the need for educationally relevant therapy in schools. The determination of the need for related services should not be made solely on the results of the CERT Tool. Use of the CERT Tool is not a requirement of the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (BEESS) but is made available to help teams when planning services for exceptional education students in Florida, including gifted students and students with Section 504 Accommodations Plans.

School-based services provided by OTs and PTs are based on educational relevance or impact on academic performance. The functional skills a student needs to perform in the educational setting are dependent on a variety of factors, including the student's exceptionality; present level of functioning; educational services; and overall developmental, cognitive and academic abilities. If a student is unable to complete appropriate instructional activities, assistance must be provided with the ultimate goal always focusing on student independence and the attainment of educational goals. Medical therapy concerns alone such as improving range of motion, strengthening, or preventing contractures may affect a student's ability to accomplish the educational goals, but unless these concerns cause a direct educational impact should not be considered educationally relevant goals. Likewise, sensory processing deficits, attention deficits or orthopedic impairments are not reasons, in themselves, to provide therapy services. The impairment must be linked to the student's inability to achieve educational goals and objectives on the IEP, EP or Section 504 plan.

Therapy in the educational environment should be viewed as a continuum of services that encompasses a variety of service-delivery models and intervention strategies. Research has shown that interventions embedded in class routines using functional life skills increase the achievement of goals and the motivation needed for participation in the general education curriculum. The continuum should be flexible to accommodate a student's changing needs. The knowledge and expertise of an OT or PT can be utilized to determine and design intervention strategies that can be integrated into a student's daily routine and implemented by school-based personnel. The student's needs may

vary from year to year and are dependent on multiple factors, including the student's present level of performance, overall development and educational program.

The CERT Tool outlines a student's need for educationally relevant therapy as determined by the school-based therapist in collaboration with the IEP, EP or Section 504 team. Academic goals and objectives can be written for each student, integrating occupational or physical therapy goals under the appropriate educational domain, such as independent functioning. These goals are reviewed by the team annually. The annual review of these goals will determine the necessity for changes in, e.g., service type, duration and intensity. Such reviews will guide the necessity for continuing, altering or discontinuing the related service. The CERT Tool may be a valuable tool contributing to this discussion or assisting in the consensus of the team.

## **Summary Sheet**

The CERT Tool contains the Occupational and Physical Therapy Summary Sheet, which includes information from the Student Profile, the student's priority educational needs and goals and objectives, information from the Therapy Profile, and Recommendation for Therapy Services. Information from the Student Profile and Therapy Profile is recorded on the Summary Sheet in the appropriate sections.

## **Completing the CERT Tool**

The CERT Tool involves a two-step process. The first part of the process—completion of the Student Profile—occurs before the team meeting, at the conclusion of the initial evaluation, and during any re-evaluation. The second part of the process—completion of the Therapy Profile and the Recommendation for Therapy Services—occurs at the IEP, EP or Section 504 team meeting. Remember, the team members, together, determine whether the expertise and intervention of an OT or PT is needed.

If the student has been evaluated by an OT and a PT, then each therapist should complete a separate CERT Tool, filling in all sections based on their specific discipline and expertise.

The CERT Tool is completed using multiple sources of information, including the results of student assessments as defined in section 468.203 or 486.021, Florida Statutes (F.S.), observations of the student in various educational settings, interviews with teachers and parents, and other relevant student records.

## **Student Profile**

The Student Profile describes student performance in five areas of school-related functions: personal care, mobility, gross motor, fine motor and visual motor, and sensory processing. Within each area, there is a continuum based on student ability.

The Student Profile is completed by school-based therapists prior to the IEP, EP or Section 504 team meeting using information obtained from student records, evaluations, observations, parent and teacher information, and other data, along with the therapist's professional knowledge.

For each of the five areas of the Student Profile, the CERT Tool contains a description of four levels (1-4) of student ability along a continuum. The therapist should thoroughly read each paragraph before choosing the level that best describes the student's abilities and current degree of support. The description does not have to match the student completely in order to be selected; rather, the score should reflect the best description of the overall functional ability of the student in that category. The therapist interprets the descriptors within the context of the student's educational environment.

A double asterisk (\*\*) indicates that the student's needs are being addressed through the classroom curriculum or other existing services—including assistance by school staff—and no additional services are necessary.

The points from each of the five areas in the Student Profile are then recorded in the Student Profile section on the Summary Sheet. The points are added together and the total score is recorded in the appropriate box. Specific evaluation tools should be noted in the Sources of Information and Additional Comments section. The therapist completing the Student Profile should sign and date this section, ensuring that no sections are left blank.

The following subsections give more detail regarding the five areas addressed in the Student Profile section.

### **Personal Care**

Personal care refers to the management of personal needs and equipment within the educational environment. Examples of personal care include the following:

- Obtaining food from the cafeteria or lunch box,
- Use of utensils for eating,
- Dressing and undressing,
- Toileting, and
- Washing hands.

### **Mobility**

Mobility refers to safe and adequate movement with or without equipment or devices. Examples of mobility include the following:

- Boarding, riding or exiting a school bus;
- Ascending or descending stairs; and
- Maneuvering throughout the school campus or other places in the community in a safe and efficient manner, which may involve the following:
  - Even and uneven surfaces with or without assistance devices,
  - Carrying school materials such as a backpack or a lunch tray,
  - Opening and closing doors,
  - Transferring to and from the floor,
  - Use of chairs or toilet seats, and
  - Accessing age-appropriate playground equipment.

## **Gross Motor**

Gross motor skills are developmental motor skills, positioning equipment, and static and dynamic balance needed to participate in the educational environment. Examples of gross motor skills include the following:

- Changing or maintaining appropriate positioning,
- Static and dynamic sitting balance,
- Static and dynamic standing balance,
- Participation in physical education activities, and
- Bilateral integration and coordination.

## **Fine Motor and Visual Motor**

Fine motor and visual motor skills include visual perception, visual motor and fine motor skills that are needed to manipulate and manage materials within the educational environment. Examples of fine and visual motor skills include the following:

- Grasping and the use of tools such as writing instruments, utensils and scissors;
- Manipulation of objects;
- Management of fasteners such as buttons, snaps and zippers;
- Coordinated bilateral hand use; and
- Visual-motor integration or eye-hand coordination.

## **Sensory Processing**

Sensory processing refers to body awareness and sense of movement, sensory perception, exploration and interaction with others during play and work activities within the student's educational environment. Sensory processing deficits may be observed in situations where the student is asked to do the following:

- Explore various stimuli by touching or smelling,
- Walk in line,
- Play with other students,
- Tolerate sounds, and
- Tolerate movement.

## **Student's Priority Educational Needs and Goals and Objectives**

At the IEP, EP or Section 504 team meeting, the team discusses the student's priority educational needs, goals and objectives. Based upon the student's goals and objectives, as determined by the team, the team then determines if the student's goals and objectives require the support of an OT or a PT. At this time, the therapist records the student's priority educational needs and educational goals and objectives that require the support of an OT or a PT on the Summary Sheet.

## Therapy Profile

The Therapy Profile describes factors in five areas that commonly influence the effectiveness of therapy services. For each of the five areas of the Therapy Profile, the CERT Tool contains a description of four levels (1-4) to choose from. During the IEP, EP or Section 504 team meeting, the OT or PT will complete the Therapy Profile section based on the input of the team. Having reviewed the student's record, the therapist should go to the team meeting knowing the number of years of educationally relevant service the student has received. Then the therapist should thoroughly read each column and choose the column that best describes the following areas:

- Number of years the student received educationally relevant therapy,
- Student's potential response to educationally relevant therapy,
- Student's learning environment,
- Therapy services to be provided to the student, and
- Support services to be provided to school staff or parents.

It is important for the entire team to provide input for the completion of the Therapy Profile. The points from each of the five areas are recorded in the Therapy Profile section. The Sources of Information and Additional Comments section should include parent and teacher input and other information shared at the team meeting.

The points from each of the five areas in the Therapy Profile are then recorded in the Therapy Profile section on the Summary Sheet. The points are added together and the total score is recorded in the appropriate box. In the Sources of Information and Additional Comments section, the therapist should include parent and teacher input and other information shared at the team meeting. The therapist completing the Therapy Profile should sign and date this section, ensuring that no sections are left blank.

The following subsections give more detail regarding the five areas addressed in the Therapy Profile section.

### **Number of Years the Student Received Educationally Relevant Therapy**

The therapy must be educationally relevant and provided in the school setting to count in the total number of the years the student has received therapy.

### **Student's Potential Response to Educationally Relevant Therapy**

This category is used to determine the student's potential response, consider the student's current performance level, and determine if therapy services are needed to support the student's goals and objectives

### **Student's Learning Environment**

The student's learning environment includes information about the student's current placement, the need for community-based instruction with or without modifications or accommodations required, and any recommended assistive technology.

## **Therapy Services to be Provided to the Student**

The IEP, EP or Section 504 team should consider the amount of support needed to meet the student's educational goals, recognizing that no one service delivery model is better than another; rather, therapy services are a continuum. The team must keep in mind that related services are only provided if the student needs these services to benefit from special education.

## **Support Services to be Provided to School Staff or Parents**

Support services to be provided to school staff or parents include the amount of training needed for teachers or parents to follow through on the student's educational program and whether trained school personnel can assist with adaptive equipment and techniques throughout the school day.

## **Recommendation for Therapy Services**

Based on the student's priority educational needs, goals and objectives, the IEP, EP or Section 504 team should then determine if the expertise and intervention of an OT or a PT is needed.

The grid at the bottom of the CERT Tool is designed to assist in determining if therapy services are indicated and, if they are, the frequency at which therapy should be considered by the team. Using the score derived from the Student Profile section, place an X over the range that contains the student's score in the top row of the grid. Using the score derived from the Therapy Profile section, place an X over the range that contains the student's score in the first column of the grid.

Draw a line down from the Student Profile score and across from the Therapy Profile score. The point where the lines intersect indicates what the CERT Tool suggests is a recommended frequency of therapy. The following are examples for the therapist to use as a guide in interpreting the scoring grid:

- Services are not indicated when the student is self-reliant and functional in the educational environment or the student's needs are addressed by classroom curriculum or other existing services, which may include any assistance provided by school staff.
- Periodic services may include documented environmental or equipment modifications and training or consultation with parents and school staff.
- Regular services may include specific therapeutic strategies, environmental or equipment modifications, and training or collaboration with parents and school staff.
- Intensive services may include intensive therapeutic strategies, multiple environmental or equipment modifications, and training of parents and school staff.

The IEP, EP or Section 504 team proceeds with a Recommendation for Therapy Services. Comments should be noted if the professional judgement of the therapist differs from the team's recommendation or there is a discrepancy in the therapist's

judgement and the results of the CERT Tool. Therapy recommendations are a team decision and this tool is only a guide to help determine the need and frequency for educationally relevant therapy.

If both an OT and a PT have evaluated the student, each school-based therapist, based on the area of expertise, should complete all sections of the CERT Tool on separate forms. The therapists who attend the IEP, EP or Section 504 team meeting must sign this section.

## Considerations for Educationally Relevant Therapy Tool

### OCCUPATIONAL AND PHYSICAL THERAPY SUMMARY SHEET

Student: \_\_\_\_\_ D.O.B.: \_\_\_\_\_ School District: \_\_\_\_\_  
 ESE Program: \_\_\_\_\_ Related Services:  Occupational Therapy  Physical Therapy

	Points	Sources of Information and Additional Comments
<b>Student Profile</b>	Personal Care	
	Mobility	
	Gross Motor	
	Fine Motor and Visual Motor	
	Sensory Processing	
	<b>Total Points:</b>	

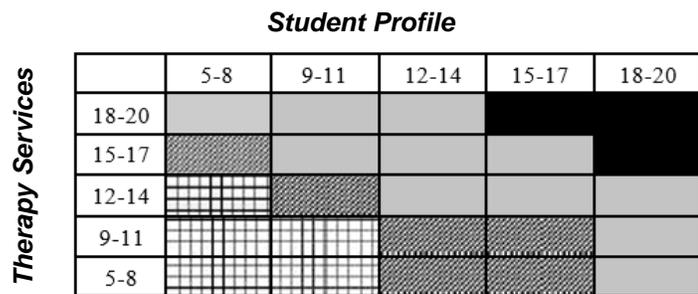
***To be completed at the team meeting***

According to 34 CFR §300.34, related services such as occupational and physical therapy are provided to assist the student with a disability to benefit from special education. The student's priority educational needs, goals and objectives that require the support of an occupational therapist or physical therapist are: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

	Points	Sources of Information and Additional Comments
<b>Therapy Profile</b>	Number of Years the Student Received Educationally Relevant Therapy	
	Student's Potential Response to Educationally Relevant Therapy	
	Student's Learning Environment	
	Therapy Services to be Provided to the Student	
	Support Services to be Provided to School Staff or Parents	
	<b>Total Points:</b>	



**Recommendation for Therapy Services**

Place an **X** on the horizontal axis to reflect the score on the Student Profile. Place an **X** on the vertical axis to reflect the score on the Therapy Profile. The point where the axes intersect indicates a recommended frequency of therapy.

\_\_\_\_\_ Occupational therapy is indicated.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Physical therapy is indicated.

The recommended frequency of therapy is:

\_\_\_ periodic. \_\_\_ regular. \_\_\_ intensive.

**The team recommendation is:**  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Occupational therapy is not indicated.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Physical therapy is not indicated.

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Therapist Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Therapist Name

## Student Profile

<b>Personal Care</b> – management of personal needs and equipment within the educational environment			
1	2	3	4
<p>Student demonstrates adequate dressing and undressing, hygiene, self-feeding skills, or oral motor skills with or without present equipment or devices.</p> <p>Student demonstrates adequate personal care skills using equipment/devices.</p> <p>**</p>	<p>Student requires supervision or prompts for dressing and undressing, hygiene, self-feeding or oral motor skills.</p> <p>Student requires supervision or prompts to use personal care equipment/devices.</p>	<p>Student requires physical assistance or specific strategies for dressing and undressing, hygiene, self-feeding, or oral motor skills.</p> <p>Student requires multiple equipment or devices and needs physical assistance.</p>	<p>Student requires intensive training by therapist to facilitate emerging dressing and undressing, hygiene, self-feeding, or oral motor skills.</p> <p>Student requires multiple equipment or devices and needs intensive training by therapist in use of devices.</p>
<b>Mobility</b> – safe and adequate movement (e.g., transfers, transitions between positions or locations, and the ability to navigate architectural barriers) within the educational environment			
1	2	3	4
<p>Student demonstrates adequate mobility with present equipment or devices.</p> <p>Student demonstrates adequate mobility without equipment or devices.</p> <p>Student demonstrates adequate transfer and transition skills.</p> <p>**</p>	<p>Student uses equipment or devices for mobility with supervision or prompts.</p> <p>Student requires supervision or prompts for safe and adequate mobility.</p> <p>Student requires supervision or prompts to complete transitions and transfers.</p>	<p>Student requires physical assistance or specific strategies to use equipment for mobility.</p> <p>Student requires physical assistance or specific strategies for safe and adequate mobility.</p> <p>Student requires physical assistance or specific strategies to complete transitions and transfers.</p>	<p>Student requires intensive training by therapist in specific strategies for new equipment.</p> <p>Student requires intensive training by therapist to demonstrate emerging mobility skills.</p> <p>Student requires intensive training by therapist to demonstrate emerging transition and transfer skills.</p>
<b>Gross Motor</b> – developmental motor skills, positioning equipment and static and dynamic balance needed to participate within the educational environment			
1	2	3	4
<p>Student can assume, maintain or change positions needed for participation.</p> <p>Student demonstrates adequate gross motor skills needed for participation.</p> <p>Student demonstrates adequate use of equipment and positioning devices for gross motor skills.</p>	<p>Student requires supervision or prompts to assume, maintain or change positions.</p> <p>Student requires supervision or prompts to perform gross motor skills.</p> <p>Student requires supervision or prompts to use equipment and positioning devices for gross motor skills.</p>	<p>Student requires physical assistance or specific strategies to assume, maintain or change positions.</p> <p>Student requires physical assistance or specific strategies to perform gross motor skills.</p> <p>Student requires physical assistance or specific strategies to use equipment and positioning devices for gross motor skills.</p>	<p>Student has emerging skills and requires intensive training by therapist to assume, maintain or change positions.</p> <p>Student requires intensive training to perform gross motor skills.</p> <p>Student requires multiple trials of positioning equipment to access the educational environment.</p>

**			
<b>Fine Motor and Visual Motor</b> – visual perception, visual motor and fine motor skills needed to manipulate and manage materials within the educational environment			
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<p>Student demonstrates adequate visual perceptual, visual motor and fine motor skills.</p> <p>Student can manipulate objects, tools and adaptive devices.</p> <p>**</p>	<p>Student requires supervision or prompts to perform visual perceptual, visual motor and fine motor skills.</p> <p>Student requires supervision or prompts to manipulate objects, tools and adaptive devices.</p>	<p>Student requires physical assistance or specific strategies to perform visual perceptual, visual motor and fine motor skills.</p> <p>Student requires physical assistance or specific strategies to manipulate objects, tools and adaptive devices.</p>	<p>Student requires intensive training by therapist to perform visual perceptual, visual motor and fine motor skills.</p> <p>Student requires intensive training by therapist to demonstrate emerging manipulation of objects, tools and adaptive devices.</p>
<b>Sensory Processing</b> – body awareness and sense of movement, sensory perception, exploration, and interaction with others during play and work activities within the educational environment			
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<p>Student tolerates movement, touch, textures, sights, sounds and smells occurring in the educational environment. Student seeks appropriate sensory input.</p> <p>Student adequately uses suggested techniques for self-regulation.</p> <p>Student is able to make choices, organize, motor plan and initiate tasks.</p> <p>**</p>	<p>Student requires supervision or prompts to tolerate touch, textures, sights, sounds and smells or to seek appropriate sensory input.</p> <p>Student requires supervision or prompts to utilize suggested techniques for adequate self-regulation.</p> <p>Student requires supervision or prompts to make choices, organize, motor plan and initiate tasks.</p>	<p>Student requires physical assistance or specific strategies to tolerate movement, touch, textures, sights, sounds and smells or to seek appropriate sensory input.</p> <p>Student requires physical assistance or specific strategies to utilize suggested techniques for adequate self-regulation.</p> <p>Student requires physical assistance or specific strategies to make choices, organize, motor plan and initiate tasks.</p>	<p>Student requires intensive interventions by therapist to tolerate movement, touch, textures, sights, sounds and smells or to seek appropriate sensory input.</p> <p>Student requires intensive training by therapist to use suggested techniques for self-regulation.</p> <p>Student requires intensive training by therapist to make choices, organize, motor plan and initiate tasks.</p>

\*\* Student's needs are addressed through classroom curriculum or other existing services, which may include total assistance by school staff.

# Therapy Profile

<b>Number of Years the Student Received Educationally Relevant Therapy</b>			
1	2	3	4
More than 8 years	5 to 8 years	3 to 5 years	Less than 3 years
<b>Student's Potential Response to Educationally Relevant Therapy</b>			
1	2	3	4
Student is expected to function in the educational environment without therapy services.	Student is expected to maintain current level of performance with periodic therapy services in the educational environment.	Student is expected to make progress toward educational goals with therapy services.	Student is expected to make significant progress toward educational goals with therapy services.
<b>Student's Learning Environment</b>			
1	2	3	4
Student is able to access the learning environment with or without the use of compensatory skills or modifications.	Periodic review or modification of the student's learning environment, including community-based instruction sites, is necessary.	Regular review or modification of the student's learning environment, including community-based instruction sites, is necessary.	Extensive review or modification of the student's learning environment, including community-based instruction sites, is necessary.
<b>Therapy Services to be Provided to the Student</b>			
1	2	3	4
<p>Student does not need intervention by the therapist once suggested modifications are in place.</p> <p>Student does not need intervention by the therapist to access and benefit from special education.</p>	Student needs periodic support from the therapist to benefit from special education.	Student needs regular support from the therapist to benefit from special education.	Student needs extensive support from the therapist to benefit from special education as student's educational needs are frequently changing.
<b>Support Services to be Provided to School Staff or Parents</b>			
1	2	3	4
Staff and parents do not require therapist involvement to establish a program and select adaptive equipment, techniques or routines.	Staff and parents require periodic therapist involvement or training to establish a program and select adaptive equipment, techniques or routines.	Staff and parents require regular therapist involvement or training to establish a program and select adaptive equipment, techniques or routines.	Staff and parents require intensive therapist involvement or training to establish a program and select adaptive equipment, techniques or routines.



Florida Department of Education  
Richard Corcoran, Commissioner