

The Role of the SHSS Occupational Therapist in Prescribing Computer Hardware/Peripherals/Software for SEA Funding

The following document has been designed to encapsulate the involvement of the School Health Support Services Occupational Therapist (OT) across the South West area. This involves a number of different school boards and while the practice itself does not vary a lot between areas, the terminology does. For the purposes of this document, any school personnel will be identified as School Team (this may involve any of the following: Classroom Teacher, Principal, Special Education Resource Teacher or SERT, LST/SPST, LRT, Regional Special Education Consultant, Learning Coordinator-Special Education/Teacher Liaison).

1. If a student is eligible to receive occupational therapy services for functional motor deficits from the South West Community Care Access Centre through the School Health program, the OT may if requested complete an assessment to support the student's need for a computer or other related equipment to compensate for a motor impairment that is significantly limiting productivity/participation at school. A SEA Equipment claim would require that the assessment state clearly that the computer is essential for the student to access the curriculum. It is the school board's responsibility to make equipment determination in the case when a student only requires equipment through SEA funding and does not require other therapeutic interventions.
2. If the student does not have the potential to use a regular keyboard (with or without a key guard) due to their physical disability, the OT will recommend a referral to Augmentative Communication Services at Thames Valley Children's Centre for assessment regarding equipment for communication needs. Recommendations for SEA funded equipment may be made in consultation with TVCC Augmentative Communication Service.
3. If the student has the potential to use a regular keyboard, the OT will complete the assessment and write a SHSS Consultation Report that may include the following information:
 - Activities/exercises to improve fine motor skills to a level suitable for some type of keyboarding that will increase productivity (increase speed, volume and legibility of recorded communication)
 - Suggestions regarding different approaches to keyboarding e.g. one-handed or two-fingered
 - Software and peripherals that can be used as adjuncts to a regular keyboard to access a computer e.g. enhanced keyboards, switches, touch screens
4. If there is no computer available for the student's use, the OT will consult with the School Team about the possibility of submitting an Equipment Request under SEA claim. This discussion should take place prior to any discussions about funding with the parent/guardians in order to prevent the establishment of unrealistic expectations in the parents.
5. If the School Team (must include appropriate level of special education personnel depending on school board policy) and OT agrees that a computer is appropriate, the School Team will complete an Equipment Request Form for computer hardware and associated peripherals and access software (software that modifies various computer functions for easier use by the student) with input from the OT. This input will include a supporting letter signed by the OT. It is recommended that the OT and school explore possible equipment available in inventory prior to exploring a SEA claim. In order for a SEA claim to be made for a computer, peripherals or software, the following criteria must be met:

- The student has an identified motor impairment that significantly limits classroom productivity and participation and the computer will be the most effective means for the student to output knowledge
- The student will require the ongoing use of the computer to access the curriculum
- The computer will be a primary tool for productivity in classroom work

If the student does not meet these criteria, the school will be referred back to the School Team (likely the special education person within the school) who can direct them to appropriate board personnel for direction.

6. In developing the Equipment Request, the OT and the School Team will need to work collaboratively to ensure that the computer can be used to maximum potential by the student in his/her educational program:

The Occupational Therapist Should:	The School Team Should:
Identify the computer hardware required.	Identify & arrange for educational software to be purchased/provided that will be compatible with the hardware, peripherals & access software the OT is prescribing.
Identify required associated/specialized peripherals: scanners, switches, etc.	Arrange for the setup of the computer & associated peripherals upon their arrival at the school & installation of all software (other than access software) on the computer for the student's use.
Identify software required to access computer/peripheral functions.	Arrange for ongoing maintenance and replacement of the computer system as required.
Identify any special furniture required for the student to use the computer: desk, chair, transport cart, etc.	Arrange for the transport of the computer & all related equipment to a new classroom or new school to which the child is transferring.
Provide the initial consultation when appropriate in the use of the specialized peripherals & access software to the student & any school personnel who will be assisting the student on the computer.	Ensure that current & future school personnel who work with the student know how to use the computer hardware/software & the educational software.

7. The OT and the School Team will review the above requirements prior to submitting the final request. The appropriate school personnel must sign the final Equipment Request prior to submission. The OT's supporting letter and report(s) may be used to support the request.