

O&P Fact Sheet

Orthotics and Prosthetics (O&P) is the evaluation, fabrication and custom fitting of orthopedic braces and artificial limbs.



Careers

- ◆ An orthotist is an allied health professional specifically trained and educated to provide custom-designed orthoses (external orthopedic braces) and related patient care.
- ◆ A prosthetist is an allied health professional specifically trained and educated to provide or manage the provision of a custom-designed external prostheses (artificial limbs) and related patient care.
- ◆ An orthotist/prosthetist is an allied health professional who is trained to custom make and fit both orthoses and prostheses (orthopedic braces and artificial limbs).
- ◆ An O&P assistant supports the O&P practitioner. Under their guidance and supervision, the assistant may perform O&P procedures and related tasks in the management of patients. The assistant also fabricates, repairs and maintains devices to provide maximum fit, function and cosmesis.
- ◆ An orthotic fitter is trained and qualified to participate in the fitting and delivery of pre-fabricated orthotic devices and/or soft goods such as trusses, pressure gradient hose and some cervical, spinal, upper and lower extremity orthoses.
- ◆ A mastectomy fitter is trained and qualified to participate in the fitting and delivery of breast prostheses and mastectomy products and services.
- ◆ An O&P technician is an individual who supports the O&P practitioner by providing the technical implementation tasks associated with the support of patient care. Under practitioner supervision and consultation, the technician fabricates, repairs and maintains the devices.
- ◆ O&P professionals work in a variety of settings including: private practice, hospitals, rehabilitation facilities, specialty clinics, home health settings, and nursing homes.
- ◆ Currently 100 percent of O&P program graduates find employment and most choose to make it a lifelong profession.

Skills & Interests

- ◆ O&P combines art, science, technology and creativity and offers the opportunity to build lifelong relationships with patients.
- ◆ The ideal candidate possesses strong interpersonal skills, an aptitude for math and science and the ability to problem solve.

Educational Pathways

- ◆ The O&P practitioner has the option of a baccalaureate program, a post-baccalaureate certificate program **OR** a master's program. Most options then require a one-year residency per discipline. *Note: There is a movement to transition the entry-level education for O&P to a master's level program by the year 2010.*
- ◆ The O&P Assistant needs to complete an assistant education program **OR** work under the supervision of an O&P practitioner for three years.
- ◆ The Orthotic Fitter can be licensed or certified, complete an orthotic fitter education program **OR** work under the supervision of an O&P practitioner for one to two years (1,900-3,800 hours).
- ◆ The Mastectomy Fitter can complete a mastectomy fitter education program along with 500 hours of experience **OR** work under the supervision of an O&P practitioner for one to two years (1,900-3,800 hours).
- ◆ The O&P technician must attain a high school diploma or GED **AND** a formal technician training certificate from an accredited program **OR** accrue two years of qualified experience under the supervision of a certified practitioner or registered technician.