

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5034

As of January 29, 2015

Title: An act relating to referral of medical cases to occupational therapists.

Brief Description: Concerning referral of medical cases to occupational therapists.

Sponsors: Senators Habib and King.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Health Care: 1/29/15.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH CARE

Staff: Evan Klein (786-7483)

Background: Occupational Therapy. Occupational therapy is the scientifically based use of purposeful activity with individuals who are limited by physical injury or illness, psychosocial dysfunction, developmental or learning disabilities, or the aging process in order to maximize independence, prevent disability, and maintain health.

Occupational Therapists (OT) may evaluate, treat, and consult patients. Occupational therapy services include but are not limited to:

- using activities and exercises to enhance neurodevelopmental, cognitive, perceptual motor, sensory, integrative, and psychomotor functioning;
- administering and interpreting tests;
- teaching daily living skills;
- developing prevocational skills and play, and avocational capabilities;
- designing, fabricating, or applying selected orthotic and prosthetic devices;
- wound care management; and
- adapting environments for persons with disabilities.

After evaluating a patient, if an OT finds that a case is medical in nature, the OT must refer the case to a physician if appropriate medical direction is lacking. Treatment by an OT of a medical case may take place only upon the referral of a physician, osteopathic physician, podiatric physician and surgeon, naturopath, chiropractor, physician assistant, psychologist, or advanced registered nurse practitioner licensed to practice in Washington.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Optometry. Optometry is the practice of examining the human eye, the examination and ascertaining of any defects of the human vision, and the analysis of the process of vision. The practice of optometry includes the use of diagnostic instruments, prescription and fitting of lenses, visual therapy, analysis of the visual system, and the adaptation of prosthetic eyes.

Summary of Bill: Treatment by an OT of a medical case may take place upon the referral of optometrists.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: OTs provide incredible support to those with visual impairments. Forty-six other states allow optometrists to refer patients to OTs. Allowing optometrist referrals would allow patients to be referred directly to an OT without the time-consuming and costly step of going to a physician for a referral. OTs trained in low vision are relied on by optometrists to facilitate the education and training in the use of low-vision devices. OTs are also a great resource when vision loss impacts independence in daily life.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Habib, prime sponsor; Kate White Tudor, WA OT Assn.; Mary Jepsen, Certified Low Vision Specialist; Brad Tower, WA Assn. of Optometric Physicians.