**Steps to Starting a Fieldwork Program**

The steps to starting a fieldwork program are outlined below. Do not feel that you need to have an elaborate program in place before you accept your first student. Start with the basics and add as you learn from both the students and staff who participate in the fieldwork program.

1. **Analyze Your Facility**

Conduct an analysis of your facility. Does your facility's mission and philosophy support the training of future practitioners? Discuss the formation of a student program with the OT practitioners to determine how receptive they are to participating in a fieldwork program. Review your OT program - can it provide a student with the number of appropriate clients and learning opportunities needed to develop entry-level skills?

Gaining support of your facility's management staff is vital for a successful fieldwork program. Arrange a time to meet with your administrator with the sole purpose of discussing the student program. Come prepared with a plan for the fieldwork program and a list of the benefits that a student program can bring to your facility. Take the time to understand the issues that management faces and work together on addressing any areas of concern.
2. **Collaboration With the Academic Program(s)**

In the preliminary stages of developing a fieldwork program, it is helpful to contact at least one academic program. The academic fieldwork coordinator can provide you with guidance and resource material needed to start a student program.

The academic programs with which you contract will provide information on their specific OT/OTA program. This information may include the program's fieldwork objectives, course syllabi, program curricula, and other related information.

Active collaboration between the fieldwork educator and the academic fieldwork coordinator should be ongoing since it is an essential component of a positive fieldwork experience.
3. **The Fieldwork Contract or Letter of Agreement**

The contract or letter of agreement serves as a legal document between the fieldwork site and the academic program. The contract should state the rights, fieldwork requirements, and obligations of the academic program, fieldwork site, and students. A written agreement is required for all Fieldwork Level I and II placements. The academic program will have a standard contract which you can use. Be sure to have your facility's legal counsel review the document before it is signed.

Begin this step early, as it may involve several exchanges between both legal counsels of the revised contract.
4. **Develop Student Resources**

You can establish the foundation of your fieldwork program by completing the following student resources:
	1. Fieldwork Data Form - This form describes your fieldwork program to the academic fieldwork coordinator and the student. The completed form should be sent to each academic program with which you have a contract.
	2. Fieldwork Objectives - These are the objectives that a student must achieve to successfully complete the fieldwork placement.
	 **Level I Fieldwork - Objectives are usually provided by the academic program.

	Level II Fieldwork - Each fieldwork site must develop its site specific behavioral objectives reflecting the entry-level competencies that the student is required to achieve by the end of the affiliation. These objectives serve to guide the student through sequential learning activities that lead to entry-level competency.**

	Some fieldwork programs correlate their objectives with AOTA's fieldwork evaluations. Other fieldwork programs write weekly objectives that cumulate in entry-level skills. Writing the learning objectives will prove to be invaluable to both students and fieldwork educators. Obtain examples of objectives from an academic fieldwork coordinator or your regional fieldwork consultant.
	3. Fieldwork Student Manual - The manual will serve as a valuable resource for students and fieldwork educators. See paper titled "Recommended Content for A Student Fieldwork Manual."
	4. Schedule of Weekly Activities - Develop a list of learning activities and /or assignments that will guide a student developmentally toward the acquisition of entry-level skills. Some fieldwork programs have a week by week outline with increasing responsibilities, learning activities, and assignments that students must successfully complete.
	5. Prepare an Orientation - A thorough orientation provides students with the knowledge and understanding needed for a successful fieldwork experience. Topics can include: an overview of the fieldwork site and its fieldwork program, safety procedures, specific evaluation or treatment interventions utilized by the facility, documentation, equipment use, etc. Try to make the sessions as participatory as possible with presentations made by different staff members or experienced students.

Don't spend excess time "reinventing the wheel." Contact your academic fieldwork coordinator or regional fieldwork consultant for examples and assistance.

- See more at: http://www.aota.org/education-careers/fieldwork/newprograms/steps.aspx#sthash.KsU5JEbV.dpuf