

MARKET SUPPLEMENT PROGRAM

Report of the Market Supplement Review Committee

Occupational Therapist

(Degree & Degree Senior)

FINAL

**Report Due Date: January 29, 2025
(Annual Review)**

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OBJECTIVE

The objective of the Market Supplement Program is to ensure that the Saskatchewan healthcare employers can attract and retain the employees required to provide appropriate health care services to the people of Saskatchewan.

This program is designed to address specific skill shortages by use of a temporary market supplement, to attract and/or retain qualified employees. The program is also designed to ensure that temporary market supplements respond to valid labour market criteria, to address recruitment and/or retention pressures.

OVERVIEW

The Market Supplement Review Committee (MSRC) reviewed updated documentation submitted in the annual review process regarding the market supplement for the Occupational Therapist classification. Occupational Therapists are members of the Health Sciences Association of Saskatchewan (HSAS). The initial market supplement report was released by the Market Supplement Review Committee on August 6, 2002 and implemented on October 16, 2002.

HSAS and SAHO are parties to a collective bargaining agreement (CBA) with a term of April 1, 2018 – March 31, 2024. The Provincial Market Supplement Program language can be found in Letter of Understanding #12 – Provincial Market Supplement Program and Letter of Understanding #13 – Determination of Market Supplement Rates, on pages 168 and 170 of the SAHO/HSAS CBA.

Role of an Occupational Therapist:

Occupational Therapists work collaboratively to enhance clients'/patients' abilities within the environments and communities in which they live and work. Using a holistic and client centered-approach, they facilitate improved functional outcomes in areas of self care, productivity and leisure for persons with physical, mental, social or developmental impairments. They may also participate in research, education, evaluation and consultation.

Qualifications:

Occupational Therapists require a Masters or degree in Science in Occupational Therapy.

There are 14 universities in Canada that offer Occupational Therapy programs. In western Canada, there are Occupational Therapy programs at the University of British Columbia, the University of Alberta and the University of Manitoba. There is no program in Saskatchewan however a new program at the University of Saskatchewan will accept students beginning in 2026-27.

ANALYSIS

The MSRC discussed the Labour Market Criteria as required by the Market Supplement Program framework.

VACANCY RATE ANALYSIS: *(Respondents were requested to provide information about the frequency and timing of vacancy occurrences {i.e. seasonal vacancies, do the vacancies always follow an event, etc.}; and to identify trends that may affect recruitment/retention efforts.)*

There were ten geographical areas that reported to the market supplement survey. Saskatoon reported overall vacancies as being moderate meaning that they may be difficult to fill and may require a greater than a standard amount of time to recruit to. Former Kelsey Trail and former Sun Country areas rated their vacancies as being significant in that vacancies are difficult to fill and they may be vacant for extended periods of time. The balance of the province reported their vacancies as being critical indicating that vacancies are either unlikely to be filled or may be vacant for extended periods of time likely more than 12 months.

Information regarding positions and vacancies is provided in the following table:

Table 1 - Occupational Therapists (Degree & Senior) – Positions as of January 2025

Classification	Number of Budgeted Positions (January 2025)		Number of Vacant Positions (January 2025)		% Vacancy	
	Full-Time	Part-Time	Full-Time	Part-Time	Full-Time	Part-Time
Degree	153	56	50	15	32.68 %	26.78 %
Degree Sr.	62	9	9	3	14.52 %	33.33 %
Total	215	64	59	18	27.44 %	28.13 %

SERVICE DELIVERY IMPACTS: *(Respondents were asked to provide information that addresses current service delivery impacts resulting from staff shortages; potential staff short term service delivery impacts; potential long term service delivery impacts; and options for alternative service delivery models.)*

Of the ten geographic areas reporting for this review, the former Sun Country and Kelsey Trail health regions identified moderate service delivery impacts in that the department provides a level of service, some routine duties are not being performed, quality of service is maintained but that problems may linger as timelines to recruit or secure alternate arrangements are beyond expectation. Seven areas noted that there service gaps were significant in that the department can only provide a basic level of service, there may be significant gaps in service and that problems persist and waiting lists are prevalent and growing. The former Five Hills area reported critical service delivery impact which means the department is not able to provide service in some instances and there is a significant impact.

There continues to be significant waitlists for outpatient services in various areas of the province. There are efforts to try and load level where appropriate across some of the geographic areas, but lack of resources continues to make that difficult. A general lack of qualified occupational therapists across the province is making recruitment exceptionally difficult. Other strategies to address service provision include the following:

- Prioritization of cases to ensure urgent and emergent care is completed;
- Increase waitlists;
- Utilization of other classifications where appropriate ie. Physiotherapists or Assistants;
- Use of overtime shifts to cover;
- Load leveling across the province where able and reorganizing services where possible;
- Advising clients to pursue private options;
- The use of Occupational Therapy Assistants and Physical Therapy Assistants to their full scope of practice;

TURNOVER RATES: *(Respondents were asked to provide local analysis of reasons for leaving and trends that may be emerging. They were also asked to provide annual turnover {loss of employees to other competitor employers} ratio to the existing staff complement {budgeted positions} in the given occupation.)*

Trends noted by respondents noted a variety of reasons which included: staff retiring, staff leaving for private practice for more flexibility and increased income, leaving for more work life balance, leaving due to workload or reduced caseloads. In addition, on a temporary basis, there are employees accessing maternity leave.

The following data is reported where known regarding turnover in the past 12 months:

Number of employees who retired from this classification – 7

Number of employees who failed their probation/trial period – 0

Number of employees who left due to family/domestic reasons – 7

Number of employees who left the organization for reasons not wage related – 3

Number of employees who left the organization for increased salary - 4

RECRUITMENT ISSUE ANALYSIS: *(Respondents were asked to provide information such as length of recruitment times; training investments; licensing issues; supply and demand issues, etc.; as well as information that would identify trends that may affect recruitment and/or retention efforts.)*

All but one area of the province indicated that their recruitment efforts were significant meaning that qualified professionals and new graduates are in great demand. One area, the former Five Hills Health Region noted their recruitment to be critical in that they have attempted exhaustive recruiting measures/initiatives and qualified professionals do not exist.

The announcement of a new program through the University of Saskatchewan is hoped to significantly assist with the recruitment of candidates but it will take time to see the results of graduates from any programs. Currently, demand is far outpacing supply and not having a school in the province is a significant barrier to recruitment as graduates from other provinces are difficult to recruit to Saskatchewan.

Other recruitment initiatives are as follows:

- Accepting students with the hope of recruiting them upon graduation;
- Word of mouth and shoulder tapping where possible;

- Attending conferences and Career Fairs to discuss opportunities i.e. Sask Therapies Leadership Conference.
- Significant advertising is done through linked in, professional associations, through trade journals and other publications
- Creation and support of a therapies working group;
- Ensuring there is a posting up continuously on various recruiting platforms i.e Health Careers;
- Increasing financial incentives to new recruits;
- Maintaining relationships with schools to proactively recruit prior to students graduating;
- Participating in early interviews and conditional offers;
- Attending various job fairs at universities in Western Canada.
- Relocation assistance.
- Educational allowances and educational days supporting lunch and learn activities.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

- SAHO and the Health Sciences Association of Saskatchewan are currently negotiating a new collective agreement as their previous agreement expired on March 31, 2024.

SALARY MARKET CONDITIONS: *(Respondents were asked to identify situations where their salary levels are lower than other employers that they would expect to recruit employees from, or other employers that recruit their employees. This may be local, provincial, regional, national or international, depending on the occupation group and traditional recruitment relationships. Cost of living considerations may or may not be appropriate to factor into market salary comparisons.)*

Table 2 – Occupational Therapist Salary Market Conditions (Degree)

Province	Job Title	Effective Date	Maximum Rate of Pay (April 1, 2023)
British Columbia	Occupational Therapist (Grade I to II Phase-In)	April 1, 2023	\$50.67
Alberta	Occupational Therapist I	April 1, 2023	\$51.80
Saskatchewan	Occupational Therapist - Degree	April 1, 2023	\$46.770
Manitoba	Occupational Therapist	April 1, 2023	\$43.380
Western Canadian Average (2023)			\$48.155

Saskatchewan Rate	\$ 46.770
Western Canadian Average	\$ 48.155
Sask from Average (\$)	\$ (1.39)
Sask from Average (%)	97.12%

Notes: Saskatchewan rates are below the Western Canadian Average

Table 2 – Occupational Therapist Salary Market Conditions (Senior)

Province	Job Title	Effective Date	Maximum Rate of Pay (April 1, 2023)
British Columbia	Occupational Therapist (Grade II & III)	April 1, 2023	\$52.17
Alberta	Occupational Therapist II	April 1, 2023	\$54.61
Saskatchewan	Occupational Therapist - Degree Senior	April 1, 2023	\$50.511
Manitoba	Clinical Service Leader - Occupational Therapy	April 1, 2023	\$49.616
Western Canadian Average (2023)			\$51.727

Saskatchewan Rate	\$ 50.511
Western Canadian Average	\$ 51.727
Sask from Average (\$)	\$ (1.22)
Sask from Average (%)	97.65%

Notes: Saskatchewan rates are below the Western Canadian Average

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Considering the labour market criteria under the provincial framework, the Market Supplement Review Committee makes the following conclusions:

- Total vacancy rates for both full and part time positions combined is above 25%.
- Service impacts occur fairly consistent in all areas of the province. A predominant them is the increase in waitlists and the need to prioritize services.
- Respondents identify that Saskatchewan graduates will not be available for some time as the program in Saskatchewan is only starting in 2026. Currently supply of grads is well below the current demand and to recruit to Saskatchewan from neighboring provinces is very difficult.
- The salary for both classifications is slightly below the western Canadian average.
- Turnover trends are varied across the province and major competitors are noted as school divisions and private practice.

Having reviewed the information as provided by respondents, and considering the labour market criteria, the Market Supplement Review Committee has determined **that an increase** should be negotiated to the current market supplement for the Occupational Therapist classification.