

Choosing a vendor: Occupational Therapy Role in Assisting Client/Family's Informed Choice

Occupational Therapists (OT) at Capital Health work in a client-centered manner. OT's often make recommendations to client/family regarding appropriate equipment needs and environmental adaptations. It is the client/family's choice where they purchase the recommended equipment or environmental adaptations. The client/family's wishes are clarified and guide the decision making process. Choosing a vendor may be a collaborative process between the therapist and the client/family. The word substitute decision maker may replace "client/family" through out this document when appropriate.

The occupational therapist must be able to communicate his/her rationale for involving a particular vendor in client care. Client consent is obtained using the principals of informed choice and vendor selection is documented in the health record using Release of Information Form or is written in the progress note section of the health record.

- [Informed Choice](#)
- [Release of Information for Funding and/or Equipment - Rehabilitation and Supportive Care Occupational Therapy Services](#)

Clients often require the occupational therapist to advocate for financial assistance on their behalf to obtain the recommended equipment. Funding agencies may choose the vendor based on equipment recommendations and quotes rather than client choice.

Professional Accountability:

College of Occupational Therapists of Nova Scotia, Article 3, g. states:

"A member shall refrain from endorsing any goods or services related to the practice of occupational therapy without having made an objective assessment of those goods and services."

Capital Health Our Promise in Action states:

"With patients and the public, we exchange information, make decisions, act together and share responsibility to improve health and well-being."

Professionals working at Capital Health provide person- centered care including:

- advocating for and empowering clients
- providing informed choice to clients or substitute decision maker
- working efficiently without compromising other key values such as informed choice
- demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness to individual client needs

Practical considerations:

Occupational therapist confirms with client/family which vendor they would like to work with, and if there are any vendors they would prefer not to work with. If the client/family

truly has no preference or client/family is requesting the therapist to choose a vendor, consider the following questions to assist with the decision making process:

- What is the proximity of vendor's location to client/family?
- Does the client have a discount at a particular vendor?
- Can vendor provide delivery and service? (E.g. rural areas, availability to trial equipment)
- Is direct billing to third party payers identified by the client as a priority?
- What has the client's previous experience been with vendor?
- What is the level of expertise of the vendor?
- Does the vendor have staff certified to do service or maintenance ("authorized dealer")?
- What is the estimated cost?

HOW TO CHOOSE A MEDICAL SUPPLIER?

Provided by: GF Strong Rehab Centre - Assistive Technology & Seating Service

Buying mobility equipment is much like buying a car. When doing so you consider the price, its reliability, the warranty, its looks, its track record and how you feel about it. You are a consumer and need to feel comfortable that the dealer you choose is going to provide you with the best service both while you are trying to decide what you need and after you have chosen to buy a piece of equipment.

The following is a list of questions you should review with potential dealers. Your OT can provide you with a list of dealers and their phone numbers. Keep track of different dealer's responses and then compare to find the one that best meets your needs. You can also ask around to find out which dealer other clients are working with and what their feedback regarding a particular dealer is.

1. What are the qualifications of the staff and of the technical support?
2. What previous experience do you have with people with my type of disability and with equipment of this type (e.g. high-end power and manual wheelchairs, specialized seating products)?
3. What types of equipment do you supply other than wheelchairs (lifts, commodes, bath seats, gloves)?
4. How long in general will deliveries take?
5. Do you have sufficient stock and staffing to be able to do equipment demonstrations in a timely fashion?
6. Will I be able to keep the demo equipment for a reasonable length of time to allow me to get a good feel for it?
7. Once I have chosen a piece of equipment will there be any extra charges beyond purchase price?
8. Once I choose a piece of equipment, will you be able to provide me with a demo model to use until my equipment comes in?
9. Do you keep parts in stock for any of the wheelchairs I might choose?

10. What is your policy in terms of maintenance and replacement of equipment?
11. What kind of warranties do you have for equipment?
12. What kind of follow-up can you provide once I have my equipment?
13. Pose a scenario: "It's Friday night, I'm planning to go out to a movie with friends and my chair breaks down. What do I do? What will you do for me? Is there an emergency number or weekend service?"
14. Is the vendor located in your geographical area, or are they able to service your area easily?

Reference/Resource:

Capital Health Ethics Support

Our Promise in Action CDHA

Occupational Therapy Professional Advisory Council (OTPAC) Position Statement –
Creation of Vendor Lists

College of Occupational Therapists of Nova Scotia (COTNS)

CDHA Website links:

[Release of Information for Funding and/or Equipment - Rehabilitation and Supportive
Care Occupational Therapy Services
Personal Directive](#)

GF Strong Website link:

GF Strong Rehab Centre-How to choose a Medical Supplier [GF Strong Rehab Centre -
Assistive Technology & Seating Service](#)