

SCHOOL-BASED VS MEDICAL-BASED THERAPY SERVICES

It can be confusing trying to determine what is educational-based versus medical-based occupational therapy.

Educational therapy focuses on interventions to improve the student's ability to learn, participate, and function in their educational setting. **School-based therapy only works on skills necessary for a student to function in school independently.** These services are more of a "top down", outcome-based, approach. Rather than rehabilitate a deficit, the therapist facilitates *access* to curricular and extracurricular activities through support. The OT may adapt and modify the environment or offer the teacher strategies to implement on a daily basis.

According to ISBE:

- Must contribute to the development, improvement, or maintenance of student's functional level within the educational environment
- School-based involves "teaming" and recommendations and decisions are made based on input from the team
- If a student needs occupational therapy to address problems but the problems do not prevent student from benefitting from the educational program, school-based therapy should not be provided.

Conversely, medical-based therapy focuses on *treatment* to alleviate or cure underlying medical issues. Therapists identify the underlying deficits of a problem and then address them through rehabilitative activities. The medical model is more of a "bottom up", remedial, approach. The therapist identifies the building blocks and attempts to repair the deficits for improved function.

Some children may qualify for therapy in a medical/rehabilitative setting but if their disability is not impeding school function, they do not require OT services.