

For resources on consultation in  
education-based therapy, see

[www.rsoi.org](http://www.rsoi.org)

*Consultation Resources*

For further information, contact:

Regional and Statewide Services for  
Students with Orthopedic Impairments

Douglas ESD

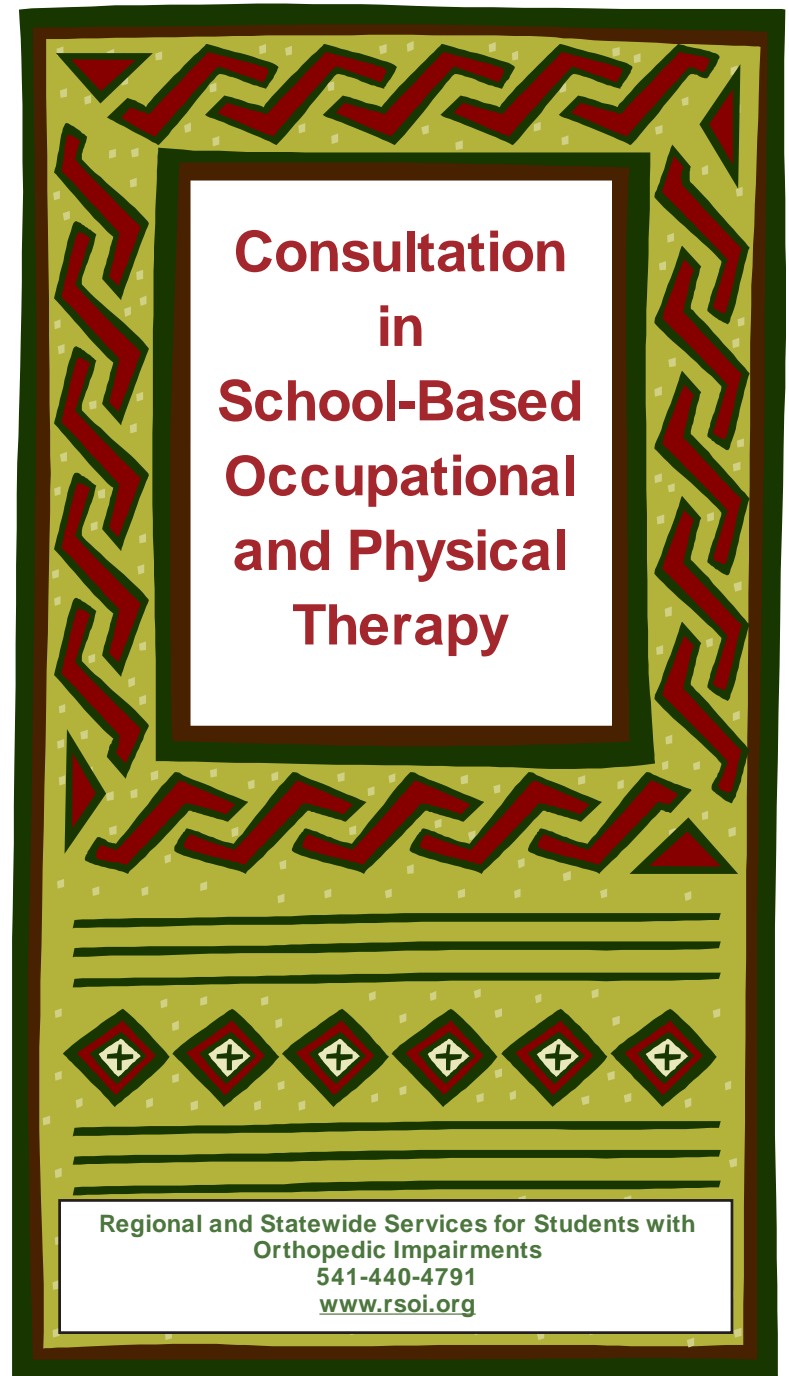
1871 NE Stephens

Roseburg, OR 97470

541-440-4791

This project is supported by a grant from the  
Cow Creek Umpqua Indian Foundation

2006



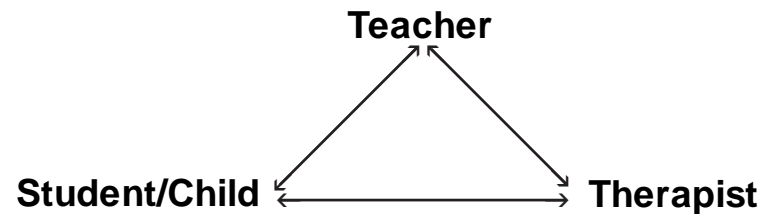
## Consultation in School-Based Occupational and Physical Therapy

### What is OT/PT Consultation in Education?

Consultation in education is a problem-solving process which takes place over a period of time and has a number of stages. During this process, the therapist assists the teacher or other school staff to maximize the student's ability to access and benefit from his or her education program. Consultation is one of a range of services a therapist can provide in the educational setting. Any consultation always involves direct evaluation and monitoring of the child.

### Educational Consultation is Different...

Consultation is not a substitute for teaching. In educational consultation the consulting therapist and the teacher join together with a focus on the student. Consultation in education is a collaborative process in which both the teacher and the therapist contribute information about the student, and both contribute to identifying the focus of concern and finding a solution.



### Scope of School Therapy Services

Therapists working in education settings may at times work directly with a student; they do other activities which augment therapy services on behalf of the student; and they provide consultation to school staff to support them in their work with the student. In general, the activities of school therapists fall under four categories. They:

- Evaluate the sensory motor functioning of students with disabilities and assist in determining service needs
- Address access to education for students with disabilities
- Address safety of students and school staff
- Help teach motor skills associated with success in school

*(Orthopedic Impairments Working Group, 2000)*

## **Why do School-based Therapists use Consultation?**

The role of the consultant is to help someone solve a problem. In education, consultation may involve training or coaching school staff to acquire new skills, so that interventions can be integrated throughout the child's day. This Integrated Model of service delivery is supported by professional organizations such as APTA (the American Physical Therapy Association) and AOTA (the American Occupational Therapy Association), as well as by research from the field.

## **When is Consultation Appropriate?**

Consultation takes place when there is an identified need for help or expertise from a therapist. When the IEP team (including the therapist) agrees that consultation from a therapist is needed, it is listed as a service on the IEP. Consultation may be one of several services provided by the therapist, or it may be the only therapy service necessary for an individual student.

## **Characteristics of Effective Consultation**

- An identified process
- Shared agreement to participate
- Clear focus definition
- Measurable outcomes for the student
- Data-driven decision-making
- Measurable outcomes for the consultation

## **The Therapist's Role in Consultation**

- Insures that each stage of the consultation process is observed
- Provides information about the student's sensory-motor issues
- Suggests options for intervention
- Helps to implement the intervention, as appropriate
- Participates to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention

## **The Teacher's Role in Consultation**

- Provides information about curriculum goals, instructional style, classroom culture and systems
- Provides information about how the student performs in educational settings
- Participates in the problem-solving process
- Helps to implement the intervention, as appropriate
- Participates to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention

## **STAGES OF CONSULTATION**

Consultation is not always sequential, but the process should include six distinct stages to insure its effectiveness:

### **Stage 1: Initiate the Consultation**

The therapist and the teacher take time to agree on a process for interaction, acknowledging that each has expertise to bring to the relationship.

### **Stage 2: Define the Issue of Concern**

The therapist and the teacher identify the focus of the consultation and agree on how it impacts the child's ability to benefit from his or her education. The conversation focuses on observable characteristics of the student and the conditions under which the issue of concern is observed.

### **Stage 3: Establish Expectations about the Consulting Relationship**

The therapist and teacher agree on their roles and those of other team members. The teacher's systems and style preferences are expressed and clarified. Limitations of the consultation are established and agreement is reached on how team members will interrelate.

### **Stage 4: Collect Information and Identify Desired Outcome**

Specific information is gathered about the student, the environment, the tasks or demands on the student and the tools or strategies already in place. The probable cause of the issue of concern is identified. A statement is developed which describes the desired student outcome in measurable terms.

### **Stage 5: Intervention**

A variety of possible interventions are considered. An intervention is selected, and an intervention plan is developed. The intervention takes place.

### **Stage 6: Evaluate the Intervention and the Consultation**

**Evaluation of the Impact of the Intervention on the Child:** The therapist and the teacher review the student performance data, evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention and either change the intervention or develop strategies to maintain the desired student outcome which has been achieved.

**Evaluation of the Consultation:** The therapist and the teacher review the goals they set for the consultation, and reach consensus on the effectiveness of the process. A decision is made to either continue the consultation, change the focus of the consultation, or to discontinue it.