

DCD Diagnosis Advocacy Information Sheet



What is Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD)?

DCD is a chronic motor skill disorder seen in children and youth, which significantly affects activities of daily living, school performance, and leisure activities.^{1,2} In order to meet DCD diagnostic criteria, the motor deficits must not be the result of any other known medical or neurological condition (such as cerebral palsy or a neurodegenerative disorder).¹

What is the occupational therapist's role in advocating for a DCD diagnosis?

One of the key roles and competencies of occupational therapists is advocating for the occupational potential, occupational performance, and occupational engagement of clients.³ Establishing a DCD diagnosis is an important first step to help a child and family receive appropriate treatment and care. If you suspect a child/client has motor coordination difficulties, having them seen by a family doctor or pediatrician is critical to ensure that the movement problems are not due to any other physical, neurological, or behavioural disorders, and to determine whether more than one disorder may be present.⁴ Although only a doctor or pediatrician (and psychologists in some jurisdictions) can make a DCD diagnosis, the occupational therapist can play a pivotal role in advocating for a diagnosis of DCD in a client.

What can the occupational therapist do to advocate for a DCD diagnosis?

The following framework (adapted from^{5,6,7}) can guide your actions:



1. Identify the issue

- ✓ Child/client with motor coordination difficulties
- ✓ Speak with parents
- ✓ Speak with daycare/preschool or classroom teacher

2. Gather the facts

OT assessment

- ✓ Complete assessment to confirm presence of motor coordination difficulties
- ✓ Determine severity of the difficulties and the impact of the motor coordination difficulties on the child's daily functioning

3. What's the message?

- ✓ Document key findings of occupational therapy assessment and observations, including how assessment findings support diagnostic criteria A and B
- ✓ Include key information from parents and teachers
- ✓ Be clear and concise

4. Build support

- ✓ Engage family to speak to family doctor or pediatrician
- ✓ Engage teacher to write letter(s) to family and doctor

5. Communicate the message

- ✓ Engage the family to speak to family doctor or pediatrician
- ✓ Ensure occupational therapy assessment results get into the hands of the doctor or pediatrician (e.g., send report with a cover letter [see template here: <http://bit.ly/2D8IDEY>] about the importance of diagnosis and/or meet in person to discuss)

6. Monitor, assess and adjust

- ✓ Follow-up with the doctor to ensure occupational therapy information was received
- ✓ Offer opportunity for discussion
- ✓ Address any requests from the physician or pediatrician

This document was prepared in March 2018 and will be updated as new evidence emerges.

References

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