



NOTA Annual Conference

April 18th, 2026

<p>Keynote Address:</p> <p>A Miracle Named Caiden</p>	<p>Nathan and Shaelyn Cudaback</p>
<p>Track 1 (morning track - Intermediate Level Course):</p> <p>Teaching, Mentoring, and Thriving: A Holistic Approach to Well-Being in OT Experiential Education</p>	<p>Nebraska Fieldwork and Doctoral Capstone Consortium</p> <p>Consortium members presenting: Leah M. Stade, OTD, MHPTT, OTR/L, Mary Smith, Ed.D, OTR/L, Stacy Smallfield, DrOT, OTR/L, BCG, FAOTA, Hannah Wieger, MOT, OTR/L, CLT, Whitney Merz, OTD, OTR/L</p> <p>Contributing authors: Kristan Pilakowski, OTD, OTR/L, BCP, Ashley Fecht, OTD, OTR/L</p>
<p>Track 2 (morning track - Intermediate Level Course):</p> <p>Empower, Restore, Thrive: Women's Health through an OT Lens</p>	<p>Marissa Ruhl, MOTR/L, CLT, LANA, CPAM</p> <p>Ella Vazquez, MOTR/L, CPAM</p>
<p>Track 3 (morning track - Beginner Level Course):</p> <p>Road Ready: Building Independence Behind the Wheel and Bridge to Independence: Occupational Therapy's Vital Role in Guiding People with Disabilities Through Transitions into Adulthood</p>	<p>Samantha Montemarano, MOT, OTR/L</p> <p>Rachel Van Robays, OTD, OTR/L</p>
<p>Track 4 (afternoon track – Intermediate Level Course):</p> <p>Your Pain Isn't Just in Your Head. It's in Your Fascia.</p>	<p>Amy Mayer OTD, OTR/L, RYT</p> <p>Lauren Erickson OTD, OTR/L, CLT</p>

Track 5 (afternoon track – Beginner Level Course): Introduction to 3D Printing for the Occupational Therapy Practitioner	Sarah Synek, OTD, OTR/L Tabatha Sorenson, OTD, OTR/L, ATP, CAPS
Track 6 (afternoon track – Intermediate Level Course): Empowering Participation: A guide to Assistive Technology design and use for Students with Complex Medical Needs	Abbie Nelson, MOT, OTR/L, BCP Noah Farho, UNMC OTD Student
FREE Student Session <i>(Friday, April 17th via zoom from 7-8pm. Please register at notaonline.org under the Conference Tab. If wanting to attend conference as well, you must register for that separately)</i> NBCOT® National Certification Exam: Information You Need to Know	Melissa Kimmerling, EdD, MOT, OTR/L

Continuing Education Sessions

The Keynote Session is an unopposed educational session. Participants may choose 1 of 3 continuing education session tracks Saturday morning and 1 of 3 continuing education session tracks Saturday afternoon. Participants cannot move between tracks and will not receive partial credit for attendance of a portion of a course. When you register, you will be required to choose your tracks. Seating is limited for each track, so register early! (Day of conference registration will be available as seating allows.)

***By registering and attending the conference in-person in Kearney, NE you will receive a code to be used on Aspire OT to view ALL recorded 2026 conference sessions for FREE to earn additional CEU's!**

**Continue to next page for conference schedule, registration information, and in-depth session information.*

Conference At-A-Glance Schedule

Friday, April 17th

NOTA Social- Watch Social Media for more info to come!

7:00pm-8:00pm

- Free Student Session (Via Zoom)

Saturday, April 18th

7:30am-8:30am

- Registration

8:30am-9:45am

- Keynote (1 CEU)
- Awards
- Gold Sponsor Recognition

9:45am-12:15pm

- Sessions (2.5 CEUs)

12:15pm-1:30pm

- Lunch Served- grab and go style

12:00pm-2:00pm

- Sponsor Booths
- Poster Session
- Raffle Prizes-must be present to win!
- Free professional headshots offered

2:00pm-4:30pm

- Sessions (2.5 CEUs)

Registration Fees

Registration for conference & membership are available online at www.notaonline.org

**Cancellation Policy: If notification of cancellation occurs prior to March 18th, 2026, refunds will be given less a \$20 administration fee.

**There will be an additional fee of \$20 when registering the day of conference.

**WEATHER POLICY: Due to the complexity involved with planning conference, any major weather-related issues that could result in a registrant being unable to attend will be evaluated on a case by case basis. A refund of *up to 50%* may be considered but is not guaranteed. The conference planning committee would review each individual case once conference is complete and any refund will be given within 30 days.

Early Bird Pricing valid until March 20th! Don't delay, register today!

Registration for conference is available online at www.notaonline.org.

Save money on your conference registration by becoming a member of the Nebraska OT Association when you register! Save over 15 % with EARLY BIRD pricing!

6 In-Person CEU hours possible *16 TOTAL CEU's with access to all courses on Aspire following conference.	EARLY BIRD Pricing *register before March 20th!	Pricing After March 20th!
OTR Member	\$185	\$220
OTR Non-Member	\$285	\$340
COTA Member	\$160	\$190
COTA Non-Member	\$235	\$280
Student Member	\$110	\$130
Student Non-Member	\$160	\$190

Keynote Session: A Miracle Named Caiden

Speakers: Nathan and Shaelyn Cudaback

Course Description:

We will be sharing our son Caiden’s miraculous story. How a 17-year-old survived a brain aneurysm rupture, all the ups and downs, and miracles along the way! We will talk about how OT, PT and Speech helped him get to where he is today!

Course Objectives:

- Understand the kind of brain aneurysm Caiden had and how it affected him.
- Understand the challenges that happen after a brain aneurysm rupture.
- Learn how OT, PT and Speech have improved his quality of life.

Track 1 – Intermediate Level Course: Teaching, Mentoring, and Thriving: A Holistic Approach to Well-Being in OT Experiential Education

Speaker Qualifications:

Nebraska Fieldwork and Doctoral Capstone Consortium

Consortium members presenting: Leah M. Stade, OTD, MHPTT, OTR/L, Mary Smith, Ed.D, OTR/L, Stacy Smallfield, DrOT, OTR/L, BCG, FAOTA, Hannah Wieger, MOT, OTR/L, CLT, Whitney Merz, OTD, OTR/L

Contributing authors: Kristan Pilakowski, OTD, OTR/L, BCP, Ashley Fecht, OTD, OTR/L

The mission of the Nebraska Fieldwork and Capstone Consortium is to foster collaborative relationships between occupational therapy and occupational therapy assistant programs and community partners to develop the highest level of experiential learning for students. This consortium strives to serve as a resource in the educational process of future occupational therapy practitioners in the state.

Course Description:

This presentation will define well-being and examine the current generation of learners. Participants will gain insight into the assumptions and contextual influences for this generation of OT students, and the impact of well-being on experiential education. Additionally, participants will engage in hands-on learning to develop well-being resources to support students within their respective practice settings and environments. Finally, participants will reflect on their own well-being and how this influences their education and mentorship of OT students in their roles as OT practitioners, Fieldwork Educators, and Doctoral Capstone Content Experts.

Course Objectives:

- Define well-being and describe its relevance to experiential education.
- Identify key assumptions and contextual factors that influence the well-being of today’s OT learners within experiential environments.
- Develop and apply practical strategies and resources to support student well-being, while considering their own wellness and its impact on their role as practitioners, mentors, and fieldwork educators.

Track 2 – Intermediate Level Course: Empower, Restore, Thrive: Women's Health through an OT Lens

Speaker qualifications:

Marissa Horak, MOTR/L, CLT-LANA, CPAM is the director of operations at Thrive Occupational Therapy, Health and Wellness, PLLC who specializes in lymphedema, oncology, and pelvic floor. She obtained a master's degree Cum Laude from the College of Saint Mary and has been practicing for ten years. Through her career, Marissa obtained top-tier training through the Norton School of Lymphatics for her certification as a lymphedema therapist in 2018 with over 200 hours of training. She is one of 34 practitioners in the state of NE and IA who holds a Lymphology Association of North America (LANA) certification- indicating her skills are of the highest level of competency and expertise. She has advanced pelvic floor training for male and female clients as well as specialty breast and prostate oncology rehab certifications.

Ella Vazquez, MOTR/L, CPAM is the community outreach coordinator at Thrive Occupational Therapy Health & Wellness and experienced occupational therapist who is passionate for whole client wellness. She received her graduate degree in occupational therapy in 2017 from College of Saint Mary. Throughout her career Ella has worked with clients across the lifespan and has experience in orthopedics, acute post-op, aging in place, mental health, emotional regulation, cognitive intervention, and sensory integration. She currently holds certifications and specializes in pelvic floor, core rehab, and myofascial release.

Course Description:

Join us for an exclusive presentation on the integration of occupational therapy interventions as essential services in women's health care. Learn from our expert therapists who treat women through pelvic floor, lymphatic, fascia and nervous system remediation to maximize outcomes and promote wellness.

Objectives:

- Determine occupational therapy's role in women's health care in a variety of settings
- Have an introductory knowledge of the pelvic floor and how to screen clients for dysfunction
- Identify the benefits of whole person care when treating the female population.

Track 3 – Beginner Level Course: Road Ready: Building Independence Behind the Wheel and Bridge to Independence: Occupational Therapy's Vital Role in Guiding People with Disabilities Through Transitions into Adulthood

Speaker Qualifications:

Samantha Montemarano, MOT, OTR/L Montemarano joined MMI as a school-based therapist for Omaha Public Schools in 2018 after working as a pediatric outpatient occupational therapist for more than two years. Throughout the years, she continued to work in the schools while growing her outpatient caseload and began exploring grant-funded projects. In 2024, Montemarano transitioned out of the schools to focus on outpatient therapy and continue her work on a variety of grant-funded projects including topics such as independent living skills, transition age services and sexual health services. Currently, Montemarano is the occupational therapy outpatient coordinator, co-created the Foundational Driving Program, works on the UCEDD grant and is a team member of the Transition to Lifespan Care clinic team.

Rachel Van Robays, OTD, OTR/L Van Robays is an outpatient occupational therapist who began working at the Munroe-Meyer Institute (MMI) in 2024. She serves children and young adults throughout MMI, the Autism Care for Toddlers (ACT) Clinics, and the Foundational Driving Program. Rachel is passionate about collaborating with families to develop personalized goals and treatment plans that support each individual in building skills, confidence, and independence to participate fully in everyday life.

Course Description:

This presentation will discuss the creation and implementation of a foundational driving program for individuals with IDD, ADHD, and ASD that emphasizes safety awareness and decision-making skills to help participants recognize potential hazards, assess risks, and make informed choices while navigating the community. This program not only teaches the basics of driving, but also included teaching strategies for anticipating and responding to traffic situations, communicating with other road users, and managing distractions while driving. This program also offers a community mobility track for those who are deemed not appropriate behind the wheel. This program offers practical education and implementation of utilizing the local bus system, ride shares, and way finding skills. Our purpose is to provide foundational skills required to participate in an on-the-road driving program with a goal of obtaining a driver's license and provide individuals with the skills to be independent with community mobility.

This course examines the role of occupational therapy in transition clinics supporting individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) entering adulthood. It highlights assessment, skill-building, collaboration, and transition planning to promote independence, employment, and quality of life, while addressing clinic processes, barriers, and solutions for sustainable multidisciplinary care.

Course Objectives:

- Participants will describe the origins and development of the Foundational Driving Program, including the identified need for the program, the population it serves, and the key factors that led to its creation.
- Participants will explain the evaluation process used in the Foundational Driving Program, including referral criteria, assessment components, clinical decision-making factors, and outcome determination.
- Participants will identify the structure and components of a typical treatment session, including skill areas addressed, therapeutic interventions utilized, and how progress is measured over time.
- Describe the role of occupational therapy in transition clinics for individuals with IDD, including the scope of comprehensive assessment and intervention strategies that promote autonomy, independence, and community participation.
- Explain the interdisciplinary clinic model and OT's collaborative role with individuals, families, caregivers, and healthcare professionals to support successful transition into adulthood, illustrated through a patient case example.
- Identify key benefits, barriers, and sustainability considerations of multidisciplinary transition clinics, including employment outcomes, quality of life impact, scheduling, billing, and statewide outreach solutions.

Track 4 – Intermediate Level Course: Your Pain Isn't Just in Your Head. It's in Your Fascia.**Speaker Qualifications:**

Amy E. Mayer, OTD, OTR/L, RYT is an occupational therapist, author, educator, and continuing education provider with more than 30 years of experience. She holds degrees from Iowa State University, Western Michigan University, and Creighton University, where she spent two decades teaching in both entry-level and post-professional Doctor of Occupational Therapy programs. Dr. Mayer is the creator of Fascia-Informed CE educational platform, author of *The Occupational Therapy Practitioner's Guide to Fascia-Informed Practice*, a textbook that translates fascia science into clear, clinically applicable strategies for health professionals. She also hosts *The Fascia-Informed Therapist* podcast, reaching listeners around the world. Her work focuses on integrating fascia science with practical clinical reasoning, offering evidence-informed education that helps practitioners incorporate fascia-informed thinking into their work and support meaningful, whole-person outcomes.

Course Description:

Experience an active workshop that reveals how fascia contributes to pain and how to teach clients simple, effective self-treatment strategies across diverse practice settings. Apply these principles to your own body as you learn to translate complex concepts into clear, engaging education that improves understanding, confidence, and outcomes

Course Objectives:

- Describe the role of the fascial system in pain perception using client-friendly language grounded in contemporary pain science.
- Apply fascia-targeting self-treatment principles to support pain self-management.
- Demonstrate how to teach and adapt fascia-targeting self-treatment strategies for clients across practice settings.

Track 5 – Beginner Level Course: Introduction to 3D Printing for the Occupational Therapy Practitioner**Speaker Qualifications:**

Tabatha Sorenson is an occupational therapist at Madonna Rehabilitation Hospitals in Lincoln, NE. She specializes in assistive technology services to help patients achieve independence and meaningfully participate in their daily tasks. She holds certifications in assistive technology and aging in place. She also serves as the rehabilitation engineering program leader on both the Lincoln and Omaha campuses.

Sarah Synek is an occupational therapist at Madonna Rehabilitation Hospitals in Lincoln, NE. She specializes in stroke rehabilitation, serves on the amputee development committee, and leads monthly amputee support group meetings at the Lincoln campus. Sarah gained experience in 3D printing during her doctoral capstone experience at the University of Nebraska Omaha. Sarah and Tabatha developed the 3D printing program at Madonna Rehabilitation Hospitals in Lincoln, NE, in 2024.

Course Description:

3D printing is an emerging area for occupational therapy practice. However, many occupational therapy clinicians are unfamiliar with use of 3D printing technology, limiting its use in their clinical settings. This conference session is aimed at providing clinicians with entry-level skills to utilize 3D printing in their practice settings. Participants in this session will learn the fundamentals of 3D printing including CAD, filament, and types of 3D printing, understand appropriate use of 3D printing including strengths and limitations, and demonstrate competence in implementation of 3D printing adaptive technology across clinical settings. If attending this session, please bring own electronic device.

Course Objectives:

- Participants will define common terminology associated with 3D printing.
- Participants will identify three open-source platforms for 3D printing.
- Participants will implement 3D printing skills into clinical practice scenarios.

Track 6 –Intermediate Level Course: Empowering Participation: A guide to Assistive Technology design and use for Students with Complex Medical Needs**Speaker Qualifications:**

Abbie Nelson is Board Certified in Pediatrics, a Roster of Fellowship Reviewer- AOTA, Guest instructor for OT programs, has 12 years in pediatric practice: inpatient, outpatient and currently school-based, and a Primary Mentor for AOTA accredited pediatric fellowship program.

Noah Farho is a UNMC OTD student. His areas of interest include intellectual and developmental disabilities, schools, and orthopedics. Noah has fieldwork experience in outpatient pediatrics, orthopedics, and acute care. Capstone project

Course Description:

This course will aim to provide learners with knowledge and skills to utilize assistive technology to promote participation and independence in meaningful activities. Effective assistive technology interventions can be key to

improving an individual's participation and independence with occupations at school and their community. The introduction of an assistive technology manual will be provided as well.

Course Objectives:

- Learners will identify ways assistive technology can enhance participation for students with significant medical needs.
- Learners will identify and navigate assistive technology resources and manual for access in schools, homes, and clinics.
- Learners will develop goals for students with complex medical needs.

FREE Student Session: NBCOT® National Certification Exam: Information You Need to Know (Friday, April 17th from 7-8pm via zoom)

Speaker:

Melissa Kimmerling, EdD, MOT, OTR/L, Nebraska Ambassador to NBCOT

Dr. Melissa Kimmerling is the program director for Augustana's hybrid Doctor of Occupational Therapy Program. Having served in academic roles since 2011, she comes to Augustana after 10 years as the founding program director for an occupational therapy program in Nebraska. As a practice leader, Kimmerling has served in a variety of professional roles, including representing Nebraska to the American Occupational Therapy Association (2016-19), as vice president of policy & advocacy for the Nebraska Occupational Therapy Association (2019-23) and Nebraska ambassador to the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy (2023-2024). Kimmerling resides in Papillion, Nebraska with her husband, two sons, two dogs and two cats.

Course Description:

During this session, an NBCOT Ambassador will share valuable information about preparing and applying for the national OTR and COTA certification exams. Specific topics include exclusive details about the exams, study tool resources, test day information, data regarding exam questions, and advice from other students and recent certificants. This presentation will allow you to be better informed about the various aspects of the national certification exam experience.

Course Objectives:

- Understand the national certification examination application process
- Learn about exam preparation strategies and the NBCOT Aspire® Study Tools and StudyPack™
- Increase awareness of NBCOT and the importance of continuing competency

Questions about conference? Contact the NOTA assistant at NOTAassistant@gmail.com.

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