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Occupational Therapy Education in a Changing Health Care System Current Issues and Trends

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Chapter Objectives

By the end of this chapter, the reader will be able to:

1. Understand the trajectory of the occupational therapy accreditation process for the occupational therapy degree.
2. Develop knowledge regarding the occupational therapy profession's move to the entry-level master's and entry-level doctorate degrees.
3. Identify the ongoing impact of social, political, and economic factors influencing occupational therapy educational requirements.

EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS FOR OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY PRACTICE

The evolution of educational standards used to inform occupational therapy curricula in the United States has progressed significantly over the past 100 years (Table 3-1). In 1917, when the National Society for the Promotion of Occupational Therapy was established, no formal educational standards were in existence. At this time, there were five institutions teaching short but intensive courses in the use of occupation (Kearney, 2004). These previously termed *reconstruction programs* became occupational therapy programs in 1918 and evolved to include mandatory training in crafts, lectures in topics related to psychology, kinesiology, working with “invalids,” and hospital-based practice. These early programs were not degree programs but were training programs to meet a specific need (McDaniel, 1968).

In 1923, the National Society for the Promotion of Occupational Therapy became the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA). That same year, in response to the advice of well-respected