

"Equality does not mean that all persons should have everything equal. Equality entails everyone being treated in accordance with individual circumstances and needs".

## INTRODUCTION

In general, the health status in the Swedish population is improving continuously, but the health status of different groups is becoming increasingly unequal. Equality is a legal right in Swedish healthcare, a human right that is especially significant for many marginalized groups in society. Despite this, even today, everyone in Sweden does not have access to equitable healthcare and welfare. In fact differences seem to be growing.

Equality does not mean that all persons should have everything equal. Equality entails everyone being treated in accordance with individual circumstances and needs.

## OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS

### – A NORM-CRITICAL PROFESSION

Occupational therapy aims towards persons being able to be as independent as possible in the everyday activities they need and want to do, based on their own resources and experience. Interventions are most oftenly directed both towards the individual and the surrounding environment.

The goal is that individuals should experience good health as well as a sense of participation in their

daily lives and in society, based on their own experience and life circumstances.

*Occupational therapy, in other words, makes everyday life work!*

Occupational therapeutic interventions are based on the assumption that each person has a unique blend of cultural, social, psychological, biological, sexual, economic, political and spiritual prerequisites and experiences that influence the person's everyday life – and feeling of being a participant in society.

Social norms and power structures also affect a person's activities and sense of participation. Since occupational therapists are person-centred when practising their profession they must also have a critical approach to the norms and power structures that exist in society as these, in turn, affect a person's activities and sense of participation.

But we need more knowledge about how norms and power structures affect us. We also need more research on equality, diversity and discrimination in occupational therapy activities to develop knowledge-based, egalitarian occupational therapy further.

## EQUAL OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

### IS ALSO ABOUT EQUAL ACCESS

Access to occupational therapists and occupational therapy interventions is not equal in Sweden. It varies across the country, between urban and rural areas, and between different groups in society.

At national, regional and local levels the accessibility of occupational therapy is influenced by decision-makers knowledge about – or lack of knowledge about – the benefits of occupational therapy. This may mean that occupational therapy skills are not utilized or not in demand where most needed. In hospitals, for example, not every brain trauma team has access to occupational therapy skills.

Different local and regional goals as well as decisions pertaining to them are translated into regulations, policies and guidelines that affect accessibility. One example of inequality is the requisition of assistive devices, for which there are considerable differences depending on where an individual is situated.

No matter who you are or where you are, we believe you should have access to equal occupational therapy interventions whenever needed.

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## THE SWEDISH ASSOCIATION OF OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS'S (FSA) PROFESSIONAL OPINION

- that it should be made clear how individual's different prerequisites, experience and life circumstances affect daily activities, and that awareness thereof must be increased.
- that all individuals who have, or are at risk of having, reduced capacity in respect of activities and/or participation must be offered occupational therapy, regardless of who they are and where they live.

## INTERNALLY FSA STRIVES TOWARDS

- all forms of discrimination in occupational therapy being neutralized.

The Swedish Association of Occupational Therapists (FSA) is both a trade union and a professional organization for occupational therapists in Sweden. FSA is politically independent and is a member of the Swedish Confederation of Professional Associations – Saco.

As FSA has high representativeness among Sweden's occupational therapists (over 90%), we know that we, as an organization, can represent the interests of occupational therapy and occupational therapists in Sweden as well as internationally.

There are about 13,000 registered occupational therapists in Sweden. Eight of ten occupational therapists are employed by municipalities or county councils, working in hospitals, health centres, with child and adult habilitation or care of the elderly and functionally impaired persons. Others may, for example, work with occupational rehabilitation, the Swedish Employment Agency, Social Insurance Agency or the Prison and Probation Service. Some are engaged in teaching and research. There are also a number who work in the private sector, for example in assistive technology companies, private care facilities or in occupational healthcare.

## Equal occupational therapy

– no matter who you are or where you are



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