

ASHT Foundations in Pediatric Hand and Upper Extremity Rehabilitation Faculty



Karen Ayala, OTR/L, CHT

Karen graduated from Boston University with a master's degree in occupational therapy in 1996 and became a certified hand therapist in 2001. Karen transitioned to the specialty of pediatric hand therapy in 2013 as an OT/ CHT at Dell Children's Medical Center of Central Texas. In 2015, Karen joined the team at Central Texas Pediatric Orthopedics. Karen is skilled in pediatric hand therapy evaluation, therapeutic exercise prescription, activity modification, pediatric orthosis fabrication, and administration of the Handwriting Without Tears program. Karen is a member of the American Society of Hand Therapists and the Texas Society for Hand Therapy.



Jenny Dorich, PhD, MBA, OTR/L, CHT

Jenny is an Assistant Professor in University of Cincinnati's Department of Orthopaedic Surgery and Department of Rehabilitation, Exercise and Nutrition Sciences. Jenny is also the Hand Therapy Clinical Lead at Cincinnati Children's Medical Center. She has expertise in mixed methods research and her central research focus is enhancing measurement of patient desired outcomes in clinical care. Her clinical expertise is in pediatric hand therapy. She has several publications in peer-reviewed journals and textbooks and has spoken on a variety of pediatric hand therapy topics regionally and nationally.



Mary “Peggy” Faussett, MOTR/L, CHT

Peggy received her Bachelors of Science in Exercise Science from Creighton University in 1999 and her Masters of Occupational Therapy from Chatham University in 2001. She became a certified hand therapist in 2012. She works at Children’s Hospital Colorado as the Pediatric Hand Therapy Program Coordinator and Fellowship Coordinator in the department of Occupational therapy. She and her team of 8 CHT’s and 4 pediatric OTs work with patients from new babies to young adults with upper extremity congenital, traumatic, and systemic conditions. Together they provide hand therapy services in the NICU, inpatient, emergency room, operating room, outpatient clinics, and multidisciplinary clinics at multiple locations across Colorado. She has presented on topics related to pediatric hand therapy nationally and internationally. She serves locally on the board for the Denver Hand SIG and nationally for the ASHT Education Division pediatrics committee.



Kenneth Lee, OTR/L

Kenneth is a graduate of SUNY Buffalo Occupational Therapy Program. He has worked at Valley Children’s Hospital in Madera, California since 2020 as a hand therapist. Kenneth has goals of developing a growing hand therapy clinic in the area for underserved populations.



Yvonne Morris, OTR/L, CHT

Yvonne graduated from St. Joseph’s College of Occupational Therapy in Dublin, Ireland in 1981. She has worked at Valley Children’s Hospital in Madera, California since 1991. She is a Senior Therapist on a growing team of hand therapists at Valley Children’s. She has presented at several national and international conferences on topics relating to pediatric hand therapy.



Alyssa Phillips, CScD, MOT, OTR

Alyssa graduated from Saint Francis University with a bachelor's degree in psychology and health science in 2016, then graduated with her master's in occupational therapy in 2017. Later, she completed her clinical science doctorate in 2020 from the University of Pittsburg, with a focus in adolescent pain management. For the last 5 years, she has worked in upper extremity, chronic pain, work & industry, and pediatrics in both outpatient and residential health summer camp settings. Alyssa will be transitioning to fieldwork director at Western University of Health Sciences.



Tara Ruppert, OTD, OTR/L, CHT

Tara has been an occupational therapist for 22 years and has been a CHT since 2008. She worked in school-based and outpatient settings for 15 years before moving into a faculty role in 2015. She now teaches full-time in the OTD program at College of Saint Mary as an associate professor and sees patients at the Children's Hospital and Medical Center in Omaha, Nebraska. During her clinical work, she supports the upper extremity orthopedic surgeons in the hand clinic and carries a caseload of children with upper extremity orthopedic impairments.



Cara Smith, PT, DPT, CHT

Cara graduated from the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in 2007 with a master's degree in physical therapy. In 2010, she completed the Evelyn J. Mackin Hand Therapy Fellowship and became a certified hand therapist in 2013. In 2020, Cara earned a Doctor of Physical Therapy degree from Arcadia University. Cara is the Hand Therapy Program Coordinator at Cook Children's Medical Center in Fort Worth, Texas. The majority of her clinical practice has been in pediatric orthopedics, working alongside surgeons in multidisciplinary clinics taking care of children with congenital and acquired hand conditions as well as traumatic injuries.



Juliet Steffe, OTD, OTR, CHT

Juliet graduated from the Medical College of Ohio in 1995 with a Master of Occupational Therapy. Early in her career, she worked for Shriners Hospitals for Children, gaining interest and experience in pediatric hand therapy. After moving to Atlanta, Georgia in 2000, Juliet continued to build her pediatric hand therapy skills with Children's Healthcare of Atlanta. While at CHOA, she worked with children with neurological and orthopedic conditions including brachial plexus birth injuries, congenital conditions of the upper extremity, and traumatic injuries. She completed training in Neurodevelopmental Treatment in 2003 and earned her OTD from the University of St. Augustine in 2005. In 2006, she became a Certified Hand therapist. The focus of her practice has been with both adults and children recovering from either traumatic or chronic conditions of the upper extremity. She is currently working on a Doctorate of Education and plans to enter the field of academia.



Lindsey Williams, OT, CHT

Lindsey is a pediatric occupational therapist and certified hand therapist specializing in treatment of pediatric upper limb conditions including congenital anomalies, orthopedic conditions, and sports related injuries at Scottish Rite for Children in Dallas, Texas. She received her Bachelor of Science in Therapeutic Recreation from Murray State University in 2005 and Master of Science in Occupational Therapy in 2008 from Spalding University. She became a certified hand therapist in 2015. Prior to joining the Scottish Rite team, Lindsey began her career at Vanderbilt Children's Hospital where she worked with a multidisciplinary team to serve hand, rheumatology, and brachial plexus clinics.