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Pediatric Occupational Therapy Kits for Cuyahoga County Families

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Pediatric Occupational Therapy Kits for Cuyahoga County Families

Shiri Akrish, Keesha Tolliver Funches, and Kelle DeBoth Foust OTR/L

Background

“1 in 6 children aged three through seventeen have one or more developmental disability” (CDC, 2022, para. 1). Delays are prevalent across all ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic groups across the nation making it of paramount importance to invest in helping the children and families affected. Moreover, many families are unaware of developmental delays until their child enrolls in kindergarten (Balikci & Melekoglu, 2020).

Early identification & interventions significantly improve social outcomes and long-term development of a child (Camden et al, 2020).

What can an Occupational Therapist (OT) do to help families?:

OTs provide tools to prevent a child’s potential from being further hindered in the future by:

- ✓ Establishing helpful routines
- ✓ Adapting environments and mindsets to ease stress
- ✓ Creatively engaging the brain and functionally exercising large and small muscle groups to increase success in skills necessary for kindergarten readiness (such as pre-writing and social-emotional skills needed for behavioral and social development).
- ✓ Helping children gain independence and confidence by building targeted skills through play.

- **Goal:** Empower families to catch delays early, provide skill strengthening activities, and resources.
- **Capstone Site:** Family Connections, a non-profit organization that provides early literacy, parent support, and school readiness for Cuyahoga families. I operated under SPARK & Playroom staff.

Research trends & proposal

3 Reoccurring Trends in the Literature:

1. **Lack of caregiver knowledge and perceptions leads to disconnect regarding normal developmental milestones.**
 - Overlooked early signs of a developmental disability
 - Education empowers families to catch delays earlier and leads to successful early intervention
 - **My Proposal:** Educate caregivers on what to do, not just what to look for when discussing milestone delays.
2. **Parents are unsure of what to ask doctors at well-child visits.**
 - After age 3, well-child visits occur annually
 - 12+ months may pass before parents mention concerns or pediatricians can determine delays.
 - **My Proposal:** Inform caregivers on milestones and offer the language for knowing what to request when scheduling pediatrician appointments or for school assessment visits.
3. **There is a lack of accessibility to parenting education and materials.**
 - “Nationally, only 10% of children eligible for Early Intervention (EI) receive services. Parents with low health literacy often have difficulty accessing the EI system” (Leslie et al, 2020, p. 1).
 - Existing written materials and handouts given to families have been found to be written above a 5th grade reading level making them further inaccessible. (Leslie et al, 2020).
 - **My Proposal:** Make Occupational Therapy more accessible: Present information comprehensibly and at an appropriate reading level. Eliminate the need for caregivers to find transportation to get help. Bring information directly to where families are at.

Brief bio

- Shiri Akrish: Occupational Therapy Doctorate student at CSU, and a mom.



Going back to school as a parent can be a challenge, however, a benefit of studying Occupational Therapy was learning about pediatric skills, sensory related behaviors, developmental milestones, and ways of addressing challenges that many children experience. I wanted to complete a project that would help families like mine in my community learn about the benefits of OT. My professional interests include pediatrics, outpatient, rehabilitation, and neurological OT.



Capstone activities

Research shows existing developmental milestone materials were at too high of a reading level; limiting accessibility. The Milestone Development Checklist was cross verified by (2) reading software programs and across 3 literacy scales (Gunning Fox, Flesch Reading Ease, and Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level index) then edited until the handout reflected a 5th grade or *below* reading level.

Major Accomplishments:

1. **Created an accessible OT based early intervention kit for caregivers:**
 - Educates on developmental milestones
 - Provides tangible tools to lessen gap of finding and intervening on a variety of atypical signs to increase better outcomes for families.
 - Informs on Occupational Therapists’ offerings (especially what OTs work on with children).
 - Delivers activities, supplies, instructions and background information on targeted skills inspired by Occupational Therapy until formal assessments and OT interventions can be scheduled with an OT professional.
 - ✓ **Assembled 46 kits:** (34 for families, 2 for Playrooms, 10 for SPARK Staff). Kit contents fit a set budget and developmental goals
 - ✓ **Developed a 21-page Activity Booklet** (Included skill descriptions and resources for finding more information and contacting an Occupational Therapist for further assistance)
 - ✓ **Created a Milestone Checklist** with appropriate reading level using software and new pediatric milestone standards updated in 2022
 - ✓ **Wrote and conducted internal Pre & Post surveys** to gain feedback on how to improve kits for families in the future



2. **Designed poster series for both Literacy Playroom library locations describing benefits of play through an OT lens:**
 - Educates on importance of play as a main occupation for all children
 - Provides families with suggestions and tips on how playing can target certain skills via activity analysis.
 - ✓ Designed **“Why play with…”** series (6 posters) for Playrooms: 1. Benefits of Play 2. Blocks, 3. Puzzles, 4. Vertical Surfaces, 5. Dramatic Play, and 6. Heavy Work
 - ✓ Exemplified how skills developed during play can carry-over to other independent capabilities for child’s home and school life.
3. **Trained staff at Bi-weekly meetings:**
 - Assisted staff in providing help to families with identified needs and connecting children to services.
 - ✓ Trained staff on kit contents and how to use items with families
 - ✓ Discussed generalist Occupational Therapy skills to help ALL children with skills (not just those with identified milestone delays).



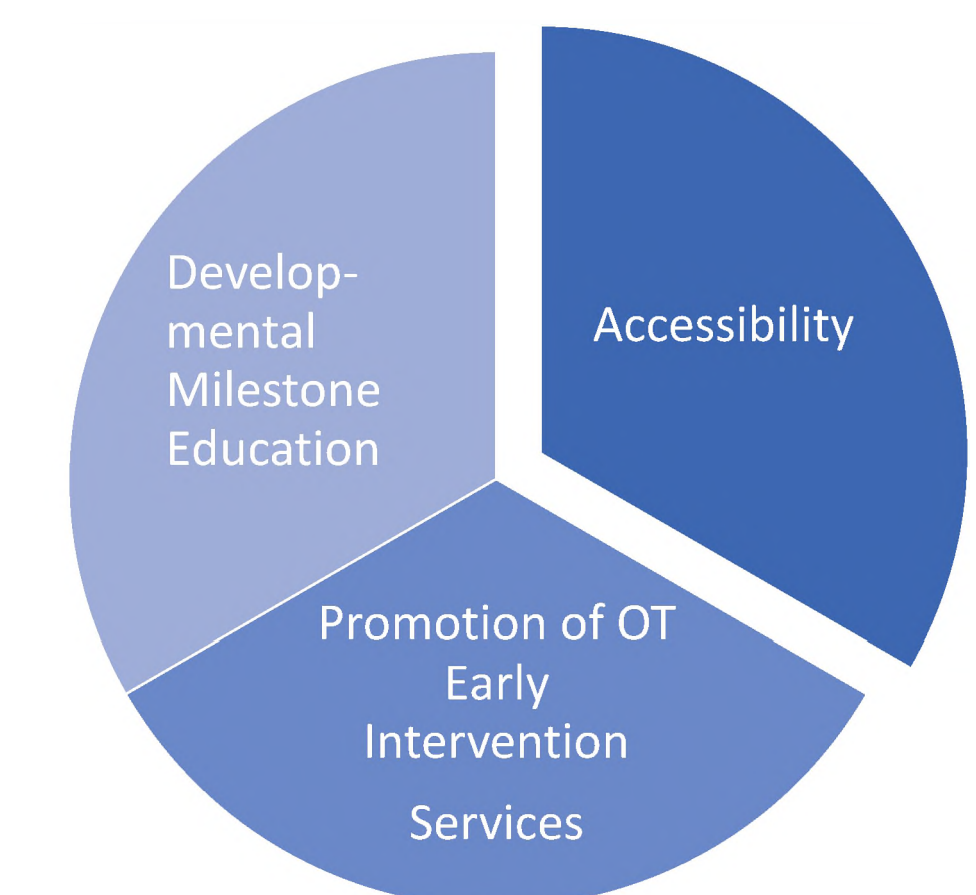
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the *entire* Family Connections staff for warmly welcoming me and supporting my capstone experience. Thank you to my mentor, Keesha, the Playroom Libraries, and SPARK staff for their encouragement, support, and assistance in connecting me with families.

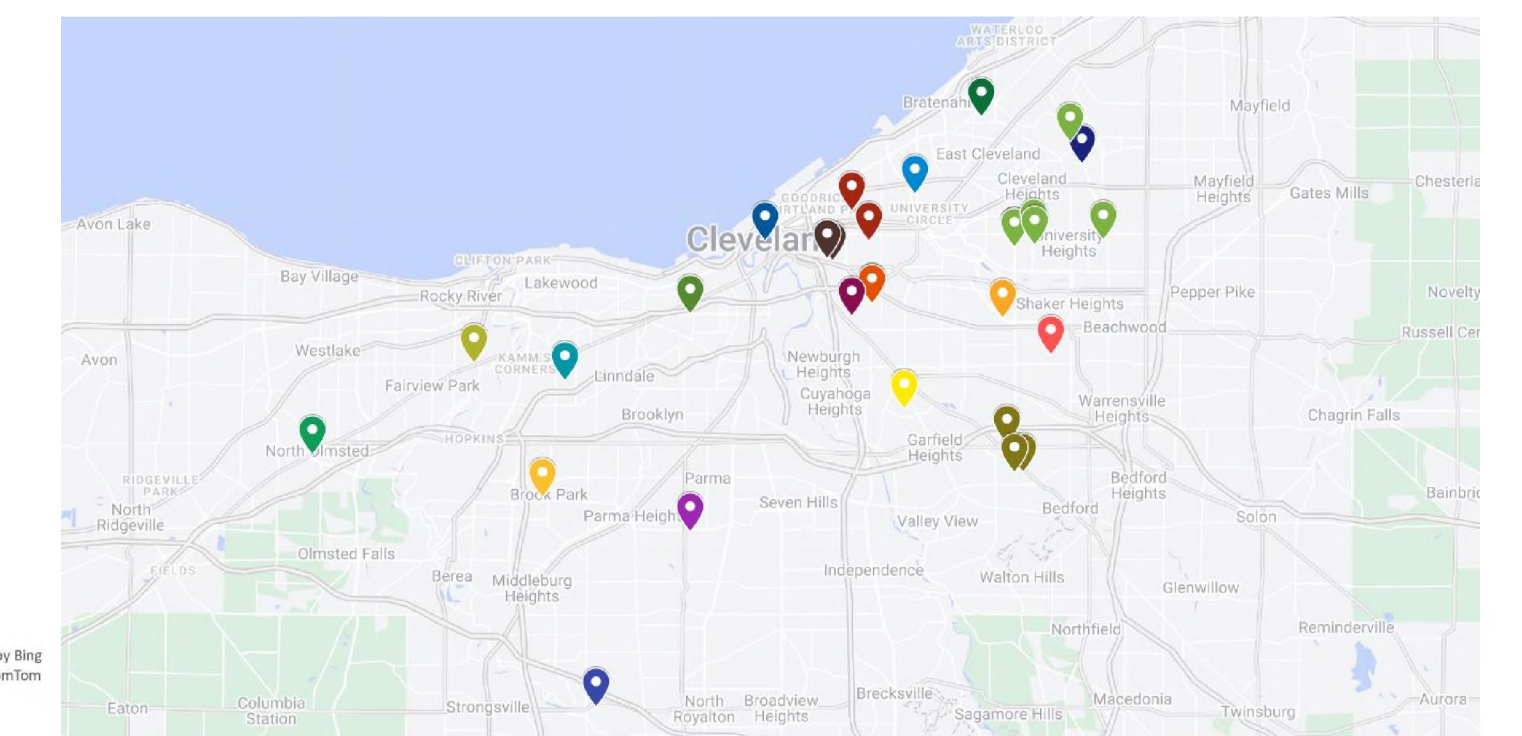
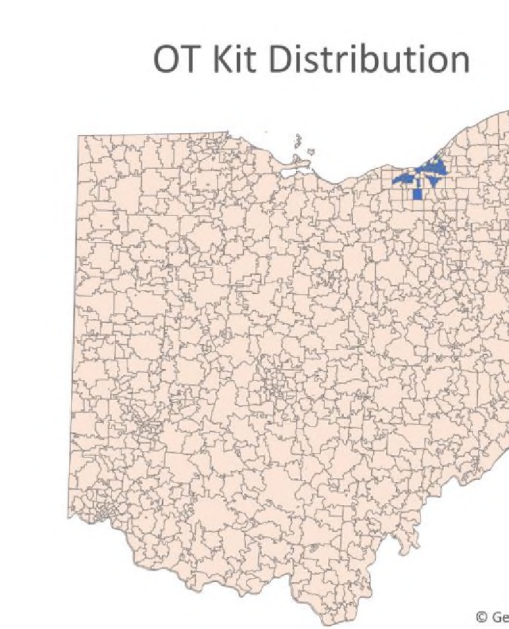
Finally, I want to also express my sincere gratitude to SPARK and CSU College of Health for providing a significant portion of funding and materials for the OT kits and increasing accessibility of the presented resources to local families. Thank you!

Purpose

To address developmental milestone education, accessibility, and promotion of early intervention via Occupational Therapy (OT) services.



Target population: Cuyahoga County children ages 3-5 years old (prior to entering kindergarten) and their caregivers.

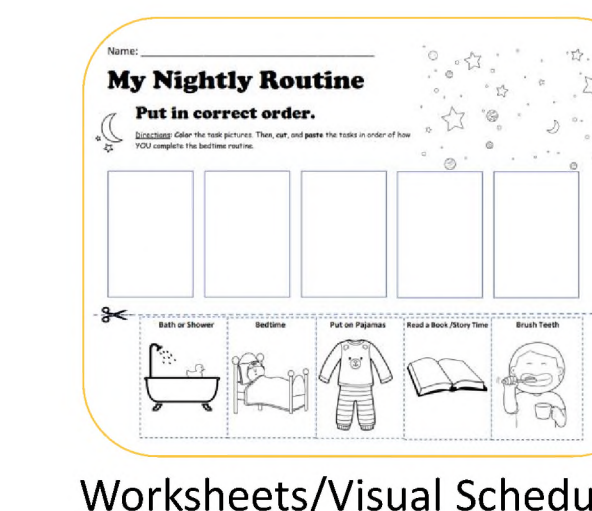


OT Kit Containers/ Sensory bins

What's In the OT Kit?	
✓ 1 Pair of Scissors	✓ 1 Toy Car
✓ 1 Eraser	✓ String
✓ 1 Pencil sharpener	✓ 1 Spray Bottle
✓ 1 Pencil	✓ 1 pre-measured bag of Cream of Tartar (for playdough recipe)
✓ 1 Glue stick	✓ 1 Sponge
✓ 1 Elmer's glue bottle	✓ 3 Straws
✓ 2 bags of foam number stickers 0-9	✓ 1 set of Child Tweezers
✓ 1 bag of sticker shapes	✓ Construction paper
✓ 1 Bag of foam beads	✓ 2 Color, Cut, Glue worksheets.
✓ 1 Storage bin (the kit itself)	✓ Pony beads
✓ Pipe cleaners	✓ 1 Spoon
✓ Pompons	✓ Milestone Checklist Packet
✓ 1 Dry Erase marker	✓ Activity Booklet



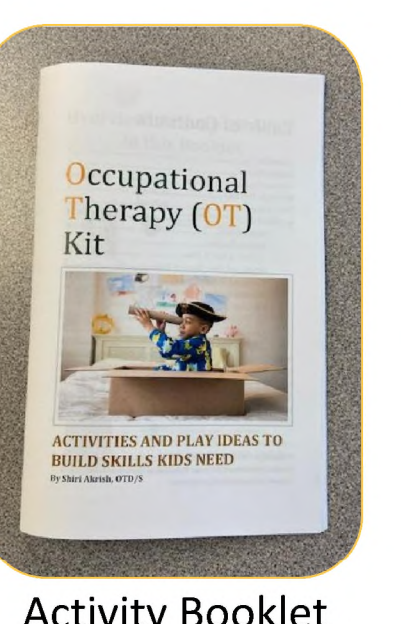
Is my child on track? What is expected of 3, 4, and 5-year-olds?



Worksheets/Visual Schedule



Kit contents



Activity Booklet



Developmental Milestone Checklist

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