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Occupational Therapy in the U.S. Criminal Justice System: Assessing Leisure Engagement and Parental Roles within the Criminal Justice Setting

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Abstract

Background:

- Participating in leisure activities enhances the connection between incarcerated mothers and their children, promoting self-assurance and nurturing stronger bonds.
- This capstone took place at Northeast Reintegration Center (NERC) with the intent to evaluate leisure engagement and parental roles among incarcerated women.

Methods:

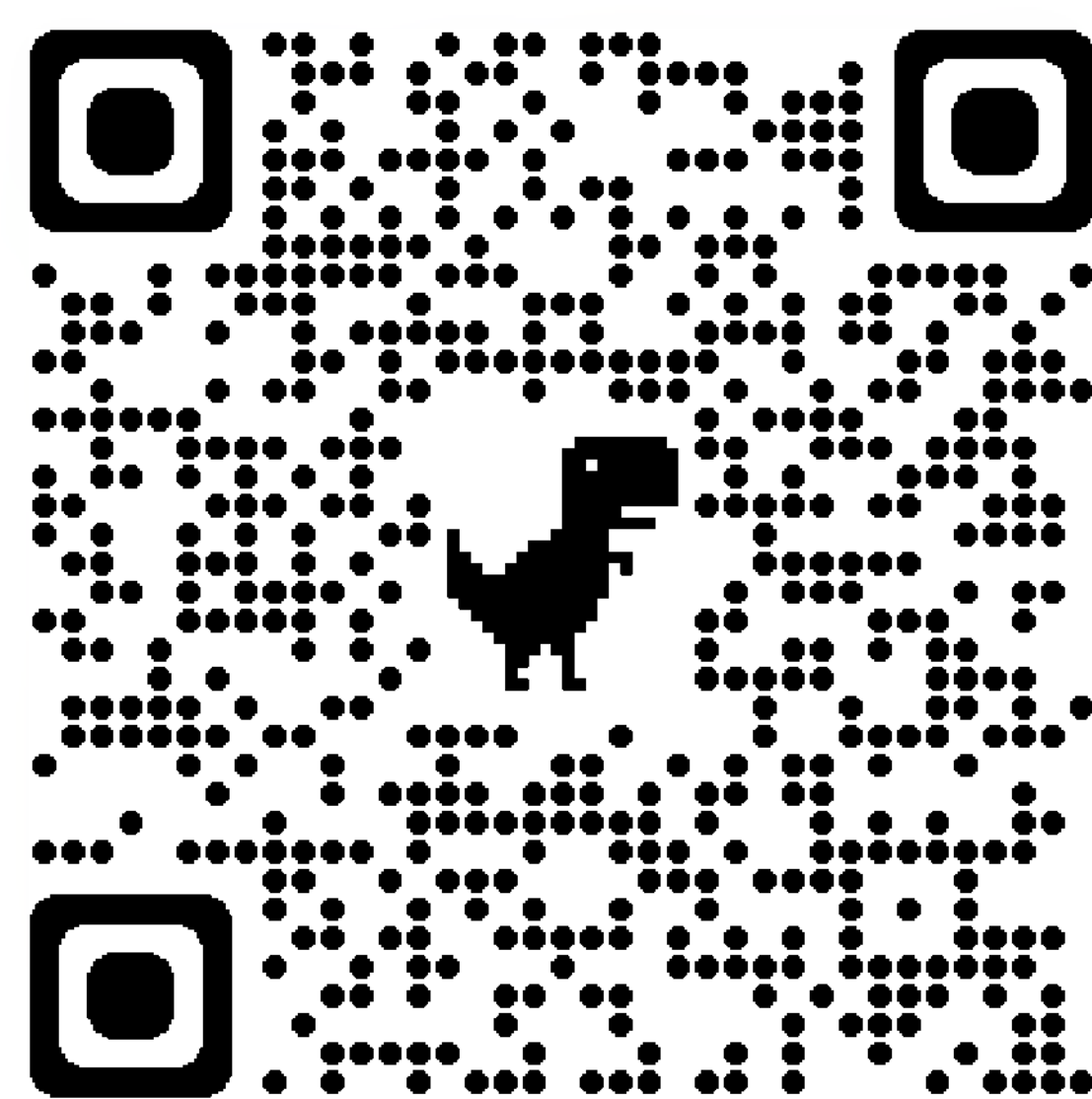
- Observed leisure opportunities, visitation sessions, and family events offered at NERC.
- Held interviews with incarcerated women and staff to gain an understanding of how they view and value leisure and their parental roles.
- Hosted a themed day event during visitation to provide incarcerated women and their visitors a chance to engage in leisure activities together.

Results/ Conclusions:

- Incarcerated women have little knowledge and awareness of healthy leisure activities.
- Teaching incarcerated women the significance of participating in healthy leisure activities can enhance their connection and bonds with family members.

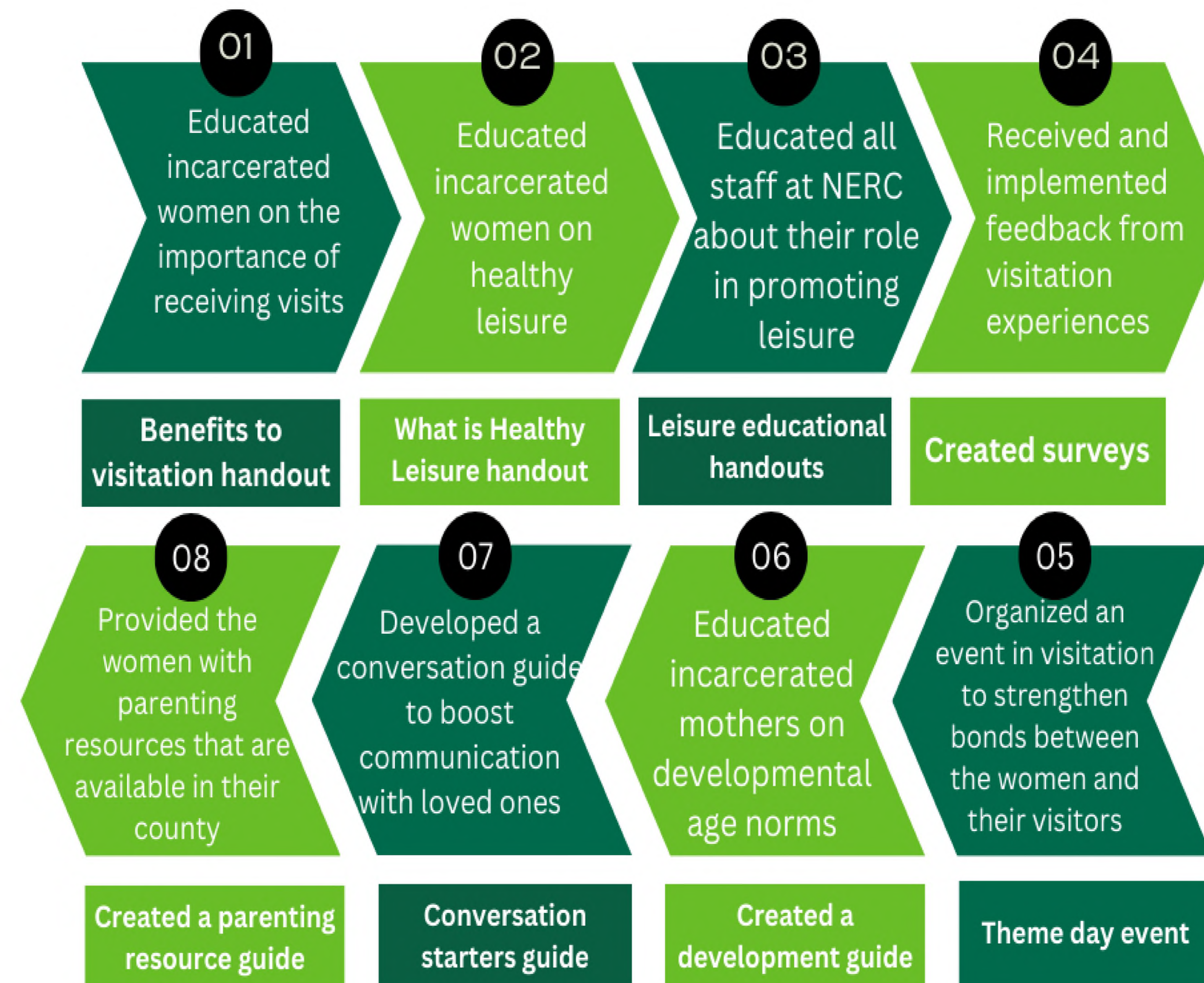
About Me:

I am an Occupational Therapy Doctorate Student and a part of the class of 2024 cohort at CSU. My clinical training encompasses a diverse range of environments, spanning acute care, outpatient pediatrics, and non-traditional settings, including those within the criminal justice system. With the field of OT evolving, I'm particularly interested in working within the criminal justice setting. Scan the QR code to learn more!



Scan Me!

Capstone Experience and Implications



Main Takeaways:

- Leisure participation can reduce the risk of recidivism because it helps incarcerated individuals learn new skills that they can utilize once released, build their identities, help give meaning to their free time, and successfully reintegrate into the community.
- Despite the many leisure opportunities and resources available, incarcerated individuals lack awareness of healthy leisure concepts.

Acknowledgements

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Challenges & Recommendations

- Lack of attendance in visitation due to the strict policies, lack of transportation for families, cost to visit, and distance.
- The visitation area restricts the interaction between incarcerated mothers and their children, further diminishing their bond.

Recommendations:

- Create variants to NERC's visitation procedures and policies to allow more interaction and engagement between incarcerated mothers and their children.
- Parenting programs that teach the women vital skills and provide opportunities to practice them while incarcerated would enrich their parent-child bond.

Synthesis

- This capstone emphasizes educating incarcerated individuals about the value of leisure involvement in improving their parental roles.
- OTs have a unique role in working with this population as advocates for occupational justice in criminal justice settings and can create opportunities to lessen occupational injustice.

Key References

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