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Improving Community Integration Through a Leisure Program to Address Cyclic Veteran Homelessness.

Breeanna Host
Cleveland State University

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Improving Community Integration Through a Leisure Program to Address Cyclic Veteran Homelessness

Breeanna Host, S/OT; Cheryl Arnold, RA,CA; Barbara Milliken, Ed.D., OTR/L, CVW

Abstract

Background:

- The rate of homeless veterans has been steadily rising.
- Lack of resources prevents engagement in meaningful occupations such as leisure. However, increasing leisure pursuits can increase a sense of community belonging, act as a coping tool, and improve overall well-being.
- There's a gap in practice regarding understanding OTs full scope of practice when working with homeless veterans.

Site:

- The Harry Donovan Jr. Valor Home was chosen due to their mission to get vets housed and their dedication to the well-being of their residents.

Methods:

- Worked to reduce barriers in leisure participation and increase access to leisure opportunities and education while at Valor Home to improve occupational balance, community integration, and well-being.

Results:

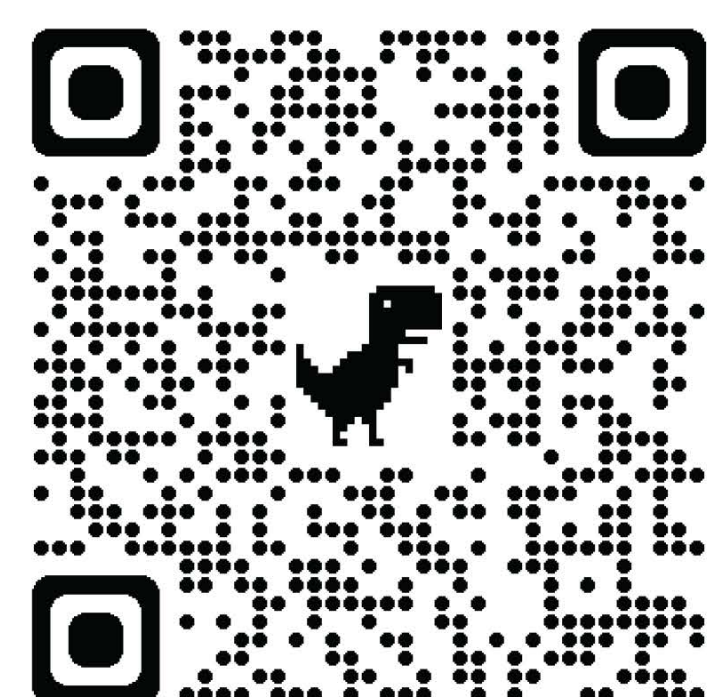
- Facilitated relationships between leisure community resources and Valor Home.
- Improved veterans' understanding of leisure and its benefits.
- Increased veterans' participation and discussion surrounding leisure.

Conclusions:

- Leisure education programs can be utilized to increase engagement in leisure occupations and improve overall well-being with homeless individuals.
- There's a need for cultural humility and rapport building when working with this population.
- More research should be done to better understand the impact OT can have with the homeless veteran population.

Brief Bio

My name is Breeanna and I'm an Occupational Therapy Doctoral student at Cleveland State University. I'm passionate about working with underserved populations to improve their quality of life through participation in meaningful occupations. This is why I chose to work with homeless veterans for my capstone experience. I hope to continue to work in non-traditional settings in my career. Scan the QR code to learn more about my capstone experience!



SCAN ME!



Capstone Experience and Implications

Hosted a Community Speaker Series

Provided an opportunity to learn about leisure resources and developed partnerships with Valor Home.

Hosted Leisure Events

Utilized to build rapport, improve motivation and morale, and increase opportunities to participate in social leisure occupations.

Developed a Leisure Resource Guidebook

Outlined resources in the Summit County area with simple steps to access the resources.

Developed a 3-Week Leisure Education Program

Utilized to assist in understanding leisure and benefits while developing self-efficacy skills for independent leisure exploration and participation.

Developed a Program Manual

Outlined the 3 modules of the program and included prompts to increase engagement with the program.

Main Takeaways:

- There are many resources willing to provide support, however, this is often unknown to this population.
- Assisting with development of self-efficacy skills is imperative when working on leisure exploration with homeless individuals.
- Determining what is motivating to the vets can assist with intrinsic motivation for leisure participation.
- OT is needed to assist this population with skill development and overcoming barriers preventing engagement in occupations.
- Leisure education can be utilized to increase leisure pursuits.
- Engaging in leisure occupations can improve quality of life!

Challenges & Recommendations

- Intrinsic motivation and participation were limiting factors.
- Determine what's motivating and be willing to meet them where they're at!
- Variable participation required the modules to be stand-alone while still building and creating a deeper understanding of the information.

What's Next?

- A program that works on supported leisure engagement after getting housed to assist with maintaining leisure exploration skills independently and continuing to improve their community integration within their new home.

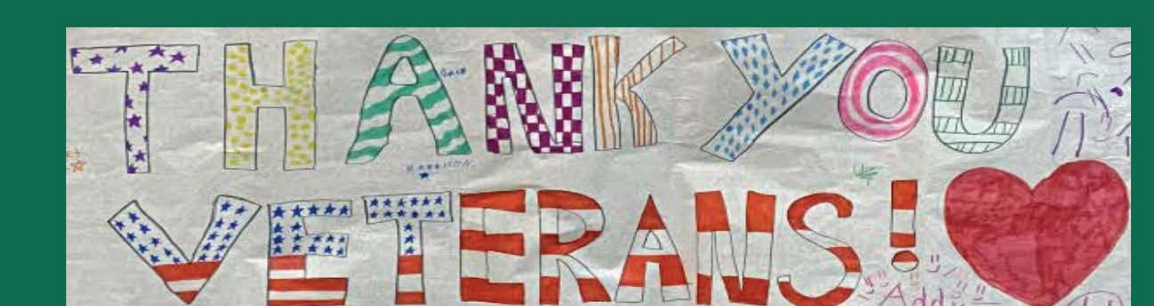
Synthesis

- Vets often experience occupational deprivation, however, participating in meaningful occupations improves health and well-being.
- It's within OTs scope of practice to address barriers preventing occupational engagement and skill development.
- OTs can work with vets to ensure they integrate into their communities successfully through leisure exploration and participation.

Contribution:

- There's limited research on OTs impact working with this population, especially through addressing leisure exploration and engagement.
- This capstone showed the impact and benefits of addressing leisure within a veteran homeless shelter on overall well-being.
- Demonstrates the need for OTs to work with the homeless veteran population!

Acknowledgements



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Key References

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