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Spring 2024

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Stults, Kara, "Life Skills and Young Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities" (2024).
Occupational Therapy Doctoral Student Capstone Posters. 71.
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Life Skills and Young Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

Kara Stults S/OTD; Linda Tarro CEO, DOO; Kristen Pataki OTD, OTR/L, ATRIC

Abstract

- Young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) are faced with numerous barriers when it comes to transitioning into postsecondary work, higher education, community and social activities, and living opportunities (Benson et al., 2021).
- OTs are advantageous to the transitioning process because they can create individualized, person-centered intervention plans that can identify the strengths, needs, and post-secondary goals of the young adult (Kao et al., 2021)
- The purpose of this capstone experience is to work with young adults with IDD to improve self-determination and life skills to increase independence in their daily lives.
- Beyond the Challenge currently works with young adults with IDDs on independent living skills, general health concepts, and social interactions. However, this charity is new and needs more support and resources for its new transition.
- During this experience, I created a 5-week program to improve self-determination and life skills of young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
- From running this program, I have concluded that adults with IDD have the desire to live independent lifestyles and withhold the skill set to do so. However, there are still flaws within the transitioning process that need to be addressed for this population to experience this independence.

Brief bio

My name is Kara, I am an occupational therapy doctoral student at Cleveland State University. My passion for occupational therapy is driven by the desire to help individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. My clinical experience covers a variety of sites, including acute care, inpatient rehabilitation, school setting, and home care. Scan the QR Code for a link to my professional website.



Capstone Experience and Implications

- Improvement of self-determination and life skills allows young adults with IDD to develop independence in their lives.
- Over the past 14 weeks, I interacted with the adults at Beyond the Challenge every day and observed already existing programming. I also had the opportunity to introduce new concepts and build on previous skill sets of the individuals at this site. In addition to this, I was able to see the innate desire to accomplish life skills tasks such as living on their own, seeking employment, and belonging to a community
- For this experience, I developed a life skills program manual that consisted of a 5-week program focusing on improving self-determination and life skills.



Personal Hygiene Healthy Relationships Table Manners Job Skill Training Home Safety

- My main accomplishments...
 - Built-in adaptations to group activities so that everyone had a chance to participate in this program.
 - Developed a 5-week program and manual for young adults with IDD. Scan the QR to access the manual.
- My main takeaways are...
 - The parents of young adults with IDD have a big responsibility when it comes to independence level.
 - Individuals have the desire to develop independence in their lives.
 - There are various resources within the Cleveland area for adults with IDD.

Key References

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Challenges & Recommendations

- Life skills consist of a variety of aspects of a person's life. With my program, I addressed 5 different types of life skills. If I were to do this program differently, I would pick only one area so that the transition process of this new skill would be easier to achieve for the individual.
- Parents for some of the individuals at this site had strong boundaries set for their children when it came to employment, sexual education, and other sensitive subjects. Overall, this was challenging when it came to advocating for these individuals because it hindered their ability to develop certain skill sets.
- Advocacy would be a great project to complete in the future. From what I have learned through this experience is that there needs to be a professional who pushes parents to allow their child with IDD to develop an independent lifestyle.
- Specifically, for Beyond the Challenge, sensory integration would be a needed project. During my time at this site, I saw that some of the individuals had underlying sensory needs that have not been addressed in their lives thus far. Therefore, the development of a sensory project to address these behaviors is needed.

Synthesis

- The results of this capstone experience support previous evidence found within OT literature. Currently, there still lies barriers in the transitioning process for young adults with IDD. Most of these adults do not get to fully develop their self-determination and life skills due to these barriers. It is our responsibility as occupational therapists to help break down these barriers to allow this population to have the independence they deserve.
- From this capstone experience, I had the opportunity to advocate for occupational therapy services in a setting that does not currently have an occupational therapist. Within this experience, I was able to educate others on the interventions that OTs provide to promote independence, adaptation, and improvements in self-care, work, and leisure.

Acknowledgements

- Thank you to Susan Wayne M. Ed., OTR/L, for providing supervision and guidance for group work at Beyond the Challenge.
- Thank you to Kris Spicer and Morgan Tarro at Beyond the Challenge for the support and guidance in developing my program, and with assistance during group activities.