

Building Success From Struggle: An Activities Manual for Homeless Youth

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This project, submitted by Megan Eidenshink, has been approved and accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Occupational Therapy from the University of Puget Sound.

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Disclaimer:

The information and content provided within the activities manual is intended to be a guide for the Rescue Mission Youth Program, to help increase the efficacy of building life skills through their outreach. These activities and suggestions are not intended to replace an occupational therapist, and have potential to increase in benefit if implemented by a skilled professional. Discussion questions and proposed answers within manual materials are merely suggestions, and do not replace the expertise of a physician, psychologist, psychiatrist, or other trained professional.

Abstract

The purpose of this project was to create an educational life skills program for the Rescue Mission of Tacoma's Youth After School Program. This life skills program is designed for use by the Program Directors. It includes structured activities for working with homeless youth in order to provide them with the necessary knowledge and tools to improve leisure engagement, healthy coping, and vital activities of daily living skills in the hopes of easing community reintegration and preventing future homelessness. Research trends show that youth homelessness is on the rise nationwide, and that programs serving youth are having difficulty meeting this current need. Based on this need, this manual provides twenty different detailed activity descriptions including activity steps, discussion prompts, necessary materials, space and social demands, and skill areas being targeted. The accompanying kit provides some of the smaller items needed for activities that are not typically available at the Rescue Mission.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this project was to create an educational life skills program for the Rescue Mission of Tacoma's Youth After School Program. This life skills program is designed for use by the Program Directors. It includes structured activities for working with homeless youth in order to provide them with the necessary knowledge and tools to improve leisure engagement, healthy coping, and vital ADL skills in the hopes of easing community reintegration and preventing future homelessness.

Literature Review

Current Trends in Homelessness

Over the past three decades, there has been an increase of epidemic proportions in the number of people experiencing homelessness worldwide (Lindsey, 1998). In fact, statistics from the National Coalition for the Homeless gathered in 2010 show that shelter-use across the United States has tripled in the past decade alone (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2010). Additionally, this recent expansion of the homeless population has seen a large increase in the proportion of families and youth seeking services for homelessness (Helfrich, Aviles, & Badiani, 2006). There are many discrepancies across the literature regarding precisely whom homeless "youth" includes. For the purpose of this paper "youth" refers to persons between the ages of 12 and 23, in an attempt to accurately represent the age groups presented in the majority of the literature. As recently as 2003, the National Health Institute Survey estimated that there were roughly between 1 and 1.3 million youth experiencing homelessness, while other sources have estimated anywhere between 750,000 to 3 million (Moore, 2005).

Closer to home, Seattle's YouthCare program director Melinda Giovengo reported more than a fifty percent increase in homeless youth seeking their services from 2008 to 2010 (Griffin, 2011). Additionally, in the Pierce County/ Tacoma area, the Tacoma Weekly approximated that 4,400-5,500 people utilized resources due to a period of homelessness or the threat of homelessness in 2010 (Larson, 2010).

A variety of researchers have hypothesized that this rapidly increasing trend is influenced by several interconnected economic, personal, governmental, and societal factors. More specifically, this trend can be connected to the recent national economic crisis because it has jeopardized middle class families' financial status and led to an increased number of families who are unable to afford a residence. Additionally, experiencing a domestic abuse incident is a high indicator of youth homelessness, which is affected by the cultural stigma about abuse and the continual lack of law enforcement regarding domestic violence. According to a variety of news and police reports, domestic violence has been increasing over the past five years, and appears to be correlated to the recent increase in economic hardship. This increase in domestic violence throughout the United States has led to an increase in women and children seeking refuge in homeless shelters (Barszewski, 2011; Vowell, 2011). Similarly, federal cuts to funding for low-income housing options have forced many families in precarious financial positions to lose their homes (Lindsey, 1998). In a qualitative study, researchers found that the most common risk factors for families being homeless were parents experiencing sexual or physical violence as children, having a fragmented (or nonexistent) social support group, and experiencing some sort of mental illness (Bassuk & Rosenberg, 1988). These risk factors are still contributing to homelessness today, and continue to form the foundational

struggles that can lead to homelessness. Overall, when underlying risk factors are considered in conjunction with the current changes in the housing market, economic troubles, and decreased governmental support, the best explanation for the current increase in families experiencing homelessness arises (Burt, 2001).

Factors Influencing Homelessness in Youth

While the aforementioned variables have been shown to directly influence the increase in homelessness, there are unique factors that contribute to the increase in homeless youth. Homeless youth are a heterogeneous group, but the majority of them have experienced some life struggle such as unwanted pregnancy, lack of financial parental support, abuse from a family member, lack of a job, or lack of an education which has contributed to their homelessness (Aviles & Helfrich, 2006). These risk factors can lead to a cycle where homelessness becomes debilitating and possibly even fatal for many youth in a variety of ways.

Homelessness poses a very real and negative threat to homeless youths' development, educational performance, physical health, and mental health (Fox & Roth, 1989). Oftentimes, youth are constantly in transition due to short shelter stays and lack of permanent housing, which leads to continual uprooting from schools. In fact, homeless youth are more likely to be held back or drop out of school due to these transitions, difficulty obtaining school supplies, and health issues (Rafferty, 1998). The McKinney-Vento Act passed in 1987 aimed to help negate the effect of constant school transitioning due to being homeless by creating more affordable, stable housing for low-income families. However, implementation has been limited, as has the Act's impact thus far. For example, homeless youth need support from administrators and educators, acceptance

from teachers and peers, and quick and efficient transfer services when they enroll in a new school (Julianelle & Foscarinis, 2003) but these supports are not consistently provided. Along with educational delays, studies have shown that nearly half of homeless adolescents experience developmental delays in language and social skills, often with co-occurring emotional disturbances (Fox & Roth, 1989). On top of these frequent developmental delays, parents experiencing homelessness reported a noticeable increase in their children's undesired behaviors and negative social interactions such as instigating fights, lack of attentiveness, mental health disturbances, and overall moodiness when living in a shelter or some sort of transitional housing (Rafferty & Shinn, 1991).

Along with developmental delays and educational setbacks, homeless youth are more susceptible to negative physical and mental impacts on their overall wellbeing. Approximately three-quarters of homeless youth experience physical or sexual abuse during a stint with homelessness, which contributes to the increase in their mental and physical health challenges. These health challenges are disproportionate to the housed adolescent population primarily because homeless youth are often initially alone on the streets and extremely vulnerable to abuse and violation (Aviles & Helfrich, 2006). Tischler, Vostanis, Bellerby, and Cumella (2002) examined the emotional problems of homeless youth, and whether these individuals were able to receive the services they needed. According to Tischler et al., 30-50% of youth reported mental health issues, but only 3% of those youth had ever received services. Participants reported via interview that their inability to access mental health services was due to a lack of knowledge and experience on the part of staff in transitional shelters, and not enough services being provided (Tischler et al., 2002).

Homeless youth are also significantly more susceptible to physical health ailments due to their prolonged exposure to the elements in all seasons, performing personal hygiene routines in public spaces, eating in overcrowded public shelters, and being on their feet for long periods of time. These factors place homeless youth at a greater risk for physical illnesses such as hypothermia, upper respiratory tract infections, tuberculosis, foot wounds, fungal infections, and lice/scabies infestations (Wlodarczyk & Prentice, 1988). Youth in a qualitative study (Higgitt et al., 2003) identified similar physical ailments including colds, sore throats, bronchitis, scabies, pneumonia, mononucleosis, foot fungus, and strep throat (Higgitt et al., 2003). In a qualitative study done in Baltimore, homeless youth most commonly identified their personal barriers to seeking or receiving health care as negative attitudes of health care professionals, long wait periods, required parental consent, lack of confidentiality, and lack of insurance for payment (Ensign & Gittelsohn, 1998). On top of these barriers, youth who are in a shelter or on the streets live in a constant struggle just to satisfy basic needs like food and shelter. This ever present need to secure the basic necessities often outweighs the time and effort necessary for navigating the system to receive health care services (Hwang, 2001). Similar statistics were reported in the Seattle newspaper *Journal*, which explained that while there are a variety of resources available for homeless youth, they are not very user-friendly and often do not accurately address all of the issues at hand (Griffin, 2011).

Inaccessibility of resources and underdeveloped life skills often create a cycle that is very difficult for youth to exit, leading to a disproportionate percentage of homeless adults who were homeless as youth. Illustrating this trend, a qualitative study performed in Minneapolis found that significantly more homeless youth reported that they expected

to experience homelessness as adults than their housed counterparts (Masten, Miliotis, Graham-Bermann, Ramirez, & Neemann, 1993).

Life Skills Development Facilitators and Barriers

One of the key underlying reasons that homeless youth are likely to experience homelessness in adulthood is their lack of stability in an essential phase of development. Adolescence is a period of life where youth develop life skills, habits, and patterns that allow for success in building their own adult lives. However, the main way that youth learn these essential life skills is through observation of adults they know successfully implementing their own routines and habits, and then applying and modeling that behavior (Gauvain & Cole, 2005). These behaviors encompass skill sets such as healthy maintenance of relationships, physical and mental self-care, planning and following a budget, and job skills. Generally, youth in healthy, stable living situations gain these skill sets unknowingly through daily interaction with adults. When there is an absence of stable adult figures such as parents, guardians, relatives, or teachers, youth are deprived of positive behavior to model (Aviles & Helfrich, 2006). Because leaving a negative home situation is often the catalyst for youth homelessness, these youth are unlikely to have previously observed positive behaviors and are simultaneously estranged from their parents or guardians (Thomas, Gray, & McGinty, 2011). Compounding on the absence of parental/guardian behavior modeling, homelessness often leads to youth dropping out of school which eliminates the potentially positive role model that teachers could provide. Through a lack of guidance and unstable living conditions, homeless youth are at a heightened risk of not developing functional life skills; therefore leading to a higher

reoccurrence of homelessness as an adult if no intervention is implemented (Johnson & Chamberlain, 2008).

Oftentimes, youth acquire maladaptive life skills like gang involvement, prostitution, or drug use that allow for survival on the streets, but do not facilitate success in mainstream society (Helfrich et al., 2006). Along with developing mainstream maladaptive skills for street survival, a study done by Ringwalt, Greene, & Robertson found that undeveloped job skills and wariness to trust adult service providers often led to a heightened risk for "...involvement in illegal sex and drug activities and other criminal behavior to meet their basic needs" (as cited in Moore, 2005, p. 9). Homeless youths' lack of experience navigating "normative" life experiences in a stable environmental context can lead to an inability to find success in adult life roles, mainly because of their lack of exposure to activities of daily living and instrumental activities of daily living like food preparation, community interaction, bill paying, bathing, and health maintenance (Aviles & Helfrich, 2006).

Potential Interventions with Homeless Youth

One essential aspect of bridging the gap in life skills with homeless adolescents is the component of self-worth and self-efficacy. A study performed by Wells, Widmer, and McCoy (2004) examined effective interventions with at-risk youth and found that creating a support network, establishing positive ties, and increasing self-efficacy through challenge-based activities allowed participating youth to feel more capable of handling life challenges and conflicts. Similarly, activities that utilized role-play and explained to homeless youth what they could do rather than what they were not supposed to do were reported as the most impactful in learning about handling physical problems (Ensign &

Gittelsohn, 1998). Fostering and building trust was another key aspect of intervention that was identified, as well as providing services that are able to treat youth holistically and provide interventions to directly negate individual barriers to accessing and receiving care (Moore, 2005). However, the research shows that intervention programs that have included self-advocacy training, safe places to study, and input from a variety of different mental and physical health care professionals have not made a lasting impact in decreasing homelessness thirteen years later (Vostanis, Grattan, & Cumella, 1998). This data supports further research and simultaneous alteration of current service provision in order to find interventions with better lasting efficacy.

Project Home Description

The Rescue Mission Center in Tacoma is a multi-program organization providing resources for people experiencing homelessness in the community. One of their ten current outreach programs is the After School Program, which is specifically targeted to help homeless youth. This program was developed to provide a safe environment for youth to do school work, relax, and participate in fun and informative fieldtrips and events. Currently the After School Program runs Monday- Friday, from 4-6 pm in the youth building on the Adams Family campus. There are approximately five to fifteen youth that attend on a regular basis, three full-time staff, and between two and five volunteers on any given day. Generally, the program is set-up for youth to engage in educational and extracurricular opportunities like gardening, making crafts, and practicing photography during approximately one hour of the two hour time period. The remaining time is spent “hanging out”- allowing the youth a safe space to talk to mentors (volunteers/staff), play pool or foosball, talk about their days, and eat dinner together.

Based on this current service provision, Rescue Mission Center employee Brian Eggers has expressed a need for these youth to develop life skills and experience educational and vocational opportunities in hopes of breaking the current cycle of homelessness (B. Eggers, personal communication, February 19, 2011). However, the Rescue Mission Center has seen an increase in the demand for their services, and therefore does not currently have the time or resources to create an additional life skills intervention program. Based on this need expressed at both the national and local level, a program manual for the Rescue Mission Center providing occupational therapy intervention group session plans for teaching a variety of life skills is a key step in beginning to address the increase of homeless youth.

Occupational Therapy Fit

Intervention strategies such as building trust and establishing a network of resources allowing for self-initiated holistic care of homeless youth fit precisely into the scope of occupational therapy practice. In fact, occupational therapy has the ideal capacity to integrate youths' life experiences and their current needs into an effective educational intervention for concurrent and future life skills. Homeless youth often experience physical, mental, developmental, and educational setbacks on top of struggling to navigate every day life situations with limited conventional life skills. A program manual providing instruction in how to effectively integrate activities targeting these co-occurring issues and building necessary activities of daily living skills would begin to fill the gaps in current provisions of care.

Procedure

In order to complete this project several steps were taken, beginning with a needs assessment. The needs assessment consisted of researching current social, economic, and political trends in the news and literature in order to find an area of unaddressed need that could benefit from occupational therapy. Conducting the needs assessment established that youth homelessness was an area of need, which led me to begin looking for a home for my intended project. I learned of the Rescue Mission of Tacoma through talking with one of their employees, Brian Eggers. After making this initial contact, I visited the Rescue Mission and spoke directly with the current Youth Director Kyle Serquinia to discuss their specific needs and wants.

Once the need and home for the project were confirmed, I began to research the literature and current studies about common deficits and the most effective interventions with homeless youth in order to identify the key areas of occupation that my manual should target. I also began volunteering weekly at the Rescue Mission's youth program. Volunteering allowed me to really get to know the population I would be serving, and gave me a chance to brainstorm with the youth what types of activities would be the most engaging for them. Upon discovering the main areas of skill development that are often lacking for homeless youth, I began to brainstorm, research, and create the activity sections for the manual.

Coming up with the activity sections was a multi-step process, accompanied with feedback from my chair at each step. Primarily, I created "outlines" for all twenty activities that began to shape the areas and skills to work on. Next, I created a basic activity analysis that included all of the main components for each of the twenty

activities. Lastly, I created the manual format, and inserted the final activity analyses for the twenty activities.

In addition, I created an introduction, a conclusion, discussion questions, youth and director surveys, and a variety of educational worksheets, games, and activities that are included in the appendices. Some basic materials for the activities that are not readily available at the Rescue Mission and a box to contain them were purchased to create a kit to accompany the project manual.

Lastly, I held an informal in-service for one of the main Program Directors of the youth program at the Rescue Mission. I explained the layout of the manual, discussed several of the activities, and answered questions posed by the staff.

All of the above steps required the following skills and knowledge:

Necessary Skills and Knowledge
ADL skill deficits of the intended client population
Most effective and engaging learning strategies for the client population
What the current barriers are for clients
Activity analysis to create group interventions
Community resources to provide in the program manual
Cost for printing, paper, and binding of program manual
Finding options for designing a program manual (binding, printing, etc.)
What materials are needed for activities
What materials the Rescue Mission already has for the youth program
Current time limits and parameters for programming
Environment/available space and circumstances

What is the most user friendly manual format for intended population

The table below reflects the expenses associated with making the manual and kit.

Cost	Materials/Supplies/Equipment Purchased	Source of Item
\$2.00	Bandanas (2 packs)	Dollar Tree
\$6.99	Plastic container for manual kit	K-Mart
\$2.00	Jump ropes (2)	Dollar Tree
\$1.00	Large bouncy ball	Dollar Tree
\$1.00	Tic-Tac-Toe mini game	Dollar Tree
\$1.00	Paint	Dollar Tree
\$2.00	Note cards & Holder	Dollar Tree
\$1.00	Crayons	Dollar Tree
\$1.00	Playing jacks	Dollar Tree
\$2.00	Playing cards	Dollar Tree
\$1.00	Play-doh	Dollar Tree
\$1.00	Plastic spoons	Dollar Tree
\$3.00	24 piece puzzles	Dollar Tree
\$1.00	Balloons	Dollar Tree
\$1.00	Paper	Dollar Tree
\$20.00	Binding cost of manual (4 copies)	Office Depot
\$200.00	Printing cost of color manual (4 copies- 1 for Department, 2 for project home, 1 for project chair)	Office Depot

Description of Final Project

The educational activity manual conveys program ideas, activities, and general information regarding life skills with the aim of informing the Rescue Mission's program directors and volunteers about how to enhance the current programming to best serve homeless youth. This manual allows program directors and volunteers to gain a greater knowledge and direction regarding underlying skills deficits and how to target them, how these deficits put youth at risk, and how to implement different activities in order to provide youth with the life skills necessary to prevent future homelessness.

The 10 x 8 color manual contains three main sections with several subsets including- an introduction, 20 different group session program plans, and a conclusion. Pages are double sided, in order to allow activity sections to be completely viewed without having to flip the pages, and the manual has a plastic cover and is spiral bound. Within the introduction, the need for occupational therapy based intervention is established via a review of the current research regarding youth homelessness. Additionally, the connections between the included activities and the Rescue Mission's current programs and mission statement are established.

The main part of the manual is made up of the group session program plans, which all follow a similar format. Each program plan includes a description of the specific life skill being addressed (i.e. anger management, food preparation, etc.) and an explanation of how this specific skill ties to independent living. The program plan also describes an activity idea for a group session, and details an activity analysis for that idea which explains the necessary materials, the time commitment, and strategies for grading the difficulty of the activity depending on the age or level of functioning of participants.

There are four overarching sections grouping the sort activities into different areas of occupational performance, including activities of daily living, instrumental activities of daily living, leisure, and mental health. Each of these sections is further subdivided into five different activities that focus on performance skills and patterns relative to the overarching performance area.

The conclusion includes ideas for sustainability of the program, expected outcomes, and links between targeted skills developed in the programs and increased functioning in adulthood. After the main components of the manual there are Appendices, which include the surveys, discussion questions, master list of materials needed and materials included in the kit, game and activity instructions/directions, recipes, and worksheets.

Desired Outcomes

After the in-service about this project, program directors and volunteers for the Rescue Mission's after school program were provided with a program manual detailing group therapy sessions for increasing homeless youth's proficiency with activities of daily living and instrumental activities of daily living. Through increasing the adult program directors and volunteers' knowledge, they are better able to provide the youth they serve with necessary tools for successfully navigating mainstream life. The program volunteers and directors learned how to implement the activities through the in-service, and through modeling of some strategies during the author's continued hands on volunteering. However, due to time constraints imposed by the spring break/end of year schedule with the After School Program at the Rescue Mission, the directors were not able to provide formal feedback about implementation of the activities.

At the in-service and over the following weeks, program directors were able to provide verbal feedback about the manual layout, accessibility, and the activity ideas. Overall, they were very excited to try the activities, and felt that they would benefit the youth participating in their program in the future.

Goals and Objectives

For the purpose of establishing an overarching vision and being able to monitor the project's success, three main goals and their accompanying objectives were developed. The following section lists the goals and objectives, as well as progress towards the goals at this point in time.

Goal 1:

When volunteers and program directors for the after school program at the Rescue Mission Center read the provided program manual they will gain understanding about the importance of activities of daily living skills, therapeutic intervention techniques, and grading/feedback strategies in order to enhance daily living skills for homeless youth.

This goal was partially met, as one of the three main program directors participated in the provided in-service and engaged in reading the manual and asking questions of the OTS.

Objective 1:

After reading the manual the volunteers/program directors will be able to identify three strategies for developing fundamental life skills for homeless youth.

This objective was met, as the program director was able to verbally identify three strategies after participating in the in-service.

Objective 2:

After reading the manual the volunteers/program directors will be able to implement one of the group program plans with a comfort level of “moderately comfortable” on a post-program questionnaire.

This objective was not met, as program directors were not able to implement the activities with youth based on time and school schedule constraints, so they could not fill out the post-program questionnaire.

Objective 3:

After reading the manual the volunteers/program directors will demonstrate the ability to successfully grade activities by locating the accurate gradation level of different activities for a participant 4 out of 5 times.

This objective was not met, as program directors were not able to implement the activities with youth based on time and school schedule constraints, so they could not demonstrate the ability to grade the activities.

Goal 2:

Upon reading the manual, volunteers and program directors will have an increased knowledge base regarding the impact that homelessness has developmentally, educationally, physically, and mentally on the youth they serve.

This objective was met, as the program director was able to identify the impact that homelessness has on a variety of occupational areas after participating in the in-service.

Objective 1:

After reading various parts of the program manual, volunteers/program directors will be able to identify three barriers to occupational success that homeless youth experience that impact their development and overall well-being.

This objective was met, as the program director was able to verbally identify three barriers to success for homeless youth after participating in the in-service.

Objective 2:

After reading parts of the program manual, volunteers/program directors will be able to distinguish three techniques that homeless youth can implement to counter the negative impact that homelessness has through establishing positive every day patterns and routines.

This objective was met, as the program director was able to verbally identify three techniques for establishing positive routines and habits that youth can utilize after participating in the in-service.

Goal 3:

When youth receiving services from the Rescue Mission after school program participate in program activities as described by the program manual, they will increase their knowledge of strategies for increasing competency in activities of daily living.

This goal was not met, as the directors did not have an opportunity to implement the activities with the youth prior to completion of this project based on time constraints and school schedule conflicts.

Objective 1:

During participation in a program session, youth will identify one personal goal for learning/improvement during the session that fits with the activities' targeted life skill.

This objective was not met, as the activities were not implemented due to time constraints and school schedule conflicts.

Objective 2:

Directly after the session, youth will be able to verbally identify two things that they did or learned to achieve their established goal.

This objective was not met, as the activities were not implemented due to time constraints and school schedule conflicts.

Objective 3:

After participating in a minimum of 1 program session, youth will be able to implement 2 different strategies or techniques for success (i.e.: self efficacy, finding a quiet place when overwhelmed, study tips, etc.) in either school or their every day activities.

This objective was not met, as the activities were not implemented due to time constraints and school schedule conflicts.

Implications for Occupational Therapy

One of the core tenets of occupational therapy is helping clients to engage in meaningful activity in order to be maximally functional within the larger context of society (AOTA, 2008). The core of our profession is well suited for providing successful

intervention to the homeless population, even though it is still a developing area of practice. Within the context of homeless youth, occupational therapists are able to provide skill development while simultaneously “identifying and minimizing occupational barriers...and [by] expanding opportunities for mastery experiences”(Petrenchik, 2006, p. 23).

This application of our practice domain focuses on adapting the current dysfunctional context and environment while developing positive performance patterns and skills in order to allow for maximal participation in society, which is clearly within the domain of occupational therapy (AOTA, 2008). This project will provide staff and volunteers at the Rescue Mission after school program with a group activity guide that will facilitate increased engagement in meaningful occupations (play, social interaction, etc.) in order to develop strategies and skills for coping with environmental barriers that homeless youth often encounter. Adapting their environment, altering the activity, or developing homeless youth’s skills will allow for their increased engagement in leisure activities and development of ADL skills which are designated areas of occupation, along with increasing the likelihood of their successful fulfillment of roles such as student, daughter/son, friend, etc. (AOTA, 2008). Consequently, occupational therapy’s ability to be multi-faceted, wide-ranging, and diverse makes it the perfect match for the complex and multi-layered challenges presented by homelessness.

Theoretical Model and Application to the Framework

The Occupational Adaptation (OA) model is a theoretical model frequently utilized and integrated into intervention by occupational therapy professionals that allows therapists to focus on the ways in which a person adapts to meet occupational challenges (DeGrace, 2007). Within this model, there is a constant and ever fluctuating interplay between person, environment, and the resulting occupation. This interplay often leads to an occupational challenge when there is a demand for mastery to which a person must respond. Under the OA model, people generate adaptive responses in order to deal with these demands for mastery from the environment and occupation. An adaptive response is a behavior, coping mechanism, or means to a solution that allows for a positive route that is different from one's personal repertoire of behavior for responding to a challenge. Therefore, within this model therapists are able to establish or expand the repertoire of adaptive responses that a person has (Schultz, 2009).

Youth who are experiencing homelessness are constantly facing occupational challenges and oftentimes have insufficient adaptive responses. Their desire for mastery is frequently challenged by the instability in their environments and is often complicated by other mental, physical, and emotional health struggles. Occupational Adaptation provides the scaffolding for the therapist to identify and address these environmental and personal barriers to occupational mastery through task readiness activities and problem solving. The unstable environment of homelessness, as well as the array of other occupational challenges is best addressed through the holistic and adaptation focus of the Occupational Adaptation theoretical model.

According to the *Occupational Therapy Practice Framework: Domain and Process second edition (Framework-II; AOTA, 2008)*, the domain of occupational therapy includes areas of occupation, performance skills, performance patterns, contexts or environments, activity demands, and client factors. Performance skills include motor, process, and communication skills and focus on what a person is doing; performance patterns are the habits and routines that people establish; activity demands are the activity properties that make an activity doable; and client factors include body functions and structures specific to the people themselves. Many of the areas of occupation described in the *Framework-II* can be problematic for homeless youth, including, but not limited to: community mobility, health management and maintenance, sexual activity, leisure participation, social participation, home establishment and management, and formal/informal education participation. The role of an occupational therapy practitioner is often to be the direct service provider or consultant, whereupon the therapist can assess ADL, IADL, and particular skill subsets to provide effective treatment (Helfrich, 2011).

The program manual developed for this project describes group activities that help the Rescue Mission to target leisure participation, activities of daily living skills, and community/peer social participation, through establishing/restoring performance patterns and skills, as well as adapting/modifying the social environment and activity demands when applicable. Similar interventions were explored in a study by Lindsey, Kurtz, Jarvis, Williams, and Nackerud in 2000, which found that homeless youth identified the most essential skills they learned as self-confidence, physical and mental self care, and positive relationship initiation/maintenance. The essential skills listed by homeless youth are consistent with those identified in the *Framework-II* (AOTA, 2008) as activities of

daily living, instrumental activities of daily living, and social participation. Upon close examination, the panorama of occupational challenges that homeless youth face match extremely well with occupational therapy's designated domain of practice under the *Framework II* (AOTA, 2008). Therefore, occupational therapy is well suited for addressing these challenges and aiding homeless youth to be more successful with their occupational performance.

Limitations of the Project

One of the main limitations of this project is that there are a wide variety of skill deficits and areas of concerns depending on the specific situation of the youth being served by the intervention. Because of this, there are many more areas for therapeutic intervention beyond the twenty activities included in this manual, but due to time constraints, creating a broader range of activities was not possible.

In addition, depending on the nature of the situation and deficit areas of a particular youth, some youth would receive greater benefit from individual services than from a group-based activity intervention. However, the existing format of the Rescue Mission's outreach services for youth utilizes group activities, thus individual activity interventions are not a good match for this organization. Logistically, the best way to reach the most youth was via group-based activity interventions.

Lastly, based on the budget and space for storage available at the Rescue Mission, not all of the necessary activity materials were able to be included in the accompanying Kit. Thus, the Kit includes many of the smaller, less expensive items, as well as many materials that the youth program did not already own. However, the youth program will

need to purchase the perishable and larger items on their own in order to implement some of the activities.

Future Steps/Sustainability

Sustainability and long term implementation of the activities with the After School Program is one of the main goals of this project, in the hopes that it will have a lasting impact. Currently, the Rescue Mission is a non-profit organization that is run mostly by volunteers, which means that the staff is constantly changing. This poses a problem for long-term implementation of the activities in this manual, because frequent staff changes can often lead to discontinuation of previous services and programs.

However, there are several aspects of this manual that help to set it up for easy transitions, and therefore, greater longevity of implementation. All of the essential materials, worksheets, instructions, and discussion questions are included either in the manual itself or in the accompanying kit. The activities were tailored to the existing materials and equipment available at the Rescue Mission, so the factor of cost is significantly reduced. It was designed in a way to minimize the need for formal training or transitioning. The manual is comprehensive and user-friendly. As long as it is passed along to an incoming Program Director, all of the tools necessary for easy implementation of the activities will be readily available without additional training. In terms of physical longevity of the manual itself, it is bound and professionally printed so that it can withstand substantial use, photocopying, etc. with minimal risk that any of the sections or pages will be lost over time. Any necessary worksheets or directions can be photocopied from Appendix C.

Overall, the format, language, and finished product were all designed to increase usability and promote sustainability. Volunteers and Program Directors alike will be able to quickly and efficiently consult the manual in order to implement a pertinent activity during the After School Program, which increases the chances that it will be used for an extended period of time.

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