The Role of Occupational Therapy for Homeless Women and Women At-Risk of Homelessness

Kelcey Storkersen
University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences, k.parker@usa.edu

Susan MacDermott
University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences, smacdermott@usa.edu

Becki Cohill
University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences, bcohill@usa.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://soar.usa.edu/otdcapstonessummer2020

Part of the Occupational Therapy Commons, and the Social Work Commons

Recommended Citation
Storkersen, Kelcey; MacDermott, Susan; and Cohill, Becki, "The Role of Occupational Therapy for Homeless Women and Women At-Risk of Homelessness" (2020). Virtual OTD Capstone Symposium, Summer 2020. 3.
https://soar.usa.edu/otdcapstonessummer2020/3

This Conference Proceeding is brought to you for free and open access by the OTD Capstone Symposia at SOAR @ USA. It has been accepted for inclusion in Virtual OTD Capstone Symposium, Summer 2020 by an authorized administrator of SOAR @ USA. For more information, please contact soar@usa.edu, erobinson@usa.edu.
The Role of Occupational Therapy for Homeless Women and Women At-Risk of Homelessness

Kelcey Storkersen, Dr. Susan MacDermott OTD, OTR/L & Dr. Becki Cohill OTD, OTR/L

BACKGROUND

In 2019, 151,278 individuals were homeless in California (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2020). Additionally, 40% of homeless adults are women, indicating that there is an even larger population of women who are at-risk of homelessness (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2020). Although more occupational therapists are beginning to work with this population, there is still an insufficient amount of clinicians to meet the needs of resource centers (Gammon, 2019).

PROCEDURE

A needs assessment and research study were performed to identify the occupational needs and barriers of women at-risk of homelessness and establish site needs. The needs assessment explored the specific needs that clients at CMOH have related to programming at this facility. The research study sought to explore themes that can be inferred about the occupational barriers and needs of women at-risk of homelessness and to understand participants’ own life experiences and stories. Questions for the study included some of the following:

- What life roles do you feel successful in? (such as being a mother, employee, friend, etc.)? Are there any roles you experience stress or difficulty with?
- What meaningful activities are you currently unable to participate in?
- What daily factors contribute to your happiness and overall health?

RESULTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme from Study</th>
<th>Quote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concern about safety and meaningfulness with employment</td>
<td>“I’m terrified of going back to work.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I hopefully will find a good job soon, something that’s a good job, not something horrible.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial restrictions impacting leisure</td>
<td>“Whether I need to budget $10 for gas, $15 for brunch, so I’ve limited the amount of times I’ve played tennis on top of the other activities I used to do.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disparity between desire/need for social roles and limited occupational roles</td>
<td>“Both my brother and sister died, my father died, my mother’s alive, but I don’t really have no support system right now.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decreased motivation for self-care</td>
<td>“What I find is that when I work, I look better, and I map everything else out because I only have so much time to do things, and it takes me a lot longer.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DISCUSSION

The research and needs assessment delivered to CMOH have demonstrated that occupational therapy would be a beneficial service for this site. Although the office is temporarily operating at half-capacity for CMOH due to COVID-19, program development has been initiated for allowing Level II students from the University of St. Augustine complete fieldwork at this site in the future.

IMPACT ON OT

- Fieldwork manual for future FW students created
- Flyers and interactive worksheets created and sent to CMOH clients, including topics of leisure exploration, stress management, and sleep hygiene (featured on the left)
- Interventions focused on role transitions, community reintegration, and leisure exploration will be occupations that future fieldwork students and practitioners can provide for this population based on present research and previous literature.