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Occupational Therapy’s Role in College and Career Readiness for Adolescents

Chelsea Van Gorder  
*University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences, c.vangorder@usa.edu*

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

Susan MacDermott  
*University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences, skmacdermott@gmail.com*

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Occupational Therapy’s Role in College and Career Readiness for Adolescents

Chelsea Van Gorder; Becki Cohill OTD, OTR/L; Susan MacDermott OTD, OTR/L

**Background**

College and Career Readiness (CCR) is comprised of both academic and non-academic factors (Lombardi, Freeman, & Rifenbark, 2018) and is incorporated into transition planning for adolescents. OT services are a crucial component in transition planning, however, the disconnect is that less than 10% of interviewed school-based occupational therapists understand their role in transition planning (Mankey, 2011). It is critical that CCR programming is implemented across student populations inclusive of those with and without disabilities (Lombardi et al., 2018).

**Purpose**

To develop a holistic and comprehensive transition program that addresses non-academic skills and is inclusive of all adolescent students, regardless of disability, to prepare them for participation in postsecondary activities (e.g., education and employment).

**Program Outcomes**

- Students rated their knowledge on CCR topics through surveys and reflection charts.
- Students agreed more with the knowledge statements after receiving the CCR lessons.
- Adolescents are more inclined to inaccurately rate their abilities regarding non-academic activities (Job & Klassen, 2012), which may indicate why students initially reported high ratings, resulting in a small decrease (1.3% for social media management) on the post-survey.
- Students expressed overwhelming support for the inclusion of targeted experiences.

**Discussion**

The Person, Environment, and Occupation model and other principles of OT (e.g., activity analysis) were utilized to design the college and career units resulting in an all-inclusive program for transitioning adolescents. Occupation-based lessons engaged students as they walked step by step through the typical processes required of postsecondary occupations (e.g., applying for a job, the interview process, applying to college), which helped students create realistic expectations and better prepare them for when they begin their postsecondary pursuits. OTs’ unique skill set makes them a valuable resource and member of the transition team during the comprehensive CCR program development and implementation. The expansion of OT services to include extensive transition-focused interventions is beneficial not only for eligible students who receive OT services, but also for the neurotypical adolescent student population.

**Program Development**

- Independent Living
  - Social/Community Experiences
  - Team Building
- College Readiness
  - Pre-Survey
  - Post-Survey
- Career Readiness
  - Pre-Survey
  - Post-Survey
- Adapting Experience Exercises
- Project Based Learning
  - Independent Experience
- Related Coursework
- Work Experience
- Job Shadowing
  - Pre-Survey
  - Post-Survey
- Adapting Experience Exercises
- Project Based Learning
  - Independent Experience
- Related Coursework
- Work Experience

**References**


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