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Occupational Therapy's Role in Assisting with Community Reintegration for Survivors of Human Trafficking

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Occupational Therapy's Role in Assisting with Community Reintegration for Survivors of Human Trafficking

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BACKGROUND

Human trafficking brings in 150 billion USD of profit per year worldwide (International Labour Organization, 2014). Physical and psychological needs of the victims include weight loss, fatigue, musculoskeletal problems, vision loss, fractures, dermatological problems, sexually transmitted diseases, anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, suicidal ideation, insomnia, memory problems, social withdrawal, and loss of personal initiative and autonomy, (Cerny, 2016; Gorman & Hatkevich, 2016; Macias Konstantopoulos et al., 2013). Occupational therapy has a role of facilitating the client's achievement of participation and engagement in occupation while maintaining or achieving health and well-being (American Occupational Therapy Association [AOTA], 2014). The field of occupational therapy can facilitate and assist survivors of human trafficking as they reintegrate into society through occupational advocacy, training, education, activities, and group interventions. Occupational therapy has a powerful role as these survivors are transitioning from an environment where they were deprived from meaningful occupations and lacked occupational autonomy to an environment where they can reintegrate into society and achieve occupational independence (Cerny, 2016).

PURPOSE

The purpose of this project is to develop a program that assists the survivors of human trafficking to successfully reintegrate into society through the participation of meaningful occupations, empowering the survivors to embrace their opportunities, and providing them access and education to perform occupational tasks independently.

METHODS

1. Needs assessment – interview of participants (survivors and staff of Bilateral Safety Corridor Coalition [BSCC])
2. Analysis of participants' concerns, goals, priorities
3. Development of a program that assists participants with their goals and addresses their barriers

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

- Program addressing secondary traumatic stress through program reflection and coworker peer-support between staff
- Pathways of steps to looking for a job, preparing for school, learning English, education and career planning, and maintaining physical health and emotional health during the transitional process
- Self-guided program developed to maintain sustainability and empower independent decision-making

RESULTS

Priorities of their everyday living	Barriers to achieving these tasks and goals
School/education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding the enrollment process • Understanding the process of transferring to a university and course planning • Understanding the education system and resources available to assist students • Not understanding English fluently
Vocation/getting a job	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having a work permit/lack of legal status • Knowing how to apply for a job • Not speaking English • Knowing how to fill out a job application • Reduced job openings due to COVID-19
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Searching for driving instructors • Reduced resources due to COVID-19 • Access to a car for practice
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transportation to grocery stores • Lack of knowledge & education on healthy diet balance and organization of an exercise routine • Safe public transportation due to COVID-19
Leisure/active recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe transportation due to COVID-19
Fostering healthy relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of current, supportive relationships

Concerns BSCC staff expressed for their clients and organization:

- Clients' achievement of independence with their day-by-day tasks such as decision making, job seeking, education planning, and fostering healthy relationships
- Organizational needs such as modification of the assessment in-take process and discharge follow-up with the clients
- Concerns with client coping skills as the survivors display anxiety during communication
- Healthy case management routine and caseload to reduce feeling overwhelmed

CONCLUSION/OT IMPACT

- Assist the transition of community reintegration for survivors to encourage occupational independence and autonomy
- Address occupation-based tasks prioritized by survivors that impact their sense of purpose and fulfillment
- Address the emotional health of the staff in order to decrease risk of compassion fatigue and strengthen healthy relationships between staff and survivors