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## Exploring Occupational Therapy's Role in Supporting Health and Wellness in the Transition to Motherhood

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# Exploring Occupational Therapy's Role in Supporting Health and Wellness in the Transition to Motherhood

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## BACKGROUND

The transition to motherhood is considered a major life event, where changes occur in all aspects of a mother's life, impacting roles, responsibilities, priorities, health, wellness, self-care, occupational balance, and can influence long-term health (Horne et al., 2005; Esdaile & Olson, 2004; Johnson, 2017; Fahey & Shenassa, 2013; Barkin & Wisner, 2013). Occupational therapists can provide evidence-based, comprehensive support and increase positive health outcomes for mothers. This can be done through using a health promotion approach, enhancing occupational engagement and wellbeing, and supporting meaningful co-occupations (Fernandes, 2018; Sloopjes et al., 2016; Carrol & Loesche, 2017; Aubuchon-Endsley et al., 2020; Pitonyak, 2014; Podvey, 2018).

## PROBLEM

There is a lack of comprehensive OT programs to support health and wellness for new mothers.

## PURPOSE

To develop a program to meet current needs of mothers and ease the transition to motherhood through supporting health and wellness.

### Outcome objectives:

- Determine the needs of the new mother population and understand how the COVID-19 Pandemic has impacted their transition to motherhood.
- Develop a program plan to provide education, tools, and support focused on maternal health and wellness.

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## METHODS

The program plan began with a needs assessment survey and an online program was developed to address the identified areas. The project was conducted at the Child Development Institute [CDI]. The needs assessment included an online survey [shared through social media and the CDI email list] and phone interviews with new mothers who have a child under 2 years old.

Needs Assessment 60 Survey Responses & 11 Interviews		
Topics Covered	Findings	Themes
The Transition to Motherhood & The Postpartum Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>50% were satisfied with their postpartum experience</li> <li>#1 resource or support postpartum mothers utilize is through online support/ social media/ parenting blogs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rough initial transition</li> <li>Recovery &amp; the unexpected</li> <li>Identity changes &amp; expectations</li> </ul>
Challenges: Routines, Roles, & Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>67% of mothers reported inadequate sleep</li> <li>45% did not have enough education/ support to meet breastfeeding goals</li> <li>Topic of interest: activities to support baby's development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sleep</li> <li>Routines/ establishing routines</li> <li>Lack of balance</li> <li>Lack of self-care</li> <li>Breastfeeding/ feeding</li> </ul>
Self-Care & Coping Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>88% of mothers valued self-care</li> <li>47% reported current routines don't allow time for self-care</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It's the little things</li> </ul>
Mental Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>27% of mothers reported symptoms or diagnosis of a perinatal mood or anxiety disorder [PMAD]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Desire for postpartum mental support</li> <li>Challenges with PMADs</li> <li>The self-sacrificing mom</li> </ul>
Social Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>52% of mothers reported adequate social support</li> <li>Topics of interest: partner communication &amp; building your "village"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support makes all the difference</li> <li>Parenting roles</li> </ul>
Physical Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>53% had symptoms postpartum affecting participation in daily activities</li> </ul>	
Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited support &amp; social opportunities</li> <li>Isolation</li> <li>Mental health impacts</li> <li>Positive impacts: awareness of cleanliness &amp; time home with baby</li> <li>Social time changes: special requirements &amp; technology to connect</li> </ul>	

## PROGRAM

### General Program Goals:

- To increase health and wellness literacy and attainment for the maternal population, (including mental and physical health)
- To support skill development in areas of maternal occupations/ co-occupations, self-care skills, and routines.
- To provide education and resources to professionals who work with the perinatal population

### Purpose of Program:

To provide education, support, and resources to ease the transition to motherhood, support skills in health and wellness awareness, supporting mental and physical health, developing self-care and coping skills, and establishing healthy routines for themselves and their families.

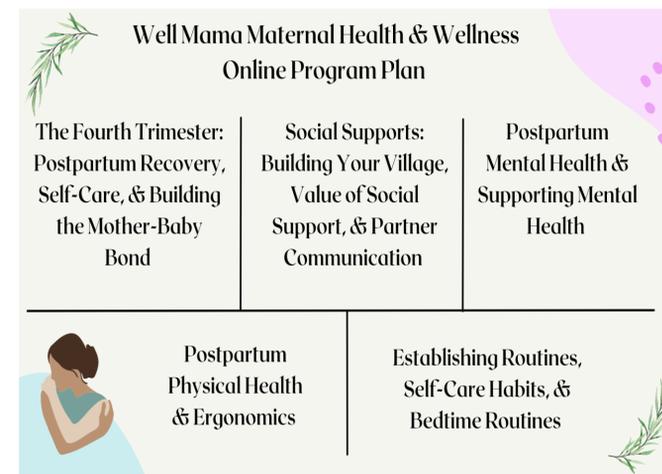
### Theoretical Framework:

Model of Human Occupation (MOHO)



### Program Content & Deliverables:

- Presentation to CDI staff on program plan and content, with outcome survey
- Program Outline



### 3. Supporting Content Created for Program

- Online Social Media Series: Self Care & Coping Skills
- Self-Care & Social Supports Worksheet
- Ergonomics Article for Blog/ Online
- Establishing Routines Log & Worksheet
- Postpartum Health & Wellness Survey Results (Flipsnack)

### Program Outcomes: Staff Presentation

- ✓ Presentation increased knowledge base
- ✓ Would use this information in practice
- ✓ Information was understandable to the public
- ✓ Information was understandable for professionals
- ✓ Materials and handouts reinforced and supported content