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## Enhancing Co-Occupation of Play For Families Experiencing Homelessness

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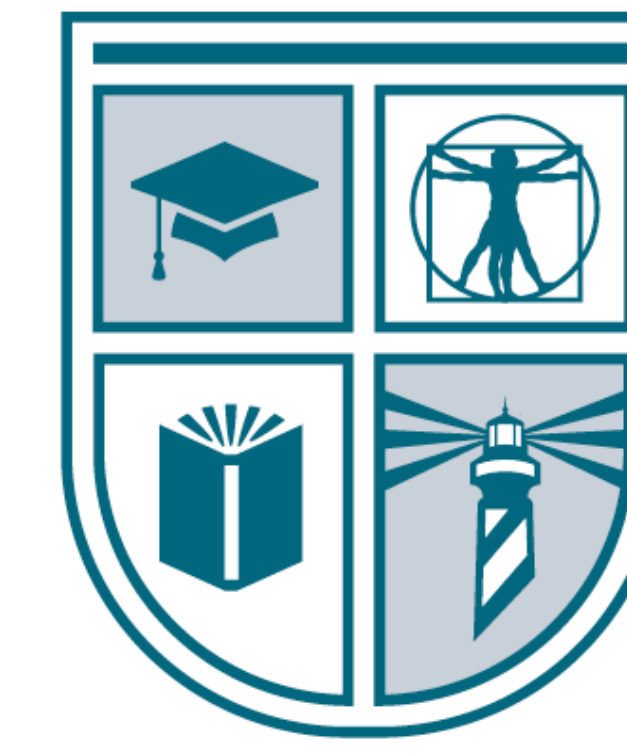
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# Enhancing Co-Occupation of Play For Families Experiencing Homelessness

Vienna Vargas, OTS; Susan MacDermott, OTD, OTR/L  
Doctoral of Occupational Therapy Program



UNIVERSITY of ST. AUGUSTINE  
for HEALTH SCIENCES

## Background

- As of 2023, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development stated that approximately 653,104 individuals experienced homelessness in the United States ( U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2023).
- Parents who have experienced homelessness with young children stated difficulties in engagement in meaningful activities and social routines, including reciprocal play, bath time, and meal preparation, which is essential in development and early learning (O'Donnell & McKinnon, 2022).
- Parents provide an essential role in their children's play experiences (Dhas et al., 2022).
- OT's role in identifying an individual environment to determine how it affects their occupational engagement (Schultz-Krohn & Tyminski, 2018).

## Problem

Parents who have experienced homelessness often lack autonomy in selecting appropriate health-promoting occupations for their children and themselves due to the lack of resources, time, and knowledge (Schultz-Krohn, 2004; Townsend & Wilcock, 2004).

## Purpose

The aim of this program is to promote access to healthy play co-occupations for lower-income families.

## Site

- Mission Hope Empowerment Village
- Open Play Therapy

This project did not involve human subjects and does not require IRB approval.

## Methods

### Literature Review

- Occupational therapy's role in play-based programming
- Occupational therapy's role in serving individuals experiencing homelessness
- Benefits of play-based programming/mindfulness

### Needs Assessment

- Observations at Mission Hope Daycare Programming
- Observation with a pediatric occupational therapist at Open Play Therapy
- Formal interview with Mission Hope staff
- Play survey to families at Mission Hope

### Evaluation Plan

- Weekly knowledge checks with the children
- Feedback from parents/Mission Hope staff

### Theoretical Framework & Models

- The Parenting Occupation and Purposes Frame-Work
- Occupational Empowerment Model
- Model of Human Occupation

## Program

### Program Objectives

- Develop and implement an occupation-based play program for children focused on health promotion.
- Provide families the opportunity to engage in healthy play activities together.
- Provide families access to health -promoting occupations.

### Group Members

- Children ages 2-8 years old residing at Empowerment Village

### Program Structure

- Week 1: Introduction/Yoga
- Week 2: Movement
- Week 3: Story Time
- Week 4: Sensory Play: Create DIY Sensory Tool
- Week 5: Sensory Play: Sensory Bins
- Week 6: Exploring Our Senses
- Week 7: Social Play



## Deliverables

### Mission Hope

- Implementation of 7-week Playful Gatherings Program at Mission Hope
- Monthly calendar of weekly community events for Mission Hope families
- Manual of continued ideas/activities for Mission Hope programming
- Parent family booklet for play activities and resources



Affirmation Rock



Story Time



Calming Jars

## Implications

### Volunteers/Interns

- Volunteers/Interns continuation of implementing programming utilizing program manual.

### Occupational Therapists

- OT's benefit of connecting and providing structured play activities and community resources for families in lower economic settings.

## References & Deliverables



References



Deliverables

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