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## Occupational Therapy's Role in the Success and Positive Outcomes of Youth Within the Foster System

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**Occupational Therapy's Role in the Success and Positive Outcomes of Youth Within the  
Foster System**

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Department of Occupational Therapy, University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences

A Capstone Presented in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirement for the Degree of  
DOCTOR OF OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY  
University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences  
August 2024

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

This capstone proposal will discuss the development of an occupational therapy program to support the needs of youth within the foster system to prepare this population to live independently. Background information including statistics, the need for occupational therapy, and the program specifics such as rationale, significance, and objectives will be discussed. The development of an occupational therapy program to aid in the success of youth within the foster care system helps to close a gap in research that will contribute to the success and positive outcomes of this population as they transition to independent living.

### **Background**

Nearly 440,000 children are placed within the foster care system in the United States (Bullinger et al., 2021). Around 24,000 youth age out of the United States foster care system each year (Armstrong-Heimsoth et al., 2020). While some states allow youth to stay in the foster system until 21 years of age, in Texas, the state is no longer responsible for individuals in foster care upon turning 18. Of these 440,000 foster children, up to 80% face significant mental health issues compared to an estimated 18-22% of the general population (National Conference of State Legislatures [NCSL], 2019). Of that 80%, 40-60% of these foster care children are diagnosed with at least one psychiatric disorder, and 25% of these children are diagnosed with PTSD (American Occupational Therapy Association [AOTA], 2021).

When children are removed from their homes, they suffer a traumatic experience that is coupled with any previous trauma (usually surrounding the reason for their removal) alongside any difficulties faced transitioning into the foster system (NCSL, 2019). This continued stress is harmful to a child's developing skills including the areas of social participation, relationship development, cognition, and emotional self-regulation (Armstrong-Heimsoth et al., 2020). These

effects are only multiplied when a child exits the foster system and is individually faced with struggles regarding housing, finances, employment, healthcare, and transportation. By providing support and tools for foster children who are still within the system, occupational therapists can promote this population's success during and after their time in foster care.

Occupational therapists are well-equipped to assist this population in gaining life skills and preparing youth for their transition out of the foster system (Smith, 2022). Without support such as occupational therapy, children in foster care face obstacles such as substance abuse, homelessness, and unemployment upon aging out of the system. Further research is needed to determine how occupational therapists can best aid this population in developing skills needed for occupational participation and performance.

The Person-Environment-Occupational- Performance model (PEOP) is greatly applicable in guiding occupational therapy treatment for this population. The PEOP model demonstrates how an individual's intrinsic factors, extrinsic factors, occupation at hand, and occupational performance contribute to an individual's occupational performance and participation (Baum et al., 2015). The PEOP model will be used to guide the development of this capstone proposal.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Individuals within foster care face a wide variety of difficulties, including mental health difficulties and a lack of activities of daily living (ADL) and instrumental activities of daily living (IADL) skill acquisition, that would benefit from the implantation of occupational therapy services (AOTA, 2021). Youth in foster care may suffer from a wide range of diagnoses and difficulties at a higher rate than their peers:

There is growing evidence of the increased presence of developmental delays, significant behavioral difficulties, sensory processing deficits, posttraumatic stress disorder, major



depression, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, reactive attachment disorder, anxiety, neurocognitive deficits, socio-emotional deficits, and executive functioning deficits, among other health concerns in children in foster care as compared with their peers not in foster care (AOTA, 2021, p. 1).

According to Jones, youth in foster care report the greatest difficulty with managing money, completing self-care, and obtaining positive educational and work skills out of all the hardships they face (2014).

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this capstone proposal is to develop a program for youth in the foster system, aged 15 and older, to gain the life skills needed for independence in occupational participation of ADLs and IADLs. Children in foster care tend to have many contributing factors that lead to a decreased quality of life as they age and gain independence (AOTA, 2021). The training and education that occupational therapists can provide will allow these children to develop strategies and coping skills that will lead to an improved overall mental health status. By including functional activities that incorporate a wide variety of ADLs and IADLs, youth will develop skills and feel success as they move through the program and transition to independent living.

### **Project Rationale**

This program is intended to better meet the needs of underserved children within the foster system and encourage a better quality of life. Occupational therapists are well-equipped to assist this population with gaining life skills while in foster care and preparing youth for their transition out of the foster system (Smith, 2022). Implementing meaningful activities in a program for the population will allow greater social skills, autonomy, motivation, and

development of life skills that are necessary for success as children in foster care transition out of foster care and become more independent (King et al., 2022).

Areas of occupation that occupational therapists may focus on with this population include community mobility, financial management, home establishment and management, meal preparation and cleanup, safety and emergency maintenance, shopping, nutrition management, social and emotional health promotion and maintenance, communication with the health care system, medication management, education, work, and social participation (AOTA, 2020).

Occupational therapists can guide this population to better cope with their trauma and reduce its impact on individual's future outcomes. Occupational therapists can also prepare children for their transition out of the system and increase their independence in a wide variety of occupations (Smith, 2022).

### **Project Significance**

Youth in foster care have many overarching difficulties that lead to a decreased quality of life (Paul-Ward & Lambdin-Pattavina, 2016). A program that can target a wide variety of these difficulties would greatly benefit this population and enhance preparation for independent living. As the occupational therapy field shifts towards prevention, occupational therapists have a unique opportunity to intercept this population and increase their range of care within the community setting (Paul-Ward & Lambdin-Pattavina, 2016). By establishing a life skills group, children in foster care will have their basic needs for connection, competency, and autonomy met and gain greater support to become successful in a wide variety of occupations (King et al., 2022).

**Capstone Objectives***Learning Objectives*

- To complete a literature review on occupational therapy in the foster system before going to the site.
- To identify five occupational therapy-based interventions that will be beneficial for the foster care population.
- To develop a program to implement at my site to benefit youth in foster care.
- To create a list of current resources available to the foster care population.

*Project Objectives*

- To conduct a needs assessment on youth in foster care and related staff to determine gaps in this population's care that may be improved by the implementation of occupational therapy.
- To develop a program that may include topics and activities related to financial management, home establishment and management, meal preparation, shopping, education, work, social participation, driving, and community mobility.
- To implement the program's content with youth in the foster care system being the intended audience.
- To demonstrate an increase in scores on a standardized assessment by youth within the foster system participating in the program.
- To evaluate the program by gaining a post-program satisfaction rating from foster children and staff regarding the program interventions.

**Definition of Terms**

- Activities of Daily Living (ADL)- Activities oriented toward taking care of one's own body and completed on a routine basis (Occupational Therapy Practice Framework, 2020).
- Instrumentals Activities of Daily Living (IADL)- Activities to support daily life within the home and community (Occupational Therapy Practice Framework, 2020).
- Community mobility- Planning and moving around in the community using public or private transportation, such as driving, walking, bicycling, or accessing and riding in buses, taxi cabs, ride shares, or other transportation systems (Occupational Therapy Practice Framework, 2020).
- Financial management- Using fiscal resources, including financial transaction methods (e.g., credit card, digital banking); planning and using finances with long-term and short-term goals (Occupational Therapy Practice Framework, 2020).
- Home establishment and management- Obtaining and maintaining personal and household possessions and environments (e.g., home, yard, garden, houseplants, appliances, vehicles), including maintaining and repairing personal possessions (e.g., clothing, household items) and knowing how to seek help or whom to contact (Occupational Therapy Practice Framework, 2020).
- Safety and emergency maintenance- Evaluating situations in advance for potential safety risks; recognizing sudden, unexpected hazardous situations and initiating emergency action; reducing potential threats to health and safety, including ensuring safety when entering and exiting the home, identifying emergency contact numbers, and replacing

items such as batteries in smoke alarms and light bulbs (Occupational Therapy Practice Framework, 2020).

- Nutrition management- Implementing and adhering to nutrition and hydration recommendations from the medical team, preparing meals to support health goals, participating in health-promoting diet routines (Occupational Therapy Practice Framework, 2020).
- Shopping- Preparing shopping lists (grocery and other); selecting, purchasing, and transporting items; selecting method of payment and completing payment transactions; managing internet shopping and related use of electronic devices such as computers, cell phones, and tablets (Occupational Therapy Practice Framework, 2020).
- Social and emotional health promotion and maintenance- Identifying personal strengths and assets, managing emotions, expressing needs effectively, seeking occupations and social engagement to support health and wellness, developing self identity, making choices to improve quality of life in participation (Occupational Therapy Practice Framework, 2020).
- Communication with the health care system- Expressing and receiving verbal, written, and digital communication with health care and insurance providers, including understanding and advocating for self or others (Occupational Therapy Practice Framework, 2020).
- Medication management- Communicating with the physician about prescriptions, filling prescriptions at the pharmacy, interpreting medication instructions, taking medications on a routine basis, refilling prescriptions in a timely manner (Occupational Therapy Practice Framework, 2020).

**Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations**

Assumptions of this capstone proposal are that all youth in foster care have experienced trauma and lack needed support leading to negative outcomes that would benefit from the implementation of occupational therapy treatment. It is also assumed that all subjects will participate throughout the program and provide honest responses. Other assumptions include youth will display greater outcomes and preparation for independent living when given the opportunity to participate in hands-on learning and education alongside the expertise of an occupational therapist. It is also assumed that youth in foster care will be transitioning to independent living at the age of 18 in the state of Texas.

Limitations of this capstone proposal include the high-risk and vulnerability of the designated foster care population as well as the risk of behavioral outbursts. Limiting factors include a small number of participants, limited research, and lack of current occupational therapy practices with this population. Another limitation of this proposal is the application of the project to the general population, as the project is focused on foster youth in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. Time is a limiting factor as program implementation and data collection will be completed over a period of 14 weeks.

Delimitations of this project include ensuring that participants are youth aged 15-18 that are currently placed within the foster system, data collection of a total of 14 weeks, and the use of informed consent throughout the process. Consideration will be required during the creation and implementation of this project to ensure the protection of the targeted subjects. Training will be required to ensure the proper steps are taken in the event of a behavioral outburst, to ensure the safety of the staff and participants. An assessment will be used to determine program effectiveness which will be administered at the beginning and end of the project implementation.

A post-program satisfaction survey will also be used to determine participant fulfillment with the completed program.

**Conclusion**

This capstone proposal explores a gap in occupational therapy research, the determined needs of children within foster care, and the discussion for an occupational therapy-based life skills program to address these needs. The program's purpose, rationale, significance, and objectives, assumptions, limitations, and delimitations are also discussed.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

This section will focus on the current literature available regarding adolescents in foster care and interventions for this population used by occupational therapy and other disciplines. Five themes that emerged through a thorough literature review will be introduced and discussed below: issues faced by adolescents in the foster system, the current role of occupational therapy within the foster care system, interventions used by other disciplines, beneficial interventions that would aid with transitioning to independent living, and perspectives of youth that have experienced foster care. A final section will establish the conceptual framework guiding this project, the Person-Environment-Occupational-Performance model (PEOP). By reviewing current literature, current practices as well as gaps in research may be identified to ensure the creation of a research-based and beneficial program to benefit the transitioning of this population.

### **Difficulties Faced by Foster Care Youth**

The following portion of the capstone paper addresses the issues and difficulties faced by adolescents within the foster system. According to Deutsch et al., this population faces a wide variety of mental, behavioral, and developmental needs that may continue to affect them as they age, including health, social, educational, and occupational paths (2015). It is estimated that almost two-thirds of children in foster care have mental and behavioral difficulties, with developmental disorders ranging from 20% to 60% of the population with prevalence increasing with age and often continuing into adulthood. Lee and Morgan report that approximately 80% of this population suffers from mental health, developmental, or behavioral concerns (2017). According to Deutsch et al., the foster care population is most diagnosed with mental health



disorders such as attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, conduct disorder, oppositional defiant disorder, anxiety, and depression (2015).

This population has many adversities and deficits that may restrict their success in occupations and with the transition to independent living. Deutsch et al. report that the foster care population is four times more likely to have attempted suicide, five times more likely to have received a diagnosis of drug dependence, and six times more likely to have a diagnosis of posttraumatic stress disorder when compared to their peers in more traditional living situations (2015). Posttraumatic stress disorder rates of recovery are 28% for foster care alumni, compared to 47% for the general population (Lee and Morgan, 2017). This population also suffers from a wide variety of developmental and cognitive difficulties when compared to their peers due to complex trauma and early adversity including lower intelligence quotient (IQ), lower cortisol levels, difficulties with memory and problem-solving, improper emotional regulation, decreased gross and fine motor skills, impaired social interactions, lowered sensory processing skills, and affected self-regulation (Deutsch et al., 2015). Commonly, children are removed from their homes due to a form of abuse and an unsafe home environment, beginning their complex trauma and early adversity, such as neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse, abandonment, inadequate housing, parental incarceration, parental drug or alcohol abuse, or a combination of these factors (Smith, 2022).

This population faces a wide variety of added challenges upon beginning their journey of independent living that may hinder their success. According to Hernandez and Jaegoo, youth who transition out of foster care into independent living are faced with higher rates of unemployment, low levels of education, homelessness, early parenthood, criminal activity, and mental health problems (2020). The authors attribute these adverse outcomes to a lack of

financial, emotional, and social support from family members as well as a lack of education regarding community resources, sexual health and family planning, career training, educational assistance, time management, and budget and money management. The most common mental health problems of this population include posttraumatic stress disorder, alcohol abuse, substance abuse, and major depression (Hernandez and Jaegoo, 2020).

Lee and Morgan mirror the findings from above, stating that foster youth do not typically have the emotional, pragmatic, and financial support available that other transitional-age youth do (2017). This lack of support coupled with adverse events decreases this population's ability to succeed in independent living, and place them at high risk for a variety of negative outcomes:

Neglect, abuse, and trauma, disrupted attachments, unstable housing, multiple placements, fragmented schooling, disrupted social networks, poverty, and gestational exposures...increase the risk that foster care alumni will experience negative functional outcomes, including lower education attainment, unemployment, poverty, homelessness, food insecurity, mental health and substance abuse challenges, health problems, early pregnancy and parenthood, and involvement with the justice system. (Lee and Morgan, 2017, pp. 283-284)

Overall, youth in foster care face a high amount and wide variety of adversities that hinder their ability to successfully transition to independent living and leave them at risk for the negative outcomes discussed above.

### **Occupational Therapy within the Foster System**

This portion of the capstone will discuss current literature regarding occupational therapy's current role within the foster system. According to Smith, occupational therapy has a unique perspective and opportunity to recognize and address multiple areas of need for

adolescents in foster care, to aid in alleviating the impact of their childhood and complex trauma by engaging them in occupations that are meaningful and holistic (2022). Walker et al. also support the use of occupational therapy in this setting, stating occupational therapy has the ability to provide occupation-based interventions while implementing a trauma-informed lens to promote greater development and carryover of psychosocial skills, such as understanding their emotions, social participation, and social-emotional regulation (2022). The authors suggest that by encouraging skill development in these areas, this population may continue to develop skills to increase mental wellness through positive interactions and engagement in occupations. Occupational therapists understand the unique perspective of the environment and its effect on participation in individualized occupations, separating occupational therapists from other professionals who work with this population (Smith, 2022).

Although occupational therapy is well equipped to assist this population, greater gaps must be filled to better assist youth with their transition out of foster care such as individualized assessments and interventions, education and training program development, and the creation of screening toolkits (Armstrong-Heimsoth, 2020). Occupational therapy uses occupations as a means of intervention, which can be used to target a wide variety of physical, mental, and cognitive needs of this population (Smith, 2022). Occupational therapy is well equipped to implement interventions and strategies to promote healthy peer relationships, self and emotional control, and executive functioning skills to bring value, purpose, and meaning back into this population's view. By providing interventions that are individualized and meaningful, occupational therapists can target motivation and self-efficacy in youth in foster care to increase independence and ease the transition into independent living (Smith, 2022). Barriers to implementing occupational therapy services include a lack of trust and learned helplessness,

alongside pre- and post-discharge displacement; it is important that these barriers are addressed while implementing a program with this population (Armstrong-Heimsoth et al., 2020).

Current evidence-based occupational therapy interventions that are used with youth and have published research include the following: yoga, play, sports, creative arts, meditation, outdoor camps, video and computer games, productive occupations and life skills, and animal-assisted intervention (Cahill et al., 2020). Yoga and sports had moderate to strong evidence to support their use, play and creative arts had moderate evidence, and all other interventions were of low evidential strength as they were less beneficial than the previously listed interventions (Cahill et al., 2020). Although these interventions are not specifically used with the foster care population, these may be used within the setting as well. Overall, there is a large gap in the implementation of occupational therapy with youth in foster care, and by addressing this gap occupational therapists can further this population's success.

### **Foster Care Interventions Used by Other Disciplines**

The following section will focus on interventions used with the foster care population by disciplines outside of occupational therapy. According to Salazar et al., independent living programs have been established by the foster care system to provide educational support, financial skills, housing services, and employment training (2021). However, only 23.4% of older youth in foster care ages 16-21 attended a financial management service when given the opportunity, due to limited availability and the non-mandatory attendance policy. It was also reported that only 52% of 21-year-old aged-out youth had a checking or savings account, compared to 81% of the same-aged youth in the general population (2021). Although this statistic has risen to 72% according to more recent research conducted by Salazar et al., this

percentage is still lacking even with the implementation of current programs by the foster system (2021).

According to Deutsch et al., there are a variety of barriers affecting the medical and child welfare systems' ability to provide appropriate service delivery and improve outcomes for this population (2015). Horn and Spencer report that psychotropic medications are prescribed to foster youth 2 to 8 times more than other Medicaid-eligible peers (2018). Although medications are a great support when used appropriately, youth in foster care are being overprescribed, placing this population at risk for obesity and diabetic conditions. There is a national rise in the use of psychotropic medication prescription and usage and a lack of non-pharmacologic, evidence-based interventions to appropriately intervene with foster youths' mental health difficulties (Deutsch et al., 2015).

Another intervention used with youth in foster care is the youth-caseworker relationship which aims to increase participation in school and improve overall youth outcomes and resiliency (Jaramillo & Kothari, 2022). It is important to consider that caseworkers will not be available long term for this population's needs and should be considered a short-term support, further highlighting the need for foster care youth to establish supportive social relationships and skill acquisition. According to Chapman and Samuels, the inexperience and instability of social workers can lead to devastation for this foster youth, causing youth to lack yet another supportive and positive relationship needed for success (2020). Programs such as First Star Academies a national nonprofit that partners with school districts, universities, and welfare agencies promote life skills, academic skills, and support that foster youth need to transition to independent living and postsecondary schooling successfully. First Star Academies is a greatly needed and beneficial program, but with only 15 current programs in place through this nonprofit, many

foster youth are lacking the resources needed to gain the skills to allow for a successful transition to independent living. Although there are current interventions in place by other disciplines, outcomes are still bleak and require further support and attention to improve the success of youth in foster care.

### **Benefit of Program Development for Transitioning Foster Care Youth**

This section of the capstone paper will discuss areas of focus for program development to support the needs of youth in foster care. According to Paul-Ward, no occupation-based, client-centered, individualized independent skills programs and interventions have been developed even though the struggles of transitioning foster youth have been well-researched (2016). Many of the interventions are classroom-based, didactic, standard, and dimensionless, lacking controlled research to determine their effectiveness (Paul-Ward, 2014).

By lacking the opportunity to learn independent living skills in a hands-on environment, this population tends to have life skills completed for them, resulting in learned helplessness (Paul-Ward, 2014). This population would benefit from hands-on opportunities for IADL acquisition such as managing money, maintaining a home, and preparing meals (Smith, 2022). Foster youth would also benefit from opportunities to practice forming attachments and peer relationships, developing cognitive and education performance, and preparing to transition to independent living. According to Armstrong-Heimsoth et al., youth in foster care also report a higher level of sensory symptoms that may contribute to behavioral difficulties, and they would benefit from a program that includes coping and self-regulation techniques (2021). Some of the greatest difficulties that youth in foster care report include money management, self-care activities, and positive study habits (Jones, 2014).

### **Perspectives of Foster Care Youth**

This segment will discuss the perspectives of youth who have experienced foster care. A common perspective shared by this population is the importance of peer mentoring and youth-directed coaching. According to Ball et al., “youth in foster care frequently emphasize that an authentic emotional connection, feeling loved, comfortable, and secure are more important than legal permanency” (2021, p. 2). Packard and Benuto also support the idea of holding emotional support over tangible support, although both were seen as important by this population (2020). Hudson’s research states that this population has limited opportunities to receive career mentoring, but the data demonstrates that this population prioritizes career mentoring, finding trustworthy authority figures, and feeling that they deserve a good life (2013). The findings presented by Powers et al. also demonstrate that this population values youth-directed coaching and peer mentoring but requires the foundations of communication, respect, honesty, acceptance without judgment, support, encouragement, informal sharing, expressing appreciation, and reciprocity for the relationship (2018).

### **Person-Environment-Occupation-Performance Model**

The Person-Environment-Occupation-Performance model was originally developed in 1980’s and bridges the gap between the biomedical and sociocultural models (Baum et al., 2015). The PEOP model has three main domains: personal factors, environmental factors, and occupations. Personal factors include physiological, psychological, motor, sensory, cognitive, and spiritual influences including motivation, self-esteem, emotional state, strength, endurance, memory, decision-making, and many other individualized elements. Environmental factors include social support and relationships; culture, including values, beliefs, customs, and rituals; the natural and built environment; and tools. Occupations are activities, tasks, and roles that an

individual chooses or is required to complete. This model displays how these three domains are interconnected and how they each affect occupational performance; PEOP also displays how both intrinsic and extrinsic factors can influence occupational participation and performance, whether negatively or positively. Key principles of this model include client-centeredness, collaboration between patient and practitioner, and the value of incorporating patient goals. By using the PEOP model and its principles, a beneficial and individualized program can be structured to support the needs of youth in foster care by identifying their goals, personal factors, environmental factors, and occupations in order to positively affect occupational performance.

### **Conclusion**

This section explored five themes that emerged from a literature review regarding occupational therapy and its implementation in foster care as well as a section dedication to the introduction of the PEOP model. The identified themes were as follows: issues faced by adolescents in the foster system, the current role of occupational therapy within the foster care system, interventions used by other disciplines, beneficial interventions that would aid with transitioning to independent living, perspectives of youth who have experienced foster care, and use of the PEOP model with this population. By exploring current research, the needs of this population, current interventions, and areas for further implementation of occupational therapy with this population have been identified.



### **Chapter 3: Project Description**

The purpose of this capstone proposal is to develop a program for the use of occupational therapists to aid youth in the foster system in gaining the life skills needed for transitioning to independent living and promoting positive outcomes. This population is underserved and lacks the opportunities and relationships needed to participate in meaningful occupations and gain independent life skills. By creating and implementing a program that includes the areas of community mobility, financial management, home establishment and management, meal preparation and cleanup, safety and emergency maintenance, shopping, nutrition management, social and emotional health promotion and maintenance, communication with the health care system, medication management, education, work, and social participation, youth in foster care will be better prepared for their upcoming transition to independent living. With the guidance of this program, occupational therapists will be better equipped to encourage this population to increase coping skills to alleviate their trauma and prevent difficulties later in life, such as addiction, jail time, and health concerns (Smith, 2022). By assessing the needs of this population and the individualized needs of youth at the site, a thorough program will be constructed to promote successful participation in occupations and increased life skills.

#### **Process and Methods**

##### **Participant Description**

Participants of this program are youth in foster care aged 15-18 who are preparing for the transition out of foster care into independent living. Youth are in the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex in Texas. Participants have spent at least 1 year within the foster system, but time will not be required to be consecutive. Participants have been placed with a foster family though

Texas Baptist Home for Children. There were no restrictions for gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, language, religion, or current familial relationships.

### **Setting**

The setting for program development and implementation was at Texas Baptist Home for Children in Waxahachie, Texas, which provides resources to youth in foster care and their families. Each participant will be housed within the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex with a foster family affiliated with Texas Baptist Home for Children.

### **Recruitment**

Participants were gained through the site, Texas Baptist Home for Children. Texas Baptist Home for Children provided the opportunity to participate to all youth in foster care currently affiliated with the site that were between the ages of 15-18 through a detailed outline explaining the purpose, benefits, and expectations of the program. A signed consent form and assent form detailing participation expectations was collected from any interested party.

### **Design**

The design of this project is an education program which included a toolkit to direct participants toward resources that will benefit those transitioning to independent living. Examples provided within the toolkit include resources for driving, housing, cleaning laundry, grocery shopping, meal preparation, and health management. Training and hands-on learning opportunities were provided to participants to access and implement resources provided within the toolkit.

### ***Timeline***

The project was completed from March 25th, 2024, to July 19th, 2024, for a total of 14 weeks. During weeks 1-2, consent and assent forms were distributed and collected. During

weeks 1-4, a needs assessment was performed with the participants, which consisted of observation sheets, questionnaires, and interviews with youth in foster care and staff at the site. A life skills questionnaire was administered to each participant to establish baseline scores during weeks 3-4. During weeks 5-12, an educational program was developed, consisting of a toolkit and a timeline, and the program was implemented weekly at the site. During week 13, the life skills questionnaire was readministered to compare baseline scores, as well as a survey to gauge the effectiveness and satisfaction of the program will be completed by each participant and site staff. Week 14, the final week, consisted of providing a deliverable of the program to the site.

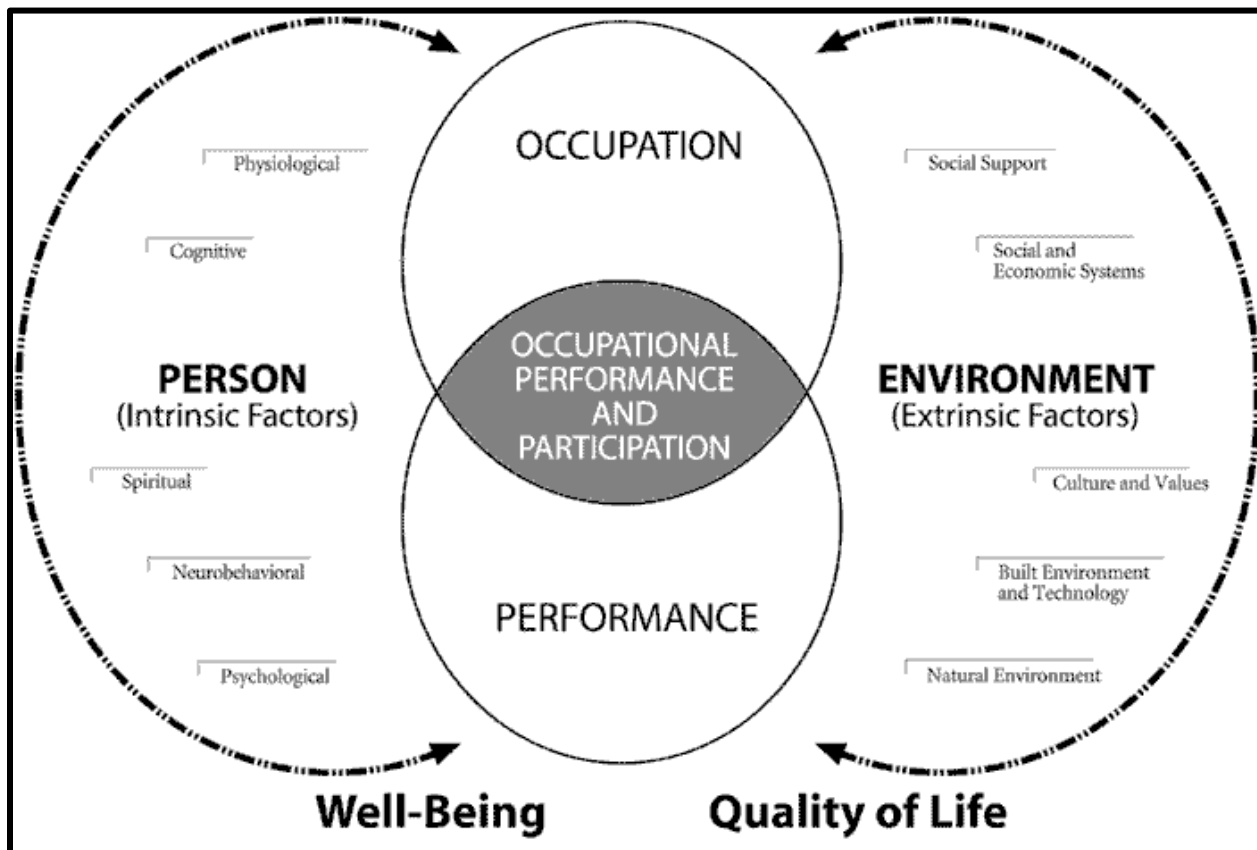
### **Conceptual Framework**

By implementing the Person-Environment-Occupational-Performance model (PEOP) to guide occupational therapy interventions and program development, holistic and individualized treatments were selected to improve outcomes for youth in foster care as they transition to independent living. As evidenced by the name, the PEOP model focuses on the individual person, their intrinsic and extrinsic environment, their chosen occupation, and their performance while completing this occupation (Baum et al., 2015). The interaction of the components of this model can be seen in Figure 1 below.

By considering a child in foster care, their current and transitional environment, occupations that they chose to and are required to participate in, and their performance with these occupations, a program was created that will best suit the youth's current and future needs to allow for increased positive outcomes. A life skills questionnaire was created in alignment with the use of the PEOP model and the occupational therapy practice framework. This questionnaire measures an individual's perception of their ability to complete basic living skills. The PEOP

model supports the use of a life skills questionnaire as it allows for identifying an occupation, the environment it is completed within, and the performance of this occupation by an individual. The PEOP model and occupational practice framework will be incorporated throughout each step of the development and implementation of this capstone project.

**Figure 1**



*The PEOP Model*

*Note.* Intrinsic and Extrinsic Factors and how they affect occupational performance, occupational participation, as well as overall quality of life and well-being.

**Measures**

Measurements used included a life skills questionnaire provided to participants, foster family members, case managers and other staff, as well as a post-program satisfaction survey.

The life skills questionnaire was completed by youth participating in the program both before beginning and upon completion of the program to determine the program's effectiveness in increasing independent living skills. The questionnaire assesses areas of basic living skills, including self-care, safety and health, money management, community mobility and telephone, and employment and leisure participation. A questionnaire was also provided to foster family members, case managers, and other related staff to determine participant strengths, weaknesses, and current level of functioning with ADLs and life skills. A post-program satisfaction survey was to be completed by participants at the site to determine the satisfaction of the program and its interventions by both numerical rating scales and qualitative questions.

### **Conclusion**

This project took place over 14 weeks with the aim of increasing independence and life skills for teenagers in foster care. The program was implemented at Texas Baptist Home for Children in Waxahachie, Texas with foster youth aged 15-18 who are preparing for independent living within the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex. The PEOP model guided the development and implementation of this program to ensure its interventions are holistic, individualized, and effective. Measures such as a life skills questionnaire and a satisfaction survey were used to determine the program's effectiveness. Youth participating in the program were given resources through use of a toolkit as well as hands-on training to increase their successful transition to independent living and reduce negative outcomes reported for this population. This toolkit includes local and national resources as well as strategies for coping, ADL, and IADL completion, and was provided to both participants and site staff. This toolkit can develop and expand to other areas or states, potentially influencing a large amount of foster youth in Texas and the rest of the United States.

## **Chapter 4: Results and Analysis**

Youth in foster care are impacted by many contributing factors that ultimately lead to decreased opportunities for learning and engagement with life skills activities. This population demonstrates decreased independence, participation, and performance with daily life activities that impact their future outcomes and quality of life. The purpose of this capstone project is to develop a program that increases youth's independence with ADLs, IADLs, and coping skills to improve this population's ability to successfully transition to independent living. Chapter 4 will further explore the needs of this population, summarize implementation of the capstone program, and state program outcomes and results.

### **Needs Assessment**

Youth in foster care have difficulty with communication with the health care system, medication management, education, work, social participation, financial management, home establishment and management, health management, meal preparation, shopping, education, work, social participation, driving, and community mobility. Based on the life skills questionnaire responses, thorough case reviews, therapy notes, and goals created by differing therapies, youth placed in foster care through Texas Baptist Home for Children mirror difficulty in the above areas and feel ill-prepared to transition to independent living. Specific areas of concern expressed by these youth included transportation, completing resumes and finding work, cooking, scheduling, online bill payments, medication management, impulse control, emotional regulation, bonding with peers and foster family, and preparing for higher education such as college or the military.

The capstone program was designed through selecting meaningful activities based on individualized needs. The PEOP model guided the creation of this capstone project, by

considering each participant's environmental factors, interests, strengths and weaknesses, as well as available support. By including activities that are meaningful to the participant the program provides opportunities to increase independence, motivation, and life skills needed to transition to independent living. The capstone program met its objectives of providing life skills training to participants, completing youth assent forms and family consent forms, conducting a thorough needs assessment, and development and disbursement of an educational toolkit.

### **Program Summary and Implementation**

The capstone program took place over 14 weeks at the Texas Baptist Home for Children in Waxahachie, Texas. Program participants were between the ages of 15-18 placed at the Texas Baptist Home for Children. Each selected participant had a permanency plan of independent living, were located within the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex, spent at least one year within the foster system, and were placed with a foster family through Texas Baptist Home for Children. No restrictions were made for gender, ethnicity, language, religion, sexual orientation, or current familial relationships. Potential program participants were identified through the current caseload at Texas Baptist Home for Children. Case managers were made aware if they had youth on their caseload that met criteria to determine youth's interest and availability. Youth were then recommended to participate by their assigned case manager at Texas Baptist Home for Children and provided the pre-program documents.

The first four weeks were focused on identifying possible participants, completing consent forms, a thorough needs assessment, and the life skills questionnaire. During weeks 5-12, participants were given the opportunity to participate in meaningful activities each week. The activities and needs assessment were then used to create the educational transitional toolkit. Weekly activities were created based on individual interest and needs, with life skill

development and the PEOP model in mind. An activity plan for each week can be found in Appendix K, and includes opportunities for growth in self-identity, cooking, financial management, communication, budgeting, transportation, and emotional regulation. To ensure longevity of this capstone program, the educational transitional toolkit was provided to participants and to the capstone site for current and future use. The educational transitional toolkit provides crisis resources, general resources, and opportunities for building life skills and can be found in Appendix E.

Supports of developing and carrying out the capstone program included the occupational therapy community, site staff, site resources, and current published research supporting the implementation of occupational therapy with youth in foster care. Challenges of carrying out the capstone program included funding changes and developments within the foster system, transitioning housing placements of youth, caseworker changes at the site and through the funding source, location of participants, youth aging out of the system during the program, developing permanency goals, timing and scheduling conflicts, willingness to participate, as well as barriers with communication to site staff and foster parents.

### **Program Outcomes and Analysis**

Means of analysis included analyzing case reviews, notes from therapy sessions and home visits, interviews from youth, family members, and staff, results from the life skills questionnaire, and previously Casey Life Skills Assessment scores to identify common themes between different youth who met criteria. A life skills questionnaire was developed with the intention of comparing pre and post program scores to measure program effectiveness. Only one participant returned the pre-program documents, although the needs of 8 youths meeting criteria were analyzed by the other above listed means.



Common themes that emerged from the needs assessment were transportation, completing resumes and finding work, cooking, scheduling, online bill payments, medication management, impulse control, emotional regulation, bonding with peers and foster family, and preparing for higher education such as college or the military.

The participant was provided with a post-survey and the life skills questionnaire upon completion of the capstone program. The participant and their foster family members were unable to provide post-survey and post-program life skills questionnaire responses due to external factors, limiting the ability to gauge the effectiveness and satisfaction of the program by participants. Based on responses from the site supervisor, some positive impact has been seen by the site through tools and resources provided to both foster homes and the site. The capstone program evaluation form can be found in Appendix F.

### ***Results***

Youth placed in foster care through the Texas Baptist Home for Children expressed their needs and areas of difficulty through a life skills questionnaire, weekly program notes with case managers and therapists, and through previous completion of the Casey Life Skills Assessment. Areas of difficulty expressed by this population included preparing for higher education such as college or joining the military, creating a resume and finding a job, finding transportation, cooking, scheduling, controlling their emotions and impulses, paying bills online, budgeting, and managing their medications. Several youths expressed reservations about transitioning to independent living, feeling unprepared, and lacking the needed knowledge and resources.

### **Conclusion**

Chapter 4 further explored the needs of youth placed in foster care, discussed the process of the needs assessment, and identified met program objectives. This section described the

capstone program plan and implementation including program participants, program activities, challenges and supports. Common areas of difficulty that emerged from analysis of the needs assessment are presented, demonstrating this population's needs to successfully transition to independent living. Program outcomes and results are displayed and discussed in this chapter, mirroring the findings of current literature exhibiting difficulties of youth in foster care which will be compared in Chapter 5.

## **Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusion, and Discussion**

The following will summarize the results of the capstone program, address strengths and limitations of the capstone project, provide final conclusions, and suggest future steps for occupational therapy practitioners and implications for youth within the foster system.

### **Summary**

Results from the capstone project found that youth placed in foster care in the Dallas-Fort Worth area feel ill prepared to transition to independent living and lack the resources and knowledge that they feel they need to succeed. Youth expressed decreased skills and preparedness in a large and variety of areas including preparing for higher education such as college or joining the military, creating a resume and finding a job, finding transportation, cooking, scheduling, controlling their emotions and impulses, paying bills online, budgeting, and managing their medications. In chapter 2, perspectives of youth in foster care were shared with some of the areas of greatest difficulty including money management, self-care activities, and positive study habits (Jones, 2014). Coupled with complex trauma, poor mental health strategies, and a wide number of adversities, this population lacks the support and opportunities for skill development as demonstrated by Lee and Morgan (2017). Analysis of this capstone project reflects the findings of the literature review regarding the needs and difficulties of youth placed in foster care and their ill-preparedness to transition to independent living.

### **Conclusion**

This capstone project reinforces current literature and demonstrates the wide variety of needs of youth in foster care. This population's needs are not being met, resulting in a lack of preparedness to live independently and leading to negative outcomes. By providing youth in foster care with opportunities to learn hands-on skills, such as this capstone project, this

population has the potential for greater preparedness and success when transitioning to independent living (Smith, 2022).

### *Strengths and Weaknesses*

Strengths of this capstone project include addressing an underserved and under researched area, providing opportunity for both youth and occupational therapy practitioners. Another strength of the project is the combination of knowledge from multiple areas of specialty, providing differing perspectives. This capstone project brings attention to the needs of youth in foster care and provides opportunity for development by occupational therapists to meet the needs of this population. This capstone project is research-based and guided with the PEOP model in mind. Weaknesses of the project include limited research and practitioners of occupational therapy with youth in foster care. Site selection was constrained to ensure the selected capstone site was able to meet objectives.

### *Limitations*

The foster system in Texas is currently going through regional changes following the elimination of group foster homes. These changes have affected availability to youth, funding changes, case manager assignments, policies, and communication within the foster system. These changes limited the number of participants included within this capstone project. Available participants were limited by the current cases under the site direction, youth location outside of DFW, youth with permanency goals differing from independent living (such as adoption and reunification), and youth aging out of the care at the beginning of the program. Activity selection was also limited to participant support, interests, available supplies, and scheduling. Participants were limited by inclusion criteria. The generalizability of the capstone

project is also limited, including youth aged 15-18 placed in foster care with the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex.

### **Discussion**

This population is underserved and lacks the necessary support needed to successfully transition to independent living. Occupational therapists have the knowledge and skills to bridge this gap to better prepare this population and serve their needs (Smith, 2022). The main objective of this capstone project was to provide opportunities for youth in foster care to develop ADL, IADL, and life skills and improve their future outcomes and quality of life. This capstone project was created with the intention of bringing attention to and providing resources to this population to increase their success. Although this project addresses a gap in research and practice, further steps must be taken by occupational therapy practitioners and other professionals who work with youth in foster care to combat these needs. This project and others like it benefit youth in foster care to aid in positive outcomes and address the long-standing failure of addressing this population's needs.

### ***Implications***

Policies related to youth in foster care must be addressed and researched to better serve their needs. By implementing policies that allow for greater therapy intervention, including occupational therapy, youth in foster care will be provided with the experience and knowledge to increase success. Curating interventions that are individualized, holistic, and effective will better assist this population and allow them to gain the needed life skills to transition to independent living.

### ***Recommendations***

The influence of occupational therapy with transitioning youth in foster care needs to be explored further to develop more consistent and beneficial interventions. The advantages of a group life skills group would be a beneficial area to explore for further research. Although this project was limited by external factors, the positive impacts of completing group therapy are displayed above. Further research, practice, and policy exploration is essential for occupational therapy practitioners in relation to foster care. Occupational therapy practitioners have the expertise and skill set to positively impact this population and influence their success, outcomes, and overall quality of life.

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**Appendix A: Life Skills Questionnaire-Youth**

**Life Skills Survey Questionnaire- Youth**

**I. Questions**

**Directions:** Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each of these statements regarding your personal experience. Place an "X" mark in the box of your answer. Be as honest as possible, this will only be used to select activities to assist you with gaining these skills.

	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
<b>1. I know how to prepare my own meals.</b>					
<b>2. I know how to open a bank account.</b>					
<b>3. I know how to pay bills online.</b>					
<b>4. I know how to write a check.</b>					
<b>5. I know how to navigate public transportation.</b>					
<b>6. I am satisfied with my current level of social participation.</b>					
<b>7. I know how to find resources on the internet.</b>					
<b>8. I know how to clean my bedroom, bathroom, kitchen, and other living areas.</b>					



**20. I can identify my strengths and weaknesses.**

**21. I am interested in attending a higher education such as a 2-year or 4-year college.**

**22. I am interested in attending a trades program, such as for welding or mechanics.**

**23. I understand sexual risks, risk reduction, pregnancy, and STDs/STIs.**

**24. I feel comfortable advocating for myself to health care professionals such as my doctor.**

**25. I know how to refill my medications.**

**26. I can shop, budget, and check out of a store by myself.**


**Q27: How would you rate your overall quality of life?**

- Highly satisfactory**
- Satisfactory**
- Neutral**
- Unsatisfactory**
- Highly Unsatisfactory**

**Q28: What meals do you know how to prepare? What is your favorite meal to make?**

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**Q29: What method of transportation do you plan on using after you graduate (i.e. bus, Uber, car)?**

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**Q30: What activities do you enjoy doing (i.e. dancing, singing, drawing, painting, sports)?**

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**Q31: What coping strategies are you currently using?**

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**Q32: What are some of your strengths?**

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**Q33: What are some of your weaknesses?**

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**Q34: What apprehensions or fears do you have about transitioning to independent living?**

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**Q35: How long have you been at Texas Baptist Home for Children? How long have you been in the foster system?**

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**Q36: What would you like know before you graduate?**

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**III. Demographic Data (Optional)**

**Name (optional):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Age:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Gender:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Number of Adults That You Trust:**

- 0**
- 1-2**
- 3-5**
- 6-10**

**Please list these adults here:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix B: Post Survey**

# PROGRAM SURVEY

Thank you for participating in this program! Please take a few minutes to review the program for any improvements to better serve you.

---

	Very Bad	Bad	Neutral	Good	Excellent
The activities I was given helped improve my life skills.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Completing more activities like these will help me feel prepared to live by myself.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have learned different ways to calm myself when I have strong emotions, such as anger or sadness.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cooking with my family makes me feel closer to them.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Completing the reflection and cooking activities made me feel satisfied.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I enjoyed doing the weekly activities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

---

How else can the program improve?

Your Name:

Date:

---



### Appendix C: Mentor Agreement Form

**Appendix C**  
**USAHS MENTOR AGREEMENT FORM & CHECKLIST**

To be completed by the Doctoral Candidate:

<b>Name:</b> Cassidy Solomon	<b>Date:</b> 11/21/2023
<b>General overview of capstone project:</b> Transitioning of Adolescents in Foster Care	
<b>Describe Mentor’s expertise area supporting the capstone project:</b> Dr. Jarrar has experience with mental health programs, mental illnesses, interventions with adolescents, a community girls’ group, and community-based treatment. Dr. Jarrar has experience with USAHS fieldwork and capstones, including at St. Augustine Youth Services which focuses on pre-independent living.	
<b>How will the Mentor’s expertise area support the capstone project:</b> Dr. Jarrar has both professional and personal experience in this area that will bring a unique and beneficial view to this population’s individualized needs. Dr. Jarrar is experienced with the fieldwork experience and expectations, and would provide adequate support to ensure my project is beneficial to the population and contains all needed elements.	

To be completed by the Mentor:

<b>Name (with credentials):</b> Rebekah Jarrar, OTD, MOT, MA, OTR	<b>Date:</b> 11/21/2023
<b>Phone/email:</b> 262-302-0022 rjarrar@usa.edu	<b>Preferred Method of Contact:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Phone <input type="checkbox"/> Email <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Text
<b>Number of years of experience in area of expertise:</b> 6	
<b>Describe experience in expertise area:</b> I specialize in pediatric mental health with a special interest in adolescence and teens.	
<b>Previous Experience with Capstone Students:</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	

**AGREEMENT**

I, Rebekah Jarrar , agree to the following:

1. I will serve as the OTD Capstone Mentor, working with this student throughout the OTD program from the time of signing this form until the student graduates.
2. I will provide advice and resources to the student as needed regarding identified area of expertise.
3. I have reviewed the Mentor Checklist and agree to the time expectations of this role.
4. I will participate in a mentoring meeting with my mentee at least once a month or as agreed upon with the student, from the time of signing this form until the student graduates, either virtually, by phone, or other negotiated form of contact.
5. I will communicate with the Doctoral Coordinator, Dr. Jan Greer, regarding any concerns or needs during the experience.
6. I have provided a copy of my Resume/CV.

*Rebekah Jarrar*

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Capstone Mentor Signature

Date: 11/21/2023

*Cassidy Solomon*

\_\_\_\_\_  
 OTD Student Signature

Date: 11/21/2023

*Cassandra Nelson, OTD, MOT, MBA, OTR, CNS, CEAS I*  
Cassandra Nelson, OTD, MOT, MBA, OTR, CNS, CEAS I (Aug 6, 2014-2019) [1]

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Doctoral Coordinator Signature

Aug 6, 2024  
 Date:

## Appendix D: MOU

APPENDIX D: MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Course Number: OCT 6731 & OCT 6832

Site Name: Texas Baptist Home for Children Site Supervisor: Philip Johnson

Address: 629 Farley St, Waxahachie, Texas Email address: pjohnson@tbhc.org

Phone: (972) 937-1321

Student Name: Cassidy Solomon Dates of experience requested: March 25<sup>th</sup>  
2024-April 19<sup>th</sup> 2024 and May 13<sup>th</sup> 2024-July  
19<sup>th</sup> 2024

Student ID #: 318619 Email address: C.Solomon@usa.edu

Phone: 469-369-9119

Mentor: Dr. Rebekah Jarrar

Doctoral Coordinator: Dr. Cassandra Nelson

**Topic:** This capstone proposal will discuss the development of an occupational therapy program to support the needs of children within the foster system in order to prepare this population to live independently.

**Objectives:** What the student will accomplish from this capstone experience. Objectives must be specific, measurable, and related to the program’s learning outcomes.

**Progress/Expected Completion Dates:** Expected completion dates estimated for specific activities and for entire experience. Example: Weeks/Hours per week/dates

Objectives	Progress/Expected Completion
To complete a literature review on occupational therapy in the foster system before going to the site.	5 hours per week/ March 15 <sup>th</sup> 2024
To identify five interventions that will be beneficial for the foster care population.	5 hours per week/ January 8th 2024- July 17 <sup>th</sup> 2024
To develop a program to implement at my site to benefit youth in foster care.	5-8 Hours a week/ July 17th 2024
To create a list of useful interventions for the foster care population before completing hours at the site.	5 hours per week/ January 8th 2024- July 17th 2024
To conduct a needs assessment on youth in foster care and related staff to determine gaps in this population’s care that may be improved by the implementation of occupational therapy.	5 hours per week/ January 8th 2024- July 17th 2024
To develop a program that may include topics and activities related to financial management, home establishment and management, meal preparation, shopping, education, work, social participation, driving, and community mobility.	5-8 Hours a week/ July 17 <sup>th</sup> 2024
To implement the program’s content with youth in the foster care system being the intended audience.	16-32 Hours a week/ July 17 <sup>th</sup> 2024
To demonstrate an increase in scores on a standardized assessment by youth within the foster system participating in the program.	Pre-scores: 32 Hours 1 Week By April 5 <sup>th</sup> 2024 Post-scores: 16 Hours 1-2 Weeks/ July 19 <sup>th</sup> 2024
To evaluate the program by gaining a post-program satisfaction rating from foster children and staff regarding the program interventions.	16 Hours for 1-2 Weeks/ July 19 <sup>th</sup> 2024

**Plans for Supervision:**

Supervision and mentoring will be provided on an individualized basis and dependent on the needs of the student and demands of capstone. The supervisory relationship will demonstrate a mutual understanding of expectations through continuous monitoring of set objectives.

Additional plans for supervision developed between student and site supervisor (as needed)

**Responsibilities of Student:**

Student will participate in 448-560 hours within the mentored practice setting

- Student initiate and track progress towards identified objectives
- Student will regularly communicate progress to all involved parties
- Student will seek regular feedback on performance

**Responsibilities of Doctoral Coordinator:**

- Ensures the consistency and quality of the capstone project and experience
- Responsible for guiding student through entirety of the curriculum in preparation and completion of capstone
- Advises and assists with securing capstone experience sites
- Ensure student has met site requirements

**Responsibilities of Site Supervisor:**

- Advise and assist regarding orientation, scheduling, resources, and requirements of site
- Provide feedback on student performance as needed
- Confirm student hours of participation

**Responsibilities of Mentor:**

- Effectively communicate their knowledge expertise through mutual understanding of expectations
- Provide feedback on proposal and paper
- Attend poster presentation, if able

Student Signature: Cassidy Solomon

Date: 02/28/2024

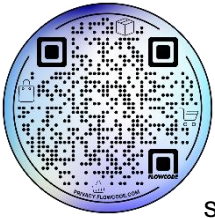
Doctoral Coordinator Signature: Cassandra Niles, OTD, MGT, MBA, OTR, CNG, CEAS I

Date: Aug 5, 2024

Site Supervisor Signature: Philip Johnson  
Philip Johnson (Aug 5, 2024 08:10 CDT)

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## Appendix E: Deliverable



### Transitioning Youth Out of the Foster System Through an Occupational Therapy Lens

This toolkit is intended to provide strategies and resources to increase youth's success in transitioning from foster care to a more independent living setting. This toolkit will be most beneficial for youth aged 15 and older. The two sections will be targeted directly to youth in foster care; the first section includes crisis resources while the second provides general resources as well as community events that can be used during or after this transition. The final section will include strategies to increase youth's skills and independence, and may also be used by foster care staff, foster parents, or family members. Any questions or updates regarding this toolkit can be directed to: [cassidysolomonot@outlook.com](mailto:cassidysolomonot@outlook.com).

**When I was growing up, I struggled with building and keeping healthy and consistent relationships. My father was not in my life, and I felt cheated that he did not teach me lessons that I felt I needed to be a successful adult. Although I was not placed in the foster system, I lacked the support and guidance from family that I was desperately craving. I remember how I felt while I was transitioning to independent living: scared, alone, unprepared, and lacking direction. Who do you turn to when you feel like you have no one? I wanted to help answer that question for others who felt like I did. I built this toolkit for youth like you and me, to feel supported and less confused through the scary process of transitioning to independent living. You are not alone.**

#### Why Is a Toolkit Needed?

Children in foster care face many adversities that may restrict their success in occupations and their transition to independent living. This population has difficulty with Activities of Daily Living and Instrumental Activities of Daily Living skill acquisition, social skills and social participation, poor mental health and coping strategies, as well as a higher percentage of behavioral difficulties. Foster care youth are four times more likely to have attempted suicide, five times more likely to have received a diagnosis of drug dependence, and six times more likely to have a diagnosis of PTSD when compared to their peers in more traditional living situations.

These difficulties and outcomes lead to a decreased ability to transition to independent living and an overall decreased quality of life. Youth who transition out of foster care into independent living are faced with higher rates of unemployment, low levels of education, homelessness, early parenthood, criminal activity, and mental health problems. Occupational therapists are well-equipped to assist this population. Occupational therapists understand the unique perspective of the environment and its effect on participation in individualized occupations, separating occupational therapists from other

professionals who work with this population. OTs can use a trauma-informed lens to develop emotional regulation and coping strategies and skill acquisition in a variety of occupations.

This toolkit is targeted towards current and former foster youth aged 15-23 who currently live within the DFW metroplex. With the help of occupational therapy practitioners, youth in foster care can increase success with independent living, increase participation and performance with occupations, and reduce overall negative outcomes. By bringing awareness to this population's needs and the benefit of occupational therapy treatment, we can increase knowledge, research, and funding to promote increased quality of life for youth in foster care.

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## Section One: Resources for Youth

Beginning the journey of independent living and leaving foster care can feel overwhelming, stressful, and a lot to handle. Section one of this guide is meant to help assist you with any questions that may arise regarding housing, education, official forms, beginning a job, and locating resources.

### Crisis Resources:

- **Dial 988**
  - Suicide and crisis lifeline is a national network of local crisis centers that provide free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week within the United States [Lifeline \(988lifeline.org\)](https://www.988lifeline.org)
- **Texas Youth Hotline**
  - Call 1-800-989-6884, text 512-872-5777 or chat with someone at: <https://www.dfps.texas.gov/youth-helpline/>
  - “The Texas Youth Helpline provides free and confidential services to youth, their parents, and other family members of youth in crisis who need help finding a counselor, safe shelter, legal information, other local referral information, or just someone to talk to.
  - Whether you contact us by phone, text, or chat, you are not required to share your name or address. We are not a reporting hotline, and we are not associated with law enforcement or Child Protective Services.”
  - You can also talk to other sources, like your caseworkers, guidance counselors at your current or former high school, or people who have already graduated.
- **Text HOME to 741741** from anywhere in the United States, anytime.
  - Crisis Text Line (CTL) is here for you. A live, trained volunteer Crisis Counselor receives the text and responds, all from our secure online and confidential platform. The volunteer Crisis Counselor will help you move from a hot moment to a cool calm. You can also visit: <https://www.crisistextline.org/> to explore resources regarding anxiety, self-harm, depression, suicide, eating disorders, and more.
- **Dial 211**
  - Dialing 211 is a way to connect with health and human services in your community. You can also visit [211Texas.org](https://www.211Texas.org) to access information regarding housing, employment, food/nutrition, crisis emergency, income/expenses, legal aid, disability, healthcare, mental health, substance use, education, or childcare.

## Shelter and Temporary Housing:

- **The Teen Project Shelter Finder**
  - Text SHELTER and your ZIP code (SHELTER 75254) to phone number 99000 from anywhere in the nation and receive a response with a local shelter.
- **AuntBertha**
  - Provides locations for housing, food, supplies, etc. that are local based on your zip code.
  - <https://www.auntbertha.com/?s=94>
- **North Texas Food Bank**
  - <https://ntfb.org/feedingnetwork/get-food-assistance/>
  - Through the above link, you can search local homeless shelters and residential programs. You will have to select “Homeless Shelters & Residential Programs” in the drop down menu.
- **ACH Child and Family Services**
  - Services for youth including emergency housing, supervised independent living, and other wrap-around services.
  - 817-335-4673
  - <https://achservices.org/en/programs/for-kids-teens/>
  - 3712 Wichita Street; Fort Worth, TX 76119
- **City House**
  - Transitional living home for homeless teens up to age 21.
  - 972-424-4626 (10 a.m.-3 p.m.)
  - 972-971-0278 (after hours)
  - <https://www.cityhouse.org>
  - 830 Central Parkway East, Suite 350; Plano, TX 75074
- **Fannie C. Harris Youth Center and Promise House**
  - LGBTQ-friendly services including emergency shelter, transitional living, counseling, and educational services.
  - 214-941-8578
  - <https://promisehouse.org>
  - 224 W. Page Ave.; Dallas, TX 75208
- **Jonathan’s Place**
  - Temporary emergency shelter, counseling services, and a 24-hour crisis hotline.
  - 972-303-5303
  - [www.jpkids.org/](http://www.jpkids.org/)
  - Main Office: 6065 Duck Creek Dr.; Garland, TX 75043
  - Fort Worth Office: 5049 Edwards Ranch Road, Suite 400; Fort Worth, TX 76107

- **Dallas Hope Charities**
  - Short Term Shelter for ages 18-24
  - Dallas, TX 75219
  - (214) 301-9407
  - Email: hope@dallashopecharities.org
  - <https://dallashopecharities.org/programs/dallas-hope-center/>
- **Elevate North Texas**
  - Emergency Shelter
  - Ages: 18-24
  - Carrollton, TX 75007
  - (214) 556-5916
  - Email: info@elevatentx.org
  - <https://elevatentx.org/>
- **Dunes LGBT Homeless Solutions**
  - Emergency Shelter + Short Term Shelter
  - Ages: 18-24
  - 4813 Trail Lake Dr, Fort Worth, TX 76133
  - (817) 902-3631
  - Email: info@duneslgbtfoundation.org
  - <https://duneslgbtfoundation.org/programs/>
- **Unbound Now**
  - 24/7 Drop In Center
  - Ages: Under 22
  - 1100 Hemphill Street, Fort Worth, TX 76104
  - (817) 885-7735
  - Email: theunderground@unboundnow.org
  - <https://unboundnow.org/>

## Food and Clothing Resources:

- **North Texas Food Bank**
  - <https://ntfb.org/feedingnetwork/get-food-assistance/>
  - Through the above link, you can find local food banks and access a schedule of upcoming mobile food banks that service 13-Counties in Texas: Dallas, Denton, Collin, Fannin, Rockwall, Hunt, Grayson, Kaufman, Ellis, Navarro, Lamar, Delta & Hopkins Counties
- **AuntBertha**
  - Provides locations for housing, food, clothing, supplies, etc. that are local based on your zip code.
  - <https://www.auntbertha.com/?s=94>
- **Catholic Charities Dallas**
  - Fixed and mobile food pantries that provide anyone facing hunger or food insecurity.
  - A schedule of upcoming pantries can be found at: <https://www.ccdallas.org/services/food-services/>
  - Locations in Dallas, Ennis, and Lancaster
  - Contact Edwin Chinchilla for more information: (972) 246-6027 or [echinchilla@ccdallas.org](mailto:echinchilla@ccdallas.org)
- **Minnie's Food Pantry**
  - Provides a drive through food pantry every Wednesday-Saturday 8:30am-11:30am (closed every fifth Saturday)
  - 661 18th Street, Plano, Texas 75074
  - (972) 596-0253
- **Helping Hands of Ennis**
  - Provides food, clothing, and financial assistance to qualifying individuals.
  - (972) 875-0218
  - 604 Northeast Main Street, Ennis, Texas 75119
  - <https://helpinghandsofennis.com/>
- **Fort Worth Community Collaborative**
  - Provides Free Clothing
  - All Ages
  - (817) 335-4673
  - Email: [contactus@fwcollab.org](mailto:contactus@fwcollab.org)
  - <https://www.fwcollab.org/>
- **Funky Town Fridge**
  - Community Fridge/Mutual Aid
  - Email: [funkytownfridge@gmail.com](mailto:funkytownfridge@gmail.com)
  - <https://www.funkytownfridge.org/>
  - 4005 Campus Dr, Fort Worth, TX 76119

- 8700 Chapin Rd, Fort Worth, TX 76116
- 1600 Circle Park Blvd, Fort Worth, TX 76164
- **Tarrant Area Food Bank**
  - Food Pantry, Assistance with Food Benefits
  - <https://tafb.org/find-food/>
  - 2600 Cullen Street, Fort Worth, TX 76107
  - (817) 857-7100
- **Attitudes & Attire**
  - Provides workshops for job readiness as well as provides clothing for women beginning work.
  - <https://attitudesandattire.org/>
  - 2050 N. Stemmons Freeway, Dallas, TX 75207 (World Trade Center)
  - (214) 630-1667
- **Dress For Success**
  - <https://dressforsuccess.org/>
  - The mission of Dress for Success is to empower women to achieve economic independence by providing a network of support, professional attire and the development tools to help women thrive in work and in life.
  - Use the above link to locate a location near you (International)

## General Resources:

### A Home Within

A nationwide service that provides free weekly therapy to current and former foster youth of any age. You can find the referral form at: <https://www.ahomewithin.org/clients/becoming-a-client/>.

### FosterClub

Space for youth up to the age of 26 who have experienced foster care. Provides updates regarding events, scholarships, clubs, community chat, internships, and other opportunities. An app is currently being developed. <https://www.fosterclub.com/members>

### YouthTakeFlight

You can follow @youthtakeflight on Instagram to stay up to date with current resources, opportunities, and news regarding youth current in and aging out of foster care in Texas.

### WAY Alliance

Provides youth (ages 14-24) who have experienced foster care with resources, mentors, and skills as well as recreational and social activities. <https://wayalliance.org/>. Located at 306 N. Loop 288, Suite 198 Denton, TX 76209 and can be reached at (940) 442-3990 or [info@wayalliance.org](mailto:info@wayalliance.org).

### iFoster

Provides youth with resources, an online personal assistant, and access to part-time and full-time job opportunities. <https://portal.ifoster.org/iFosterForYouth.aspx>.

### Transition Center

There is one Transition Center in each region. You can find each centers location here: [https://www.dfps.texas.gov/Child\\_Protection/Youth\\_and\\_Young\\_Adults/Transitional\\_Living/transition\\_centers.asp](https://www.dfps.texas.gov/Child_Protection/Youth_and_Young_Adults/Transitional_Living/transition_centers.asp)

What you can find at a Transition Center: Bus tokens, housing assistance, employment and education assistance, counseling, access to food and/or clothes, computer labs and Internet access, ETV and financial aid application help, financial benefits, limited case management for former foster youth ages 21 through 25, and case manager staff for aged out foster youth.

### Texas Foster Youth Connections

<https://texasfosteryouthconnections.org/>

Texas Foster Youth Connections provides general tips and information about foster care records, job opportunities, hotlines, housing, finance, education, healthcare, and other areas.

## Specific Needs Resources:

### Addiction Resources:

#### Texas Alcoholics Anonymous

See their site to find a meeting near you: [http://www.aa.org/pages/en\\_US/find-aa-resources](http://www.aa.org/pages/en_US/find-aa-resources)

#### Texas Narcotics Anonymous

See their site to find a meeting near you: <http://www.na.org/meetingsearch/>

#### Smart Recovery

Free online meetings for recovery from substance abuse, gambling addiction, sex addiction, and other addictions. <http://www.smartrecovery.org/community/calendar.php>

### Pregnancy Resources:

- **Abba's Heart Home**
  - A ministry of Texas Baptist Home for Children that assists with housing, counseling, schooling, transportation, adoption plans, financial assistance, job counseling, and life skills for mothers who are expecting and working an adoption plan.
  - Text: 972-573-6931
  - Email: [pregnancyservices@tbhc.org](mailto:pregnancyservices@tbhc.org)
  - <https://tbhc.org/expectant-mothers/>
- **TBHC Teen Pregnancy Care**
  - Offers parenting education, encouragement, social activities and programs, support with schooling/continuing education, support with job skills training, community resources, housing assistance, assistance with Medicaid and WIC, assistance locating child care, referrals for medical care or counseling, and services specifically for fathers.
  - 972-937-1321
  - Email: [teenpregnancy@tbhc.org](mailto:teenpregnancy@tbhc.org)
  - <https://tbhc.org/teen-pregnancy-care/>
- **Prestonwood Pregnancy Center**
  - Provides Ultrasounds, STD Testing, Pregnancy Test, Classes, Guidance, Family Resource Center, and more
  - <https://prestonwoodpregnancy.org/>
  - 972-428-4700
  - Multiple locations:



- Richardson Office- 690 W Campbell Rd Suite 150, Richardson, TX 75080 (Open Monday-Saturday)
  - Southwest Office- 7988 W Virginia Dr Suite 100, Dallas, TX 75237 (Open Monday-Saturday)
  - Mobile Unit- 18355 LBJ Freeway, Mesquite, TX 75150 (by appointment on Wednesday and Friday); 1050 N Westmoreland Rd, Dallas, TX 75211 (by appointment on Tuesday and Thursday)
- **Mid Cities Women's Clinic**
  - Provides Ultrasounds, Pregnancy Testing, STD Testing, Family Resources, and more
  - <https://mcwomensclinic.com/>
  - Call: 817-442-6147; Text: 817-512-8572
    - Serves the Hurst, Euless, Bedford, Keller, Grapevine, Haslet, Coppell, Southlake, Colleyville, Las Colinas, Irving, Arlington, Grand Prairie, North Richland Hills, Arlington, Grand Prairie, North Richland Hills, Richland Hills, Lewisville, Saginaw, Fort Worth, Haltom City, and Watauga area.
  - 201 Westpark Way, Euless, Texas 76040 (Monday-Thursday)
  - Mobile Clinic at 10321 U.S. 287, Fort Worth, TX 76131 (Monday, Wednesday, Friday)
- **FirstLook: A Sexual Health & Pregnancy Center**
  - 972-938-7900
  - 213 YMCA Drive, Waxahachie, TX 75165 (Monday-Thursday and Fridays by Appointment Only)
  - Clinic: STI Testing and Treatment, Pregnancy Testing, Ultrasound, Abortion Pill Reversal, Domestic Violence Screening.
  - Education: Prenatal Classes, Parenting Classes, Adult and Infant CPR, Life Skills Classes.
  - Support: Pregnancy Options Counseling, Doula Support, Spiritual Mentoring, Bible Studies, Healing After Abortion.
- You can contact any local church and ask about their pregnancy resources in your area.

## LGBTQ+ Resources:

- **Dunes LGBT Homeless Solutions**
  - Emergency Shelter + Short Term Shelter
  - Ages: 18-24
  - 4813 Trail Lake Dr, Fort Worth, TX 76133
  - (817) 902-3631

- Email: [info@duneslgbtfoundation.org](mailto:info@duneslgbtfoundation.org)
- <https://duneslgbtfoundation.org/programs/>
- **Trans Pride Initiative**
  - Resources and support network for transgender individuals in the Dallas area.
  - 214-449-1439
  - <http://www.tpride.org>
  - 1300 South Polk Street, Suite 264; Dallas, TX 75224
- **Youth First**
  - LGBTQ-friendly services including low-cost mental health counseling, vaccinations and tests, transgender health services, HIV services, homework help, and GED prep.
  - 214-521-5124
  - <http://www.myresourcecenter.org/>
  - 5750 Cedar Springs Rd.; Dallas, TX 75235
- **Lambda Legal**
  - A legal organization focused on promoting the legal rights of the LGBTQ+ community. Information related to LGBTQ+ discrimination.
  - 214-219-8585
  - [https://lambdalegal.org/?\\_gl=1%2A132wl8e%2A\\_ga%2AMTM3MjM5NzEyNi4xNzE1Nzg1NTky%2A\\_ga\\_290ZG8GMP3%2AMTcxNTc4NTU5Mi4xLjAuMTcxNTc4NTU5Mi42MC4wLjA](https://lambdalegal.org/?_gl=1%2A132wl8e%2A_ga%2AMTM3MjM5NzEyNi4xNzE1Nzg1NTky%2A_ga_290ZG8GMP3%2AMTcxNTc4NTU5Mi4xLjAuMTcxNTc4NTU5Mi42MC4wLjA).
  - 3500 Oak Lawn Avenue, Suite 500; Dallas, TX 75219-6722
- **Austin Galano Club**
  - LGBTQ recovery programs in Austin.
  - <http://www.austingalano.org>
  - 6809 Guadalupe St.; Austin, TX 78752
- **Way Out at the Montrose Center**
  - Outpatient addiction recovery for LGBTQ and HIV-positive youth in Houston.
  - 24-hour helpline: 713-529-3211
  - <https://montrosecenter.org/>
  - 401 Branard Street; Houston, TX 77006
- **Black Trans Men Inc**
  - Advocacy, Peer Support in Dallas, TX.
  - 1-855-BLK-TMEN
- **Resource Center (Nelson-Tebedo Clinic)**
  - Advocacy, Community Resource, Cultural Competency Training, HIV/Aids Care, Hormone Provider, Low Cost Community Clinic, Reproductive Health, Social Groups (including Kiki and Ballroom groups and events with United

Black Ellument (UBE) for people ages 18+), Social Support, Support, Therapy, Training Resource.

- 214-540-4446, jcano@myresourcecenter.org; 4012 Cedar Springs Road, Dallas, TX, 75219
- **PFLAG Dallas**
  - Community Resource, Family Support, Peer Support, Social Groups, Social Support.
  - 972-849-0383, 11211 Preston Rd, Dallas, TX, 75230
- **Black Transwomen Inc**
  - Advocacy, Community Resource, Employment Services, Mentorship, Peer Support, Social Groups, Social Support, Support.
  - 855-255-8636, blacktranswomen@gmail.com; 3530 Forest Ln, Dallas, TX

## Resources for Independent Living:

If you choose to and can participate in Extended Foster Care, greater resources will be available to you- many resources in the guide are available to those within and outside of Extended Foster Care. [If you have further questions, please use the resources already available to you: a friend, case manager, an adult you trust, support group, church, coach, family member, work member, religious organization, or any of the crisis resources listed below.](#)

### Extended Foster Care Program

- Provides resources such as a Transitional Living Allowance and Aftercare Room and Board, Education and Training Voucher (which you can even get while you are in foster care), Aftercare Case Management and Former Foster Care Children's (FFCC) Medicaid.
- a young adult who ages out of foster care at age 18 is eligible for Extended Foster Care provided there is an available placement, the young adult signs a voluntary extended foster care agreement and meets at least one of the following conditions:
  - 18 up to 22-year-olds, and:
    - regularly attending high school or enrolled in a program leading toward a high school diploma or school equivalence certificate (GED); or is
  - 18 up to 21 years old and:
    - regularly attending an institution of higher education or a post-secondary vocational or technical program (minimum six hours per semester); or
    - actively participating in a program or activity that promotes or removes barriers to employment.
    - employed for at least 80 hours per month; or
    - incapable of doing any of the above due to a documented medical condition.
- For more information about Extended Foster Care Go to:  
[https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/Files/CPS\\_pg\\_x10400.asp](https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/Files/CPS_pg_x10400.asp)

### Supervised Independent Living (SIL) Program

- Part of the Extended Foster Care program that allows young adults to live independently under a minimally supervised living arrangement provided by a DFPS contracted provider.
- A young adult in SIL is not supervised 24-hours a day and is allowed increased responsibilities, such as managing their own finances, buying groceries/personal items, and working with a landlord.

- Living arrangements may include apartments, non-college and college dorm settings, shared housing and host home settings. You can find current SIL programs at:  
[https://www.dfps.texas.gov/Child\\_Protection/Youth\\_and\\_Young\\_Adults/Transitional\\_Living/Extended\\_Foster\\_Care/SIL\\_Contracted\\_Providers.asp](https://www.dfps.texas.gov/Child_Protection/Youth_and_Young_Adults/Transitional_Living/Extended_Foster_Care/SIL_Contracted_Providers.asp)
- Young adults must apply for and be accepted into the SIL program. For more information about SIL go to:  
[https://www.dfps.texas.gov/Child\\_Protection/Youth\\_and\\_Young\\_Adults/Transitional\\_Living/Extended\\_Foster\\_Care/supervised\\_independent\\_living.asp](https://www.dfps.texas.gov/Child_Protection/Youth_and_Young_Adults/Transitional_Living/Extended_Foster_Care/supervised_independent_living.asp)

### **Transitional Living Services**

“Transitional Living Services, programs, and benefits help foster care youth and young adults make the transition to adulthood smoother and help them identify and achieve long-term education, career, and life goals. Transitional Living Services begin at age 14 and may continue until age 23.

Transitional Programs for Young Adults over 18:

- Extended Foster Care and Return to Care
- Extended Court Jurisdiction
- Trial Independence Period
- Supervised Independent Living
- Youth Housing Program

Find more information at:

[https://www.dfps.texas.gov/Child\\_Protection/Youth\\_and\\_Young\\_Adults/default.asp](https://www.dfps.texas.gov/Child_Protection/Youth_and_Young_Adults/default.asp)

- **PAL (Preparation for Adult Living)** helps older youth in foster care prepare leave DFPS care and support and live as adults. Eligible youth up to age 21 receive services and benefits that help them become self-sufficient and productive adults. PAL services include life skills assessments, life skills trainings, a transitional living allowance, aftercare room and board, and case management services. PAL regional staff can help you with these services.
  - Youth and young adults in the PAL program are referred by PAL staff, CPS staff, and providers to local Workforce Solutions offices for help with the following:
    - Looking for a job
    - Getting ready to start a job
    - Learning about career workshops
    - Setting up a profile and job search on the WorkInTexas and Texas Workforce Commission websites
  - Supportive services (based on need and funding availability) may include:
    - Graduation items

- Counseling
  - Tutoring
  - driver's education fees
  - mentoring.
- A transitional living allowance of up to \$1,000 is distributed in increments of up to \$500 per month, for young adults up to age 21 who participated in PAL training, to help with initial start-up costs in adult living.
- Aftercare room and board assistance (ages 18-21) is based on need of up to \$500 per month for rent, utilities, utility deposits, food, etc. (not to exceed \$3,000 of accumulated payments per young adult).
  - \*\*\*Contact Regional PAL Staff for more information about all Transitional Living Services at:  
[http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child\\_Protection/Youth\\_and\\_Young\\_Adults/Preparation\\_For\\_Adult\\_Living/PAL\\_coordinators.asp](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Protection/Youth_and_Young_Adults/Preparation_For_Adult_Living/PAL_coordinators.asp)

## **Educational Resources:**

**Pursuing higher education can take many different forms. Whether you are interested in enrolling in a college or university, completing your GED, entering a trade, or joining the military, this section will be of assistance.**

### **GED Program:**

You must be 18 years of age to take the GED; if you are 17 or younger you must have permission from DFPS. If you are 21 or older, you can apply for financial aid and receive vouchers. The GED tests four sections: Mathematical Reasoning, Reasoning Through Language Arts, Social Studies, and Science. The test is in an online format and may be taken at a testing center or on a personal computer. At a test center in Texas each section will cost \$36.25, and online will cost \$42.25 per subject. The GED must be paid for with a debit or credit card, but the website gives instructions to register for an American Express Bluebird card if needed. Affordable study materials and classes are available on the GED website. Locate resources, sign up for a test, or find a testing center at: <https://www.ged.com/>. Lower cost testing centers can be found at: [https://www.ged.com/wp-content/uploads/accommodations\\_lower\\_cost\\_test\\_clinics.pdf](https://www.ged.com/wp-content/uploads/accommodations_lower_cost_test_clinics.pdf).

### **Trade School:**

There are many different trades available such as Plumbing, Auto Repair, Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC), Solar Installers, Cosmetology, Wood Working, Wind Turbine Service, Welding, Morticians, Electrician, Home Inspector, Chef, Tattoo Artist, etc. If you are interested in pursuing a job or career in the trades, you can find local trade schools at: <https://www.trade-schools.net/>. Alternative options for entering some of these trades can be found below.

### **Job Corps:**

Provides free residential career training and educational programs for low-income youth adults ages 16-24. Job Corps offers 10 different areas to choose from: advanced manufacturing, finance and business, hospitality, transportation, automotive and machine repair, health care, information technology, construction, homeland security, and renewable resources and energy. Job Corps provides free housing, nutritious meals, basic medical care, books and supplies, training clothing, a living allowance, and a supportive community. For more information, visit: <https://www.jobcorps.gov/>.

### **Registered Apprenticeships:**

Provides classroom instruction and assists with obtaining paid work experience. Offers pathways in many different areas: Advanced Manufacturing, Agriculture, Construction, Cybersecurity, Education, Energy, Financial Services, Healthcare, Hospitality, Information

Technology, Telecom, and Transportation. Further information can be found at:

<https://www.apprenticeship.gov/>.

**YouthBuild:**

Serves youth between the ages of 16-24 who are neither in school nor employed. The YouthBuild movement primarily serves young people who lack a high school diploma and financial resources. To locate a program near you, visit: <https://youthbuild.org/our-programs/>.

**FEMA Corps:**

FEMA Corps is a unique, team-based service program that gives 18-26-year-old participants the opportunity to serve communities impacted by disaster while gaining professional development experience. FEMA Corps members live, work, and travel in dedicated teams and serve 10-11 months (depending on membership type) with an option to extend for a second term. Members gain training and experience while providing important support to disaster survivors and communities. Members also earn a modest living stipend during their service and receive an education award upon completion of the program. To apply, go to: <https://www.fema.gov/careers/paths/corps>.

**YearUp:**

Year Up offers a job training program that is tuition free and is partnered with many well-known companies. Year Up is a 3-step job training program that takes 1 year or less to complete. The first phase of the program takes place in a classroom setting where you'll learn the ins and outs of your specific training pathway and develop professional and personal skills alongside a community that empowers you to reach your full potential. In the second phase of the program, you'll be placed into an internship where you'll apply your newly acquired skills. Finally, upon graduation from Year Up, support staff will guide you through every part of your job search to ensure success. To see what is available near you, visit: <https://www.yearup.org/job-training-programs>.

**Military:**

There are many different branches of the military to choose from when considering enlisting: Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Marine Corps, Navy, Space Force. To join the military, you must be either a U.S. citizen or have a U.S. Permanent Resident Card (Green Card), as well as speak, read, and write English fluently. Each military branch has different age limits and are dependent on if you are joining as an officer, join the Guard, or Reserve. Everyone that enlists must take the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB), have a high school diploma or GED, and pass medical requirements and a physical fitness test. If you are interested in more information or speaking with a recruiter, go to: <https://www.usa.gov/military-requirements>.



## College/University Resources:

### Choosing a College:

The following link will help you compare colleges based on location, size, programs offered, costs, graduation rates, and more: <https://collegescorecard.ed.gov/>

### College Benefits/ETV:

The Education and Training Voucher (ETV) Program serves eligible youth or young adults, ages 16 up to age 23 and are enrolled in a college, university or a vocational or technical program. Eligible youth may receive up to \$5,000 in financial assistance per academic year to help pay for basic living expenses while attending school.

Apply for the ETV Program at: <http://www.texasetv.com> or call toll free 877-268-4063.

Texas' institutions of higher education must help full-time students who were formerly in DFPS conservatorship or who have been legally emancipated to find temporary housing during breaks between academic terms.

### Tuition and Fee Waiver:

The college tuition and fee waiver provide exemptions from payment of tuition and fees at a Texas state supported college or university to individuals formerly in Texas state foster care and adopted youth who meet the requirements.

[https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child\\_Protection/Youth\\_and\\_Young\\_Adults/Education/state\\_college\\_tuition\\_waiver.asp](https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Protection/Youth_and_Young_Adults/Education/state_college_tuition_waiver.asp)

### SAT/ACT:

Before applying to a college or university, you will have to take either the SAT or the ACT exam. Most colleges do not have a preference between the ACT/SAT, so it is important to choose the test that fits your strengths best. To compare the ACT and SAT tests, visit: <https://blog.collegeboard.org/should-you-take-sat-or-act>. This website also provides free study materials as well as link to scheduling/sign-up for both exams.

### FASFA:

If you are planning on applying for college, it is important to start filling out your FASFA form. Colleges require this form and use this information to determine your eligibility for loans and financial aid. You will also be asked if you were foster care in the application. To complete this form, visit: <https://studentaid.gov/>. **This will need to be completed yearly.**

If you are a current foster youth over age 18, you might be eligible to receive extended foster care maintenance payments from your agency that may be provided to you directly in some instances for your room and board. Please note, foster care payments you receive should

not be reported on the FAFSA as a part of your income. If you are confused about what to report on the FAFSA or have questions on FAFSA completion, you can call 1-800-4-FED-AID (1-800-433-4243).

### **Foster Care Liaison:**

Every school is required to have a foster care liaison available to assist and advocate for youth who are currently in or who have aged out of foster care. To find the name and contact for the foster care liaison at any school, go to <https://www.highered.texas.gov/>, select the search icons, and search “foster care liaison listing”. Download and open the Excel spreadsheet to access the list.

### **Scholarships:**

Applying for scholarships is a great way to avoid loans and debt while in school. Many scholarships are available based on location, program, grades, and selected school. Applying for as many scholarships as you qualify for may greatly benefit you, so make you search for these and take advantage!

- C. Ed Davis PAL Scholarship
  - These scholarships are for basic non-tuition needs for students interested in the field of law and majoring in government, political science, history, or other pre-law fields.
  - [https://www.dfps.texas.gov/Child\\_Protection/Youth\\_and\\_Young\\_Adults/Education/other\\_resources.asp](https://www.dfps.texas.gov/Child_Protection/Youth_and_Young_Adults/Education/other_resources.asp)
- Freshman and Sophomore Success Scholarship
  - Only students awarded the scholarship both semesters as a freshman may apply for the scholarship as a sophomore or as a 2nd year student at a Texas state-funded institution of higher education.
  - [https://www.dfps.texas.gov/Child\\_Protection/Youth\\_and\\_Young\\_Adults/Education/other\\_resources.asp](https://www.dfps.texas.gov/Child_Protection/Youth_and_Young_Adults/Education/other_resources.asp)
- Foster Care to Success Scholarships
  - Opens around May for each year
  - <https://www.fc2success.org/our-programs/information-for-students/>
- Umps Care Charities All-Star Scholarship
  - <https://www.umpscure.com/scholarship/all-star-college-scholarship/>
- National Foster Parent Association Scholarships
  - <https://nfpaonline.org/resources/scholarships/>
- The Youth Empowerment Scholarship
  - <https://www.tffa.org/membership/the-youth-empowerment-scholarship/>
- Soaring Scholars
  - <https://fosterangelsstx.org/programs/scholarship/>
- NFPA Youth Scholarships

- <https://nfpaonline.org/resources/scholarships/>
- Family Fellowship Scholarship Program
  - <https://academics.fosterlove.com/family-fellowship/>
- David E. Ballard Living Legacy Scholarship
  - Applicant must be pursuing a career in live entertainment. Field of study may include but is not limited to live event operations, production, music engineering, music business management, customer service, hospitality and/or other related fields.
  - <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/scholarships/david-e-ballard-scholarship>
- The Ultimate Scholarship Book 2025
  - Available in any public library.
  - Can be purchased here: <https://www.amazon.com/Ultimate-Scholarship-Book-2024-Scholarships/dp/1617601799>
- BigFuture Scholarships
  - <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/pay-for-college/bigfuture-scholarships>
- U.S. Department of Labor Scholarship Search
  - <https://www.careeronestop.org/Toolkit/Training/find-scholarships.aspx>
- Scholarship Search Program (FastWeb)
  - <https://www.fastweb.com/>
- Compare Scholarship search sites
  - <https://college-scholarships.com/scholarship-information/free-scholarship-searches/>
- Ask the financial aid office on your campus about where to locate scholarships, or search for them on your school's website.

### **Transferring Credits/Colleges:**

If you find that you are needing to transfer colleges for any reason, a great guide can be found at: <https://www.collegeraptor.com/find-colleges/articles/tips-tools-advice/credit-transfer/>.

To explore college and university transfer requirements and/or course equivalencies, visit: <https://www.collegetransfer.net/>.

### **Disability:**

If you have a learning or physical disability, you can request accommodations from your college. Even if you end up not needing the accommodations, it will reassure you and you can utilize them as needed. You can find accessibility statements of each school here: <https://tcdd.texas.gov/resources/higher-education-resources/>. If you need assistance, speak with your academic advisor or any staff member.

## Requesting/Filling Out Forms:

### Driver's License

If funds are available, Texas law waives certain fees related to applying for a driver's license or State Identification Card, for a youth in DFPS conservatorship or a young adult in DFPS paid foster care. Form 2042 is the waiver letter that DFPS provides to the youth or young adult, to present to DPS when applying for the driver license. The form establishes residency and replaces the need for form DL-5.

If you have any changes, such as your address or your name, you must update this information with the Department of Public Safety (DPS). To make these changes or schedule and appointment use the following link:

<https://www.dps.texas.gov/section/driver-license>

For any further questions regarding your driver's license, please refer to this resource guide: [https://www.dfps.texas.gov/handbooks/CPS/Resource\\_Guides/Driver\\_Licenses\\_for\\_Youth\\_in\\_Conservatorship\\_Resource\\_Guide.pdf](https://www.dfps.texas.gov/handbooks/CPS/Resource_Guides/Driver_Licenses_for_Youth_in_Conservatorship_Resource_Guide.pdf)

### Health, Dental, and Vision Insurance:

Healthcare coverage is available to youth or young adults who are transitioning or age out of Texas foster care. If you age out of foster care in Texas, you qualify for free health insurance until you turn 26. When you leave foster care when you are 18 or older, you should be automatically put on Former Foster Care Children's (FFCC) Medicaid Insurance. But you will have to take steps to stay on it until you turn 26.

After you no longer qualify for FFCC Medicaid Insurance, you will have different options to secure health, dental, and vision insurance. To find coverage options in your area, visit:

<https://www.healthinsurance.org/states/health-insurance-texas/>.

### Birth Certificate:

If you need a replacement of your birth certificate, please visit:

<https://www.texas.gov/texas-vital-records/>. You will need a valid ID, to complete the online application, and pay a fee.

### Social Security Card:

To receive a replacement Social Security card, visit: <https://www.ssa.gov/number-card/replace-card>.

### Passport:

To apply for your passport, go to: <https://www.usa.gov/apply-adult-passport>. You will need to fill out a DS-11 Form, provide proof of citizenship and an acceptable photo ID, provide a passport photo, and pay a passport fee. For the passport book, plan to pay around \$165.

For locations that can take and provide passport photos, go to:

<https://iafdb.travel.state.gov/>. Pricing for passport photos will vary, but you can always call the site beforehand.

### **Taxes:**

If you are working, you must file your taxes yearly, usually around April 15. You must file your taxes on time to avoid penalties and fees. For information about taxes, such as when to fill and how to file, is located at: <https://www.irs.gov/how-to-file-your-taxes-step-by-step>.

### **Credit Report:**

Your credit score is important when you are considering buying or renting a car, home, or even starting a new job. To understand why a credit report is important and how to access your own credit report, visit: <https://www.usa.gov/credit-reports>.

Every youth in the conservatorship of DFPS age 14 up to age 18 are informed that a credit report is run annually, until discharged from DFPS care. In addition to ensuring that the youth is notified that a report was run, the caseworker will explain the credit report and the importance of maintaining good credit. A young adult in Extended Foster care requests their own report at <https://www.annualcreditreport.com/index.action>.

### **Voting**

For information about how, when, and where to vote, go to: <https://www.usa.gov/how-to-vote>.

### **Food Stamps (SNAP):**

In Texas, The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). helps people buy the food they need for good health. People also can buy garden seeds with SNAP benefits. SNAP food benefits are put on a Lone Star Card and can be used just like a credit card at any store that accepts SNAP. To see if you qualify based on your income, to apply, and for more information, please visit: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/services/food/snap-food-benefits>.

### **CPS Case Records:**

A youth who has been discharged from foster care because he or she turned age 18 or has been legally emancipated may request a copy of their CPS case record at no charge. The youth must complete and follow the directions on Form 4885 Request for Records at: <https://ncaptureweb.airvbox.com/dfps-forms/4885/>.

The youth can also access Form 4885 Request for Records by:

- Contacting his or her former CPS caseworker.

- Contacting his or her PAL staff.
- Clicking on the legal section on Texas Youth Connection website.

**Bank Account:**

To find requirements for opening a bank account and for assistance determining what bank account type is the best for you, go to: <https://www.usnews.com/banking/articles/how-to-open-a-bank-account>.

## Activities and Events

- Sign up for a free account at **FosterClub** for events, scholarships, clubs, community chat, internships, and other opportunities. An app is currently being developed. <https://www.fosterclub.com/members>
- Follow **@youthtakeflight** on Instagram to view upcoming activities and events throughout Texas.
- **WAY Alliance** provides youth (ages 14-24) who have experienced foster care with resources, mentors, and skills as well as recreational and social activities in Denton, TX. <https://wayalliance.org/>.
- PAL Experiential Camp-A camp held annually for youth (when a contractor is available) aimed at increasing self-esteem, improving communication skills, problem-solving and having fun.
- PAL Statewide Teen Conference-An annual three-day conference held in conjunction with Texas Woman's University, offering workshops for youth that lead to self-sufficiency and independence.
- PAL College Conferences-Texas A&M San Antonio and Austin Community College; each host an annual two-day conference for youth to learn about and prepare for higher education opportunities to include vocational programs.
- Regional Youth Leadership Councils (YLC) or Youth Advisory Boards- Benefits of youth participation in a YLC include:
  - Opportunities for Community Services and Outreach projects to support foster youth
  - Advocacy training to ensure the voices of foster youth are heard and incorporated into policy and practice
  - Leadership building skills
  - Planning and facilitating events
  - Learn how to strategically share their story
  - Developing supportive friendships/caring adults
- Regional conferences or events- Regions provide teen conferences and other age-appropriate activities and events such as college conferences, back to school events, prom events, graduation celebrations, or holiday celebrations.

If you are interested in attending any of the statewide or regional events or have questions about services or resources, please contact your regional PAL Staff and let your caseworker know as well.

[https://www.dfps.texas.gov/Child\\_Protection/Youth\\_and\\_Young\\_Adults/Preparation\\_For\\_Adult\\_Living/PAL\\_coordinators.asp](https://www.dfps.texas.gov/Child_Protection/Youth_and_Young_Adults/Preparation_For_Adult_Living/PAL_coordinators.asp)

## Mentoring Opportunities:

Mentoring provides opportunities for relationship building and skill learning and has been researched to benefit both mentors and mentees.

- To gain a mentor:
  - <https://wayalliance.org/>
  - <https://www.bbbs.org/about-us/>
  - <https://www.mentoring.org/>
  - The Salvation Army Boys & Girls Club of Waxahachie
    - 620 Farley St, Waxahachie
    - (972) 937-7727
- To become a mentor:
  - <https://www.dfps.texas.gov/Community/Volunteer/Opportunities/mentor.asp>
    - Lists mentorship opportunities by region.
  - <https://4-h.org/>
  - <https://www.mentoring.org/>
  - The Salvation Army Boys & Girls Club of Waxahachie
    - 620 Farley St, Waxahachie
    - (972) 937-7727

## Support Groups:

- Foster Care Alumni of America
  - <https://fostercarealumni.org/texas-chapter/>
  - [TX.Chapter@fostercarealumni.org](mailto:TX.Chapter@fostercarealumni.org)
  - (512) 900-1631 (leave a message)
- Foster Club Community Chat
  - <https://www.fosterclub.com/members>
- Facebook Support Group (foster kids support group)
  - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1393270240795072/>
- Family Roots for Life
  - <https://www.eventbrite.com/o/family-roots-for-life-inc-69940056153>
  - Monthly, one-hour, virtual sessions for former foster youth
  - Must fill out intake form before joining

## Volunteer Opportunities:

- Statewide Youth Leadership Council (YLC)
  - Elected youth who were in the foster care system are able to make recommendations to improve services and policies
  - [https://www.dfps.texas.gov/About\\_DFPS/Public\\_Meetings/Advisory\\_Committees/default.asp](https://www.dfps.texas.gov/About_DFPS/Public_Meetings/Advisory_Committees/default.asp)



- Youth and Alumni Leadership Groups
  - <https://www.fosterclub.com/youth-alumni-groups#>
- Meals on Wheels
  - <https://www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org/americaletsdolunch>
- Habitat for Humanity
  - <https://www.habitat.org/volunteer/near-you/find-your-local-habitat>
- United Way
  - <https://www.unitedway.org/get-involved/volunteer>
- The Salvation Army
  - <https://www.salvationarmyusa.org/usn/volunteer/> (find locations near you)
- Waxahachie Corps (The Salvation Army)
  - 620 Farley St, Waxahachie
  - (972) 937-7727
  - <https://www.salvationarmyusa.org/usn/volunteer/>
- AmeriCorps
  - <https://americorps.gov/join/find-volunteer-opportunity#/>
  - Provides benefits such as covered living expenses for some opportunities
- Boys & Girls Clubs of America
  - <https://www.bgca.org/get-involved/volunteer/>

## Section Two: Activities and Life Skills Development

No matter our age or level of independence, we can always learn new skills and brush up on skills we have learned before. In this section, you will find occupational therapy-based activities to help you develop skills such as: work preparation, managing finances, cooking, making balanced and nutritious meals, grocery shopping, laundry, cleaning, transportation, medication management, communication with health care, and managing stress, emotions, and sleep.

### Work Preparation

#### Creating a Resume

Worried you will not be able to build a resume with little to no work experience? You can still make a resume to highlight your strengths and build a strong first impression. For resume examples, a step-by-step guide, and a resume builder for teens and young adults with little experience, [visit this link](#).

@[jacatwork](#) on TikTok covers all things career. She has a playlist of her resume tip videos.

#### Mock Interviews

The best way to feel prepared and confident for an interview is to practice. Ask a friend, family member, or co-worker to ask you some practice interview questions. You can find some typical interview questions with possible answers at:

<https://www.nhvweb.net/collegeandcareer/files/2017/01/Sample-Interview-Questions-and-Answers.pdf>.

@[hannagetshired](#) on TikTok has many videos about career building. This video shows you how to create your own practice interview questions using ChatGPT:

<https://www.tiktok.com/@hannagetshired/video/7209819414185676075>.

@[jacatwork](#) on TikTok covers all things career. She has a playlist of her interviewing tip videos.

You can find tips for before, during, and after a job interview at:

<https://www.bgca.org/news-stories/2021/June/interview-tips-for-teens/>.

#### Mock Job Applications

To practice filling out a typical job application, go to:

<https://www.careeronestop.org/Toolkit/Jobs/practice-job-application.aspx>.

#### Searching for Jobs

To search for a job as a teenager, you may consider using your age as the search (i.e. 17-Year-Old). While there are many different job search engines, my two personal favorites can

be found at: <https://www.twc.texas.gov/services/job-search> and <https://www.indeed.com/?from=gnav-homepage>.

If you are unsure if starting a job is right for you, or you need experience for the job before starting, you can find more information in the “Education” section above starting on page 20. You can also visit this page to select a pathway (find a career I like, finish high school, get a job, etc.): <https://www.careeronestop.org/GetMyFuture/default.aspx>.

The Uber Game is a semirealistic game that allows players to make decisions and try to pay their rent as an Uber driver: <https://ig.ft.com/uber-game/>.

### **Finding Clothing for Interviews and Work**

To find needed clothes for an interview or work, you can visit:

- Aunt Bertha
  - <https://www.auntbertha.com/?s=94>
  - To find free clothing near you enter your zip code, then go to Goods>Clothing>Clothes for work.
- Attitudes & Attire
  - Provides workshops for job readiness as well as provides clothing for women beginning work.
  - <https://attitudesandattire.org/>
  - 2050 N. Stemmons Freeway, Dallas, TX 75207 (World Trade Center)
  - (214) 630-1667

### **Managing Finances**

#### **Reality Check Yourself**

We all have a dream of what we want our life to look like, but do you know how much it will cost you to live that dream? Using the websites below you can see the level of income, types of jobs, and amount of money you will need to live your lifestyle now and your dream lifestyle in the future:

<https://texasrealitycheck.com/> and <https://www.jumpstart.org/education/reality-check/>.

#### **Budgeting**

This site gives templates for tracking your income, spending, bills, and to create a budget: <https://www.consumerfinance.gov/about-us/blog/budgeting-how-to-create-a-budget-and-stick-with-it/>.

If you feel like you need some practice with budgeting and/or you would like to make some goals with your budget, visit: <https://www.incharge.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Student-Guide-Lesson-Three1.pdf> and <https://www.moneyprodigy.com/teen-budget-worksheets/>.

### Writing Checks

Although you will typically find yourself using your debit card, Venmo, CashApp, etc., there may come a time when you need to know how to write a check. The following site gives a description of each section of a check, printable check you can practice with, and tips for using checks: <https://www.thesimplehomeschooler.com/writing-check-worksheets/>.

### Making Finances Fun

Below you will find a list of games that allow you to practice your budgeting and financial skills:

<https://mycreditunion.gov/financial-resources/hit-road-financial-adventure>

<https://www.gpb.org/education/lights-camera-budget>

<https://www.timeforpayback.com/>

<https://playspent.org/>

<https://fame.claimyourfuture.org/game/>

Interactive “game” that provides information about loans, money, and finances: <https://hntsam.com/>.

## Cooking

### Simplify Your Cooking

If cooking is not your strong suit, you can build these skills by practicing.

Start simple: think muffins, sandwiches, smoothies, soups (chicken noodle, ramen, pho), pancakes, pre-made frozen meals, premade/bagged salad, rotisserie chicken, boxed pasta, canned or frozen veggies, and premade or frozen hamburger patties.

Target and Walmart both have areas with premade food items (visit the deli section), and Target also has bagged meals in the Deli that provide all the ingredients you need to cook a meal (<https://www.target.com/c/prepared-meals-sides-deli-grocery/meal-kits/-/N-7doppZcq7po>).

### Use What You Have

Only have access to a microwave? No problem! Lots of meals can be made using just a microwave. Here are 25 different meals and treat ideas:

<https://www.tasteofhome.com/collection/recipes-you-can-make-in-a-microwave/>.

If you have a crockpot, many recipes allow you to place all the ingredients in the crockpot and allow it to cook without much work.

Websites such as <https://www.supercook.com/#/desktop> show you what recipes you can make, based on what you already have in your kitchen!

### Learn From Others

TikTok:

<https://www.tiktok.com/@arimonika>

<https://www.tiktok.com/@healthyfitnessmeals>

<https://www.tiktok.com/@benjixavier>

Instagram:

<https://www.instagram.com/calwillcookit/> (@calwillcookit)

[https://www.instagram.com/mealsandmunchies\\_/](https://www.instagram.com/mealsandmunchies_/) (@mealsandmunchies\_)

<http://instagram.com/joshuaweissman> (@joshuaweissman)

YouTube:

@JoshuaWeissman has many affordable recipes at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S-TmmjEN-V0> and at

[https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL4WiRZw8bmXt9q1\\_5MhZWqfhldFg3eINH](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL4WiRZw8bmXt9q1_5MhZWqfhldFg3eINH)

Easy online recipes:

<https://www.tasteofhome.com/recipes/cooking-style/easy-recipes/>

### Making Balanced and Nutritional Meals

It is important to make sure we are eating well balanced meals and drinking water to help our physical and mental health. When life is busy, it is important we plan out healthy meals

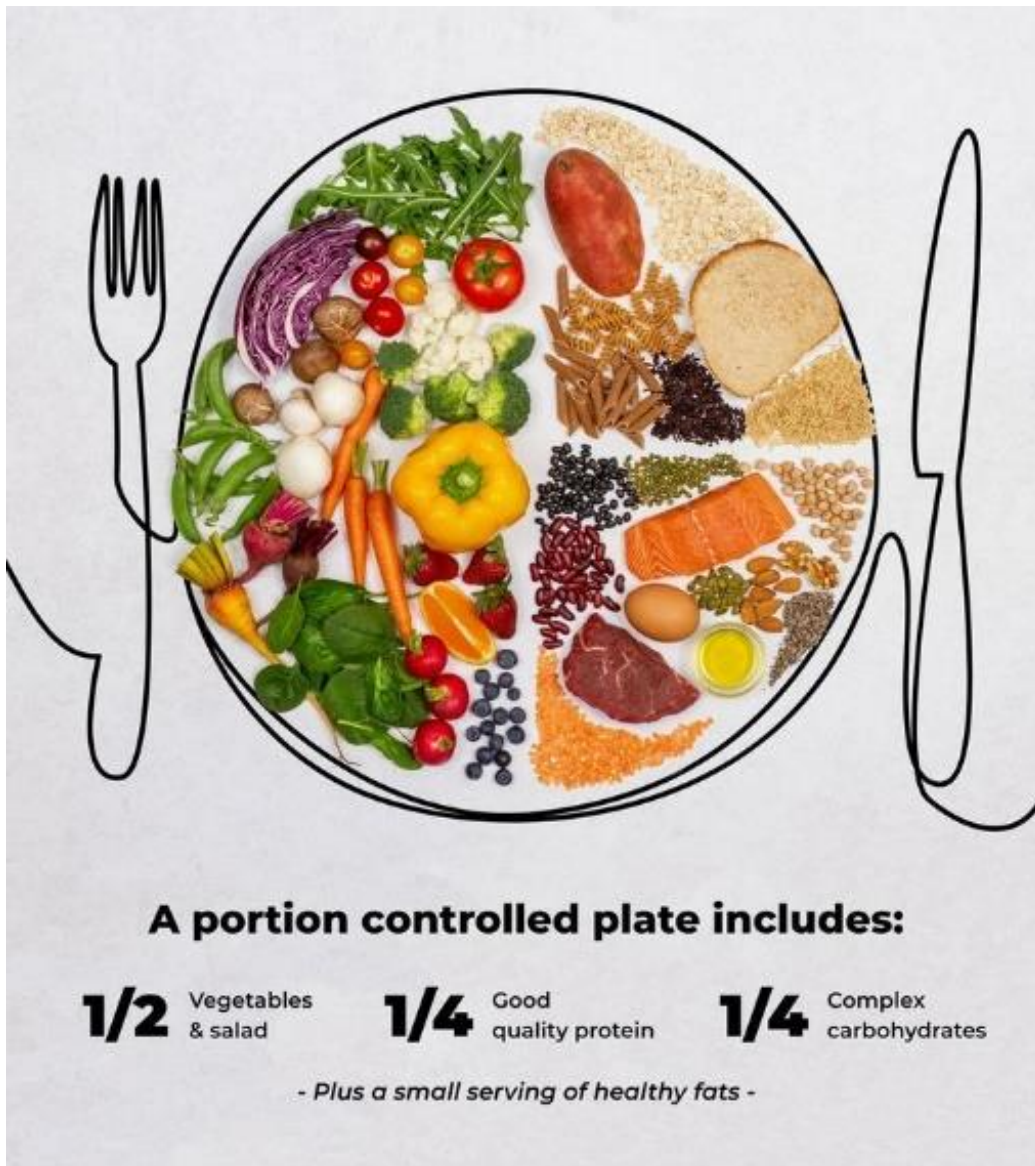
to keep us moving. This link will send you to a weekly menu planner, with a section to add needed groceries: <https://extension.usu.edu/nutrition/files/menu-handout.pdf>.

MyPlate provides tips, recipes, and resources for healthy teens at: <https://www.myplate.gov/life-stages/teens>.

For tips on eating better, getting fit, living well, or managing weight visit: <https://www.livestrong.com/>.

This blog has many tips about healthy eating and meal planning for teens: <https://mealsbymiles.com/meal-plan-for-teens/>.

Laid-back YouTube video showing how @philcofer shops aware and healthy at the grocery store: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=byjmCw-wBD8>.



## Grocery Shopping

There are many ways to make a grocery list; using notes on your phone, an app like AnyList or Mealime, pencil and paper, or using templates like this:

<https://extension.usu.edu/nutrition/files/menu-handout.pdf>.

Many of the above grocery shopping apps will allow you to compare prices and stay within your grocery budget. Other apps such as Walmart, InstaCart, and UberEats allow you to order groceries (and many offer delivery) but remember that delivery and the driver's tip will cost extra. Different grocery stores also have different prices for items; Walmart, Brookshires, and Winco tend to be on the lower price end while Target, Market Street, and Trader Joes are usually more expensive.

For "staple" items to place on your grocery list: <https://www.webmd.com/food-recipes/grocery-list>.

If you need practice with online shopping, you can find an exercise at:  
<https://health.utah.edu/occupational-recreational-therapies/colleagues-clinicians>.

## Laundry and Cleaning

### Cleaning Supplies

When you begin living on your own, you will need to get basic cleaning and laundry items. @CleanThatUp on TikTok shows how to build a start up cleaning kit at the dollar store for less than \$25: <https://www.tiktok.com/@cleanthatup/video/7145205162267741482>. You will also need laundry items such as a basket, detergent, dryer sheets, and stain remover.

### Checklist and Tips

If you find keeping up with cleaning difficult or overwhelming, you can find a checklist here: <https://creatingmaryshome.com/room-cleaning-checklist-for-tweens-teens/>. You may also like the tips found at <https://www.luxelilly.com/blog/laundry-101-essential-tips-for-beginners> and <https://www.verywellmind.com/the-neurodivergent-guide-to-cleaning-up-7372087>.





## Transportation

### Public Transportation

If you do not have your own car, there are many public transportation possibilities for you to use. While Uber and other Ride Share apps are convenient, the rides are expensive, especially for daily use. Bus and train routes will most likely be able to get you there and cheaper. The easiest way to plan a trip using public transport is using Apple Maps. By selecting the bus or “transit” icon, you can see available routes. The route will tell you which bus to get on, where to find the bus stop, stop to get off at, and guide your trip.

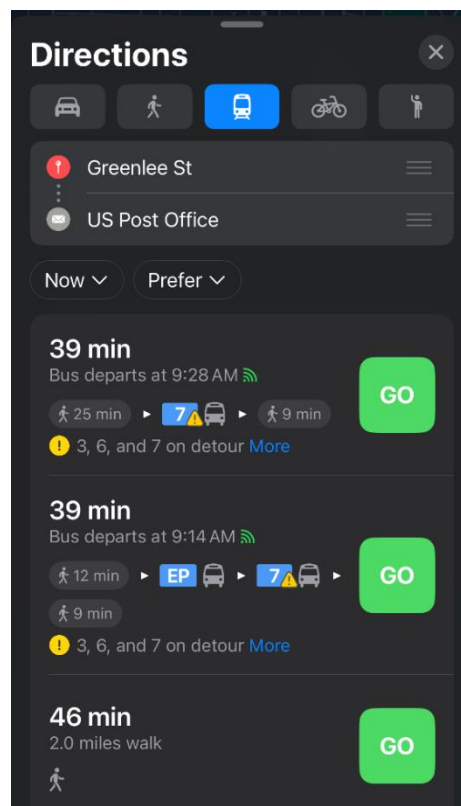
### Car Maintenance & Insurance

Buying and maintaining a car can be an expensive and intimidating, but exciting step! Here is a guide to help with any questions: <https://www.edmunds.com/car-buying/guide-for-first-time-car-buyers.html>.

This site helps you compare different auto insurances available in Texas: <https://www.helpinsure.com/>.

To enroll in a driver’s education class or for more information, please click [here](#).

The games found on this site are simulations that will help you prepare for driving, before getting on the road: <https://www.silvergames.com/en/t/car-simulator>. You can also participate in a scavenger hunt to improve your directional skills.



## Managing Your Medications

Medications can be expensive. If you have insurance, go to their website and find “preferred pharmacies” and your portion of the medication payment will be less. If you do not have insurance, <https://www.goodrx.com/> offers coupons for medications. You may also be able to ask the pharmacy for generic medications (that are less expensive than name brand). Setting up auto-refill can ensure you never run out of medication.

Taking your medication consistently will help it work best. Make it part of your routine: take them when you wake up or with a meal, set an alarm on your phone, download a pill reminder app (such as MyTherapy or Medisafe), and/or put them somewhere you see them every day.

A pill box will help you keep your medication organized. You can find one that works for you [here](#).

## Communicating with Healthcare

It is important when you talk to nurses, doctors, therapists, etc. that you tell them your concerns, feelings, and ask any questions you have. Ask questions and tell them your needs about your medications, symptoms, and care.

“I feel statements” may help guide you when you are unsure how to advocate for yourself:

- I feel... (insert feeling word)
- when... (tell what caused the feeling).
- I would like... (tell what you want to happen instead).

## Tips for Stress, Emotions, and Sleep



## In The Moment

There are many techniques to calm yourself in the moment, many of which you can find below. Some you may have heard of or used; some may be new. Try some or all of the exercises below to find what works best for you.

### 1. Breathing Exercises:

#### a. Bubble Breath

- i. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5DqTuWve9t8&t=5s>

#### b. Box Breathing

- i. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tEmt1Znux58>



#### c. 4-7-8 Calm Breathing

- i. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LiUnFJ8P4gM&t=3s>

### 2. Mindfulness Meditation

- a. A mental training practice that teaches you to slow down, release negativity, and calm both your mind and body.

## TEN STEPS TO MINDFULNESS MEDITATION



**Create time & space.**  
Choose a regular time each day for mindfulness meditation practice, ideally a quiet place free from distraction



**Set a timer.**  
Start with just 5 minutes and ease your way up to 15-40 minutes.



**Find a comfortable sitting position.**  
Sit cross-legged on the floor, on the grass, or in a chair your feet flat on the ground.



**Check your posture.**  
Sit up straight, hands in a comfortable position. Keep neck long, chin tilted slightly downward, tongue resting on roof of mouth. Relax shoulders. Close eyes or gaze downward 5-10 feet in front of you.



**Take deep breaths.**  
Deep breathing helps settle the body and establish your presence in the space



**Direct attention to your breath.**  
Focus on a part of the body where the breath feels prominent: nostrils; back of throat; or diaphragm. Try not to switch focus.



**Maintain attention to your breath.**  
As you inhale and exhale, focus on the breath. If attention wanders, return to the breath. Let go of thoughts, feelings or distractions.



**Repeat steps 6-7.**  
For the duration of meditation session. The mind will wander. Simply acknowledge this and return to your breath.



**Be kind to yourself.**  
Don't be upset if focus occasionally drifts or if you fall asleep. If very tired, meditate with eyes open and rearrange posture to more erect (but still relaxed) position.



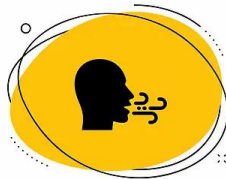
**Prepare for a soft landing.**  
When the timer goes off, keep eyes closed until you're ready to open them. Be thankful. Acknowledge your practice with gratitude.

- b. Progressive Muscle Relaxation  
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D7QoBABZu8k&t=2s>)
- c. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1dbYduxlpwE>

3. Your Safe Place/ Comfy Corner/ Cooldown Zone
  - a. Whether it is a room, corner, your bed, or a bench at the park-have a place that you can go to calm and ground yourself. Do your best to make it comfy and your own- pillows, blankets, your favorite colors, pictures, art, music, rugs, books.
4. Controlling Impulses
  - a. <https://www.theottoolbox.com/impulse-control-worksheets/>
  - b. Write down your triggers, ways to avoid these triggers, and how to handle when you do have to face these triggers.
  - c. Doodle, chew gum, use fidget toys.
  - d. Stop, Think, Act. You can place signs stating this around your home.
  - e. Get restful sleep and enough of it and have a healthy diet and exercise routine.
  - f. Delayed gratification tips and worksheets can be found here: <https://positivepsychology.com/delayed-gratification-exercises-worksheets/>.

### 3 Breathing Exercises for Stress Management

Deep breathing is beneficial to stay calm during a stressful situation.



#### Pursed Lips Breathing

- Inhale through the nose for 2 seconds.
- Pucker your lips, then exhale for 4-6 seconds.
- Repeat several times until you feel a slowed rate of breathing.

#### Square Breathing

- Sit upright with your back straight.
- Inhale for 4 seconds, then hold your breath for 4 seconds.
- Exhale for 4 seconds, then hold your breath for 4 seconds.
- Repeat.



#### 4-7-8 Breathing

- Sit upright.
- Put your tongue on the roof of your mouth near your teeth.
- Close your mouth, then inhale through the nose for 4 seconds.
- Hold your breath for 7 seconds.
- Exhale completely through pursed lips for 8 seconds.
- Repeat.



Read more at [www.projectfactor.com](http://www.projectfactor.com).

5. Making Goals to Keep in Mind
  - a. <https://www.theottoolbox.com/breaking-down-goals/>
  - b. <https://www.theottoolbox.com/free-goal-ladder-worksheet/>

### Activities to Help with Stress and Emotions

1. Something Creative:
  - a. Journaling, art (finger painting, coloring, painting, drawing), design shoes or a shirt, make jewelry, cook or bake a new recipe, write a song or wrap or poetry, start a blog, create a vision board, plant a garden or pot a plant, photography, origami, or make a miniature gardens or terrariums.
2. Something Active:
  - a. Yoga, recreational sports team, a walk in your neighborhood or in nature or in a park, take a bike ride, stretch, swim, workout or dance video, bury a time capsule, go geocaching, stargazing, paintballing, complete an obstacle course, or go to a smash room.
3. Something For Your Mind:
  - a. Listen to music, read a book, listen to a podcast, complete brain breaks, (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=30lpveNICwU>), make a list of things you are grateful for, write a letter to yourself at FutureMe.org, or complete a puzzle.
  - b. Think of 10 things that define who you are and make you special. Take your time. Write down your list. This can also be written on a mirror with sharpie. Put the list somewhere you will see it routinely, such as next to your bed or pinned up in your workspace.
  - c. Five Senses Scavenger Hunt
    - i. Take three deep breaths in and out. Walk around a yard, neighborhood, or home and use the five senses to find:
      1. five things you can see
      2. four things you can touch
      3. three things you can hear
      4. two things you can smell
      5. one thing you can taste
    - ii. Afterward, take a moment to reflect. It may help if a person thinks about questions, such as:
      1. Was one sense easier to use than others?
      2. Did you notice anything surprising?
      3. Which sensory experiences did you like or dislike?
4. Something Relaxing: Have a picnic in your yard or at a park, have a spa night, watch the sunrise/sunset, take a bath or shower, put on essential oils or your favorite scent, take or short walk, sit in the grass barefoot, or read a book under a tree.
5. Something To Do with Others: Make your own pizza night, movie night, game night, book club, minute-to-win-it challenges, scavenger hunt, yard games (ladder ball,

corn hole, twister, giant Jenga, limbo), water ballon/water gun battle, or escape rooms.

Appendix F: Capstone Experience Evaluation Tool

1

APPENDIX F: CAPSTONE EXPERIENCE EVALUATION TOOL (MIDTERM/FINAL)

The doctoral capstone experience evaluation process is customized in collaboration between the student and the site supervisor, to facilitate communication and document student progress and performance in the capstone experience.

Student Name:	Cassidy Solomon
Doctoral Capstone Experience Site and Address:	Texas Baptist Home for Children 629 Farley St, Waxahachie, Texas
Experience Dates:	March 25th 2024-July 19th 2024
Site Supervisor:	Jerusha McCrary (under the direction of Philip Johnson)

Description of the doctoral capstone experience:

TBHC cares for foster children and their families, by offering the support and resources needed for success. Many foster children would benefit from occupational therapy services, and TBHC provides an opportunity for expansion in the field of OT. While at the experience, a needs assessment will be completed, a program developed and implemented, as well as use of a standardized assessment.

Fundamental Learning Objectives	Progress
What does the student want/need to know? What skills does the student need to develop?	Supervisor will rate student's progress at midterm and final
<b>Fundamental Learning Objective #1:</b>  The student will demonstrate effective professional behaviors, to include: 1. Professional appearance (relative to the setting) 2. Integrity /honesty 3. Self-motivation 4. Time management 5. Dependable performance of duties as instructed 6. Empathy / compassion 7. Effective communication 8. Collaborative teamwork & tact 9. Respect for self and others (supervisors, peers, clients, and those of different backgrounds) 10. Client advocacy	Supervisor - Check one of the following:  <b>MIDTERM</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accomplished <input type="checkbox"/> Making Progress <input type="checkbox"/> Not progressing, needs attention  <b>FINAL</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accomplished <input type="checkbox"/> Making Progress <input type="checkbox"/> Not progressing, needs attention

2

Fundamental Learning Objective #1 - Comments	
Midterm	Final
Cassidy has remained professional and has been open to growing and learning.	Cassidy has been prompt and available, and has shown a great ability to work in a professional environment
<b>Fundamental Learning Objective #2:</b>  The student will demonstrate an understanding of the mission, values and vision of the experiences setting and follow all policies and procedures of the site as directed.	Supervisor - Check one of the following:  <b>MIDTERM</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accomplished <input type="checkbox"/> Making Progress <input type="checkbox"/> Not progressing, needs attention  <b>FINAL</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accomplished <input type="checkbox"/> Making Progress <input type="checkbox"/> Not progressing, needs attention
Fundamental Learning Objective #2 - Comments	
Midterm	Final
Cassidy has a passion to help kids in care which directly connects to our mission	Cassidy has shown love and support to our agency and has made sure to do this in line with our mission, values and vision.



3

<b>Collaborative Objectives</b> <i>For the student: These may reflect learning objectives identified in the student's capstone project proposal and adapted for the site. Collaborative objectives should reflect site priorities and experiences intended to meet the student's learning objectives. The number of objectives can be expanded as needed. Attach an addendum if required.</i>		<b>Progress</b> Supervisor will rate student's progress at midterm (week seven) and at the end of the capstone experience.
<b>Student /Site Objective #1:</b> To complete site orientation, complete internship on-boarding, and receive site expectations and procedures.		Supervisor - Check one of the following:  <b>MIDTERM</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accomplished <input type="checkbox"/> Making Progress <input type="checkbox"/> Not progressing, needs attention <input type="checkbox"/> N/A  <b>FINAL</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accomplished <input type="checkbox"/> Making Progress <input type="checkbox"/> Not progressing, needs attention <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
<b>Student /Site Objective #1 - Comments</b>		
Midterm	Final	
Cassidy completed all onboarding early on.	same as Midterm.	

4

<b>Student /Site Objective #2:</b> To conduct a needs assessment on youth in foster care and related staff to determine gaps in this population's care that may be improved by the implementation of occupational therapy.		Supervisor - Check one of the following:  <b>MIDTERM</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Accomplished <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Making Progress <input type="checkbox"/> Not progressing, needs attention <input type="checkbox"/> N/A  <b>FINAL</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accomplished <input type="checkbox"/> Making Progress <input type="checkbox"/> Not progressing, needs attention <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
<b>Student /Site Objective #2 - Comments</b>		
Midterm	Final	
Has begun this but continues to fine tune.	Cassidy has directly provided several homes with tools and resources to work on growth. Cassidy has also created a general resource for our agency to utilize.	

5

<p><b>Student /Site Objective #3:</b> To develop a program that may include topics and activities related to financial management, home establishment and management, meal preparation, shopping, education, work, social participation, driving, and community mobility.</p>		<p>Supervisor - Check one of the following:</p> <p><b>MIDTERM</b>  <input type="checkbox"/> Accomplished  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Making Progress  <input type="checkbox"/> Not progressing, needs attention  <input type="checkbox"/> N/A</p> <p><b>FINAL</b>  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accomplished  <input type="checkbox"/> Making Progress  <input type="checkbox"/> Not progressing, needs attention  <input type="checkbox"/> N/A</p>	
<p><b>Student /Site Objective #3 - Comments</b></p>			
<p>Midterm</p>		<p>Final</p>	
<p>Cassidy has been working hard to create a thorough resource list. This is still in progress.</p>		<p>Cassidy has completed her resource list. This is being provided to our agency</p>	

6

<p><b>Student /Site Objective #4:</b> To implement the program's content with youth in the foster care system being the intended audience.</p>		<p>Supervisor - Check one of the following:</p> <p><b>MIDTERM</b>  <input type="checkbox"/> Accomplished  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Making Progress  <input type="checkbox"/> Not progressing, needs attention  <input type="checkbox"/> N/A</p> <p><b>FINAL</b>  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accomplished  <input type="checkbox"/> Making Progress  <input type="checkbox"/> Not progressing, needs attention  <input type="checkbox"/> N/A</p>	
<p><b>Student /Site Objective #4 - Comments</b></p>			
<p>Midterm</p>		<p>Final</p>	
<p>Cassidy has worked with a few of our older kids but continues to work on impacting more kids.</p>		<p>Cassidy has work through the planning for adulthood process with several of our kids. she has seen some positive impact.</p>	
<p><b>Student /Site Objective #4:</b> To demonstrate an increase in scores on a standardized assessment by youth within the foster system participating in the program.</p>		<p>Supervisor - Check one of the following:</p> <p><b>MIDTERM</b>  <input type="checkbox"/> Accomplished  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Making Progress  <input type="checkbox"/> Not progressing, needs attention  <input type="checkbox"/> N/A</p> <p><b>FINAL</b>  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accomplished  <input type="checkbox"/> Making Progress  <input type="checkbox"/> Not progressing, needs attention  <input type="checkbox"/> N/A</p>	

7

Student /Site Objective #5 - Comments	
Midterm	Final
Completed initial. still needs to do final review.	Final review was completed and the scores collected
<b>Student /Site Objective #6:</b> To evaluate the program by gaining a post-program satisfaction rating from foster children and staff regarding the program interventions.	
<b>Supervisor - Check one of the following:</b> <b>MIDTERM</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Accomplished <input type="checkbox"/> Making Progress <input type="checkbox"/> Not progressing, needs attention <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A  <b>FINAL</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Accomplished <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Making Progress <input type="checkbox"/> Not progressing, needs attention <input type="checkbox"/> N/A	
Student /Site Objective #6 - Comments	
Midterm	Final
N/A	sent to families, await returns.

8

**MIDTERM Supervisor Evaluation of Student Performance**

Please check one:

- The student has made satisfactory progress toward objectives
- The student has NOT made satisfactory progress toward objectives (Please state why in the comments.)

The student has completed 253 hours of experience at this site at midterm

Site Supervisor Signature: *Jonisha McCrary MA* Date: 6/10/2024  
 Student Signature: *Cassidy Sabornie* Date: 6/10/2024

**FINAL Supervisor Evaluation of Student Performance**

Please check one:

- The student has met objectives and is recommended to pass the capstone experience
- The student has NOT met objectives and is NOT recommended to pass capstone experience (Please state why objectives were not met in the comments.)

The student has completed a total of 450 hours of experience at this site

Site Supervisor Signature: *JM McCrary MA* Date: 7/15/2024  
 Student Signature: *Cassidy Sabornie* Date: 7/15/2024

Doctoral coordinator to review and accept upon submission.

**Appendix G: Doctoral Capstone Coordinator Evaluation of Student Performance**

**Doctoral Capstone Coordinator’s Evaluation of Student Performance**

**Student Name: Cassidy Solomon**

**Term: Summer 2024**

**Professional Growth and Development**

*1. Assesses/identifies personal knowledge/skills and needs for learning.*

10 Meets Expectations	8 Nearly Meets Expectations	7 Needs Improvement	6 Unsatisfactory
Consistently initiates and engages in assessment process and identifies needs for knowledge/skills prior to and throughout the capstone process that are realistic given curricular foundation, level of education and experience. Consistently modifies plan as new needs arise.	Frequently initiates and engages in assessment process and identifies needs for knowledge/skills prior to and throughout the IP process that are realistic given curricular foundation, level of education and experience. Frequently modifies plan as new needs arise.	Occasionally initiates and engages in assessment process and identifies needs for knowledge/skills prior to and throughout the IP process that are realistic given curricular foundation, level of education and experience. Occasionally modifies plan as new needs arise.	Rarely initiates and engages in assessment process and identifies needs for knowledge/skills prior to and throughout the capstone process that are realistic given curricular foundation, level of education and experience. Consistently modifies plan as new needs arise.

*2. Effective Use of Time and Resources.*

10 Meets Expectations	8 Nearly Meets Expectations	7 Needs Improvement	6 Unsatisfactory
Consistently sets and prioritizes key tasks and is accountable for completing them and meeting deadlines.	Frequently sets and prioritizes key tasks and is accountable for completing them and meeting deadlines.	Occasionally sets and prioritizes key tasks and is accountable for completing them and meeting deadlines.	Rarely sets and prioritizes key tasks or has difficulty being accountable for completing them and meeting deadlines.

*3. Identifies resources and strategies to gain needed knowledge and skills.*

10 Meets Expectations	8 Nearly Meets Expectations	7 Needs Improvement	6 Unsatisfactory
Consistently initiates identification of consistently relevant resources, feasible strategies to gain needed knowledge and skills, and critically analyzes key information.	Frequently initiates identification of relevant resources, feasible strategies to gain needed knowledge and skills, and critically analyzes key information.	Occasionally initiates identification of relevant resources, feasible strategies to gain needed knowledge and skills, and critically analyzes key information.	Rarely initiates identification of relevant resources, feasible strategies to gain needed knowledge and skills, and critically analyzes key information.

*4. Reflection/Adaptation*

10 Meets Expectations	8 Nearly Meets Expectations	7 Needs Improvement	6 Unsatisfactory
Consistently reflects on and is responsive to constructive feedback, monitors progress related to acquisition of needed knowledge and skills, modifies communication styles and demonstrates flexibility with unexpected circumstances	Frequently reflects on and is responsive to constructive feedback, monitors progress related to acquisition of needed knowledge and skills, modifies communication styles and demonstrates flexibility with unexpected circumstances.	Occasionally reflects on and is responsive to constructive feedback, monitors progress related to acquisition of needed knowledge and skills, modifies communication styles and demonstrates flexibility with unexpected circumstances.	Rarely reflects on and is responsive to constructive feedback, monitors progress related to acquisition of needed knowledge and skills, modifies communication styles and demonstrates flexibility with unexpected circumstances.

**End Product: Capstone Paper**

**5. Formatting/APA**

10 Meets Expectations	8 Nearly Meets Expectations	7 Needs Improvement	6 Unsatisfactory
No more than 3 errors throughout the document: in-text citation, reference list, appendices, formatting. Demonstrates quality of writing: Writes in 3rd person without errors in spelling, grammar, or punctuation. Writes coherently, shows insight and own voice throughout the document, synthesizes literature with minimal use of direct quotes to convey points.	4-5 errors throughout document: in-text citation, reference list, appendices, and formatting. Demonstrates quality of writing: Writes in 3rd person. Minimal errors in spelling, grammar and/or punctuation. Writes coherently, shows insight and own voice throughout the document, synthesizes literature with minimal use of direct quotes to convey points.	6-8 errors throughout document: in-text citation, reference list, appendices, and formatting. Quality of writing needs improvement: Writes in 3rd person. Errors in spelling, grammar and/or punctuation. Synthesizes literature with frequent use of direct quotes to convey points	More than 8 errors throughout document: in-text citation, reference list, appendices, and formatting. Difficulty with quality of writing: Writes in 3rd person with multiple errors of spelling, grammar or punctuation. Lacks coherency. Frequent use of direct quotes to convey points

**6. Quality of Finished Capstone Paper**

10 Meets Expectations	8 Nearly Meets Expectations	7 Needs Improvement	6 Unsatisfactory
Includes all the following components: 1. Need for capstone project is identified: Background, problem, purpose, rationale, and significance are clear and supported. 2. Literature specific to the project/study is summarized and evaluated. Trends and gaps are identified and discussed. 3. Project process or methods are clearly described: described the planned capstone project as well as the process or methods that were	All components are included; however, some may be underdeveloped.	All components are included, however are underdeveloped and/or vague. There is not a clear connection between components.	Components are missing or incomplete. Lacks a clear connection between components.

<p>employed to execute project.</p> <p>4. Data/ outcomes gathered as part of the capstone project are reported objectively.</p> <p>5. Summary of project is comprehensive: Data/outcomes/results are interpreted, and conclusion are drawn. Limitations of the project are discussed and includes next steps.</p>			
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**End Product: Deliverable**

*7. Quality and Usefulness of Deliverable Product*

10 Meets Expectations	8 Nearly Meets Expectations	7 Needs Improvement	6 Unsatisfactory
<p>All 6 components are included:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Uses clear communication throughout the deliverable, including grammar, spelling, and other writing mechanics.</li> <li>2. Adapts deliverable to communicate to intended audience with an intent to advocate for and sustain the purpose of the capstone project.</li> <li>3. Designs a deliverable that is neat, attractive, organized, well-formatted, and professional.</li> <li>4. Designs a deliverable that has practical, programmatic, and/or clinical utility.</li> <li>5. Demonstrates accurate application of theories/models and literature in deliverable (as appropriate).</li> </ol> <p>Uses APA style to cite sources, all sources are timely and relevant.</p>	<p>All 6 components are included; however, 1-2 components may be underdeveloped.</p>	<p>All 6 components are included; however, 3-4 components may be underdeveloped.</p>	<p>All 6 components are underdeveloped.</p>

*8. Quality of Capstone Poster Presentation*

10 Meets Expectations	8 Nearly Meets Expectations	7 Needs Improvement	6 Unsatisfactory
<p>All components of the presentation are complete, correct, scholarly in content, and professional in tone, as is possible.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Title; Introduced self, site(?)</li> <li>2. Relevant Background presented</li> <li>3. Problem clearly stated</li> <li>4. Purpose or Research Question/Hypothesis clearly stated</li> <li>5. Project Objectives (included or communicated)</li> <li>6. Methods described appropriately for project</li> <li>7. Theory/Model/Framework (included or communicated)</li> <li>8. Results explained or presented appropriately for project (program, educational seminar, advocacy activities, research results)</li> <li>9. Conclusions discussed, to include OT implications (included or communicated)</li> <li>10. Delivery and Q&amp;A matched audience level of understanding</li> </ol>	<p>One component of the presentation is incomplete, incorrect, not scholarly in content, or not professional in tone.</p>	<p>Two components of the presentation are incomplete, incorrect, not scholarly in content, or not professional in tone.</p>	<p>Three or more components of the presentation are incomplete, incorrect, not scholarly in content, or not professional in tone.</p>

**Final Score**

<p><b>Sum:</b> Addition of scores #1-#8</p>	80/80
<p><b>Percentage Grade:</b> Divide sum by the total points possible and multiply by 100</p>	100%

**Appendix H: Life Skills Questionnaire- Caregiver**

**Life Skills Survey Questionnaire- Caregiver**

**Q1: What are some of the youth's strengths?**

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**Q2: What are some of the youth's weaknesses?**

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**Q3: Do they help you to prepare meals? What type of meals do they know how to prepare?**

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**Q4: Do they know how to complete their own laundry? Do they currently do their laundry?**

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**Q5: Do they know how to clean common areas such as the kitchen, bathroom, and bedroom?**

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**Q6: What other skills would you like them to have before they transition to independent living?**

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**Q7: Are there any coping strategies that have worked for your family? Are there any strategies that you would like further information on?**

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**Appendix I: Life Skills Questionnaire-Staff**

**Life Skills Survey Questionnaire- Staff**

**Q1: What are some youth behaviors you struggle managing?**

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**Q2: What are some current coping strategies that you implement?**

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**Q3: What are some of our youth's greatest challenges when aging out of the foster system?**

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**Q4: What are some needs or gaps of current foster youth that be addressed?**

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**Q5: What other skills would you like youth to have before they transition to independent living?**

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**Q6: If you have any resources that would assist our youth, case managers, or other staff please attach them here or email them to [c.solomon@usa.edu](mailto:c.solomon@usa.edu). I would like to create an organized and accessible way for the team to access these resources. Thank you!**

**Appendix J: Informed Consent Form****INFORMED CONSENT FORM****TITLE OF STUDY**

Occupational Therapy's Role Within the Foster System

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR**

Cassidy Solomon

University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences

Doctor of Occupational Therapy

c.solomon@usa.edu

**PURPOSE OF STUDY**

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Before you decide to participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read the following information carefully. Please ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information.

The purpose of this project is to develop an occupational therapy-based program to support the needs of youth within the foster system to prepare them for independent living.

**STUDY PROCEDURES**

This study will consist of questionnaires, a standardized assessment, activities intended to target life skills, and a post-satisfaction survey. Questionnaires will be used to assess participant and population needs. A standardized assessment, the

Casey Life Skills Assessment, will be completed both before and after program implementation to assess program effectiveness. Activities will be provided to the participant to be implemented weekly, which may be completed with or without the principal investigator or caregiver's assistance. Research is limited regarding occupational therapy methods with foster care youth, and some activities may be considered experimental with this population.

### **RISKS**

Participants may be at risk of injury during physical activities, such as during sports, games, or community outings. Locations will be screened for safety and participants will be given a debrief of any needed safety protocols. Protocols will be in place to protect any collected participant demographic information. Texas Baptist Home for Children and the researcher will not be held liable for any injury obtained during program participation.

You may decline to answer any or all questions and you may terminate your involvement at any time if you choose.

### **BENEFITS**

There will be no direct benefit to you for your participation in this program. However, we hope that the information obtained from this program may increase needed life skills to ease your transition to independent living. Your participation in this program will contribute to developing a project that will be provided to TBHC and participants, as well as contribute to current occupational therapy research.

**CONFIDENTIALITY**

For the purposes of this research project, your comments will not be anonymous to the primary investigator. Every effort will be made by the researcher to preserve your confidentiality including the following:

- Assigning code names/numbers for participants that will be used on all research notes and documents
- Keeping notes, assessments, and any other identifying participant information in a secured and locked building in the personal possession of the researcher.

Participant data will be kept confidential except in cases where the researcher is legally obligated to report specific incidents. These incidents include, but may not be limited to, incidents of abuse and suicide risk.

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

If you have questions at any time about this program, or you experience adverse effects as the result of participating in this program, you may contact the researcher whose contact information is provided on the first page. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, or if problems arise which you do not feel you can discuss with the Primary Investigator, please contact the Philip Johnson, the Foster Care Program Administrator of Texas Baptist Home for Children, at [pjohnson@tbhc.org](mailto:pjohnson@tbhc.org).

**VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION**

Your participation in this program is voluntary. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part in this study. If you decide to take part in this program, you will be asked to sign a consent form. After you sign the consent form, you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. Withdrawing from this program will not affect the relationship you have, if any, with the researcher. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed, your data will be returned to you or destroyed.

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**CONSENT**

I have read, and I understand the provided information and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason and without cost. I understand that I will be given a copy of this consent form. I voluntarily agree to take part in this study.

Participant's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Investigator's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix K: Caregiver Consent Form**

**CAREGIVER CONSENT FORM**

Name of Child/Student (herein referred to as Child):

\_\_\_\_\_  
First Name                      Last Name

Name of Program: **Occupational Therapy’s Role Within the Foster System**

I do hereby acknowledge, consent and agree to all of the following terms and conditions:

- I declare and represent that I am the parent or guardian of the Child (listed above).
- I declare that my child is physically fit and prepared to participate in this program. In consideration of their acceptance as a participant in this event, I hereby agree to release, defend, indemnify, and hold harmless Texas Baptist Home for Children and its agents, affiliates, sponsors, and the University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences from any and all claims for any and all expenses, personal injury, loss, or damages incurred or caused by my child during or in connection with his/her participating in this program.
- I acknowledge that participation in some activities involves certain risks and hazards of injury and/or property damage.
- I declare that in signing this form, I agree to and giving permission for my child’s participation for the duration of this program.
- I hereby attest that the Child’s attendance and involvement in this activity is voluntary and that I have read (or have had read to me) this release, understand it and sign it voluntarily.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent or Guardian Printed

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Parent or Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Relationship to Child

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date Signed

**Appendix L: Weekly Activity Plan**

<p>Self-Reflection Activity</p>	<p>I want you to think of 10 things/words that define who you are and make you special. Take your time. Write down your list. Put the list somewhere you will see it daily, such as next to your bed or on your bathroom mirror. Another option is to get a mirror from the dollar store and write these words on the mirror with a Sharpie.</p>
<p>Family Cooking Activity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Step 1: Select ANY simple recipe as a family, tacos is only a suggestion.</li> <li>· Step 2: Allow them to complete as many of the steps as possible, aiding as needed. If their knife skills are lacking, nylon knives and/or anti-cutting gloves are available on Amazon.</li> <li>· Step 3: Enjoy the meal as a family! Discuss what went well and what skills may need more practice next time.</li> </ul>
<p>Practicing and Role-Playing “I Feel Statements”</p>	<p>“I feel statements” may help guide you when you are unsure how to advocate (speak up) for yourself:          I feel... (insert feeling word)          when... (tell what caused the feeling).          I would like... (tell what you want to happen instead).          Example 1: I feel hurt when you talk over me. I would like us to take turns saying our part.          Example 2: I feel angry when you talk about the way I dress. I would like you to stop speaking rudely to me.          Now, practice a few examples of your own.</p>
<p>Reality Check Yourself</p>	<p>We all have a dream of what we want our life to look like, but do you know how much it will cost you to live that dream? Using the websites below you can see the level of income, types of jobs, and amount of money you will need to live your lifestyle now and your dream lifestyle in the future:</p>

	<p><a href="https://texasrealitycheck.com/">https://texasrealitycheck.com/</a> and <a href="https://www.jumpstart.org/education/reality-check/">https://www.jumpstart.org/education/reality-check/</a>.</p>
<p>Creating a Budget</p>	<p>This site gives templates for tracking your income, spending, bills, and to create a budget:  <a href="https://www.consumerfinance.gov/about-us/blog/budgeting-how-to-create-a-budget-and-stick-with-it/">https://www.consumerfinance.gov/about-us/blog/budgeting-how-to-create-a-budget-and-stick-with-it/</a>.</p>
<p>Making Finances Fun</p>	<p>Below you will find a list of games that allow you to practice your budgeting and financial skills:  <a href="https://mycreditunion.gov/financial-resources/hit-road-financial-adventure">https://mycreditunion.gov/financial-resources/hit-road-financial-adventure</a>  <a href="https://www.gpb.org/education/lights-camera-budget">https://www.gpb.org/education/lights-camera-budget</a>  <a href="https://www.timeforpayback.com/">https://www.timeforpayback.com/</a>  <a href="https://playspent.org/">https://playspent.org/</a>  <a href="https://fame.claimyourfuture.org/game/">https://fame.claimyourfuture.org/game/</a></p>
<p>Plan Your Route</p>	<p>Let’s plan your route from here to Walmart. Do you have a cell phone? Let’s practice using Apple Maps. It will show you how to take buses and trains to get to your location. By selecting the bus or “transit” icon, you can see available routes. The route will tell you which bus to get on, where to find the bus stop, stop to get off at, and guide your trip. What other routes do you want to try?</p>
<p>Practicing Cool-Down Techniques</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Bubble Breath</li> <li>2. Box Breathing</li> <li>3. 4-7-8 Calm Breathing</li> <li>4. Mindfulness Meditation</li> <li>5. Progressive Muscle Relaxation</li> </ol> <p>Which exercises do you like best? What other things can you do when you get angry, sad, or upset?</p>