



Advocating for Leisure Based Programs for Individuals from Vulnerable Populations

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Introduction

- The Occupational Therapy Practice Framework 4th Edition (OTPF) identifies leisure as one of nine broad categories of occupation (AOTA, 2020).
- Leisure is a basic human right for all individuals regardless of their health status/condition and is reinforced under the UN international treaty, The Convention on the Rights of Persons with disabilities (CRPWD) (Singleton and Darcy, 2013).
- Leisure-based programs could include a wide variety of leisure activities include visual or performing arts, physical activity, or others and the engagement in leisure activities could improve both the physical and mental health of individuals.

Methods

- Semi-structured, open-ended interview questions with providers conducting leisure-based programs
- Observation of the leisure-based programs to explore class format, location, participant engagement, and instructor teaching methods.
- Vulnerable populations including individuals with intellectual disabilities and older adults living in subsidized housing.

Results

- The programs at all three sites are offered year-round.
- Each site included in the study highlighted the socialization aspect of the program as leading to its' success.
- Two of the sites offer performances for their programs and have identified this as a component of their success.
- All three sites and their associated programs report positive feedback from their participants.

Site	Location	Contact Person	Program Offered	Population Served
Episcopal Place in collaboration with UAB Arts in Medicine	Birmingham, Alabama	Melissa Turnage	Weekly dance classes in styles including ballet and tap	Senior adults in low-income housing
The Exceptional Foundation	Birmingham, Alabama	Jon Perez	Daily programs focused on life enrichment, socialization, and exercise	Adults and children with intellectual and developmental disabilities
Merrimack Hall Performing Arts Center	Huntsville, Alabama	Lauren Chenoweth	Day program and after-school programs including dance, yoga, and visual arts	Individuals with intellectual disabilities

Discussion

Implications:

- The positive feedback each program reports highlights the importance of providing leisure-based programs for vulnerable populations and identified multiple successful components of leisure-based programs including year-round programming, socialization, and performance. These components can be utilized to guide future program planning and implemented into already existing leisure-based programs.

Discussion continued

Limitations:

- Study was limited to only three programs. Two of the programs are similar in design both serving a population of individuals with intellectual disabilities. The study was also limited by the fourteen-week time frame of the capstone process.

Future Study Suggestions:

- The inclusion of program participants in interview process. Include a wider range of leisure-based programs and populations and follow each program for a longer period of time.

Conclusion

- Successful components of a leisure-based program include its' availability year-round, socialization, and a performance or showcase aspect. We hope the current findings from this study leads to the implementation of new leisure-based programs for individuals from vulnerable populations.

References

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