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Developing a Comprehensive Screening Tool of Occupational Performance and Engagement to Identify Levels of Housing Support for Successful Long-Term Community Placement

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Introduction

- According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness (2021), 7,940 individuals are experiencing homelessness in Minnesota with 3,049 of those individuals in the Minneapolis/Hennepin County region.
- Catholic Charities is an organization that provides housing and services to these individuals
 - Does not currently have a screening tool to assess for disabilities that can inhibit independent living skills, which put some residents at risk for eviction or serious medical crisis.
- **Purpose:** Develop screening tool to guide case managers working for Catholic Charities in the intake process and to refer individuals experiencing chronic homelessness to necessary services, including occupational therapy.



Figure 1. Professional Rehabilitation Consultants. (2021). [PRC Logo]. Canva. https://www.canva.com/design/DAEnZE5uW8w/7OV9KT_jRgykvCJfW0UFQ/edit



Figure 2. Catholic Charities of St. Paul and Minneapolis. (2021). [Catholic Charities Logo]. Catholic Charities. <https://www.cctwincities.org>

Site Description

- Professional Rehabilitation Consultants (PRC) and Catholic Charities of St. Paul and Minneapolis are two organizations that work closely with individuals experiencing chronic homelessness
- Catholic Charities is a Housing First organization with 29 programs providing permanent supportive housing and mental health services to individuals experiencing chronic homelessness throughout this region in Minnesota
- PRC is an outpatient occupational therapy clinic specializing in mental health and other chronic conditions.
- PRC partnered with Catholic Charities in June 2021.

Summary of Needs Assessment

- Catholic Charities requested screening tool to be used with new and current residents
 - Gain an understanding of the individuals' occupational history and current functional performance.
- Background of need:
 - Several individuals placed in independent permanent supportive housing units did not appear to be functionally independent enough to live safely and successfully in the unit.
 - Some individuals exhibit behaviors that put them at risk for eviction due to violating lease agreements.
 - Ex: hoarding, unkept or unsanitary rooms, frequent falls, substance use, and overall decline in health.

Literature Review Summary

Transition to Permanent Supportive Housing

- Individuals who have experienced chronic homelessness experience:
 - Increase feelings of isolation, decrease in social connectedness, fewer opportunities to engage in meaningful occupations (Raphael-Greenfield et al., 2015)
- New values emerge
 - Home maintenance, budgeting, and abstinence from substance use (Raphael-Greenfield et al., 2015)
- New difficulties emerge
 - Coping with the quiet, decrease in social activities, and boredom (Marshall et al., 2018)
- Exploration of new routines (Marshall et al., 2018)

Housing First

- Evidence-based rehabilitative public health approach for individuals experiencing chronic homelessness to provide permanent supportive housing (Tsemberis, 2010)
- Follows philosophy that stable home environment is needed in order to manage other concerns in life, such as substance abuse and mental health disorders (Raphael-Greenfield et al., 2015)

Role of OT

- Synovec (2020) found 85% of individuals experiencing homelessness have at least one mental or chronic health disorder
- OTs can improve wellness/quality of life for individuals by providing tools to overcome external and internal barriers to increase independence
- Possible interventions: sleep hygiene, compensatory strategies, symptom management, etc. (AOTA, 2019; Synovec, 2020)

Figure 3. Screening Tool.

Capstone Project Description

Purpose

- Developed screening tool to assess areas of overall health, occupational performance, substance use patterns, safety awareness, and employment history of residents at Catholic Charities

Referrals

- Case managers will use this screening tool with new and current residents to make referrals to occupational therapy, nursing assistance, medical care, substance abuse counseling, etc.

Results

- Referrals to supportive services will allow residents to experience an increase in safe and independent living skills and improvement in housing stability

Learning Objectives Achieved

1. Develop a comprehensive screening tool of occupational performance and engagement for individuals with significant barriers including mental illness, substance use, and homelessness by week 16.
2. Gain clinical experience working in a community-based setting in 16-weeks.
3. Collaborate with peer OTD student and specialized mentor(s) to implement a new screening tool for individuals experiencing mental illness, substance use, and housing instability in 16-weeks.



Figure 4. Drafke, S. (2021). [Photo is of two Catholic Charities residences, Glenwood Residence and Higher Ground, in Minneapolis, MN]

Implications for OT Practice

- OT is not a commonly referred service within this population
- Interviews from other Housing First organizations showed an emerging need for OT services with this population
- Screening tool encapsulated areas of occupations address in OT interventions
- With an increase in advocacy and knowledge of OT, more referrals to OT were made by the end of the 16-week capstone experience
- With increased referrals, individuals were able to receive services that were needed to assist in increasing quality of life

REFERENCES & ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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References Available Upon Request