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Life skills program for women in transitional living

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Doctoral Project

LIFE SKILLS PROGRAM FOR WOMEN IN TRANSITIONAL LIVING

by

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B.S., Sacred Heart University, 2015
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ABSTRACT

Homelessness represents a significant and multifaceted challenge that profoundly impacts numerous individuals on a global scale. It is noteworthy that approximately one third of the homeless population comprises women, and alarmingly, roughly 90% of single parents experiencing homelessness are women. Moreover, among women facing homelessness, mental health issues and substance abuse are disproportionately prevalent, as has been observed in recent research by O'Campo and colleagues (2023). The factors leading to homelessness among women are intricate and diverse, as evidenced by scholarly investigations. Vulnerability to violence, exploitation, and marginalization, coupled with limited access to resources and essential life skills, are among the prominent underlying reasons (Milaney et al., 2020). Considering these critical challenges, the development of effective interventions becomes imperative. Addressing the issue of inadequate life skills necessitated the creation of a specialized program, spearheaded by occupational therapists (OT). This life skills program was meticulously crafted following an extensive review of the existing literature and thoughtfully incorporated elements from previous successful initiatives, such as the Housing First Program (HFP) and the Supporting Many for Residential Transition (SMART) program.

The proposed occupational therapy (OT)-led life skills program is set to be

implemented at a transitional living facility under the auspices of the Father Bills & Mainspring (FBMS) organization, situated in the Boston, MA area. This program will be twelve weeks and specifically designed to cater to women between the ages of 18 and 30, who currently reside within the transitional living facility. The program's core emphasis will be on developing essential living skills, encompassing independent living proficiencies, as well as employment readiness capabilities. The overarching objective of this intervention is to equip the participants with essential skills, empowering them to secure gainful employment and successfully transition into self-sufficient housing arrangements.

Upon the conclusion of the twelve-week program, it is predicted that the participants will acquire profound knowledge and skills concerning independent living and employment. These proficiencies will be subject to evaluation through the administration of a comprehensive questionnaire. Moreover, the prospective long-term outcomes of this program encompass the participants' capacity to maintain sustainable arrangements for independent living and pursue meaningful and lasting employment opportunities. If the efficacy of this program attains the anticipated positive outcomes, the overarching objective shall entail its integration as a permanent fixture within the institutional framework of the FBMS organization. Furthermore, its propagation across additional homelessness organizations in the area of Boston, MA, would be a desired outcome, thus amplifying its societal impact and fostering greater support for those facing housing instability.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AOTA	American Occupational Therapy Association
BHCHP	Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program
BU	Boston University
COPM	Canadian Occupational Performance Measure
FBMS	Father Bills and Mainspring
HFP	Housing First Program
IADL	Instrumental Activities of Daily Living
MAOT	Massachusetts Association for Occupational Therapy
MAP	Moving Ahead Program
MOHO	Model of Human Occupation
OT	Occupational Therapist
SLT	Situated Learning Theory
SMART	Supporting Many to Achieve Residential Transition

CHAPTER ONE – Introduction

Homelessness is a societal concern that affects a major portion of the population nationwide. In 2020, a comprehensive analysis revealed a trend of escalating homelessness over the course of four consecutive years within the United States. On any given night, an estimated 18 individuals out of every 10,000 were experiencing homelessness, representing a 2.2% surge from the previous year (Sleet & Francescutti, 2021). This can be compared to the population of Vermont or Wyoming, approximately 600,000 individuals (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2023). While homelessness affects all individuals, homeless women experience a unique set of challenges. The literature explains that their homelessness may stem from a variety of factors such as having a diagnosed mental illness, heightened vulnerability to violence, exploitation, marginalization, amplified rates of poverty, limited access to services tailored specifically for women, and a scarcity of essential resources when trying to escape from domestic violence situations (Milaney et al., 2020). Consequently, these circumstances often result in a lack of life skills, ultimately hindering their ability to secure gainful employment and establish sustainable independent housing arrangements. To address these issues, an OT-led life skills program is proposed to take place directly in a women's transitional living facility and will focus on independent living skills and employment skills.

Theoretical Frameworks and Current Evidence

A comprehensive literature review was undertaken, encompassing current evidence and existing models to identify program approaches and elements that have shown to be effective in improving independent living and employment readiness skills.

The "Supporting Many to Achieve Residential Treatment" (SMART) program, which emphasizes the instruction of various life skills essential for independent living (Gutman & Raphael-Greenfield, 2017), is a successful model that significantly influenced development of this program. Additionally, elements of the Housing First Model also helped shape this program. This model advocates that all individuals should have access to housing regardless of their income level, asserting housing as a fundamental human right. According to the Housing First approach, providing stable housing can yield improved outcomes in various domains of individuals' lives. Therefore, this program was developed to take place in a transitional living facility where the participants' basic needs are being met as opposed to a temporary shelter setting (Mackinnon & Socias, 2021).

The formulation of this program was additionally guided by relevant theoretical frameworks. The Situated Learning Theory (SLT) was employed as a guiding principle in the program's design. This theory posits that learning occurs within social and cultural contexts, intrinsically linked to specific situations in which it takes place (Korthagen, 2010). By incorporating SLT principles, the program endeavors to create a learning environment that aligns with real-life scenarios, facilitating practical skill development and knowledge application.

The Proposed Program

The proposed program is designed as a targeted life skills intervention aimed at women between the ages of 18 and 30, residing in a women's transitional living facility affiliated with the Father Bills and Mainspring (FBMS) organization, located in the vicinity of Boston, MA. For clarity, a transitional living facility is defined as a temporary

residence offering wrap-around services over a period of up to 24 months, facilitating individuals in stabilizing their lives (SAMHSA, 2022). The program's initial implementation will involve a 12-week pilot intervention, consisting of two distinct 6-week modules. The first module will concentrate on teaching independent living skills, while the second will focus on employment readiness skills. Both modules will be conducted in a group format, twice a week. During the program's educational day, participants will engage in collaborative group activities and reflection sessions. On the second day, practical exercises and scenarios will be incorporated, either within the transitional living facility itself or at specific external locations, such as a grocery store. The independent living skills modules will encompass various essential topics, including kitchen safety, budgeting, bill payment, communication skills, resume writing, job interview preparation, professional attire, and workplace professionalism.

Prior to beginning the program, participants will undergo an assessment using the Canadian Occupational Therapy Performance Measure (COPM), a tool employed to gauge an individual's perceived occupational performance in everyday activities. Additionally, they will complete a questionnaire to evaluate their knowledge in various independent living skills and employment readiness areas. These assessments will be repeated upon program completion to gauge the progress and outcomes related to knowledge and practical skills attainment.

Funding and Dissemination

The successful implementation of the pilot program necessitates securing adequate funding. While certain resources will be sourced from local organizations, such

as Boston Health Care for the Homeless (BHCHP) and Dress for Success Boston, supplementary funds will be essential to cover expenses related to personnel, supplies, transportation, equipment, travel, and program evaluation. To secure the required funding, a multifaceted approach will be adopted, encompassing outreach to various funding sources. This will involve pursuing grants, seeking financial support from private foundations like The Boston Foundation, and exploring crowdfunding platforms as potential avenues for raising funds. Through these endeavors, the program aims to acquire the necessary financial resources to ensure its successful implementation and impactful outcomes for the targeted population.

In addition to funding, another important aspect of this program will be dissemination upon completion of the first 12-week pilot program. The overarching objective of dissemination entails the integration and expansion of the proposed life skills program across diverse homelessness organizations and transitional living facilities within the Boston area. The immediate or short-term goals of dissemination focus on ensuring the program's continuity within the FBMS organization and advocating for the significance of occupational therapy (OT) services and life skills programming in community-based settings. To achieve these dissemination objectives effectively, various communication channels and activities will be employed. These encompass conducting meetings, delivering presentations, disseminating newsletters, and establishing dedicated websites tailored to the specific target audiences, namely the FBMS organization and occupational therapists/occupational therapy students. These dissemination efforts aim to foster program sustainability, raise awareness of the invaluable role of OT services, and

emphasize the significance of life skills programming in community-based contexts. By engaging in these activities, the program seeks to make a meaningful impact on the lives of its participants and contribute to the betterment of community support structures for those experiencing homelessness.

Conclusion

The proposed life skills program holds immense promise in empowering homeless women aged 18-30 within the FBMS-affiliated transitional living facility. By addressing the critical need for essential life skills, employment readiness, and independent living capabilities, this program strives to create a positive and transformative impact on the lives of its participants. With a focus on practical hands-on activities and group collaboration, participants will be equipped with the necessary tools to enhance their daily living and employment prospects. In addition, by fostering collaboration and awareness among key stakeholders, including the FBMS organization, occupational therapists, and occupational therapy students, the program seeks to make a lasting difference in the lives of homeless women, empowering them to achieve sustainable independence and improved overall well-being.

CHAPTER TWO – Project Theoretical and Evidence Base

The present program addresses the issue of young women between the ages of 18 and 30 who have been diagnosed with mental illness and are unable to maintain independent housing and/or employment. Younger women may experience greater instability in housing and less social support than men due to various factors, such as caring for children, lower levels of education, unemployment, and victimization (de Vet et al., 2019). It is also believed that women are more likely to conceal their mental illness or lack of housing due to feelings of embarrassment or low self-esteem, compared to men. The literature reveals multiple factors that contribute to the inability to sustain housing or employment, including repeated inpatient psychiatric admissions, lack of available resources, lack of support, limited transportation/community mobility, and inadequate acquisition of necessary life skills. Furthermore, a comprehensive review of the literature was conducted to construct a model that outlines the primary factors contributing to homelessness among women.

The literature search strategy employed in investigating the problem of young women with a diagnosed mental illness being unable to sustain housing or employment entailed the use of specific search terms and keywords, including "homelessness," "employment," "mental illness," "young women," "unemployment," "community mobility," "lack of resources," "lack of supports," "life skills," and "childcare." The databases searched for relevant articles included PubMed, SAGE, Journal of Occupational Rehab, British Journal of Health Psychology, and American Journal of Industrial Medicine. The search parameters were limited to English publications, articles

only, published between 2011 and 2022, and specific subjects such as mental health, mental disorders, social sciences, and public health. From these targeted limits, around 100 articles were initially identified, with approximately half of them being excluded following abstract screening based on the previously stated criteria. Subsequently, a snowballing approach was utilized to identify additional literature from the reference lists of relevant journal articles. The findings were then categorized based on an analysis of the major contributing factors, including mental illness, resources, supports, transportation/community mobility, and life skills.

Mental Illness

The literature reveals that mental illness, along with repeated inpatient psychiatric admissions, represents a significant factor contributing to women's inability to sustain housing and employment. As reported by Gutman and Raphael-Greenfield (2017) and Currie et al. (2018), approximately one-third of all homeless adults in the United States have a co-occurring mental illness, such as major depressive disorder, bipolar disorder, or schizophrenia. Such individuals are at a higher risk of experiencing repeated inpatient admissions compared to those who are experiencing homelessness alone, mental illness alone, or neither. Due to the frequency of their inpatient stays, these individuals may miss significant amounts of work, if employed, or may struggle to meet their financial obligations, which can further exacerbate their mental illness and lead to homelessness.

Substance use disorders represent another prevalent issue among those experiencing homelessness, in addition to the high prevalence of mental illness. According to Gutwinski et al. (2021), rates of alcohol or substance use disorders among

the homeless population are approximately ten times greater than those of the general population. Contributing factors to this comorbidity include genetic predispositions, environmental factors, and experiences of inequality. The author further concludes that it is common for individuals experiencing homelessness, mental illness, and substance use to feel situationally depressed or sad about their current circumstances, leading them to turn to substance use as a means of coping. This behavior may then hinder their ability to obtain stable housing or employment, given their active substance use disorder or mental illness (Gutwinski et al., 2021).

Resources

Insufficient resources are an additional contributing factor to the issue of homelessness and unemployment among individuals. Access to high-quality medical care is vital for all individuals; however, homeless women face significant challenges in accessing resources (Washington et al., 2010). Women's needs are distinct from men's, necessitating gender-specific care, trauma and abuse treatment, and childcare services. The lack of childcare resources is a significant challenge for homeless women, particularly those aged 18-30. Additionally, these women experience the burden of living in shelters or on the streets with young children, which can adversely impact their health (Bassuk & Beardslee, 2014). According to Guo et al. (2016), roughly 50% of homeless mothers are fleeing domestic violence situations, which makes them even more vulnerable as they attempt to protect both themselves and their children. Furthermore, without access to affordable childcare, these mothers must care for their children all day, contributing to their inability to acquire or maintain employment.

Supports

The lack of support, including familial, social, and professional, has emerged as a significant factor contributing to the experience of homelessness among young women. These women who are experiencing homelessness are also likely to face social exclusion, which refers to the inability to participate fully in various aspects of society such as economic, cultural, social, and political (Watson et al., 2015). According to Watson et al. (2015), the experience of social exclusion can lead to diminished quality social support, high-risk behaviors, and compromised physical and psychological health. Women experiencing homelessness often lack support from their families due to reasons such as alienation caused by mental illness, substance use, or domestic violence. Additionally, these women may feel ashamed of their situation and attempt to conceal it from their loved ones, which can further perpetuate feelings of isolation and alienation (Watson et al., 2015).

Transportation

Access to transportation and community mobility is a crucial factor for maintaining employment among individuals. In the present economic climate, it is unrealistic to expect homeless individuals to have access to vehicles or unlimited public transportation options (Polgar, 2011). Community mobility plays a vital role in enabling individuals to engage in daily activities such as employment, social interaction, and instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs). The lack of access to community mobility can further exacerbate feelings of isolation among homeless individuals (Polgar, 2011). In many cases, employment opportunities are not located within walking distance of

shelters or other housing options available to homeless individuals. As a result, without access to basic needs such as shelter, food, childcare, and community mobility, sustaining employment becomes challenging for these young women, leading to a potential worsening of their homelessness (Polgar, 2011).

Life Skills

Life skills are abilities that are crucial for complete engagement in everyday life. Examples of life skills that are necessary for acquiring housing and employment include interview skills, apartment living and safety skills, being a responsible tenant or neighbor, community living, money management, and health and wellness (Gutman & Raphael-Greenfield, 2017). Women with unstable housing often lack the necessary life skills needed to obtain safe and stable housing. Barriers to acquiring these essential life skills needed to sustain employment and housing include a lack of family support, periods of homelessness during childhood or adolescence, and foster care placements (Gutman & Raphael-Greenfield, 2017). Life skills such as money management, home safety, interview skills, and community living skills are typically learned from parents and/or in traditional school settings. However, due to circumstances beyond their control, such as a lack of family environment, education, and experiencing homelessness or foster care, young women often lack the knowledge of these skills to help them achieve success in adulthood (Gutman & Raphael-Greenfield, 2017).

Conclusion

In summary, young women aged 18-30 who are experiencing homelessness and unemployment constitute a particularly vulnerable group due to the dearth of resources

and support systems available to them. Mental illness and/or psychiatric admissions, lack of resources, personal and professional support, community mobility, and essential life skills have all been identified as significant factors contributing to the problem of homelessness and unemployment among this demographic (Watson et al., 2015; Gutman & Raphael-Greenfield, 2017; Polgar, 2011). Although there may be additional contributing factors, these appear to be the most salient, as suggested by the literature. To address this issue, it is essential to comprehend the reasons for young women's homelessness and unemployment so that they can acquire the necessary abilities to facilitate self-sufficient and successful living.

CHAPTER THREE – Overview of Current Approaches and Methods

Homelessness is a multifaceted and complex issue that affects millions of individuals across the globe. It is a nationwide epidemic that appears to be on the rise. According to Gutman and Raphael-Greenfield (2017), around one-third of homeless adults have a co-occurring chronic mental illness, such as bipolar disorder, depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, or substance abuse disorders. These individuals are more likely to experience chronic homelessness or have difficulty retaining housing compared to those without a mental illness diagnosis. This can lead to worsening of their mental health and long-term homelessness. Young women who are homeless and have a co-occurring mental health diagnosis are at a greater risk of facing violence, marginalization, discrimination, and sexual exploitation (Li & Uranda, 2020). Additionally, these women are prone to prolonged unemployment, which can be attributed to various barriers that hinder their ability to obtain and maintain employment. To address the knowledge gaps related to maintaining stable housing and employment, several life skill intervention programs have been implemented to teach apartment living skills and job training skills. This paper specifically focuses on women between the ages of 18 and 30 who are homeless and have a co-occurring mental health diagnosis.

Search Strategy

A comprehensive review of the literature was conducted to collect information on previous interventions focused on job skills training and apartment living skills for individuals experiencing homelessness and residing in transitional housing. The aim of this search was to identify effective program components for women aged 18-30 living in

transitional housing. The research questions that guided this search included "What interventions are effective in helping individuals in transitional living acquire independent housing and employment?" "Do individuals in transitional housing who participate in life skills interventions achieve better outcomes than those in homeless shelters?" "Is there evidence to suggest that individuals residing in transitional housing benefit from life skills interventions?" and "Are group life skills interventions more effective than individual ones?"

A comprehensive literature review was undertaken to address the aforementioned research inquiries, utilizing prominent electronic databases such as CINAHL, PubMed, SAGE, and MEDLINE. The search query comprised of terms such as "transitional living," "interventions," "homelessness," "housing," "employment," and "women." To ensure the relevance and accuracy of the results, the search was restricted to English publications from 2004 to 2022. Only articles were considered for inclusion and the final selection was based on the appropriateness of population, methodology, and context.

Life skills interventions to gain employment

In the pursuit of stability and independence, obtaining employment is a crucial step for women residing in transitional living. Unfortunately, various barriers, such as inadequate education or job training, limited work experience, and mental health issues, often hinder homeless women from achieving employment. To address these barriers and help women develop the necessary life skills and confidence to enter and succeed in the workforce, life skills interventions are crucial. Some interventions that have been implemented in community-based settings, such as transitional housing facilities, to

address the lack of employment include resume writing, job search and application techniques, job interview skills, customer service skills, and professional dress (Gray et al., 2017; Siskind et al., 2013).

The present study investigates a program named "Ready for Work" that was conducted by Hoven et al. and focused on helping homeless individuals gain employment. The program consisted of four stages, namely registration, pre-placement training, work placements, and post-placement support. The study included both men and women over the age of 18 who were experiencing homelessness. The program aimed to provide participants with work training, work placements, and post-placement supports to integrate them into the workforce. The study found that job coaching played a crucial role in helping participants gain employment, particularly younger clients aged 18-24. While the study did not explicitly explain the reasons for this, it can be inferred that this may be due to the younger clients' greater ability and motivation to learn new skills required for employment. Moreover, job coaching was found to be significantly helpful in navigating the job market and finding suitable jobs that match the participants' specific skills and experience. The study concluded that individuals who received job coaching had a significantly higher chance of gaining employment than those who did not.

Another study, conducted by Gray et al. (2017), examined the Moving Ahead Program (MAP) at a homeless shelter in Boston. This program focused on job and life skills training and included 225 men and 207 women with co-occurring mental illness and substance use who were homeless. The program spanned 14 weeks and consisted of interactive classroom-based training for five days a week. The training included job and

life skills classes such as resume writing, job search strategies, and interview preparation. Upon completion of the program, the employment rate increased significantly from 5.5% to 53.6%. The participants reported that their work skills and confidence also increased greatly from before the program. Furthermore, the average life satisfaction rating increased from 2.85 to 3.52 on a scale from 1-5. Although the studies mentioned above provided evidence on the success of job skills training programs in increasing employment rates, the long-term effects of such programs, such as sustaining employment, were not addressed.

Life Skills Interventions to Obtain Permanent Housing

Women residing in transitional living situations encounter numerous obstacles as they strive towards establishing stability and autonomy, with obtaining secure and affordable housing being a critical challenge. To address these obstacles, life skills interventions have proven to be a potent resource to equip women with the practical and interpersonal skills required to acquire and sustain housing.

The results of the literature search on interventions targeting apartment living skills for individuals in transitional living situations revealed several recurring themes, including money management, kitchen safety, community participation, negotiating conflict with roommates, and advocacy skills, as reported by Helfrich and Fogg (2007) and Gutman and Raphael-Greenfield (2017). In a two-group controlled study conducted by Gutman and Raphael-Greenfield, twenty adult men residing in a homeless shelter in New York City participated in the Supporting Many to Achieve Residential Transition (SMART) program, which consisted of six modules of life skills related to independent

living, including housing interview skills, apartment living skills, being a good tenant and neighbor, community living, managing money, and health and wellness. The six-week program consisted of twice-weekly sessions delivered in the shelter via a DVD format, which provided hands-on training following each module. The 6-month follow-up post-intervention showed that 57% of the intervention group participants had transitioned to independent housing, compared to 25% of the control group participants, indicating a positive outcome of the apartment living skills intervention. The authors attributed this result to the comprehensive training and support provided by the SMART program, including the development of essential life skills and supportive relationships, which were not offered to the control group. However, the authors acknowledged certain limitations of the study, such as the small sample size, lack of randomization, and inability to collect outcome measures beyond the transition rate six months post-intervention.

In a study conducted by Helfrich and Fogg (2007), individuals experiencing homelessness and mental illness engaged in 12 group and individual sessions with an occupational therapist to develop skills necessary for independent living. A practical skills test (PST) was administered halfway through the program to assess knowledge retention. The study demonstrated that participants showed improvement in room/self-care, food management, money management, and safe community participation over time, as evaluated by the PST. Furthermore, preliminary findings suggest that participants have maintained the skills acquired during the study. The study included both men and women, with women showing better performance on the food module compared to men,

while men and women performed equally on most modules.

In summary, the two studies provided crucial information regarding the acquisition of housing among homeless adults with mental illness. Although neither study focused exclusively on women, they did provide valuable insight into the life skills in which women performed better. Both studies found that participation in life skills interventions led to an increased rate of housing stability.

Transitional Housing vs. Homeless Shelters

The term "homelessness" encompasses a wide range of individuals who reside in various community-based settings. Transitional housing serves as a short-term placement for individuals who lack permanent housing and are in the process of transitioning to independent living. A randomized control trial conducted by Goering et al. focused on a "housing first" program that provided transitional living to participants in five major Canadian cities. Participants, who were recruited from shelters and were a mix of men and women, engaged in supportive services and life skills interventions, including stress and money management, social engagement, and meaningful participation. This program resulted in increased housing stability, social functioning, improved mental health, quality of life, and community integration (Goering et al., 2011). A study by Rashid evaluated a transitional living program for young adults who had aged out of the foster care system. The program provided support, life skills, and employment training, and the results demonstrated that 90% of the participants were able to obtain more permanent housing and employment compared to those who did not participate in the transitional living facility (Rashid, 2004). Although these studies did not focus specifically on

women, they provide important information on the effectiveness of life skills interventions in promoting housing stability.

Conclusion

In summary, the implementation of life skills interventions within transitional living programs designed for women experiencing homelessness can prove to be beneficial in helping them attain meaningful employment and independent housing. These interventions aim to equip individuals with practical skills necessary for navigating the challenges associated with independent living and employment, such as financial management, kitchen safety, job applications, and interview skills. After an extensive review of the literature, it has been found that the most effective elements for gaining meaningful employment include engaging with a job coach or supportive individual and attending an intensive classroom-based life skills program. In addition, interventions such as money management, kitchen safety, and safe community participation have been identified as essential components for achieving independent housing. The literature also suggests that interactive and hands-on approaches may be more effective than traditional lecture-based methods. Furthermore, the success rate of women participating in these interventions in transitional living facilities appears to be higher than those in other community-based settings, such as homeless shelters. In conclusion, the integration of life skills interventions into transitional living programs can provide a strong foundation for success and ultimately lead to greater stability in the lives of women experiencing homelessness.

CHAPTER FOUR – Description of the Proposed Program

Homelessness and mental illness pose unique challenges for women residing in transitional living facilities as they strive to achieve stability and independence. These women face numerous obstacles, including traumatic experiences, loss of support systems, and poverty, making it challenging to secure stable employment and housing. However, with adequate support and resources, these women can build a better future for themselves. Participation in a life skills training program has been effective in preparing them for meaningful employment and independent housing. Such programs can equip women with practical skills such as job searching and application, resume writing, interview techniques, household management, budgeting, and communication, enabling them to navigate the job market and secure stable housing in a supportive environment.

Transitional living facilities play a vital role in supporting women experiencing homelessness, providing them with temporary housing and support services to achieve stability, develop skills, and access necessary resources before moving to permanent housing. Transitional living facilities are often part of the “housing first model,” which prioritizes housing for individuals who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in a short-term placement (MacKinnon & Socias, 2021). In this model, housing is considered a basic human right and individuals should be given immediate access to housing that offers support services rooted in harm reduction with the goal of community integration and attainment of more permanent housing environments (MacKinnon & Socias, 2021). Many individuals experiencing homeless cannot work on developing the necessary life skills if their basic needs are not being met, such as food and shelter. Therefore, it is

imperative to establish a housing first philosophy prior to implementing any life skills program or module.

Participants and setting:

The life skills program in question targets women aged 18-30 residing in a transitional living facility in Quincy, MA. who are motivated to gain employment and independent housing. The target audience for this program are English speaking, currently unemployed, and can effectively read and write at a 5th grade level or higher. This program will be delivered primarily on-site to minimize transportation barriers and ensure participants are in a comfortable and familiar environment. However, some of the life skills modules will take place off-site, with assistance from the occupational therapists who will take the participants to various “real life” locations in order to practice the skills. For example, during the budgeting module, the participants will go to the grocery store in the community to practice shopping on a budget.

Prior to commencing the program, the participants will complete a questionnaire to establish their personal characteristics, learning styles, and goals. In addition, The Canadian Occupational Performance Measure (COPM) will be administered pre and post intervention to measure changes in occupational performance and occupational satisfaction. The COPM is a semi-structured interview that aims to identify and prioritize the participants overall goals ensuring the program is tailored to meet individual needs (Sammells et al., 2023).

Description of the Program

This program is a comprehensive module-based program designed to support young women who have a diagnosed mental illness and have previously experienced homelessness. The program's primary objective is to equip these women with the necessary skills and resources to secure meaningful employment and independent housing. The program is voluntary and exclusively offered to the women living in the transitional living facility in Quincy, MA.

The content and development of this life skills program were informed by existing research and identified gaps in the available support for the homeless population. Specifically, the program addresses skills that are essential for obtaining and sustaining employment and independent housing. Many young women facing these challenges may have lacked opportunities to develop these skills during adolescence due to sporadic foster care placements, periods of homelessness, untreated mental illness, or hospitalization and/or incarceration (Gutman & Raphael-Greenfield, 2017). The proposed program aims to address these barriers by providing personalized, goal-oriented, and client-centered modules.

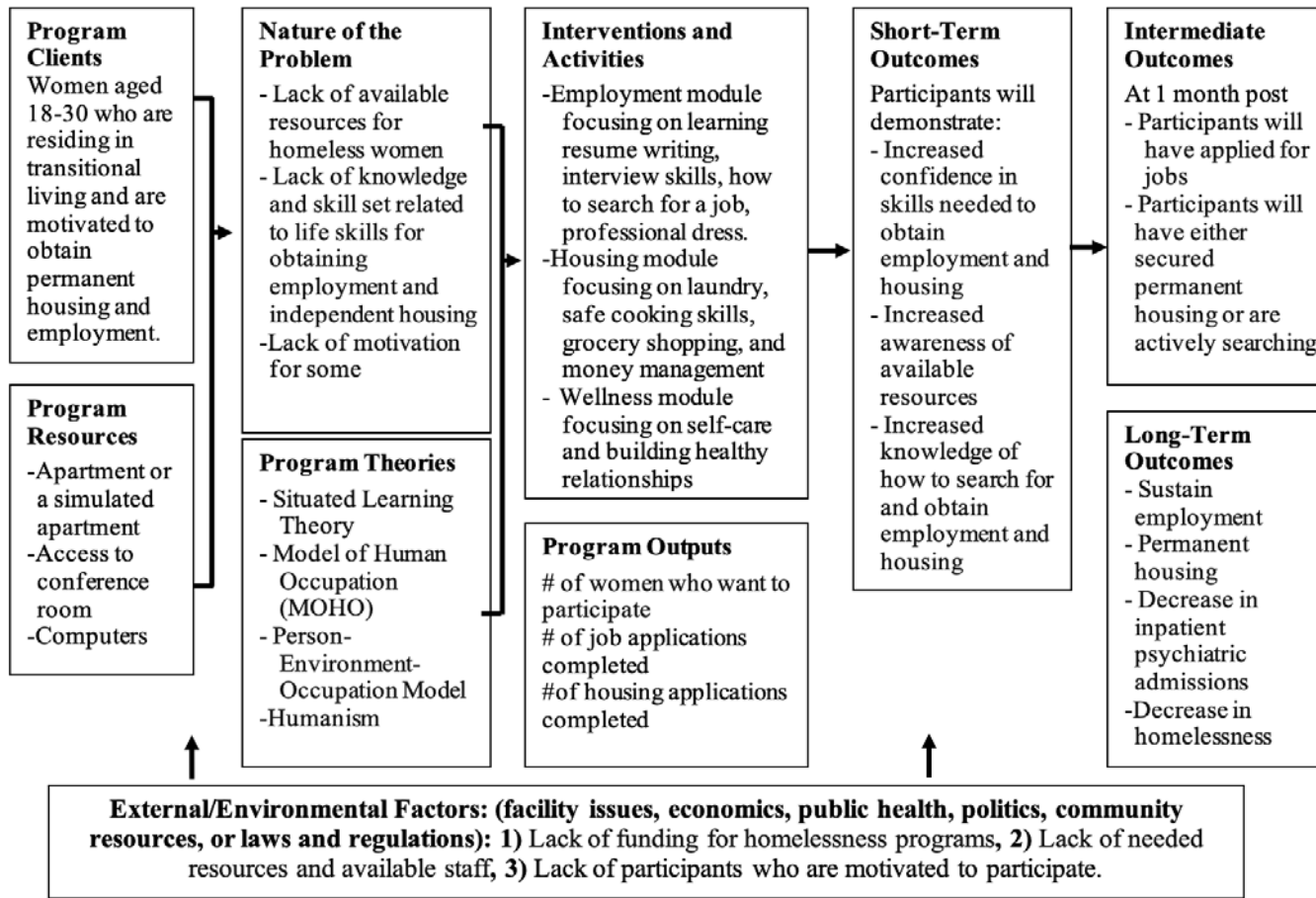
Logic Model

The logic model is a visual representation of how a program or intervention is expected to work. The purpose of a logic model is to clarify goals and objectives, identify key components and relationships, facilitate program planning and design and guide program implementation and evaluation. Figure 4.1 includes guiding theories, activities, outputs and anticipated short term, intermediate, and long-term outcomes.

Figure 4.1

Logic Model

Program title: Implementing life skills interventions for women aged 18-30 residing in transitional living to help them obtain permanent housing and employment.



This program draws from multiple theoretical frameworks and learning theories; with the Model of Human Occupation (MOHO) framework and the Situated Learning Theory (SLT) being the primary guiding frameworks. The MOHO framework provides a lens to understand how these life skills or daily activities can contribute to the participants health and wellbeing. The MOHO framework is a theoretical framework used in occupational therapy to understand how people engage in daily activities or occupations, and how these occupations contribute to their health and wellbeing. MOHO is based on the idea that occupation is a fundamental aspect of human life, and that engaging in meaningful and purposeful activities is important for both physical and mental health.

The MOHO framework consists of three interrelated components: the person, the occupation, and the environment. The person component refers to the individual's physical, psychological, and social characteristics that influence their engagement in occupations. The occupation component refers to the activity itself, including its purpose, meaning, and structure.

The environment component of MOHO includes physical, social, and cultural factors that can either facilitate or hinder engagement in occupations. For example, homeless individuals may lack access to basic hygiene facilities, such as showers or laundry facilities, which can make it difficult for them to present themselves professionally in job interviews. They may also lack a stable address or phone number, which can make it difficult for potential employers to contact them or for them to receive mail or other communication related to employment opportunities.

The MOHO framework is a useful tool for understanding how daily activities or life skills contribute to an individual's health and wellbeing. By addressing the person, occupation and environmental factors while supporting engagement in meaningful occupations, occupational therapists can help homeless individuals improve their overall health and wellbeing and increase their chances of finding and keeping employment (Abaoğlu et al., 2017).

The other guiding theory, the Situated Learning Theory, highlights the importance of context and experience in learning. The situated learning theory, also known as situated cognition, is a theory that suggests that learning occurs through social and cultural contexts and is deeply connected to the specific situations in which it occurs. This theory emphasizes the idea that knowledge is constructed through experiences and interactions within specific contexts, and that learning is more effective when it takes place within authentic and meaningful situations. The theory suggests that learning is not simply the acquisition of knowledge, but also involves the development of social and cultural practices, including language, identity, and social norms. Situated learning thus provides individuals with the opportunity to participate meaningfully within a community of practice to gain knowledge and skills that allow them to engage in real-life problem-solving contexts. This program leverages the SLT by creating authentic learning opportunities that are situated within the relevant context, allowing learners to engage in hands-on problem-solving activities and participate in communities of practice (Korthagen, 2010).

Overall, both the MOHO and SLT theoretical frameworks provide a strong foundation for development of this program designed to promote learning and skill acquisition for the participants.

Program Format

Some portions of these modules were influenced by the existing research on the SMART modules and the Housing First Program, both of which have shown success in helping homeless individuals with mental illnesses to develop independent living and employment skills (Gutman & Raphael-Greenfield, 2017; Goering et al., 2011). The program will consist of two six-week modules. The first module focuses on independent living skills and the second on employment skills.

The independent living module will cover a range of topics including kitchen safety, budgeting, paying bills, household management, health and wellness, and community participation. Each skill will be taught over a one-week period with two educational sessions per week, on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The Tuesday session will be conducted in a group format with an occupational therapist presenting a PowerPoint and providing the participants with individual handouts and sample templates. On Thursdays, participants will build upon the education on Tuesday and will have the opportunity to engage in hands-on practice. These sessions will also be more individualized and there will be OTs available to assist the participants with their hands-on practice.

Similarly, the employment skills module will be delivered over six weeks with topics including resume writing, job search strategies, interview skills, how to dress for an interview, professionalism skills, and negotiating conflict with co-workers. The

format of the employment skills module will mirror that of the independent living skills module, with both group and individual sessions supported by the occupational therapist. Group sessions provide opportunities for participants to gain further insight into their conditions, learn from others, and engage in social participation. Individualized sessions are necessary to address the diverse learning needs or differences, set individualized goals, address social anxiety, and other barriers. Therefore, it is important for the educators in this program to offer both educational group sessions and individualized sessions to ensure that all participants can benefit from this program.

Table 4.1

Module One: Independent Living Skills Program Format

Module One: Independent Living Skills		
	Tuesdays (Group Sessions)	Thursdays (Hands-On Practice/ Activities)
Week One: Kitchen Safety	Review kitchen safety concerns in PowerPoint format <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fire safety • Food handling/ cleanliness • Knife safety • Electrical safety • First aid 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handouts given to each participant on safety reminders • “Quiz” given to each participant where they are asked to circle potential hazards and identify what they would do in specific situations. • Discuss answers to the quiz as a group
Week Two: Budgeting/ Money management	Review basics of budgeting in PowerPoint Format <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define what is a budget • Identify (potential) sources of incomes • Discuss fixed and variable expenses • Prioritizing expenses • Set goals related to budgets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sample budgets given to each participant • Identify wants vs. needs • Practice budgeting grocery shopping at a grocery store.

Week Three: Paying bills	Review paying bills in PowerPoint format <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different types of bills that need to be paid • Keeping track of due dates • Payment options (online vs. check writing) • Avoiding fraud/ scams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mock bill paying exercise: give participants a sample bill and have them identify the type, due date, and practice writing a check and paying it online. • Creating a monthly calendar of different bills and the due dates.
Week Four: Household Management	Review communication techniques in PowerPoint format <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laundry • Cooking healthy meals • Cleaning strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants will be practicing these skills at the transitional living facility.
Week Five: Health & Wellness	Review health and wellness in PowerPoint format <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthy eating habits • Importance of physical activity • Maintain mental health • Sleep hygiene • Sexual health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individualized sessions with educators on how to maintain these various areas of health and wellness
Week Six: Community participation	Review community participation in PowerPoint format <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building social connections • Community events • Resources in the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants will create a “resource map” in their community with resources they feel like pertain to them

Table 4.2*Module Two: Employment Skills Program Format*

Module Two: Employment Skills		
	Tuesdays (Group Sessions)	Thursdays (Hands-On Practice/ Activities)
Week 1: Résumé Writing	Review résumé writing in PowerPoint format <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purpose of a résumé • Formatting a résumé • Sample résumés • Questions? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants will given sample résumés and links to resume templates • Participants will practice creating their own résumés • Participants will collaborate with peers/ proofread peers résumés
Week 2: How to search for a job	Review job searching in PowerPoint format <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying job goals • Networking • Searching job sites (Indeed, Monster) • Creating a cover letter • Following up after application 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants will practice searching for jobs and identifying jobs they would like to apply for • Participants can also apply for jobs during this module
Week 3: Interview Skills	Review interview skills in PowerPoint format <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researching the company • Body language • Punctuality • Knowledge of common interview questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants will practice mock interviews with the OTs
Week 4: Dressing for an interview	Review professional dress in PowerPoint format <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clothing to avoid • Picture examples of professional outfits • Resources on organizations that provide professional clothing to the homeless population 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OTs will take the participants to an organization that can provide them with professional outfits for free- participants will get to choose one interview outfit

<p>Week 5: Professionalism in the workplace</p>	<p>Review professionalism in the workplace in PowerPoint format</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time management skills • Leadership/ respect • Dress code • Teamwork 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The program will provide participants with workplace scenario-based exercises, where they will be required to identify appropriate actions to be taken in those situations.
<p>Week 6: Negotiating conflict with co-workers</p>	<p>Review how to negotiate conflict with co-workers in PowerPoint format</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using “I” statements • Communication techniques • Seek mediation/ assistance if needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants will be presented with potential scenarios that may arise with their co-workers, and they will collaborate in small groups to devise effective solutions. Participants will role play scenarios within small groups.

Program Follow-Up

After completion of these modules, it will be essential to have a follow-up plan to ensure that the skills learned throughout the program are being implemented and to provide on-going support to the participants. The follow-up can take many forms, first, assessments will be re-administered in order to determine outcomes of the program. In addition, the occupational therapists will schedule follow-up meetings with the participants at one month, three months, six months, and one year post program to determine progress and success.

In addition, throughout this program there is a chance that participants may have to take a leave or discontinue participation in the program for a multitude of reasons, including sicknesses, substance abuse relapses, and psychiatric hospitalizations. In this case, the occupational therapists who are running the program will offer one to one support if and when the participants want to return to the program in order to help them

catch up on the missed material.

Role of Program Educators

Occupational Therapists have a unique knowledge and skill set to be able to deliver this program effectively and successfully to individuals residing in a transitional living facility. Occupational therapists typically have a holistic focus and expertise in promoting occupational participation and engagement (Ryan & Boland, 2021). Therefore, the primary educators of this program will be occupational therapists with prior experience working in community-based settings and with individuals with mental illness. In addition to the OTs, there will also be additional support services for the participants such as social workers and case managers. The role of the social workers and case managers will be to help support the participants in relation to after-care planning and community resources once this program has concluded.

Expected Outcome

The aim of the life skills program is to assist women residing in a transitional living facility to acquire practical skills to promote independent living and meaningful employment. Many of these women have experienced occupational deprivation in various aspects of their lives before joining the program. Overall, the variables that are being measured throughout the program are independent living skills, such as housing and employment skills. The aim of the program is to improve these skills so that the women will become more self-sufficient and reduce the chances of experiencing homelessness in the future. The overall expected outcome is for the women to achieve a greater sense of self and stability by taking the steps towards gaining meaningful

employment and permanent housing.

Potential Barriers to the Program

There are several potential barriers to implementing this proposed program including a lack of funding, staffing shortages, and lack of participation and/or motivation. Identifying and addressing these barriers will be essential in implementing an effective program. The primary barrier is lack of funding. The proposed program requires funding to cover various expenses, including providing computers for the participants, community transportation, and access to available resources. To address this barrier, multiple strategies can be employed. First and foremost, it's important to establish partnerships with local community organizations. In the Boston area, there are many organizations that seek to aid this population such as the Massachusetts Coalition for Homeless and Healthcare for the Homeless. In addition to forming partnerships, fundraising events can also be an effective way to address this barrier and generate funding. If this proposed program is successful, grant proposals may need to be written to secure future funding for similar programs.

Another potential significant barrier is staffing shortages. This program requires skilled and dedicated staff who are able and willing to provide individualized support for each participant. Currently, the OTs leading this program will either work as volunteers or be paid through their existing organization. However, this approach can lead to difficulties with retaining staff due to the low salaries and high burnout rates. In addition, there will be supportive staff such as social workers or case managers who work directly in the transitional living facility who will be available to assist the OTs with the program

and aid the participants with community resources, particularly after the program has concluded.

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter is to introduce a life skills program for young women who are residing in transitional living facilities to help them develop the necessary skills to acquire permanent housing and meaningful employment. While there are several barriers that can potentially hinder the program's effectiveness, there are effective ways to address them. This program incorporates existing research obtained from previously implemented programs such as the S.M.A.R.T program and The Housing First program (Gutman & Raphael-Greenfield, 2017; MacKinnon & Socias, 2021) and is designed to address the needs of women aged 18-30 residing in a transitional living facility. Overall, the benefits of this program can extend beyond the individual participants, also positively impacting their families, community, and society. By recognizing and overcoming the barriers to implementing life skills programs, young women in transitional living can be empowered to reach their potential and create a brighter, healthier future.

CHAPTER FIVE – Program Evaluation Research Plan

Homelessness and mental illness are two critical issues that have increasingly become prevalent in contemporary society, and their interrelated nature can lead to a cycle of unemployment and chronic homelessness, posing significant challenges to individuals, families, and communities. According to Gutman & Raphael-Greenfield (2017), approximately one-third of homeless adults exhibit co-occurring mental illness, including depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, and substance abuse disorders. Despite persistent efforts to tackle these problems, homelessness and mental illness remain persistent social issues requiring ongoing attention and intervention. This study specifically focuses on women, as they often experience these problems at disproportionate rates, leading to chronic homelessness and unemployment. Women's vulnerabilities, such as the possibility of facing violence, discrimination, marginalization, and sexual exploitation, are some reasons why they often experience chronic homelessness and unemployment, as stated by Li and Urada (2020).

To effectively address the critical issues of homelessness and mental illness, a life skills program is being developed for women residing in a transitional living facility who have a history of homelessness and mental illness. Such a program can provide an essential support system for individuals seeking to rebuild their lives and achieve self-sufficiency. The program aims to equip participants with the necessary skills and knowledge to secure and maintain employment and housing. The program will take place over twelve weeks and be divided into two six-week modules. The first module will focus on independent living skills such as kitchen safety, financial

management/budgeting, paying bills, community participation, and overall health and wellness. The second module will concentrate on job readiness skills such as job search, interview skills, professional dress, workplace professionalism, and conflict resolution. In addition to these critical skills, the program staff can provide emotional and psychological support to address underlying issues that may have contributed to their homelessness.

Purpose of the study

The proposed study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of a life skills program for women in transitional living. Upon completion of the program, it is hypothesized that most participants will gain meaningful employment and independent housing after completing the twelve-week program. The program's short-term and long-term goals include increased knowledge and confidence in specific life skills related to apartment living and employment for the participants, obtaining permanent housing and employment upon completion, and reducing inpatient psychiatric hospitalizations. This program evaluation can provide valuable insights into participant needs, program effectiveness and may create opportunities for funding to increase services. The effectiveness of the program will be evaluated by changes in participant knowledge of skills, gaining meaningful employment, and obtaining independent housing.

Methodology

Participants enter the transitional living center at different times and their length of stay also varies. Additionally, participants will have differing levels of skills and needs based on their lived experiences prior to entering the transitional living center. Thus, a

non-comparison single-group pretest-posttest study design will be used to evaluate the changes in knowledge and skill development following program participation. The evaluation will be conducted using questionnaires and checklists, as well as qualitative data collection methods such as interviews.

Participants

The target population includes women between the ages of 18 and 30 who currently reside in a transitional living facility situated outside of Boston in Quincy, MA. Participants will be selected through referrals made by occupational therapists, social workers, or case managers operating in community-based settings in Boston. The inclusion criteria for this program will consist of a woman, between the ages of 18-30, have a high school diploma or equivalent GED, English speaking, currently in recovery and/or sober, a diagnosed mental illness that is currently stable, history of homelessness, employment history, and the ability and motivation to learn life skills related to housing and employment. The exclusion criteria for this program would be individuals who are actively engaging in substance abuse, have severe mental illness that is not controlled by medications, lack of motivation to obtain housing and/or employment, and other deficits that would impair their ability to learn life skills.

Procedures

Convenience sampling will be utilized for recruiting participants for this program. This method involves recruiting participants from the transitional living facility in Boston, who are easily accessible and willing to participate in the study. The recruitment process will begin by interviewing potential participants who are currently residing in the

transitional living facility. Informed consent will be obtained, and incentives such as gift cards or public transportation passes will be offered to increase participation rates.

Ethical Considerations

There are several ethical considerations that must be addressed. The program must ensure that participants are treated with respect and dignity, and their privacy and confidentiality are maintained. In addition, informed consent must be obtained, and the participants must be fully informed about the program's objectives, procedures, and potential benefits and risks. The program must be accessible to all women who meet the inclusion criteria regardless of their race, ethnicity, religion, or sexual orientation, and participants should not be coerced or pressured into participating. Finally, the program must ensure that participants are not stigmatized or labeled as "homeless" or "mentally ill" and that they are treated with empathy and compassion. Addressing these ethical considerations can provide an empowering and supportive environment for women to gain the necessary skills and knowledge to achieve self-sufficiency and rebuild their lives.

Outcome Measures and Data Collection

Prior to beginning the program, standardized measures, such as The Canadian Occupational Performance Measure (COPM) will be utilized to collect quantitative data on the participants occupational performance. These measures will also be repeated post intervention to measure change. Upon entering the transitional living facility, the program evaluator and OT student will meet with each potential participant to determine their interest and motivation level for participation in the program. Upon consent and

satisfying the inclusion criteria, the participants will be given a questionnaire to complete.

The questionnaire will include questions about their current abilities and knowledge of tasks related to managing finances, budgeting, kitchen safety, resume writing, interview skills, ect. An example of a kitchen safety question on this survey includes:

If there was a grease fire on the stove in the kitchen, what would you first do?

- A) Pour water on it
- B) Put a wet towel over it
- C) Pour baking soda on it
- D) Pour flour on it

Refer to appendix A for the entire questionnaire.

After having the participants complete this questionnaire in order to obtain a baseline measure of their current knowledge on life skills related to independent living and employment, the participants will also be given the Canadian Occupational Therapy Measure (COPM). The COPM measures client perceived changes in occupational performance over time (COPM, 2022) and looks at various areas of occupation including self-care, productivity, and leisure. The participants will also rate important areas of occupation in terms of their current performance and satisfaction levels (Law et al., 1990). The results from the COPM will allow the program evaluator to have a better understanding of the participants occupational performance prior to beginning the program. After completing the pre-test questionnaire and the COPM, the participants will engage in the first module, independent living skills. After the participants successfully complete both modules, they will be given the COPM again to determine any changes in

occupational performance and satisfaction (Sammells, 2023). They will also be given the same questionnaire used at the beginning of the program to determine baseline knowledge, in order to determine a change in knowledge upon completion of the program. The program evaluator will also meet with each participant upon completion of the program to gather participants' experiences and perceptions of the program's effectiveness, as well as any barriers or challenges they may have encountered during the program. Some examples of questions that will be asked during this interview include:

1. How comfortable do you feel performing the tasks related to independent living and employment skills that were addressed in this program?
2. Did you face any specific challenges or difficulties when trying to implement the skills learned in this program?
3. Are there any areas within the program that you feel like were not adequately covered or that you still have questions about?
4. How well do you feel the program addressed your personal goals and expectations related to independent living and employment?

Data Management

All data will be stored securely in password-protected electronic files and only accessible to the program evaluator. Physical copies of the data, such as the checklists and surveys, will be stored in a locked cabinet with limited access within the offices of the transitional living facility, with only the program evaluator and program director having access. The data will be anonymized, with all personally identifiable information removed or replaced with unique identifiers, to protect the participants' privacy. There

will be a key used to link the program participants with unique codes in a separate locked file. The outcome data will be stored securely for approximately 3 months post program and then it will be destroyed per the facilities document disposal policy. These measures will ensure that the participants' privacy and confidentiality are protected and that the research complies with all applicable ethical and legal requirements.

Data Analysis

To analyze the data collected in this study, a mixed-methods approach will be employed. Descriptive statistics will be used to summarize the quantitative data collected from the questionnaires and checklists and a paired t-test will be used to determine if there are significant differences between pre-test and post-test scores. Additionally, qualitative data collected from the interviews will be analyzed using a thematic analysis approach to identify patterns and themes related to the participants' experiences and perceptions of the program's effectiveness.

Limitations

Limitations of the study design include the lack of a control group, convenience sampling and the small sample size which limits the ability to attribute the outcomes to the program or generalizability of the results to other populations. Furthermore, the self-reported data may introduce response bias and social desirability bias, as participants may be hesitant to report negative experiences or outcomes.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the proposed life skills program for young women in transitional living presents a unique opportunity to address the critical issue of homelessness and

chronic mental illness among this vulnerable population. By focusing on the development of essential life skills, such as independent living and job readiness skills, the program seeks to empower participants to achieve long-term self-sufficiency and break the cycle of homelessness. While the single-group pretest-posttest study design has limitations, the use of multiple data collection methods and inclusion of qualitative data will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the program's effectiveness. The ethical considerations of the program have been carefully considered, and measures have been taken to ensure participant safety and privacy. Despite the limitations, the findings from this study have the potential to inform the development of future life skills programs for individuals in transitional living and other vulnerable populations. Overall, this study has the potential to provide a roadmap for addressing the critical issue of homelessness and chronic mental illness among young women.

CHAPTER SIX – Dissemination Plan

The establishment and execution of an occupational therapy (OT) life skills program designed for women living in transitional living facilities in Boston hold significant promise in achieving transformative changes and facilitating the transition of these women towards independent housing and the acquisition of purposeful employment. This structured program will be administered through four comprehensive 12-week sessions, spanning an entire year. It is hypothesized that this initiative will yield favorable outcomes, with the women successfully attaining the objective of securing stable housing and gainful employment. The findings from this program will be disseminated to the Father Bill's and Mainspring (FBMS) organizations in order to create a permanent program within the organization.

Dissemination Goals

The process of dissemination will be initiated upon completion of two sessions of the program and effectiveness data are available. The overarching objectives of the dissemination plan can be categorized into long-term and short-term goals, expansion of the occupational therapy (OT) life skills programs within a diverse array of homelessness organizations and transitional living facilities throughout the city of Boston. The goals of this dissemination plan are as follows:

- Long term goal:
 - Inclusion and expansion of OT life skills programs within various homelessness organizations and transitional living facilities in the Boston area

- Short term goals:
 - Permanence of this life skills program within Father Bills & Mainspring organization
 - Bring awareness to the need of OT services and life skills programming within community-based settings

Target Audiences

The primary target audience for the dissemination process of this program is the Father Bills & Mainspring organization. With a mission dedicated to the eradication and prevention of homelessness throughout Southern Massachusetts, the organization commits itself to the provision of emergency and supportive housing, alongside an array of essential support services (Father Bills & Mainspring, 2016). The comprehensive scope of the Father Bills & Mainspring organization encompasses emergency shelters, transitional living facilities, permanent housing initiatives, homelessness outreach programs, and community meal provisions (Father Bills & Mainspring, 2016). Given the program's objective of establishing a lasting presence within the organization, and its subsequent implementation within multiple transitional housing facilities across Southern Massachusetts, the Father Bills & Mainspring organization is rightfully identified as the primary audience for the dissemination efforts.

The secondary audience for the dissemination process encompasses occupational therapy practitioners, particularly those engaged in community-based or mental health settings. Although community-based mental health occupational therapists constitute a relatively limited subset within the broader occupational therapy profession nationwide,

their role and impact within their respective settings are crucial. These dedicated practitioners primarily operate within various community-based environments, including but not limited to supportive housing facilities, substance use treatment centers, and child and family services integrated within homeless shelters or supportive housing contexts (Roy et al., 2017). Raising awareness regarding the imperative need for occupational therapy services within transitional housing facilities holds paramount significance for all stakeholders involved. By directing attention to this pressing issue, the dissemination efforts seek to highlight the indispensable role of occupational therapy practitioners in facilitating the well-being and rehabilitation of individuals within transitional housing environments.

Key Messages and Messengers

For the primary audience, Father Bills & Mainspring Organization, the key messages are as follows:

1. Implementation of an OT-led life skills program can equip participants with the essential skills to not only mitigate the risk of homelessness, but also prevent its recurrence, fostering long-term stability and independence.
2. Occupational therapists play a pivotal role in assisting this population by teaching occupation based and functional skills needed to gain meaningful employment and cultivate the ability to live independently.

The key messages will be effectively disseminated by the program developer who possesses a comprehensive understanding of the program elements and potential impact.

This expertise enables the developer to convey the messages to the Father Bills &

Mainspring Organization, ensuring clarity, relevance, and alignment with the organization's mission and objectives.

For the secondary audience, occupational therapists/occupational therapy students the key messages can be conveyed as follows:

1. Occupational therapy intervention has demonstrated potential to make a profound impact on the lives of homeless women and improve their overall quality of life and well-being.
2. Community-based occupational therapy, as an emerging setting within the field of occupational therapy, offers substantial advantages to OT students and novice practitioners in terms of experiential learning opportunities.

Dissemination Activities and Tools

To effectively engage the target audience of the Father Bills & Mainspring organizations, several methods of dissemination have been identified:

- Person to person contact
 - *Meetings:* An initial approach for dissemination entails requesting meetings with key individuals serving on the board of the organization, such as the director of program development. These meetings will serve as an opportunity to engage in discussions regarding the program's outcomes, providing a platform for sharing valuable information.
 - *Presentation:* Another avenue for dissemination is through the organization's "speakers bureau," a monthly initiative that invites diverse

individuals, including community organizations, program participants, and staff members, to deliver talks at events hosted by the organization (FBMS, 2016). Utilizing this platform will prove instrumental in communicating the program's outcomes and achievements to both the organization's members and other community-based entities involved in homelessness alleviation efforts.

- Written information
 - *Newsletter*: FBMS releases a biannual newsletter named "The Heartbeat," which serves as a platform for highlighting current events, participant narratives, volunteer recognition, and ongoing programs or activities within the organization (FBMS, 2016). Including a dedicated section within this newsletter, containing information about the life skills program and its outcomes, would be highly advantageous.
 - *Website*: The FBMS website presents an effective medium for disseminating program-related details and outcomes. Specifically, the "Impact" section of the website showcases notable achievements of the organization, often featuring participant testimonials or narratives through videos or written accounts. It would be beneficial to incorporate the journey and success story of a program participant who has undergone the life skills program.

It is important to note that the meetings and presentations will be initially conducted by the program developer. The subsequent creation of written materials,

including the newsletter and website content, will also be undertaken by the program developer in collaboration with the assistance of staff at the Father Bills and Mainspring organization. In addition, the participants will help disseminate by writing testimonials or speaking about their experience in videos.

The second target audience is OTs and the following methods of dissemination have been identified to effectively reach out to this group:

- Written information:
 - *Newsletter:* To disseminate information to OTs, the program developer will author a newsletter to be published through the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) Special Interest Section (SIS) quarterly newsletter.
- Person to person contact:
 - *Presentations:* Both the program developer and the OT student will engage in disseminating information through presentations conducted at the mental health SIG meetings. These meetings take place virtually via Zoom and are accessible to all members of MAOT. Each presentation within this forum is centered around specific topics or events occurring in the field of OT throughout the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Consequently, the program developer and student will collaboratively prepare a PowerPoint presentation showcasing the results and outcomes of the program's initial two sessions. This presentation will be shared with occupational therapy practitioners during the SIG meeting. In addition,

after additional sessions of the program, the dissemination efforts will be expanded to presentations at the AOTA conference for the following year.

Budget

Table 6.1 delineates the costs associated with each individual dissemination activity. This program is executed at the local level; thus the majority of dissemination efforts will be concentrated within the local vicinity and are not considered expenses.

Table 6.1

Expenses

Dissemination Activity	Items	Cost	Total Cost
Presentation for the “speakers bureau” at FBMS	Poster printing and presentation materials	\$200.00	
MAOT SIG meeting	MAOT membership	\$75.00	
AOTA SIS newsletter	AOTA membership	\$155.00	
AOTA conference	Conference fee	\$275.00	
	Travel (Airfare, hotel, food).	\$1000.00	
	Poster printing	\$100.00	
			Total Cost: \$1,805.00

The dissemination budget will encompass all expenses related to dissemination activities beyond the first year of the program, consisting of a total of four sessions. The preliminary dissemination endeavor will be carried out through a presentation at the FBMS, necessitating the allocation of \$200.00 to create a poster and other essential presentation materials. Furthermore, a portion of the dissemination activities will be conducted via the MAOT, which mandates an annual membership fee. Hence, a sum of \$75.00 will be allocated to cover this requirement. Although the initial dissemination activities are limited to the local area, there are future plans to broaden the scope and

disseminate findings at the AOTA conference. This expansion entails additional expenses, including conference registration, travel arrangements, and the production of poster materials.

Evaluation

The efficacy of the dissemination endeavors will be assessed through multiple channels. Initially, attendance records will serve as a metric for evaluating the impact of presentations conducted within the FBMS organization and the virtual Special Interest Group (SIG) meeting. Moreover, the written dissemination activities, including contributions to the MAOT newsletter and FBMS newsletter, will be appraised based on the extent of press coverage and promotional exposure. Ultimately, the overall success of the program will hinge upon the ultimate approval and integration of this life skills program as a permanent fixture within the FBMS organization, providing a conclusive measure of its effectiveness.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the dissemination chapter has provided a comprehensive overview of the strategies, budget allocation, and measurement of outcomes for the program's dissemination efforts. The locally run nature of the program has allowed for focused dissemination activities within the immediate community, minimizing expenses related to travel and airfare. The chapter has outlined the importance of community-based occupational therapy as a valuable learning setting for OT students and new practitioners. Additionally, various outlets have been identified to assess the success of the dissemination activities, including attendance records for presentations and the evaluation

of press coverage and promotion for written dissemination efforts. Ultimately, the long-term success of the program will be contingent upon the program's integration as a permanent offering within the FBMS organization. This chapter serves as a roadmap for effective dissemination, ensuring that the program's outcomes and benefits are widely disseminated to relevant stakeholders and contributing to the growth and advancement of community-based occupational therapy.

CHAPTER SEVEN – Funding Plan

The establishment and implementation of a life skills program specifically tailored to women residing in transitional living arrangements is key towards facilitating their successful transition from homelessness to independent living. Women in these circumstances often lack the essential skills needed for reclaiming stability, fostering self-confidence, and effectively reintegrating into society. The acquisition and development of these skills increase the likelihood of securing meaningful employment and achieving independent living. This program will be run in four 12-week sessions at a women's transitional living facility run by Father Bills and Mainspring organization in Boston. To successfully implement the life skills program, funding is needed to support equipment and supplies, staffing requirements, dissemination, and ongoing marketing, for example. These funding priorities are required for program initiation and sustainability, ensuring the program can effectively address the multifaceted needs of women in transitional housing.

Available Local Resources:

The life skills program is conducted within a transitional living facility operated through Father Bills & Mainspring, situated outside of Boston; a city endowed with a diverse array of local resources aimed at aiding individuals facing adversity. Utilization of supportive services are needed to ensure smooth operation of the program. One such resource involves establishing a partnership with an accredited occupational therapy program and serve as a 12-week level II fieldwork site. This collaboration provides the opportunity for valuable experience for the students and supports the occupational

therapy students (OTs) capacity for providing the life skills programming. Moreover, Boston Health Care for the Homeless (BHCHP) is a longstanding program with a notable 25-year history and can be an invaluable resource for this program. BHCHP has a long-standing partnership with Father Bills & Mainspring and provide the residents of all their shelters, emergency housing, and transitional living facilities with comprehensive medical care, behavioral health services, and oral health care (O’Connell, J.J. et al., 2010). In addition, BHCHP has established relationships with many other organizations and foundations throughout the city of Boston and can serve as a liaison for additional support services such as case management, women’s health care, and family support services.

Another resource of significance is Dress for Success Boston, a non-profit organization that caters to women’s professional needs by providing them with suitable attire to enhance their employment prospects. Father Bills & Mainspring have prominent connections to Dress for Success Boston, and therefore will aid the women participating in this life skills program with preparing for job interviews. Each woman will receive a referral to Dress for Success, which affords them access to professional outfits suitable for their interviews. Furthermore, upon securing employment, these women are provided with additional attire to wear during their work engagements (Dress for Success, 2023).

Needed Resources

In addition to local resources, other funding is needed to support program implementation. Table 7.1 lists the needed resources and associated costs for years one and two of the program.

Table 7.1*Yearly Expenses*

Categories	Items	Year 1 Expenses	Year 2 Expenses
Personnel	Program evaluator/ developer	\$0	\$0
	1 Level II OT student per 12-week program	\$0	\$0
	Case Manager	\$4,000.00	\$8,000.00
	Support staff: employed directly in the transitional living facilities.	\$0	\$0
Consultants	Boston Health Care for Homeless	\$0	\$0
	Dress for Success Boston	\$0	\$0
Equipment	12 notebook computers	\$800.00	\$200.00
	Projector or TV	\$100.00	\$0
Supplies	Writing supplies (pens, paper, notebooks)	\$50.00	\$50.00
	Household items	\$100.00	\$100.00
	Job readiness materials (resume templates, mock interview questions)	\$0	\$0
	Budgeting materials	\$0	\$0
Communication	Telephone communication with outside organizations and individuals	\$0	\$0
Materials preparation	Printing papers and making copies of all needed resources	\$50	\$50
Travel	A van for transportation	\$15,000.00	\$0
	Gas	\$2,000.00	\$3,000.00
Facility	This program takes place directly in the transitional living facility	\$0	\$0

Gift Cards	All participants who complete this program in the first year will be given a \$20 gift card to stop and shop	\$800	\$0
Evaluation	Questionnaires, observation, and COPM.	\$62	\$62
Dissemination Plan	Presentation materials, MAOT membership, AOTA membership, AOTA conference fee, travel, airfare.	\$1,805.00	\$0
Unforeseen Expenses		\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00
		Year 1 total:	Year 2 total:
		\$26,717.00	\$13,462.00

This life skills program comprises four consecutive 12-week sessions that will be conducted in a transitional living facility managed by Father Bills and Mainspring. The provided Table 7.1 outlines the projected expenditures for the first and second years of this program. The personnel involved in this initiative include a program evaluator/developer, who is employed by a local community hospital as part of their responsibilities and will receive compensation from the hospital. Additionally, this program will collaborate with an occupational therapy academic program and serve as a level II Fieldwork (FW) site. One OT student will be assigned to each 12-week program to aid in their development and implementation. Furthermore, a case manager will be responsible for client intake, documentation, and facilitating access to community resources. While this case manager is currently employed by Father Bills and Mainspring, they will receive an additional \$1,000 per program in the first year and \$2,000 per program in the second year, in addition to their regular salary. Finally, the

existing support staff at the transitional living facilities will be available throughout the programs to provide assistance and support to the participants.

A crucial component contributing to the efficacy of this program is the provision of necessary equipment. This entails purchasing twelve laptops, encompassing devices for each participant, the program developer, and the case manager. To ensure cost-effectiveness, refurbished laptops will be acquired, amounting to an estimated expenditure of approximately \$800 for the initial year. In the subsequent year, an additional \$200 will be allocated to address potential notebook computer replacements or repairs, while otherwise utilizing the same laptops throughout the second year of the program.

An additional essential component is the acquisition of supplies. These supplies encompass writing materials such as pens, paper, and notebooks, which are essential for facilitating participants' engagement in written activities. Furthermore, household items including kitchen utensils and laundry detergent are required to facilitate the hands-on aspects of the program. Additionally, budgeting materials and job readiness resources such as resume templates and mock interview questions are of paramount importance; however, these resources will be obtained online at no expense.

To ensure effective correspondence with external organizations and agencies, the program necessitates the provision of a telephone. The responsibility for managing such communication is the role of case manager, who will be equipped with a dedicated work phone. The funding for this telephone will be provided by Father Bills and Mainspring, enabling the case manager to utilize it exclusively for all program-related

communication. In addition, the case manager will be responsible for preparing all needed materials designated by the program developer, this includes making copies and printing items. The amount of funds allocated for this will be \$50 in the case that additional items such as printer paper needs to be purchased.

An important financial consideration associated with this program entails the purchase of a pre-owned 12-passenger van. The attainment of this vehicle holds significance as it serves as a means of transportation for participants, facilitating their access to various venues such as grocery stores, retail establishments, and organizations like Dress for Success. Although this initial investment constitutes a substantial expenditure in the first year, it is expected to yield long-term cost savings in subsequent years.

Upon completion of the program requirements, a \$20 gift card will be given to each participant who successfully completes the program within the initial year. To accommodate all potential participants, a total allocation of \$800 has been designated for this purpose, encompassing the entirety of the anticipated 40 participants. Furthermore, a crucial aspect of this program pertains to evaluation and outcome assessment, necessitating the acquisition of the Canadian Occupational Performance Measure. The COPM manual and 100 copies of the measure will be purchased, incurring a cost of \$62.00.

Moreover, over the course of the initial year of this program, activities pertaining to dissemination will be conducted both at the midpoint, i.e., the six-month mark, and upon the culmination of the first year. A sum of \$1,805.00 has been allocated for

dissemination activities within the first year. In addition, it is prudent to allocate an additional amount of \$2,000.00 to account for unforeseen expenses, thereby ensuring the program's successful implementation. In totality, the estimated expenditure for the initial year of this program amounts to \$26,717.00, with an additional allocation of \$13,400.00 projected for the subsequent year.

Potential Funding Sources

Table 7.2 presents a compilation of potential funding sources that can be leveraged to provide financial support for the implementation of the life skills program.

Table 7.2

Funding Sources

Potential Funding Sources	Specific Sources
Grants	Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
Private Foundations	The Boston Foundation
Crowdfunding Platforms	GoFundMe

There are multiple funding sources that are suitable for supporting this life skills program. The total projected cost for year one is \$26,717.00. One viable funding option involves pursuing support from government agencies and grants specifically tailored to ending homelessness and the support of transitional housing programs. For instance, the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) awards Homeless Assistance Grants to communities and organizations administer housing and services at the local level (National Alliance to end Homelessness, 2023). This program provides grants to individuals and organizations who engage homeless individuals and families

living on the streets, improve the number and quality of emergency shelters, help operate these shelters, provide essential services to residents, rapidly re-house homeless individuals, and provide support services to prevent families and individuals to becoming homeless (or homeless again). (HUD, 2023). Therefore, the program developer will partner with Father Bills and Mainspring, who is the organization that runs the transitional living facility to apply for this grant.

In addition to grant opportunities, an alternative funding source for the life skills program involves engaging private foundations or philanthropic organizations with a vested interest in education, homelessness, or community development initiatives. Such entities often administer grant programs specifically tailored to support programs such as this life skills program. For instance, The Boston Foundation is a foundation that supports non-profit organizations, charities, partners with companies and professionals to provide funding to individuals and programs that support arts & culture, education, health & wellness, neighborhoods & housing, and jobs & economic development. This organization provides approximately \$2 million dollars per year to nonprofits, organizations, and programs throughout the city of Boston (The Boston Foundation, 2023).

Furthermore, community fundraising events, crowdfunding platforms (such as GoFundMe or Patreon), and individual donations hold potential as valuable avenues for gaining funds for the program. An illustrative example of a community fundraising event could involve organizing a raffle held within the premise of the transitional living facility. The program's staff would proactively reach out to various establishments such as stores

and restaurants throughout Boston, requesting donations of gift cards or baskets. The entirety of the proceeds generated from the raffle would be allocated to funding the life skills program, ensuring its continued operation and success.

Conclusion

In conclusion, securing adequate funding is crucial for the successful implementation and sustainability of the life skills program at the transitional living facility. This chapter explored various potential funding sources, including private foundations and philanthropic organizations, community fundraising events, crowdfunding platforms, and individual donations. By strategically tapping into these funding opportunities, it is possible to acquire the financial support necessary to cover program costs, including personnel, equipment, supplies, communication, materials preparation, travel, facilities, and evaluation. By diversifying funding sources and leveraging partnerships with relevant stakeholders, the life skills program can continue to empower individuals in transitional situations, enhance their self-sufficiency, and contribute to their successful reintegration into society. Effective financial planning and ongoing efforts to secure funding will be essential to ensure the sustained impact and long-term viability of the life skills program in supporting the transitional living facility's mission and benefiting program participants.

CHAPTER EIGHT – Conclusion

The issue of homelessness among women is multifaceted and widespread, impacting a significant number of women across the nation. These individuals face distinct and complex barriers that hinder their access to gainful employment and stable housing (Li & Uranda, 2020; Mackinnon & Socias, 2021). The proposed life skills program aims to develop crucial independent living and employment readiness skills to women residing in a supportive environment, such as a transitional living facility. In this setting, the basic survival needs are met, and the women often have achieved stable physical and mental health, optimizing readiness to learn independent living skills and employment readiness skills. The primary objective of this intervention is to equip these women with the necessary tools and competencies that will empower them to achieve self-sufficiency and stability as they navigate through the various facets of their lives. Through this comprehensive and tailored approach, it is anticipated that this program will play a vital role in fostering the women's independence and resilience, ultimately promoting their successful integration into society as they progress towards a brighter future.

To evaluate the program effectiveness, a pre-posttest outcome measure will be employed for all participants. This measure will capture the participants baseline knowledge of independent living skills and employment skills before the program's initiation and their subsequent improvements upon completion. The hypothesized improvement in the participants independent living and employment knowledge and skills not only contribute to their immediate well-being but also holds far-reaching

implications for their success and self-sufficiency. Moreover, after completing the program it is proposed that the participants will have an increased likelihood to gain meaningful employment and have independent living arrangements within approximately six-months.

Furthermore, favorable program outcomes may enhance regard for occupational therapy as an integral service. A key objective is to establish the program as a permanent fixture within the operational framework of the Father Bills & Mainspring (FBMS) organization. Notably, the broader ambition is to extend the program's implementation beyond the current setting and apply it across various transitional living facilities, catering to diverse populations encompassing different genders and age groups. This strategic expansion seeks to embrace a more inclusive and equitable approach, acknowledging the diverse needs of various marginalized groups experiencing homelessness. Moreover, an overarching long-term aspiration is to extend the program's reach even further, encompassing additional homelessness organizations operating within the city of Boston.

In conclusion, this program significantly contributes to the innovation of occupational therapy by pioneering a novel and targeted intervention aimed at addressing the unique challenges faced by homeless women. By tailoring the life skills program to specifically cater to the needs of this vulnerable population, the intervention goes beyond conventional approaches and exemplifies the essence of client-centered care in occupational therapy practice. The incorporation of evidence-based practices from the Housing First Program (HFP) and Supporting Many for Residential Transition (SMART)

into the program design showcases a progressive and integrative approach, capitalizing on successful elements from existing interventions. Through these innovative practices, this program not only demonstrates the potential to enhance the lives of homeless women but also enriches the field of occupational therapy by setting a precedent for the development of targeted, evidence-based interventions for diverse and underserved populations. As a pioneering effort in addressing homelessness through occupational therapy, this program holds promise for inspiring future research and interventions aimed at fostering inclusivity and promoting social equity within the profession.

APPENDIX A –Independent Living Skills and Employment Questionnaire**Kitchen Safety:**

If there was a grease fire on the stove in the kitchen, what would you first do?

- A. Pour water on it
- B. Put a wet towel over it
- C. Pour baking soda on it
- D. Pour flour on it

When loading a dishwasher, do you place silverware up or down? And why?

- A. Up _____
- B. Down _____

What should you use when taking a hot pan out of the oven?

- A. Paper towel
- B. Oven mitt
- C. Dish towel
- D. Your hands

Budgeting:

What is the consequence of not paying your credit card bill each month?

- A. You will accrue interest
- B. You can get yourself into debt
- C. Nothing, you do not have to pay each month
- D. Both A & B

What percent of your income should go into savings?

- A. 80%
- B. 50%
- C. 20%
- D. 5%

Paying Bills

What are some examples of household bills that need to be paid?

What do you include when writing a check?

- A. Your name
- B. The name of the company or person you are paying
- C. The amount you are paying
- D. All of the above

Wellness

How many hours of physical activity should you get per week?

- A. 30 minutes
- B. 90 minutes
- C. 150 minutes
- D. 200 minutes

You should take at least 1 nap every day

- A. True
- B. False

Resume Writing

Which of the following is a crucial element to consider when writing a resume?

- A. Using fancy fonts and colorful designs to make it visually appealing.
- B. Including every detail of every job you've ever had, no matter how irrelevant.
- C. Tailoring the resume to highlight relevant skills and experiences for the specific job.
- D. Writing lengthy paragraphs to provide a comprehensive overview of your career.

How to search for a job

What is a key strategy to effectively search for a job?

- A. Applying to only a few select job postings that seem perfect for you.
- B. Relying solely on online job boards and websites for job opportunities.
- C. Networking and reaching out to professional contacts in your field.
- D. Sending out generic and identical resumes and cover letters to multiple employers.

Interview skills

What are some things you can do to prepare for a job interview?

Professional dress

Which of the following best describes the importance of professional dress in the workplace?

- A. It allows you to express your personal style and preferences.
- B. It fosters a sense of unity and professionalism among colleagues.
- C. Professional dress is only necessary when meeting with clients or superiors.
- D. Dressing casually promotes a more relaxed and creative work environment.

APPENDIX B – Executive Summary

Homelessness presents a global pandemic that profoundly affects approximately 18 individuals per 10,000 in the United States (US) alone (Sleet & Francescutti, 2021). Over the past two years, the US has seen a 3.1% increase in single homeless individuals (HUD, 2022). While homelessness affects all individuals, multiple factors contribute to homelessness among women, including a scarcity of services tailored specifically to their needs, heightened susceptibility to exploitation and marginalization, elevated rates of poverty, and limited resources for escaping domestic violence situations (Milaney et al., 2020). Furthermore, a considerable proportion of these women lack the essential life skills necessary for securing gainful employment and independent housing. This deficiency in life skills often arises from inadequate access to skill development during their formative years due to prolonged homelessness, exposure to foster care environments during upbringing, and recurrent hospitalizations during adolescence (Gutman & Raphael-Greenfield, 2017). Life skills training programs have shown to be effective in skill development for these individuals.

The proposed life skills program will specifically target women between the ages of 18 and 30 who are currently residing in a transitional living facility through the Father Bills and Mainspring organization in Quincy, MA and adhering to the housing-first approach. The housing-first model operates under the principle that housing is an inherent entitlement, and individuals experiencing homelessness should be promptly provided with housing assistance. It is hypothesized that by addressing the fundamental human need for housing, improved outcomes are likely to ensue (Mackinnon & Socias,

2021). Consistent with the housing-first paradigm, this life skills program will be implemented within the confines of the transitional living facility itself, with a primary focus on developing essential competencies related to housing and employment.

Project Overview

This life skills program was developed after a comprehensive review of current research and empirical evidence pertaining to various models and programs implemented among similar populations. The development of this program was significantly influenced by the Supporting Many to Achieve Residential Transition (SMART) programs. The program's design was strengthened by incorporating the Situated Learning Theory (SLT). The SLT emphasizes the significance of context and experiences in the process of learning (Korthagen, 2010). This framework has significantly guided the development of this life skills program in terms of how the learning activities are structured.

Prior to starting the program modules, the participants will undergo an intake interview in the presence of the program evaluator and an occupational therapy (OT) student. They will also complete a comprehensive questionnaire designed to assess their existing knowledge and proficiency pertaining to both independent living skills and employment-related skills. Furthermore, they will be administered the Canadian Occupational Therapy Performance Measure (COPM), which is an outcome tool that assesses an individual's perceived occupational performance in everyday activities usually in the areas of self-care, productivity, and leisure. By employing these measures, participants' occupational performance and skill repertoire will be better understood prior

to their active engagement in the program and allow for customization of activities as needed.

The program will be divided into two distinct modules, with the initial module concentrating on the acquisition of independent living skills. Activities in the initial module are designed to promote skill development in key domains including money management, kitchen safety, community engagement, conflict resolution within shared living arrangements, and self-advocacy proficiencies (Helfrich & Fogg, 2007; Gutman & Raphael-Greenfield, 2017). The module will be facilitated by the program evaluator in collaboration with an occupational therapy student and delivered within the transitional living facility over a six-week period.

The second module of the program addresses barriers related to insufficient educational background or job training, limited work experience, and mental health concerns (Gray et al., 2017; Siskind et al., 2013). The module will also be delivered over a six-week period by the program evaluator and an occupational therapy student and emphasizes the cultivation of essential skills necessary for obtaining employment. Topics include the following: crafting effective resumes, job search strategies, honing interview skills, adopting professional attire, cultivating professionalism in the workplace, and navigating conflicts with colleagues.

Upon the completion of both program modules by the participants, the (COPM) and the knowledge and skill questionnaire will be readministered to determine any changes in knowledge and perceived performance after program engagement. Additionally, each participant will be given the opportunity to partake in a closure

interview with the program evaluator. This interview serves as a platform for participants to express their individual experiences, assess the program's impact, and address any encountered barriers or challenges that may have arisen throughout their engagement.

Anticipated Outcomes

Following the completion of this 12-week program, it is anticipated that all participants will acquire knowledge pertaining to independent living and employment skills, as assessed through the questionnaire. Moreover, it is anticipated that there will be a clinically significant improvement in participants' self-perceived occupational performance and satisfaction, as measured by the Canadian Occupational Therapy Performance Measure (COPM). In terms of long-term projected outcomes, it is hypothesized that the participants will achieve meaningful employment and effectively apply the acquired skills to sustain these positions over an extended duration. Additionally, while not measured in this study, improvements in skill development and performance of important life skills leads to enhanced self-esteem, self-efficacy, community integration, and enhanced overall quality of life.

If the program achieves the positive outcomes expected, the goal is to permanently embed the program within the organizational framework of Father Bills and Mainspring. This will allow the program to continue to provide substantial assistance and support to women confronted with homelessness.

Recommendations

A primary objective of this program is to establish a permanent occupational therapy position within the FBMS organization, ensuring the ongoing implementation of

life skills programs to aid individuals experiencing homelessness. With continued positive results, it is recommended that this position be extended to encompass other community-based organizations as well. Forging partnerships between occupational therapy programs and these initiatives is also recommended, which will afford Level II fieldwork students the opportunity to acquire experiential knowledge within the context of community-based occupational therapy services. Noteworthy examples of community-based occupational therapy settings include homeless shelters, transitional living facilities, veterans' affairs (VA) services, and substance abuse treatment programs, among others (Estrany-Munar et al., 2021). Community-based occupational therapy represents a relatively emerging domain within the field and presents advantages for both the profession of occupational therapy and its students. This approach underscores the significance of promoting health and occupation as the central tenets of practice.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings and recommendations outlined in this executive summary highlight the significant potential of occupational therapy in addressing the needs of individuals experiencing homelessness. By establishing a permanent occupational therapy position within the FBMS organization and extending it to other community-based organizations, there is an opportunity to consistently implement life skills programs and positively impact the lives of those affected by homelessness. The integration of occupational therapy within community-based settings not only offers valuable learning experiences for students but also emphasizes the promotion of health and occupation as fundamental aspects of practice. By embracing this approach and

forging partnerships with various organizations, occupational therapy can play a pivotal role in enhancing the well-being and quality of life for individuals experiencing homelessness, while simultaneously advancing the field.

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APPENDIX C – Fact Sheet



Life Skills Program for Women in Transitional Living

Carey Hotsky, OT, MS, OTR

Introduction to the Problem

- Young women experiencing homelessness face challenges such as traumatic events, loss of support systems, and poverty which can make it challenging to secure stable employment and housing.
- These women often lack the necessary skills needed to gain employment and independent housing due to inability to develop skills during childhood and adolescence due to foster care placements, periods of homelessness, untreated mental illness, and hospitalizations and/or incarceration (Gutman & Raphael-Greenfield, 2017).



Proposed Program

- The proposed program to address this issue is a life skills program that will be run in a women's transitional living facility and will focus on teaching life skills related to independent living skills and employment skills.
- This program will follow a "housing first" model which prioritizes housing for individuals who are homeless or at risk for homelessness.
 - In this model, housing is considered a basic human right and individuals should be given access to housing with support services rooted in harm reduction with the ultimate goal of community re-integration (MacKinnon & Socias, 2021).
- The program will be run over the course of 12 weeks and will be comprised of two modules, each lasting six weeks.

Module One: Independent Living Skills

- Week 1: Kitchen safety
- Week 2: Budgeting/ money management
- Week 3: Paying bills
- Week 4: Communication
- Week 5: Health and Wellness
- Week 6: Community participation

Module Two: Employment Skills

- Week 1: Resume writing
- Week 2: How to search for a job
- Week 3: Interview skills
- Week 4: Professional dress
- Week 5: Professionalism in the workplace
- Week 6: Negotiating conflict with co-workers

Theories and Evidence Based

- Model of Human Occupation (MOHO)
 - MOHO places emphasis on the individual, their engagement in occupations, and the environmental factors, explains the ways in which daily activities contribute to an individual's well-being and overall health (Abaoğlu et al., 2017).
- Situated Learning Theory (SLT)
 - The SLT emphasizes the significance of context and experiences in the process of learning (Korthagen, 2010).

Implications for Occupational Therapy

- Community-based OT is an emerging setting within the field of OT and can offer numerous learning opportunities for OT students and practitioners
- OT-led life skills intervention has demonstrated potential to make a profound impact on the lives of homeless women and improve their overall quality of life and well-being.



<https://www.a2therapyworks.com/blog/vlog/life-skills>

Funding Sources

- It is anticipated that this program will require approximately \$26,717.00 for the first year to successfully run.
- Potential funding sources for this program include:
 - Grants through Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
 - Private foundations such as The Boston Foundation
 - Crowdfunding platforms such as GoFundMe

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