Life Skills Development and Role of Occupational Therapy for Adults with Special Needs

Canary Brooks, OTS', Dr. Tonia Taylor,  † and Renae Bennett²

University of Mississippi Medical Center¹ and Itawamba Crossroads Ranch

OVERVIEW OF CAPSTONE SITE

Itawamba Crossroads Ranch (ICR) is an non-profit organization that is progressing to provide adults with special needs a safe and comfortable environment to assist with life skills and interaction with volunteers and peers. ICR was developed based on a vision to provide opportunities for special needs adults to thrive, not merely exist. The mission statement behind this vision is “To provide high-functioning, special needs adults a safe, loving environment with supervised independence. Our goal is to provide activities and learning experiences which will focus on each resident’s abilities, not disabilities.”

LITERATURE SUMMARY

- Participants accelerated skill consolidation, self-determination, and autonomy by being actively involved in formal curriculum sessions during the day and less structured sessions in the evening (Kingsnorth, Rudzik, King, & Mcpherson, 2019)
- Active support being associated with optimal outcomes and customizing to fit the needs of participants receiving service. Staff should reflect knowledge, skills, and cultural competence to empower supportive framework of the residents trusted in their care (Bigby & Beadle-Brown, 2016).

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

- Phase I: A questionnaire was conducted via facetime with ICR founder and executive director, Renae Bennett, regarding the needs of the capstone site. Based on the findings, the primary gaps included the need of enhancing independence of ADL/AADLs and guidance for coping strategies, and mannerism effective communication.
- Phase II: A semi-structured interview was created to target the special needs population. Prior to retrieving data, the capstone mentor emphasized the importance of incorporating better structure, organization, and guidance for the benefit of the capstone site and future residents. Common findings included the need of assisting with organization, memory, and task completion followed by various ADL task.

PROJECT GOALS / OBJECTIVES

Goal 1: The capstone student will develop a daily activity independence program at Itawamba Crossroads Ranch within 1 week.

- Student will conduct the Phase III Needs Assessment with much volunteers, residents, and their families.
- Students will review the data collected from Phase III Needs Assessment.
- Student conducted the Phase II Needs Assessment with much future residents and caregivers utilizing a semi-structured interview to determine the needs of the participants.
- Based on the findings, the project developed as a result of researching the literature, assessing the needs, and objectives, the ultimate long-term goal is to improve the independence of adults with special needs in a new, residential environment. Along with that goal, it would be important to address the structure, behavior, education, and benefits of the participants, family/caregivers, and the organization.

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

The project developed as a result of researching the literature, assessing the needs, and collaborating with executive director of Mustard Seed, Inc. Based on those task, an existing program was modified and implemented for the needs of the capstone site and future residents. Ranch Bucks is a point-based incentive program to assist with developing life skills and empowering to change negative behavior.

PROJECT SUMMARY AND FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

- My professional and personal knowledge of working with adults with special needs has increased. Under the supervision and guidance of the staff members of Itawamba Crossroads Ranch, I was able to modify and implement a program, Ranch Bucks, focusing on the well-being, independence, and social activity with the future residents of Crossroads Ranch.
- As an occupational therapy student, the role of occupational therapy in a special needs setting in the following: a consultant, practitioner, and advocate.
- The capstone mentor, staff, and volunteers perceived the protocol manual as a tool that would be sustainable and useful for continuing implementation.

REFERENCES AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST

Thank you Itawamba Crossroads Ranch, Elizabeth Gammil and Del Adams, Dr. Tonia Taylor, Dr. Penny Rogers, UMCCC Faculty, and OTD Class of 2021