
2020 OTD Capstone Symposium

Spring 4-23-2020

Occupational Therapy's Role in Adapting Residential Youth Camps for Increased Inclusion

Brittany Tate

University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences, b.tate@usa.edu

Susan MacDermott

University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences, smacdermott@usa.edu

Becki Cohill

University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences, bcohill@usa.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://soar.usa.edu/otdcapstonespring2020>



Part of the [Occupational Therapy Commons](#), and the [Recreational Therapy Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Tate, Brittany; MacDermott, Susan; and Cohill, Becki, "Occupational Therapy's Role in Adapting Residential Youth Camps for Increased Inclusion" (2020). *2020 OTD Capstone Symposium*. 3.
<https://soar.usa.edu/otdcapstonespring2020/3>

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by SOAR @ USA. It has been accepted for inclusion in 2020 OTD Capstone Symposium by an authorized administrator of SOAR @ USA. For more information, please contact soar@usa.edu, erobinson@usa.edu.

Occupational Therapy's Role in Adapting Residential Youth Camps for Increased Inclusion

Brittany Tate, OTDS, Susan MacDermott, OTD, OTR/L, and Becki Cohill, OTD, OTR/L

BACKGROUND

Each year, summer camps serve more than 11 million youth in the (Wilson, Sibthorp, & Brusseau, 2017). Occupational therapy (OT) is an emerging area of practice (Hanscom & Schoen, 2014). Hanscom and Schoen (2014) recommended strategically combining OT with traditional camp programming to create an emotionally, physically, and spiritually safe environment that promotes optimal attending and task follow through. Individualized intervention strategies can be infused into the day to support each camper's successful participation.

PROBLEM

Residential youth camp enhances positive youth development, as it meets motivational needs and promotes intrinsic engagement (Halsall, Kendellen, Bean, & Forneris, 2016). However, the number of inclusive camps is limited (Shefter, Uhrman, Tobin, & Kress, 2017). Further problems include seasonal staff turnover and lack of inclusion training (Harper, 2017).

PURPOSE

To explore the populations served within Pathfinder Ranch, a residential youth camp, identify barriers to participation, and recommend adaptations to the environment to promote a more inclusive environment.



PROJECT RESULTS

Camp Staff Survey: Four Themes Emerged	Camp Survey Responses
Theme one Increase Training on Inclusion Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Need more staff to utilize the specialized equipment and need additional training on things like the adaptive climbing gear” (Camp Staff #5)
Theme two Challenging and Diverse Terrain All staff 11/11 or 100% agreed the environment was the most challenge aspect to promote inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Hikes are the most challenging, whether it's with including kids with mental, emotional, or physical differences that may require adaptation” (Camp Staff #7) “Including campers with physical limitations on hikes is challenging because of the terrain and time limits” (Camp Staff #11)
Theme three Increase Discussion on Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “We don't talk about what inclusion means or how to put it into practice often enough” (Camp Staff #3)
Theme four Increase Knowledge of Students' Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Team Challenge can be difficult to plan when caregivers are not clear about different physical abilities or challenges” (Camp Staff #1)
Camp Staff Interview Responses	Teacher and Parent Chaperone Interview Responses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “We get limited information on how to support each student” (Camp Staff #8) “I wish the parents would provide more details on how to help their child adapt to being away from home, especially if their child has any limitations” (Camp Staff #9) “I'm just not sure how to modify or adapt my orienteering class so that all the students will be able to participate. I could really use the [OT student's] guidance” (Camp Staff #2) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Camp has given my child opportunities to learn life skills and has challenged him outside of his comfort zone” (Parent #1) “This morning, she was dressed and had her water bottle filled before the bell rang. At home, we struggle with time management” (Parent #2) “My students have never been on a hike and the rocky terrain is especially challenging for the students with low muscle tone or cerebral palsy” (Teacher #3) “Pathfinder Ranch helped create a strong sense of community within our school and ensures each student has an ample opportunity to feel included” (Teacher #2)

Explored barriers within the camp environment and transitions from academic setting to overnight camp. Inclusion methods were implemented with the direct support of the special education teachers and then taught to the camp staff.

Intended duration versus actual: Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the facility and all California schools were temporarily closed, which abruptly hindered the ability to observe the impact of the in-service and proposed recommendations.

Capstone Products: Recommendations to increase inclusion and associated lesson plan

ACKNOWLEDGMENT:

A special thanks to everyone at Pathfinder Ranch, especially my mentor Elizabeth Hueter-Willoughby, and the naturalists who contributed to my capstone experience in many ways.

METHODS

Project completed over eight weeks. Included observations, reflective journaling, interviews, survey, staff feedback, and an in-service.

- Observations of activities elicited program strengths, limitations, and adaptation recommendations
- Participation in activities built rapport and provided an opportunity to give real-time feedback to staff on inclusion techniques
- Participants drawn from the pool of seasonal staff at Pathfinder Ranch
- Staff in-service on inclusion techniques with the use of a trivia game to match camp culture

OT IMPLICATIONS

Occupational therapy (OT) has a unique understanding of adapting activities and environments to match task demands which could assist the staff in promoting inclusivity (Braveman & Suarez-Balcazar, 2009). OT was supported through positive feedback from Pathfinder Ranch staff as well as the participants' engagement in meaningful inclusive tasks.

References

- Braveman, B., & Suarez-Balcazar, Y. (2009). Social justice and resource utilization in a community-based organization: A case illustration of the role of the occupational therapist. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 63(1), 13–24.
- Halsall, T., Kendellen, K., Bean, C., & Forneris, T. (2016). Facilitating positive youth development through residential camp: Exploring perceived characteristics of effective camp counselors and strategies for youth engagement. *Journal of Park and Recreation Administration*, 34(4), 20–35. <https://doi.org/10.18666/JPra-2016-V34-I4-7273>
- Hanscom, A., & Schoen, S. (2014). Using occupational therapy principles in developing nature camp for all children. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 37(4), 1.
- Harper, N. J. (2017). Wilderness therapy, therapeutic camping and adventure education in child and youth care literature: A scoping review. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 83, 68–79. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2017.10.030>
- Shefter, L., Uhrman, A., Tobin, L., & Kress, J. (2017). Inclusion coordinators at Jewish summer camps: Roles and challenges. *Journal of Jewish Education*, 83(1), 69–84.
- Wilson, C., Sibthorp, J., & Brusseau, T. A. (2017). Increasing physical activity and enjoyment through goal-setting at summer camp. *Journal of Park and Recreation Administration*, 35(4), 24–36. <https://doi.org/10.18666/JPra-2017-V35-I4-7930>