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The Importance of an Educational Occupation-Based Work program for Young Adults with Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities

Jennifer Zielinski

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THE IMPORTANCE OF AN EDUCATIONAL OCCUPATION-BASED WORK
PROGRAM FOR YOUNG ADULTS WITH INTELLECTUAL
& DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

By

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2017

A doctoral project submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the

Occupational Therapy Doctorate

Department of Brain Health
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Abstract

Barriers to occupations and transitions to vocational opportunities can be difficult for adolescents and young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD)s to feel confident and pursue job opportunities. Some of the problems stem from the stigma related to the individual's disability, the contexts surrounding them, and the performance of the work tasks expected. Individuals with I/DDs expressed that not having enough support in the community and the workforce creates significant obstacles to retaining a job. Occupational therapists (OT)s can play a unique role in transition and employment for individuals with an I/DD. With a focus on self-determination and successful employment, the outcomes and development arise significantly for people with I/DDs.

Employers and managers who have had experience working with or knew someone with an I/DD had a more positive attitude in employing these individuals. Consequently, individuals with I/DDs stated that they felt more able to complete their job requirements when receiving job training while acquiring self-determination and self-advocacy. Good workplace culture support often includes areas of social opportunities, team-building opportunities, and structure. Training for specific job skills and implementing work programs for individuals with I/DDs encompasses a unique set of skills, knowledge, and abilities necessary for successful occupational performance in the workplace. The Doctoral Capstone Project consists of six educational modules in developing an occupational work program for young adults with I/DDs. The lesson plans provided in the outlined format of the appendices describe the components related to vocational training skills requested by the agency and were executed and demonstrated how an OT can implement lesson plans for a work program within this population.

Dedication

The Occupational Therapy Doctorate (OTD) student would like to express her gratitude to Dr. Donna Costa, Founding Program Director of the UNLV Occupational Therapy Program and committee chair, for facilitating her decision to pursue her post-professional doctoral degree and providing invaluable expertise, guidance, and encouragement throughout the program. The student is especially grateful for the incredible support during an unprecedented personal life transition.

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The OTD student would also like to thank her fellow peers and colleagues. She is grateful and fortunate to have had her peers as a source of feedback, support, and comedic relief during the three-year journey as the inaugural OTD class of 2023. We finally made it! The OTD student would also like to express gratitude to her lifelong partner Dave (you are my ROCK, SOUL, and the most profound inspiration. I love you SO much!), and to her wonderful family, especially John, Tina, Ida, her friends, dad, Julie, Jeanne, and her god dog Dachshunds, Chaco and Kami. She could not have made it through this without any of you!

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Section One: Introduction

An intellectual disability (ID) is defined as a generalized disorder that appears during childhood and is characterized by impaired cognitive functioning (Brown et al., 2019). It is also used to describe various conditions with genetic and nongenetic etiologies. Intellectual disabilities are sometimes measured by below-average performance on tests of mental ability or intelligence with Down syndrome as one of the most common conditions associated with an intellectual disability. However, there are many other conditions that are common with IDs such as fetal alcohol syndrome, fragile X syndrome, and autism spectrum disorder (ASD). The diagnosis is determined through both clinical and individualized or standardized testing (Brown et al., 2019). Other terms previously used to refer to an intellectual disability include mental retardation and mental deficiency, though today intellectual disability is the preferred and universally accepted term to describe this condition (American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities [AAIDD], 2010; Brown et al., 2019).

The purpose of this capstone project was to determine if an educational occupation-based program would increase perceived self-confidence in the workplace in young adults, 18-30 years old with intellectual and developmental disabilities as measured by self-reports. One of the most impacted occupations for individuals with intellectual disabilities (ID) is work. In our society, work is considered an expectation (Brown et al., 2019). Paid work leads to more significant opportunities for participation within the community and establishes the possibility of financial independence. Individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities (I/DD)s that have successfully participated in paid employment are inclined to develop new skills, increase self-esteem, gain independence, and promote self-determination. Financial stability influences an individual's quality of life, health, and sense of control as a determinant of health. Paid work

leads to more significant opportunities for participation within the community and financial independence.

Occupations are categorized as activities of daily living (ADLs), instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs), health management, rest and sleep, education, work, play, leisure, and social participation (AOTA, 2020). According to the Occupational Therapy Practice Framework: Domain and Process 4th Edition, (OTPF-4), work is classified as an instrumental activity of daily living (IADL) skill which is described as activities to support daily life within the home and the community (AOTA, 2020). Work is considered labor or effort related to the development, production, delivery, or management of objects or services and is beneficial for financial and/or non-financial services. Work also provides social connections, contributes to society, and provides routine and structure for a person's daily life (AOTA, 2020).

Population, Intervention, Outcome (PIO) Question

In young adults, 18-30 years old with I/DDs, will an educational occupation-based program increase perceived self-confidence in the workplace as measured by self-report and observation?

Overview of the Problem

The problem pertains to a need for improvement in developing work and job skills training programs for young adults transitioning from high school into the workforce and/or young adults who are establishing employment post high school. It is important for individuals who have I/DDs to be part of the community, accepted by society, and interact socially within all contexts and environments. Work is an important occupation adolescents engage which assists with the successful transition into adulthood and into society. This includes gaining employment, independence, and social/communication skills (Chiang & Howe, 2018). Ellenkamp et al.,

(2016) investigated papers published in the last 20 years to answer the question: What work environment-related factors contribute to obtaining or maintaining work in competitive employment for people with an intellectual disability? The authors found common themes regarding the importance of perceived self-confidence, self-advocacy, and self-determination. Promoting and developing these skills are key for individuals with I/DDs to be successful in the workplace. Occupational therapy practitioners (OTPs) can focus on improving performance skills for individuals with I/DDs and assist in establishing positive attitudes and volition, which is within the scope of practice. Practitioners can also support people with I/DDs in the workforce by providing education and training for stakeholders, colleagues, and caregivers on how individuals can be successful in the community and in the workplace. These factors also contribute to an individual with I/DDs quality of life (QOL), health, and well-being. Several terms associated with these factors include:

- Well-being
- Self-determination
- Autonomy
- Self-advocacy

The term well-being is defined as a commitment to one's health, self-esteem, sense of belonging and security, and establishes the opportunity for self-determination, meanings, roles, and helping others (AOTA, 2020). Self-determination is a term related to an individual's well-being and is defined as the process by which a person controls their own life. It is based on a set of skills, knowledge, and beliefs that enable a person to engage in setting goals, enable self-regulation, and maintain a sense of autonomy according to their own values and interests. Self-determination employs an individual's choice, free will, and volition and is one of the greatest

indications that a person with an I/DD is successful in the transition from being a teenager and transforming into adulthood.

According to the OTPF-4, autonomy is an approach that highlights a person's knowledge, experience, strengths, and control of their overall well-being (ATOA, 2020) and self-advocacy is the action or representation of oneself or an individual's personal views or interests. Self-advocacy includes making one's own decisions about life, learning how to obtain information about a person's interests, establishing relationships, and support networks. Self-advocacy is also knowing and understanding the rights and responsibilities of an individual including the ability to reach out to others in times of need (AOTA, 2020). Self-advocacy is imperative for people with I/DDs to understand because it encourages empowerment and addresses issues that stigmatize affected areas within this population, such as employment and participation within the community. Occupational therapy practitioners can create programs related to work and create solutions for young adults with I/DDs to have a healthy QOL and gain independence.

Proposed Solution

The OTD student implemented her capstone project at The Garden Foundation (TGF). The Garden Foundation is a non-profit organization serving individuals with disabilities in the city of Las Vegas. The goal of TGF is to support and enhance the lives of people with disabilities by providing a place of education, inspiration, independence, and inclusion (The Garden Foundation, 2023). The facility offers various educational programs ranging from arts and crafts, internships, and signature training programs such as Dig It Coffee Co. and Boxes of Sunshine (gift boxes). The sister company of TGF, Dig It Coffee Co., employs several clients at TGF. Dig It helps in strengthening the community and provides customers with a unique opportunity to see and embrace TGF's clients' unique skills in different ways (The Garden Foundation, 2023). By

strengthening skills through their mobile locations and training programs, TGF's clients learn valuable skills, including communication, financial reasoning, self-confidence, and customer service. Clients from TGF can also receive their own health cards from the Southern Nevada Health District.

The GROW program at TGF is an educational-based program that occurs on a weekly basis Monday – Friday from 12:30 – 4:30 pm. GROW stands for giving back, recreational, occupational, and wellness. The program consists of a variety of classes including cooking, fitness, journaling, art, yoga, meditation, life/social skills, and vocational skills. For this capstone project, the OTD student proposed a solution in enhancing TGF's vocational skills classes by incorporating positive employment opportunities for young adults with intellectual/developmental disabilities. Through collaboration with the programs manager and staff at TGF, several educational training modules related to job training skills were developed with an emphasis on self-confidence, self-determination, and self-advocacy skills. By providing and teaching these modules on a weekly basis, young adults with I/DDs gained knowledge related to job training skills and developed the essential qualities necessary to communicate, convey, negotiate, and/or assert the individual's own career and job interests. Increasing self-confidence with an emphasis on self-determination contributes to developing a positive attitude and acquiring job skills necessary to live independently and pursue a healthy quality of life.

At TGF, the focus is on abilities rather than disabilities with the idea of empowering clients to reach their full potential. "Everyone is celebrated for who they are and encouraged to thrive and bloom where they are planted" (The Garden Foundation, 2023). The Garden Foundation also provides internship programs that focus on the client's abilities while discovering the perfect match for their passion. This enables individuals to experience a career of

their choice while exploring their interests and doing work that excites them. Clients at TGF are granted the freedom to choose what to study, where to work, and are encouraged to use the skills of what they do best. The Garden Foundation believes everyone should have this same opportunity.

The mission of TGF is not a one-size-fits-all program. The foundation believes in practicing person-centered planning and therefore provides a customized experience to meet the needs of each client and their family. Every person served at TGF has their own interests, skills, needs, and goals. Clients at TGF are encouraged to make choices in what they want to do and strive to do. The Garden Foundation strives to help everyone reach their full potential. Their vision is to enhance each client's life by providing a place to learn, grow, socialize, explore, be independent, and have fun. The programs at TGF are designed to provide a warm and inclusive environment while enriching lives through education, socialization, community service, and personal development (The Garden Foundation, 2023). Occupational therapists can contribute to work-related and work transition programs for young adults with I/DDs seeking employment in various community settings including schools, day programs, post-secondary education programs, and workforce development services.

Project Significance to Occupational Therapy

The significance of the project for the occupational therapy profession pertains to the importance in the development of employment programs for individuals with I/DDs. Occupational therapists have a unique skill set that is often missing in transition teams and can serve as consultants in developing work/job training programs, advocate for services that support adults with I/DDs, and expedite individualized employment opportunities (Benson et al., 2021). Occupational therapists understand the barriers faced by young adults with I/DDs who are

attempting a successful transition to postsecondary work, higher education, community participation, attending social activities, and independent living opportunities. With the knowledge and understanding of these challenges, OTs can better advocate for people with I/DDs and tailor to their needs accordingly with involvement in the transition process.

Occupational therapists can be critical members of the multidisciplinary transition planning team for young adults with I/DDs transitioning from the secondary school and post-high school settings into the workforce. Practitioners can also support adolescents with I/DDs throughout the transition process while building self-determination skills. The holistic approach and knowledge OTs provide complete individualized, person-centered assessments for young adults with I/DDs to identify their strengths, needs, and postsecondary goals. This will support people with I/DDs in building self-advocacy and self-determination skills.

Section Two: Statement of the Problem

Background

Historically, individuals with I/DDs were typically institutionalized and unable to participate within the community. Until recently, job opportunities for this population experienced segregation from the community, and choices were limited. The availability of work opportunities has recently become more specific for this population as individual plans have been tailored towards a person's abilities. Through the passing of policies such as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Olmstead Supreme Court Decision, people with I/DDs have recently gained more rights and access to live in the community with neurotypical adults. The ADA aimed to improve the welfare and equity of all individuals with disabilities by decreasing barriers to their participation in daily life activities and making it unlawful to discriminate against these individuals in housing, work, and within the community (Brown et al., 2019). The Olmstead Supreme Court Decision stated that the segregation of individuals is unlawful and led to deinstitutionalization (Brown et al., 2019).

Currently, individuals with I/DDs have more employment opportunities and job training supports than in the past. However, even with these policies in place, there continues to be a disparity among employment rates for individuals with I/DDs compared to neurotypical individuals. Approximately 1-2% of people in the country have an intellectual disability. According to the US Department of Labor, only 30% of adults with I/DDs are employed compared to 76% among those without disabilities. The rate is even lower for those who have intellectual and developmental disabilities (Blaskowitz, et al., 2019). Consequently, when adolescents with I/DDs graduate from high school, they no longer receive the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), a special education law that provides individual rights and

protects people between the ages of 0-21 years old with disabilities. People over 21 years old with I/DDs who are no longer in school do not receive an individualized education plan (IEP), or Section 504 to support them (Schell et. al., 2018). Unfortunately, it is believed that only 7.5% of eligible students who have I/DDs with an individualized education plan (IEP) receive occupational therapy during their transition into adulthood (Blaskowitz, et al., 2019). With the expertise of OTs, opportunities can be created for individuals with I/DDs to engage in truly meaningful activities, such as life skills related to work (e.g., self-care, ADL/IADLs), learning time management, money skills, facilitating employment, provide on the job training skills to enhance their quality of life, and promote independence.

Many adults 18 years and older with I/DDs have not received adequate preparation to pursue job opportunities or have not had a job lack confidence and it is essential for this population to be included in society and their communities. Policymakers, providers, families, and advocates realize the benefits of employment for people with intellectual disabilities and occupational therapists can play a unique role in the transition and employment of individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities (Brown & Stoffel, 2019). With a focus on self-determination and successful employment, the outcomes and development of self-confidence increases significantly for people who have I/DDs (Dean & Burke, 2017). More individuals with I/DDs now possess the prerequisite skills and supports necessary for successful workforce integration than people with I/DDs of previous generations. It is important for the community to accept and allow people in the workforce who have differences and/or challenges.

Significance of the Problem for Occupational Therapists

The purpose of this quality improvement project is to determine if an educational occupation-based program will increase perceived self-confidence in the workplace as measured

by self-report and observation. Competitive employment for individuals with I/DDs provides the opportunity for this population to learn new skills, integrate them into the community, enhance social and communication skills, and offer opportunities to gain financial independence.

Unfortunately, the employment rate in the United States for individuals with I/DDs aged 21-64 year is only 34% (Siperstein, 2013). When young adults accomplish work tasks successfully, they are more likely to gain self-confidence and will be more successful with employment throughout adulthood. Employment in the workplace and the community enables individuals with I/DDs to gain tremendous benefits from social inclusion and participation. While employed, the daily flow of life includes a physical presence in the community as well as engaging in daily occupations, leisure, recreational activities, and vocational activities. Employment also provides structure, routine, and a gain of financial stability for people with I/DDs. Maintaining employment and working are necessary factors for young adults with I/DDs to become independent and lead productive lives. With provided training and support, individuals with I/DDs can successfully contribute to a work environment. Occupational therapy can be a powerful contributor to work-related and work-transition programs for adults seeking employment in the community (Dean & Burke, 2017).

Occupational therapists contribute to functional skills such as life skills, social skills (e.g., self-care, ADL/IADLs), time management, money skills, and facilitating vocational, employment, and on-the-job training skills to enhance the QOL and promote independence for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. With the development of a work program, OTs can provide the implementation of performance skills and create valued employment experiences. Helping young adults with I/DDs identify their vocational interests, build job training skills, and modify contexts and environments are all part of the skill set that

OTs can employ in an occupation-based work program. Guiding young adults in the transition from school or after graduating high school to vocational opportunities is undervalued.

Occupational therapists can serve as consultants in developing assessment tools, advocating for services that support adults with I/DDs, and facilitators in creating customized employment opportunities to end the disparity gap for people who have I/DDs (Blaskowitz, et al., 2019).

Anticipated Outcomes

The anticipated outcomes for this capstone project were to develop an educational job training skills modules and implement a work program that focused on a person's abilities rather than their disabilities. The program, called STRIVE, is a work program that supports individuals with I/DDs, celebrates the person for who they are, recognizes who the person is, and strives to gain an understanding of the person's abilities. STRIVE stands for Successful Training Received In Vocational Environments. It enables a person's full potential through work, job training skills, and incorporates work into life-long learning. It is important for individuals who have I/DDs to be included in the community and workplace, interact socially, and participate in society on a regular basis. The learning modules for this program were tailored to specific lesson plans that helped promote self-determination, self-advocacy, and job training skills. The results indicated an increase in self-confidence for young adults with I/DDs seeking, obtaining, or maintaining successful employment. The lesson plans demonstrated how the significance of an educational occupation-based program increased perceived self-confidence in the workplace and occupational performance for young adults with I/DDs.

By exploring the outcomes of employment interests and pursuits of young adults with I/DDs, OTs can focus on identifying and selecting work opportunities for the client consistent with their abilities, interests, limitations, and individual goals. In employment-seeking and

acquisition opportunities for individuals with I/DDs, OTs can provide the necessary skills in advocating for oneself including support for completing, submitting, and reviewing application materials, preparing for interviews, and discussing job benefits while finalizing negotiations. While working on job performance and maintenance skills, the OT can help with maintaining required work skills and patterns such as managing time, and relationships with professional staff (AOTA, 2020).

Employment and independent living are also important factors for increasing the QOL for individuals with intellectual disabilities. Currently, only 18% of adults with I/DDs work in competitive employment. Evidence indicates preferred employment and positive outcomes occur for adults who have I/DDs with work experience, expectations, and opportunities to work on a consistent basis (Dean & Burke, 2017). Developing a work program that focuses on the individual's abilities and strengths rather than their disabilities provides a positive outlook, improves successful outcomes, and contributes to self-determination skills. The STRIVE program aims to provide job coaching and training support related to occupational performance, social skills, financial training, emotional support, time management skills, problem-solving/decision-making skills, hygiene/grooming skills, and management of ADLs/IADLs.

Needs Assessment

Work is one of the most impacted occupations for individuals with intellectual disabilities. In our society, work is considered an expectation (Brown et al., 2019). Paid work leads to more significant opportunities for participation within the community through the possibility of financial independence. Individuals with I/DDs that have successfully participated in paid employment can develop new skills and increase their self-esteem. Financial stability can influence an individual's quality of life, health, and sense of control as a determinant of health.

Even though the established policies help integrate individuals into the community and offer them opportunities to seek employment within the communities, the employment rate in the United States for individuals with ID aged 21-64 is only 34% (Siperstein, 2013).

The Garden Foundation provides funding for educational day programs and employment services. States offer support in four settings: integrated employment, community-based non-work, facility-based work, and facility-based non-work. Integrated employment is work within the community and involves payment; community-based non-work are volunteer opportunities and does not involve an amount of money or a paycheck for the person volunteering. Facility-based employment is work within a setting where most individuals have a disability and receive constant support. Finally, facility-based non-work is services provided, such as day habilitation or medical daycare programs where most individuals have a disability (Brune & Levine, 2021). Between the years 2008-2018, there was a decrease in individuals receiving integrated employment services from 20%-17% (Brune & Levine, 2021). In the same period, facility-based employment increased, meaning most individuals were not working in the community (Brune & Levine, 2021). The Garden Foundation provides each of the four settings states offer. Therefore, a needs assessment was developed for the STRIVE program to implement a program based on these settings. With a needs assessment, the STRIVE program determined the best possibilities for this population and gathered information based on the needs, environment, and health issues concerning the individual. The needs assessment process was categorized into three general steps. (Scaffa & Reitz, 2020).

Step one involved gathering data and creating an accurate picture of individuals with I/DDs. This included utilizing interviews, focus groups, and surveys to understand the complexities regarding their health needs. Data was collected from key informants or persons

who had expertise and were able to provide knowledge about the population, such as caregivers, family, friends, staff at TGF, and community resources (Scaffa & Reitz, 2020). The assessment tools utilized at TGF included standardized assessments with adaptations tailored according to the individual needs of the client. The assessments utilized included adaptations modified from The Generalized Self Efficacy scale (GSE), the ARC self-determination scale, and the Canadian Occupational Performance Measure (COPM).

Step two of the needs assessment described the environment including the physical and social environment related to the target population at TGF. It is important to obtain information regarding the assets and the strengths of the environment for individuals with I/DDs to successfully perform occupations within the community (Scaffa & Reitz, 2020). Step three involved the analysis of the needs and priorities for the STRIVE program. It has been proven that a structured workplace and training program for people with I/DDs improves social, communication, and emotional behaviors. A work program has proven beneficial for people with I/DDs yet the outcomes of people with I/DDs who have jobs remain poor. Currently, only 18% of adults with I/DDs work in competitive employment. It is proven that better employment and positive outcomes occur for adults with I/DDs who have work experience, understand expectations, and have had opportunities to work (Dean & Burke, 2017).

Work has been found to help people develop a sense of purpose, identity, and a perceived sense of success in society. The work environment is often considered the place where individuals develop meaningful social relationships and is linked to an increased sense of purpose and identity. Research on the transition to work plan often remains focused on young people leaving school for the first time. This particular study focused on people aged 18 and over in which less evidence exists as to what constitutes best practice for a social group and who may

be making the transition into paid employment for the second or even third time, and who have significant life the under-representation of people with a disability in the workforce continues to be a social and economic challenge for young adults with I/DDs to experience (Scanlon et al., 2020). The target population assessed for the needs assessment of the STRIVE program are young adults aged 18-30 years old with intellectual/developmental disabilities. Providing the needs assessment determined that educational occupation-based learning modules would be beneficial for young adults with I/DDs at TGF.

Section Three: Research Question

It is hypothesized that young adults with I/DDs who participate in an educational occupation-based program will increase perceived self-confidence in the workplace. The purpose of this capstone project was to create specific educational modules for young adults with IDD to learn job training skills and increase self-confidence in the workplace. These learning modules will help individuals build the foundational skills necessary to obtain a job and develop the functional skills to maintain a job. The research question related to the literature reviews examined whether an educational occupation-based program increased the perceived self-confidence in the workplace as measured by self-report and observation in young adults, 18-30 years old with intellectual/developmental disabilities.

Section Four: Literature Review

Evidence suggests that transitions to vocational opportunities can be difficult for adolescents and young adults with I/DDs especially with self-confidence that contributes to feel pursuing job opportunities. It is theorized some of the problems stem from stigma related to the individual's disability, the contexts surrounding them, and the performance required for work tasks. One of the issues with work is that individuals with ID often claim they do not receive enough support from the community and therefore finding work is a major barrier in retaining a job (Ellenkamp et al., 2016).

Supports

Ellenkamp et al. (2016) investigated articles published in the last 20 years to answer: what environment related work factors contribute to obtaining or maintaining work in competitive employment for people with intellectual disability (ID)? Ellenkamp (2016) determined that relevant work environment-related factors for obtaining/maintaining work in competitive employment for people with ID included support from the employers by focusing on the employer's decisions, job content, integration, work culture, and job coaches. The review discovered that employees with ID added to the workplace culture in a positive way through dedication to their work and the pride in which they accomplished their tasks. The study also highlighted the importance of interaction in the workplace for people with ID, as a significant value for being accepted and included in the workplace. Different levels of social support from co-workers, bosses, job coaches and families for people with ID were found to be relevant for maintaining jobs.

Both positive and negative perceptions are necessary aspects for building effective programs and work participation of employees with ID. Occupational therapy practitioners

(OTP)s contribute to enhancing positive work skills for individuals with ID in competitive employment by adding value to programs for and providing agency staff with the needed information and expertise to create opportunities for individuals with ID. Occupational therapists help individuals engage in truly meaningful activities and functional skills such as life skills of self-care, ADL, or IADLs, which include learning time management and money skills.

Practitioners can also facilitate employment/on the job training skills to enhance individuals with ID's quality of life, which ultimately promotes independence. Ellenkamp (2016) highlighted comments from individuals with ID who stated they felt competent to complete their job requirements after receiving job training and training in self-advocacy. A positive workplace culture supports social opportunities, team-building opportunities, consistent routine, and structure for individuals with ID (Ellenkamp et al., 2016).

Self-Determination and Self-Advocacy

Obtaining and maintaining work is a key factor in developing self-determination and self-advocacy skills. Chiang et al. (2018) discussed the effectiveness of self-determination programs used to promote post education transition for secondary school students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). Secondary school students with IDDs often face significant challenges during the transition from high school to adult life. Self-determination is the strongest predictor for a successful transition to adulthood, including employment and independence (Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1997). Adolescents with disabilities who are more self-determined when they leave school are more likely to be employed and live independently. Promoting self-determination is considered one of the best practices in transition services. The Chiang et al. (2018) systematic review determined the effectiveness of self-determination programs used in transition services in facilitating necessary skills for secondary school students with intellectual

and developmental disabilities. The objectives of these programs included increasing self-awareness and self-advocacy skills, improving social skills, and enhancing the development of functional skills. The most reported self-determination programs used the Beyond High School Model and Self-Directed Individualized Education Plan curricula. Both curricula were designed to promote improvement in students' self-determination skills. Strong to moderate evidence supports the effectiveness of both curricula. This review identified no intervention that would assist students to directly improve activities of daily living skills or independent living skills. Occupational therapy practitioners working with students with IDD in the transition to adult roles can contribute to the development of self-determination skills by not only deploying existing evidence-based curricula but also establishing new curricula to address areas that are currently lacking.

Dean and Burke's (2017) descriptive study analyzed the employment outcomes for participants with intellectual disability (ID) in an employment program. A convenience sample of adults who were served by a community support agency were recruited. All participants had an interest in finding competitive employment. The purpose of the study was to present outcomes from a pilot program implementing an occupation-based employment model centered in self-determination. The authors combined elements of existing evidence-based practices, including supported employment and the Self-Determined Career Development Model (SDCDM) (Wehmeyer et al., 2003). A collaboration between occupational therapists and special educators who worked together in a community agency developed the study. The method utilized included twelve adults with intellectual disability, ranging in age from 23 to 53 years, and participated in the program during the first year. Some adults had previous employment experience. This study demonstrated that an occupation-based employment program was

effective in promoting employment for adults with intellectual disabilities while living in the community. Occupational therapists can be effective in promoting employment outcomes for adults with intellectual disabilities living in the community. Practitioners and researchers can use the results of this pilot program to advocate for occupational therapy involvement in the transition from high school as well as partnerships with community agencies (Dean & Burke, 2017).

Hoffman et al. (2018) looked at programs based on self-determination principles to support adults with IDs in order to attain competitive employment goals. The study suggests that implementing the Self-Determined Career Development Model can result in increased self-rated performance of and satisfaction with meaningful activities in adults with ID. Use of the Self-Determined Career Development Model (SDCDM) has shown positive employment-related outcomes in previous studies of people with disabilities (Wehmeyer et al., 2003). However, research involving implementation by occupational therapists and through a community agency that supports adults with ID is limited.

The purpose of this study was to explore employment and community participation outcomes through use of the SDCDM with individuals with intellectual disabilities. A pretest–posttest design was used to measure community participation, self-determination, and self-rated performance and satisfaction with performance. All selected participants were adults who had been diagnosed with ID, received services at the same community agency, and wanted to pursue employment or activities to improve job skills. Data was collected using the Canadian Occupational Performance Measure, the Arc’s Self-Determination Scale, the Community Integration Questionnaire, and the Community Participation Indicators. Results showed significant increases in occupational performance and demonstrated that the SDCDM can be an

effective tool to increase employment rates for adults with ID and improve their self-rated performance of and satisfaction with desired occupational goals. Use of the SDCDM by occupational therapy practitioners can increase employment rates and self-rated performance of meaningful activities for adults with intellectual disabilities (Hoffman et al., 2018).

Occupational therapy practitioners should understand the barriers faced by young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD)s who are attempting a successful transition to postsecondary work, higher education, community, social activities, and living opportunities so they can better advocate for them and tailor their involvement in the transition process (Benson et al., 2021). Practitioners can be critical members of the multidisciplinary transition planning team for adolescents transitioning from the secondary school setting post high school into the workforce and support transitioning adolescents with IDD)s in building self-determination skills.

Occupational therapists might also assist in completing individualized, person-centered assessments with young adults with IDD)s to help them identify their strengths, needs, and postsecondary goals that help support people with IDD)s in building self-advocacy and self-determination skills. However, it is believed that only 7.5% of IEP eligible students with IDD)s receive occupational therapy during their transition to adulthood.

Blaskowitz et al. (2021) conducted a review to summarize the scope of evidence that can inform occupational therapy intervention with adults with primary or comorbid intellectual disability (ID). Measurements of this research utilized were small sample designs, that included case studies and single-subject designs. Findings revealed the challenges in recruiting adults with ID, who are considered a vulnerable population with extra research protections. Occupational therapy practitioners use a range of habilitative and compensatory approaches to teach new skills

or modify tasks and environments to address occupational performance among adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Therefore, OTPs must identify and use available evidence to guide intervention planning. A total of 159 articles met inclusion criteria and contained information on occupational therapy intervention with adults aged 18 years or older with primary or coexisting intellectual disabilities. The findings of this literature review were relevant to fifty-seven of the 159 articles focused on intervention to address occupational performance outcomes including the areas of employment, self-care, leisure, social interaction, and community participation. Occupational performance outcomes are crucial to enhancing the performance of young adults with ID in all areas of these performance skills but especially with employment.

Occupational Justice

According to Hayes and Gallagher Worthley (2015), occupational therapy practitioners can promote occupational justice for individuals with IDD by helping family members and caregivers understand the individual's perspectives associated with participation in certain occupations. Further, OTPs can use observation-based assessment tools to gain insights into how factors related to the social environment support or inhibit an individual's occupational experiences. Practitioners may also contribute to developing opportunities for enhanced enjoyment and participation for this population. Needs assessments includes adults with I/DDs who are actively engaged in social interactions or complete an occupation with another person and display higher levels of volition than when they engage in occupations alone (Mahoney et al., 2013). It can be concluded then, that individuals are more likely to find meaning and motivation to participate when they are interacting with others (Mahoney & Roberts, 2009). Individuals with IDD have fewer opportunities to engage in meaningful occupations than their

peers (Maes et al., 2007). However, structured social opportunities may have the potential to increase occupational engagement and the volitional drive to participate in occupations for individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities.

Occupational therapy practitioners can work with community agencies and consult with agency staff to design group activities that promote social participation and engagement for all individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities. In addition, occupational therapy practitioners can collaborate with care providers to assess volition. In doing so, they may add value to programs for adults with I/DDs by providing agency staff with the needed information and expertise to create opportunities for individuals with I/DDs to engage in truly meaningful activities, employment, and enhance their quality of life.

Occupational therapy practitioners use a range of habilitative and compensatory approaches to teach new skills and/or modify tasks and environments to address occupational performance among adults with intellectual/developmental disabilities (Blaskowitz et al., 2021).

Person Centered Approach

Kaehne and Beyer's (2014) study examined the approach of using client-centered planning during transitions for young people with intellectual disabilities. The authors discovered that person-centered planning may improve the involvement of some stakeholders, particularly, the people with IDs and their families. Involving young individuals with ID in planning their future represents significant progress on the choice, rights, and inclusion agenda (Department of Health 2001). It was determined however, the impact of person-centered planning on developing transition options and service delivery may be limited. Successful outcomes in using the Person-centered transition planning approach will generally influence outcomes for users if all stakeholders participate in meetings throughout the process, receive pertinent information related

to the individuals planning, and accept their responsibility to contribute to the future of the individual with an intellectual disability. They must also commit to and take account of the person or individual, caregivers, families, and other parties involved desires. Analysis of the data showed an increase in the participation of young people and careers at review meetings and a important shift in topics discussed during the transition planning process compared with previous programs.

The results of the study suggested that person-centered planning can positively impact on certain aspects of transition planning. The key to further improvements of the person-centered approach is to commend it with consistent involvement of all relevant stakeholders in planning for individuals. Client centered planning is an approach to service that incorporates respect for the client (person) and collaborates with the individual as an active participant in the therapy process (AOTA, 2020). Using this perspective highlights the person's knowledge, experience, strengths, respect in choice and decision making, and overall autonomy (AOTA, 2020). With the implementation of work, a program consisting of OT practitioners can implement performance skills and create valued employment experiences for youth with ID. Occupational therapists can help with person-centered planning by implementing client-centered factors and provide meaningful opportunities, services, and training skills to young people with intellectual disabilities (Kaehne & Beyer, 2014).

Transitions

A study by Rosner et al. (2020) described the consistency of youth with I/DDs as having poor work outcomes. Occupational therapy (OT) can support a school to work transition but is underrepresented in transition practice. The findings of this article represented a total of 35 articles. Seven articles used randomized controlled designs. The articles in this study reported

interventions parallel to the *Occupational Therapy Practice Framework: Domain and Process* (3rd ed.) but did not mention occupational therapy utilized as part of the transition services for young individuals with intellectual disabilities. A significant part of training and facilitating transitions for young adults from high school to pre-vocational work programs is crucial in a school to work transition program. Several objectives for a work program are to improve confidence, self-determination, and establish social, communication, and functional work skills for people with intellectual disabilities. All individuals, regardless of their disability deserve the opportunity to be members of their community where they can live, learn, work, and play throughout all stages of life. With the implementation of work, a program consisting of OTPs can implement performance skills and create valued employment experiences for young adults with intellectual disabilities.

Scanlon et al. (2020) indicated the disability policy in Ireland has advanced in recent years. However, people with disabilities are still underrepresented in the workforce and the problem continues to be a social and economic challenge for this population. The study explored the experiences of people with disabilities making transitions from education to training and employment. Most respondents showed motivation to work but identified continuous obstacles to work due to their disability. Being labeled as someone with a disability can negatively influence prospective employers' perceptions regarding ability, safety issues, and work performance. Throughout this study, it was noted that employee supports such as training and occupational support services, employer supports, accommodations with the employer (e.g., modifications or special equipment), and work readiness programs contributed to psychosocial wellbeing. For many of the participants, employment created a source of identity and social status. For many of the participant's paid work was also helpful in maintaining a routine schedule, provided

structure, and a solid work/life balance. The article concluded that high levels of unemployment amongst people with a disability is both a social and economic concern across many jurisdictions. In an inclusive economy, people with disabilities can help fill the expected labor forces shortages associated with demographic change and population ageing (Schur et al. 2014), as well as bringing their unique perspectives and skills to increasingly diverse workplaces.

According to Voltz (2020), there is a need for new and innovative programs to support individuals with I/DDs in the community, specifically in integrated and competitive employment. The purpose of this study was to examine the feasibility and acceptability of a community and occupation-based day program for adults with disabilities (Voltz, 2020). Occupational therapy practitioners are ideal to help prove the need for services and can be a leader in the field, offering client-driven, occupation-based services in the community. This was demonstrated in this study by the evidence of the successful implementation of the pilot program. The integration of the program was feasible and accepted by the participants, community partner, and the facility in which it was implemented. The occupation and community-based focus led to positive and favorable results from the three constituents of the project. The results of this study contribute to the body of evidence that occupational therapists have unique skills, that can make a significant effect on services for adults with intellectual/developmental disabilities (Volz, 2020).

Section Five: Statement of Purpose

The statement of purpose of this quality improvement capstone project was to examine the necessity of the development of an educational occupation-based program to increase perceived self-confidence in the workplace and occupational performance for young adults with intellectual/developmental disabilities. The goal of the program was to develop and implement a job training skills work program for clients who attended TGF on a weekly basis.

The mission of the STRIVE program is for young adults with I/DDs is to gain independence, employ self-determination, and participate in productive employment activities to be able to earn money, engage socially, and feel a sense of pride and accomplishment for themselves and for others. The vision of the program involves providing endless possibilities that empower individuals with disabilities to gain independence and lead a successful, independent life. It is important for individuals who have I/DDs to be included in the community, participate in activities, and be part of the workforce in society on a regular basis. Self-determination is one of the greatest indications that a person with an I/DD is successful in the transition from a teen into adulthood including employment, independence, and social/communication skills.

It is hypothesized that young adults with I/DDs who participate in an educational occupation-based program will increase perceived self-confidence in the workplace as measured by assessments such as the Generalized Self Efficacy scale (GSE), the ARC self-determination scale, and the Canadian Occupational Performance Measure (COPM). The purpose of this project was to create educational modules for an occupation-based work program with specific lesson plans for young adults with I/DDs to learn job training skills and increase self-confidence in the workplace. The projected outcomes of these learning modules were to help individuals build the foundational skills necessary to obtain a job and develop the functional skills necessary

for maintaining a job and provide long-term job training skills for young adults with I/DDs with ongoing supported employment opportunities. The objectives developed were to promote self-determination, self-advocacy, and provide job training skills for this population.

The STRIVE program was built to include the promotion of self-determination with a focus on goal-directed, self-regulated, and autonomous behavior. The primary goal of the program was to teach self-advocacy and self-determination skills while utilizing the ability to communicate the individual's wants, needs, interests, and strengths. It is crucial for individuals with I/DDs to learn basic relationship skills necessary to obtain and maintain a job. When developing an occupation-based work program, it is the OTs priority to provide educational opportunities, accommodations, and the tools necessary for the individuals with I/DDs to successfully obtain work and become independent.

Section Six: Theoretical Framework

The Model of Human Occupation (MOHO) is an important occupation-based framework. It utilizes a top-down holistic approach while examining the individual, their meaningful activities, occupations, and their relationship with the environment. This is an excellent type of framework for people with I/DDs as it measures the person's most important and meaningful daily occupations and activities. The use of MOHO allows the therapist to identify an individual's capacity, limitations, and barriers of occupational performance and includes motivation, values, and interests (Kielhofner, 2008).

The learning theory incorporated into this program is the Humanistic Learning Theory, which focuses on the idea of self-actualization and supports the need to succeed. Underlying the humanistic perspective on learning is the assumption that every individual is unique and that all individuals have the desire to grow in a positive way. This is especially true with individuals with I/DDs as stigma often surmises the implications for a person with a disability to succeed.

Section Seven: Methodology

The design used for this capstone project included a quasi-experimental design of nonrandom assignment groups based on convenience sampling. This type of design is used frequently in community settings where all clients at the same facility receive the same services. The methodology included a pre/post-test measurement of the client's knowledge and awareness of job training skills before and after the educational modules were implemented at The Garden Foundation. The purpose of the educational modules and the aim of the program was to promote self-determination and enhance self-confidence in preparation for people with intellectual/developmental disabilities to join the workforce.

The STRIVE program used several instruments based on valid pre/post-test assessments to determine the necessity of developing a job training skills work program for young adults 18 years and older. It was determined that a job training skills program is necessary for young adults graduating high school and/or post high school. The pre/post-test skills assessment survey measured quality improvement design. Instruments included a questionnaire and survey regarding how confident the person was in getting a job before receiving the job training skills educational modules and how confident they felt after the training modules.

Agency Description

The OTD student's capstone was implemented at The Garden Foundation. The agency is a non-profit organization and is a community-based setting serving those with disabilities in the city of Las Vegas. The goal at TGF is to support and enhance the lives of people with disabilities by providing a place of education, inspiration, independence, and inclusion (The Garden Foundation, 2023). The facility offers a variety of educational classes through the GROW program, which stands for giving back, recreational, occupational, and wellness. Classes offered

in the GROW program include cooking, fitness, journaling, art, yoga, meditation, life/social skills, and vocational skills.

Clients who participated in the program were identified into three different categories depending on cognitive abilities and skill level. Clients labeled as 101 needed the most support, were mostly non-verbal, and required one-on-one assistance. Clients labeled 102 were considered moderate assistance, were somewhat independent, and depending on the activity required some assistance from the staff. Clients labeled 103 were considered mostly independent. Contact was made with four selected clients (n=4) within the 102 -103 skill levels. However, one client was excluded from the criteria due to inconsistency in attendance, bringing the total number of participants to three (n=3).

The OTD student's capstone was also partially experienced with a transitional independence program called TIP at Denver Public Schools (DPS). TIP is an educationally based transitional work/job training skills program for students with I/DDs between the ages of 18-21 at North High school in Denver. Students who attend the program are projected to graduate from high school at the age of 21 years. The students observed in the TIP program either worked in a paid position or volunteered at a job site. After observation and informal interviews with job training coaches and staff, it was determined that the student's self-confidence levels in getting a job appeared to be higher than they were before they began the program and obtained a job.

Methods and Procedures

The OTD student attended the GROW program at TGF for 4-5 days per week over a fourteen-week period. The development, process, and content of specific educational modules in the STRIVE program were based on a set of initial questions asked in a pre-test questionnaire assessing the knowledge clients had related to work and job training skills. After the educational

training modules, a post-assessment questionnaire was provided with the same questions as the pre-test but with three additional questions related to a 3-point Likert scale rating system. The additional questions were designed to measure the participants' opinions and perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the educational modules.

The pre/post-test questionnaires were given to ensure quality improvement from the educational modules. It was noted that the clients were not well versed in job training skills such as understanding what a resume is, the difference between a job and a hobby, hygiene/grooming skills related to preparing for a job interview, how to answer common job interview questions appropriately, and how to prepare for a job interview in general. The methodology implemented in the STRIVE program at TGF included six lesson plans related to job training skills for adults with I/DDs. These lesson plans covered topics that included a career interest exploration module, hygiene/grooming job interview trainings, lessons on how to write a resume, practice of how to answer common job interview questions, learning how to dress appropriately for a job interview, and practicing mock interviews. Didactic teaching methods were employed through direct instruction, hands-on learning, role-playing, group projects, and one-on one training. The lesson plans consisted of visual and kinetic experiences using pictures paired with words, worksheets, demonstrations that included self-management strategies, and tactile based instruction. This type of instruction allowed clients the opportunity to watch others and learn appropriate methods and responses with hands-on experiences.

The content of the educational modules was partially based on modified versions of one-sheet lesson plans already developed within The Garden Foundation. Other modules were created based on research, literature, and innovative teaching methods practiced for people with intellectual/developmental disabilities as visual aids and learning tasks are often broken down

into small easy steps. Each lesson plan was modified to the educational modules by adjusting activities and introducing the learning task as a series of short individual actions rather than using complicated drawn-out procedures. The use of instructional prompts and cues were also used as systematic teaching methods. These prompts included visual cues, verbal cues, gestural, and/or physical prompts.

Population

The target population selected for the capstone project included young adults who were in high school or were post-high school graduates and had I/DDs. The young adults were between the ages of 18-30 years. Observed participants from the TIP program were high school students between the ages of 18-21 years. The participants in the STRIVE program included three clients that were post-high school graduates between the ages of 22-29 years. The clients attended the GROW program on a weekly basis at The Garden Foundation. This program aligned perfectly with OTD student's job training skills program and allowed her to implement the STRIVE program. The educational modules through the STRIVE program lasted approximately 30-45 minutes once a week during the life/social skills classes with a sample group of three clients (n=3). Verbal consent was obtained prior to visiting the sites. The OTD student was able to observe clients, staff, and volunteers at the sites multiple times before implementing the capstone project. Meetings with staff were conducted prior to beginning the capstone project.

Data Collection

Following a needs assessment, a pre/post-test job skills assessment questionnaire was utilized. The questionnaires were designed and prepared in a Google docs form template used by TGF with questions developed by the OTD student and programs manager and therefore

unstandardized. The pre-test assessed and recorded data involving the knowledge and skills of the client before and after attending the job training educational modules. Data collected was also based on observations and informal interviews. The information collected was adapted from questions utilized in assessments including the Canadian Occupational Performance Measure (COPM) and the General self-efficacy scale (GSE). The pre-test assessment was given to four clients at TGF and included questions based on their understanding of job training skills and knowledge of what it takes to get a job (e.g., resumes, interview questions, hygiene/grooming). The questions were developed from a skills assessment template frequently used and developed by TGF to assess a client's skill level and ability regarding a particular subject. Each question was either a multiple choice, true/false, or yes/no questions related to having a job, the appropriate behavior and body language to display during a job interview (e.g., eye contact, posture, tone of voice, manners), understanding of goals, appropriate attire to wear at a job interview, and overall awareness of how to prepare for a job interview. Some questions required an example or explanation (e.g., can you give me an example of a hobby).

The data collected indicated that clients lacked job training skills related to hygiene and grooming. They answered questions incorrectly regarding how to dress for an interview, prepare for an interview, and did not understand the definition of a resume and what it entails. Consequently, based on the inaccuracy and understanding of the answers provided by the clients' pre-test, six educational job skills training modules were developed and implemented. The post-assessment consisted of additional questions based on how confident the individual felt in getting a job and successfully performing a job interview after the educational training modules were implemented. The lesson plans were created and implemented once a week for 30-45 minutes covering six topics:

1. Introduction and career interest exploration
2. Self-determination/self-advocacy skills
3. Resume-building skills
4. Resume-building skills (continued)
5. Hygiene and grooming skills/common job interview questions
6. Job interview/social skills (appropriate body language, manners, job etiquette) and mock job interviews

The first module consisted of an introduction and career interest exploration checklist worksheet. Each client learned about careers, jobs, hobbies, skills, and the difference between a job, a career, and leisure activities. Clients completed a career exploration checklist after demonstrating an understanding of the differences. A worksheet was also completed to identify strengths, weaknesses, and current skills related to jobs and careers of interest. A career interest assessment worksheet to explore activities that interested the participants most was also collected.

Modules two and three involved teaching self-determination, goals, self-advocacy skills, and how to create a resume. Clients determined their most important types of jobs from the career exploration worksheet completed in module one. Each client created their resume within two-weeks and were able to take their resume home at the end of the STRIVE program as well as edit it with access to a Google document with their personal email address.

Module four and five included learning about job interview skills and social skills lessons related to job interviews including professional etiquette for a job interview. Clients ended the lesson while role-playing with each other by answering different scenarios and completing a “DO’s and DONT’s” multiple-choice worksheet. Module six consisted of a mock interview with

each client. Clients were given the choice to dress in professional attire and were provided with a printed copy of their resume to bring to the interview.

Module seven addressed the post-skills assessment survey which concluded the job skills training modules for the STRIVE program. The questions asked were the same as the pre-test skills assessment questions and were used to measure data regarding whether the program was successful. Several questions at the end of the post-assessment were added to measure the level of perceived self-confidence in getting a job after participating in the job skills training modules.

Data Analysis

Several methods of data were analyzed throughout this capstone project including self-report measures, a skills assessment pre/post-test questionnaire, interviews, narratives, and observations regarding job training skills with clients, caregivers, and staff at The Garden Foundation. A paired data samples t-test design was used to compare the means from a single group of three clients (n=3) in the same group of paired continuous variables at different times. The data sample displayed the difference between mean values in one sample group with two data points known as a pre/post-test design. The data was used as a summative evaluation that involved observations of the clients before and after the job skills training educational modules occurred.

The scale of measurement used to collect the data was nominal. This scale provided the variation of the sample group with classifications that did not have any significant relationship to each other besides attending the GROW program on the same day of the week. Quantitative characteristics such as gender, age, diagnosis, and skill level were recorded to specify labels and categorical levels of the participants. Descriptive statistics were obtained, collected, and used to describe and summarize the outcomes of the pre/post-test results. Statistical characteristics of

samples were examined and compared from the specific sample population of individuals with I/DDs between the ages of 22-29 years. The paired samples t-test examined the difference between a set of paired samples using the pre-and post-test scores. The dependent samples t-test demonstrated if there were observed changes in the clients' pre-test score and if there was an expected change in the clients' post-test score. Four questions were asked at the end of the posttest assessment using a 3-point Likert scale format. The questions were related to the client's perceived confidence level in successfully getting a job and performing at a job interview. One example of a question included "After taking this class, I feel more confident in getting a job." The three multiple choices answers included: agree, disagree, or neither agree nor disagree.

Section Eight: Ethical and Legal Considerations

For ethical and legal considerations, anonymity and confidentiality was respected for each client. Furthermore, despite the inclusion of young adults with I/DDs within the community, the learning modules were meant to be created for all participants regardless of type of disability. This project aimed to advocate for the individual's self-perception. Autonomy, self-advocacy, self-sufficiency, and independence are implemented daily at The Garden Foundation. The unique programs are personalized, client-centered, and tailored to the individual needs of each person. Some legal considerations pertain to the Desert Regional Center (DRC) compliancy orders related to the documentation of goals for each client. The DRC is a state agency that serves children and adults living in Southern Nevada who have a diagnosis of intellectual disability or closely related developmental disabilities. Documentation for each client that is funded through the DRC must be written daily as TGF is partnered with the state. Contracts and goals for each client must be documented daily, maintained, updated, and evaluated on a regular basis. Ethical considerations include HIPPA and any health concerns related to the client. Anonymity and confidentiality were respected for each client regarding HIPPA and privacy laws.

Section Nine: Results

Results indicate the STRIVE work program increased knowledge around job skills necessary for participants to succeed in the workforce. The pre-test skills assessment indicated that the participants demonstrated a good understanding of many of the topics. However, interviewing and resume related questions showed the participants did not fully comprehend how to dress appropriately for a job interview, did not know what a resume was, or why a resume was important. Some of the clients missed a few simple pre-assessment questions such as what type of clothing to wear at a job interview, how to answer common interview questions, know the difference between a job and a hobby, and how to present oneself during a job interview. Based on the post-test assessment results, by providing hands-on training and lessons addressing the development of a resume, hygiene/grooming instruction, and practicing various interview questions, the participants gained knowledge and demonstrated a much better understanding of how to succeed in a job interview and complete a resume.

Table 1

Characteristics of participants in pre/post-test assessments and educational modules (n=3)

Gender	Age	Diagnosis	Cognitive Ability
Female	22	Intellectual disability	*102
Female	25	Autism	*103
Female	29	Down syndrome	*103

*102 =Garden Foundation moderate assist for work task and motivation, 103=min assist****

Note: Four participants were included in the pre-test study. One participant was excluded from the criteria due to inconsistency in attendance and was unable to participate on a regular basis.

The characteristics of the participants are listed in Table 3. All participants varied in diagnoses and cognitive ability. Clients labeled 102 were considered moderate assistance, were somewhat independent, and required more assistance from the staff. Clients labeled 103 were considered mostly independent. Contact was made with four selected clients (n=4) within the 102 -103 skill levels. However, one client was excluded from the criteria due to inconsistency in attendance (n=3).

From a quantitative review of pre-test and post-test assessments, clients' scores increased from a 1.64 average score to a 1.94 average score. This represents an approximate 19% overall increase in understanding of the subject matter (Figure 1).

Figure 1

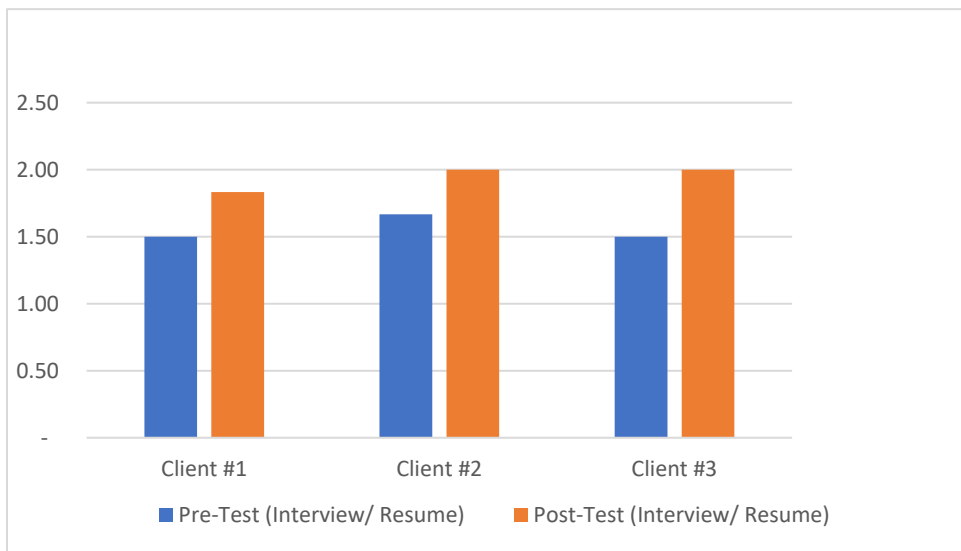
Pre/Post-Test Assessment Scores



When narrowing the subject matter of the assessments to only interviewing and resume related questions, clients' scores further increased from a 1.56 average score to a 1.94 average score. This represents a 25% overall increase in understanding of the subject matter (Figure 2).

Figure 2

Pre/Post-Test (Interview/Resume) Assessment Scores



Additional post-test assessment questions were based on a three-point Likert scale. The end results determined the clients who participated in the post-test assessment selected that they agreed on feeling more confident after the job training skills program. Four questions were asked and based on self-report measures whether the client agreed, disagreed, or neither agreed nor disagreed to determine if they felt more confident in getting a job after the job training skills educational modules. All three of the clients selected “agree” for the post-test questions.

Section Ten: Discussion

Work is classified as an instrumental activity of daily living (IADL) skill and described as activities to support daily life within the home and the community (AOTA, 2020). Work, or having a job provides social connections, contributes to society, and provides routine and structure for a person's daily life (AOTA, 2020). Adults with I/DDs thrive on structure, routine, and social connections. Therefore, the need for a work/job training skills program for young adults with I/DDs post high school is crucial for society and the community. Employment seeking and acquisition involves advocating for oneself. Completing a resume, preparing for and participating in interviews, discussing job benefits, and finalizing negotiations enables individuals to utilize their ability and gain responsibility for all these items. Self-advocacy encourages the ability for people with I/DDs to effectively support their rights. It is important for people with I/DDs to understand their rights regarding their disability. For example, some clients may need accommodations or modifications in the workplace to help support them on the job. Providing education and general knowledge to recognize and learn about their disability and the accommodations necessary is important in both the workplace and for the individual to live an independent life.

Young adults with disabilities are not always prepared to enter the workforce upon graduation. There are not many supportive programs, systems, laws, or policies to help this population after a young adult with an I/DD turns twenty-one. Therefore, once a person with I/DDs graduates from high school, job training and vocational employment opportunities seem to be lacking. The literature reviewed for this project also demonstrated that young adults with I/DDs lack confidence and do not receive adequate preparation to pursue job opportunities upon

graduating high school or receive appropriate training and the skills necessary to obtain and maintain employment after graduating from high school (Ellenkamp et al., 2016).

The intention of the program was to provide young adults between the ages of 18-30 years old with I/DDs an educational occupation-based program educational modules with topics related to job skills. The learning modules included specific lesson plans related to vocational and job training skills with the intention of participants gaining knowledge and feeling more confident while entering the workplace successfully.

The overall goal at the end of the capstone project was for the clients at TGF to gain perceived self-confidence and learn strategies on how to improve performance skills and understand the skills necessary to obtain and maintain occupations related to the workplace. The one-sheet lesson plans that involved the career exploration and interest checklist questions were adapted from the COPM standardized instrument regarding values, interests, and strengths. This assessment coincided with the theoretical framework of The Model of Human Occupation due to its focus on volition, the reason why a person chooses to do something, and makes decisions based on self-determination. The MOHO also includes motivation, values, and interests regarding a person's occupational choice and participation (Kielhofner, 2008).

Based on the post-test results, by providing hands on training and lessons the participants demonstrated a much better understanding of how to succeed in a job interview and completing a resume. Overall, the post-test assessment scores showed all clients increased significantly from pre-test assessments. Additional post-test assessment questions were based on a three-point Likert scale. The end results determined the clients who participated in the post-test assessment selected that they agreed on feeling more confident after the job training skills program. There was also a job interview skills self-evaluation worksheet provided for clients to fill out and

reflect on after they participated in the mock job interviews. The worksheet was a self-evaluation checklist worksheet based on self-rated performance and satisfaction pertaining to whether the client used appropriate body language (e.g., eye contact, posture, tone of voice, professionalism, good manners) during their interview.

The post-test questions determined the clients increased their understanding of how to interview for jobs and write a resume. Additionally, clients felt more confident after attending the educational modules developed in the STRIVE program. Assumptions for the study revealed that due to a lack of preparation for young adults with I/DDs entering the workforce, many clients did not show an understanding of how to prepare for an interview, create a resume, answer interview questions appropriately while using proper body language, and understand how to dress appropriately.

Section Eleven: Limitations

Limitations of the project were restricted due to the convenience sampling utilized by clients who only attended classes at The Garden Foundation. By promoting and teaching the one sheet lesson plans in one facility, samples were limited and therefore did not represent the entire population of people with I/DDs in the community of Las Vegas or throughout the United States. Other limitations of this project included skewed answers due to voluntary participation and attrition. Also, since the pre/post-test assessments were provided in the facility and not measured in the community, results were limited to participants who only attended classes at TGF and not outside of the agency. Furthermore, the limited amount of space at TGF created limitations on the demand and needs of clients with disabilities in the community who wished to join the program but could not due to the facility outgrowing its space. Therefore, TGF is on a waitlist for additional clients to attend.

Due to other activities and classes occurring at the same time as the modules, participation may have been limited. Distractions also occurred during some lessons since there is a limited amount of space at the facility. Resources in the small room were also limited as some materials would have been too large to fit in the small space. However, lessons were simplified and designed for the small space and with only three clients this was feasible. Some biases may include lack of acceptance for people with aggressive behaviors or severe medical needs. Also, the skills assessments are provided by staff who may already know the client(s), therefore, this may skew the data based on the client's cognitive abilities and skill level.

Section Twelve: Conclusion

The results of this capstone project indicated that a job training skills program is necessary for young adults with I/DDs entering the workforce. It is essential to provide long-term job training skills for young adults with I/DDs and provide ongoing supported employment opportunities for this population. After receiving the educational training modules, participants' perceived self-confidence increased in job training and interview skills. Clients also gained knowledge of basic job training skills and demonstrated a clearer understanding of what a resume is, the information documented in a resume (e.g., name, address, email), understood appropriate hygiene/grooming, and proper attire to wear for an interview as well as feeling confident in how to answer common job interview questions. The design indicated that the quality improvement increased based on the scores of the pre/post-test assessments.

Work, or having a job, has been found to help people develop a sense of purpose, identity, and a perceived sense of success in society. Often, the work environment is the place where individuals develop meaningful social relationships. Individuals with I/DDs that have successfully participated in paid employment can develop new skills and increase self-esteem. Financial stability can influence an individual's quality of life, health, and sense of control as a determinant of health.

Since more individuals with I/DDs now possess prerequisite skills and supports necessary for successful work force integration than people with I/DDs of previous generations, it is important for the community to accept and allow people in the work force who have differences or challenges. With a structured, well-planned needs assessment, the STRIVE program can determine the best possibilities for this population and gather information based on the needs, environment, and health issues. In the past, care for individuals with I/DDs was based on the

person living and performing activities in an institution. However, due to changes within the last 20 years, individuals with I/DDs have evolved and are currently involved and participate in the community. The possibility and acceptability of a community and occupation-based day work program for adults with I/DDs is needed and quite possible (Voltz, 2020).

The purpose of STRIVE is to promote client centered practice and enable people with I/DDs to demonstrate their abilities in a positive, supportive, and engaging environment that creates awareness in the community. People who have a disability should be included in the community whether it is through work, school, or leisure activities. Among people with I/DDs, employment and work are crucial for functional independence and productive living. Provided training and educational programs that include job coaches, social workers, consultants, recreational therapists, and occupational therapists is essential for the community as there seems to be a lack of diversity with this population being employed in the work force.

The long-term outcomes for the STRIVE work program were developed and implemented to provide supported employment outcomes and highlight the needs essential in providing young adults with I/DDs long-term ongoing supports that help to:

1. Promote stable employment
2. Decrease disruptive work interference behaviors
3. Verify employment skills in the natural labor market (e.g., competitive wages)
4. Develop learned employment skills
5. Highlight the importance of integrated employment settings and diversity in the workforce

Occupational performance outcomes are crucial to enhancing the performance of young adults with I/DDs in all areas of these performance skills but especially with employment.

Several objectives determine the need and purpose of transitional work program. For example, statistics show that work programs (Chiang et al., 2018) improve confidence, self-determination, and establish social, communication, and functional work skills for people with intellectual disabilities. All individuals, regardless of their disability, deserve the opportunity to be members of their community where they can live, learn, work, and play throughout all stages of life. With the implementation of work, a program consisting of OT practitioners can implement performance skills and create valued employment experiences for youth with ID.

The programs currently developed are designed to improve social, communication skills, and emotional skills while also promoting independence. With the STRIVE program, the intention is to improve individual job skills, work skills, and promote finances as well as help a person connect socially. As mentioned by Voltz (2020) the need for a community occupation-based program for adults with I/DDs is essential for diversity and growth within a community. The need for new and innovative programs that support individuals with I/DDs in the community is a necessary investment, especially in integrated and competitive employment (Voltz, 2020).

The implications for this capstone project included that work/job skills training programs improve confidence, self-determination, and establish social, communication, and functional work skills for people with intellectual disabilities. With the implementation of work, a program consisting of OTs included within the interdisciplinary team, can contribute by implementing performance skills and create valued employment experiences for young adults with I/DDs. Occupational therapists can help with person-centered planning by implementing client-centered factors and providing meaningful opportunities, services, and job training skills to young adults with intellectual disabilities.

Endless possibilities can be provided through a work program that empowers individuals with disabilities to gain independence and lead a successful, independent life. It is important for individuals who have I/DDs to be included in the community, participate in activities, and be part of the workforce in society on a regular basis. Self-determination is one of the greatest indications that a person with an I/DD is successful in the transition from adolescence into adulthood. According to the AOTA vision 2025, occupational therapy empowers people to control their own lives, perform daily tasks they are motivated and inspired to perform, and create opportunities through their own agency (AOTA, 2020).

Appendix A: One Sheet Lesson Plan Template

The Garden Foundation uses specific lesson plan templates. Each template provides the title of the activity, a description of the activity, and a description for what each individual can accomplish according to their cognitive abilities (101, 102, and 103)



Lesson Plan Template (Social/Life Skills)

Title of Activity

Description of activity: how it connects to their lives (why they are doing it)

Example from Strengths vs Challenges: Being able to recognize your strengths and challenges will help you see what you need to work on and what you're already great at!

Link to where you found your lesson idea will be inserted here

101: short description of what they will be doing

Example from Strengths vs Challenges: working on independent goals

102: short description of what they will be doing

Example from Strengths vs Challenges: decrease number of examples and simplified vocab/concepts

103: short description of what they will be doing

Example from Strengths vs Challenges: adding how to overcome challenges

Discussion: Talk about main idea of lesson as a whole group

- Define any major vocabulary/concepts
 - Add the expected responses below
 - Example from Strengths vs Challenges activity:
 - Talk about strengths - what is a strength that YOU have? Give them an example
 - Responsible, honest, kind
 - Talk about Challenges (relate it to your weaknesses) - what is something you want to improve on? Give them an example
 - Time management, patience, manners



Materials:

- If there's any, include here

Prep for Activity:

1. Pass out any materials necessary for the activity
2. Explain the **purpose** of the activity
 - a. Always relate it back to why it is important for them to learn this - helps them make a PERSONAL connection!
 - b. Example from Strengths vs Challenges activity:
 - i. It is important to understand that we all have things that we are great at and things we struggle with, but that is what makes us all unique!
3. Move the group so they are sitting based on the 101, 102, 103 activity
 - a. Ex. 103 all sit at the same table or near each other

Activity:

4. Move to each group and explain what each 101, 102, 103 group will be doing
5. Make sure that each group is given step by step instructions.
 - a. If any of the instructions repeat over 2 or more groups, you may give them to the whole group!
 - b. Example from Strengths vs Challenges activity:
 - i. 101:
 1. Complete a different activity based on their goals (ex. Sign language, taking a walk, etc)
 - ii. 102:
 1. Using your blue marker, write down 4 things you are really great at!
 - a. Ex: time management, kind, etc
 2. Using your red marker, write down 4 things you need more practice on
 - a. Ex: coping skills, playing the guitar, etc



iii. 103:

1. Using your blue marker, write down 5 things you are really great at!
 - a. Ex: time management, kind, etc
2. Using your red marker, write down 5 things you need more practice on
 - a. Ex: coping skills, playing the guitar, etc
3. For each challenge you write, write down a way to overcome it in black marker.
 - a. Ex: Coping skills=keep a stress ball at my table

Discussion: Bring the whole group back together - emphasis the importance and purpose of the activity

Example from Strengths vs Challenges activity:

- Why is it important to identify your own strengths and challenges and share with others?
 - To learn about how we are different
 - To know what friends are good at
 - To recognize that we all have strengths and challenges
- Does everyone have challenges that they face?

Appendix B: Description of One Sheet Lesson Plan Modules

Prior to 1st Session:

- Designed Google form for pre-test questions
- Gathered pre-test questions from participants

Module One: Introduction and Career Interest and Exploration/Skills/Interest/Hobbies Checklist

- Objectives
- Research
- Worksheets – interest checklist

Module Two: Self-Determination/Goals/Develop Resume

- Objectives
- Research
- Introduction to the development of a resume

Module Three: Resume Building Skills (continued)

- Objectives
- Research
- Completed Resumes

Module Four: Hygiene and Grooming Skills

- Objectives
- Research
- Completed worksheets related on how to dress and appropriate body language to display during an interview

Module Five: Job Interview Skills

- Objectives
- Research
- Completed worksheets on professional etiquette for a job interview and DO's and DON'T's

Module Six: Mock Interviews

- Objectives
- Research
- Performed a mock interview

Last Session

- Designed Google form for post-test questions
- Gathered post-test answers from participants and obtained results

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Curriculum Vitae

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Education

University of Nevada, Las Vegas 2020 – 2023 Occupational Therapy Doctorate (OTD)
Las Vegas, NV

University of Northern Colorado 2013 – 2017 Audiology and Speech-Language
Greeley, CO Sciences (BS); Minor Special Education

Internship Experience

The Garden Foundation

January 2023 – April 2023

Occupational Therapy Doctorate Student (OTD/S)
Las Vegas, NV

Assisted in the development and implementation of individual support plans for the GROW Program; included activities such as movement, music, dance, art, cooking, education, socialization, and life – skills training.

- Modified activities and lesson plans for adults with various levels of intellectual disabilities (IDDs) 18 years and older
- Provided active engagement routine health, and assistance with daily activities
- Developed and implemented work/job training skills program for adults with IDD
- Utilized positive communication for clients and staff to encourage a positive learning environment
- Assisted clients and staff in implementation of daily activities and individual program plans related to client-centered goals
- Ensured equipment and environment was safe and clean

Capability Health and Human Services

May 2022 – August 2022

Occupational Therapy Doctorate Student (OTD/S)
Las Vegas, NV

Assisted OTR/L in pediatric outpatient clinic with therapeutic activities enabling the child to reach developmental milestones.

- Assisted OTR/L while facilitating a positive learning environment for clients with autism and developmental delays
- Utilized a client centered model, within the confines of the clinic as well as used a parent educational model in the Early Intervention program

- Promoted positive emotional, social, and academic learning skills for clients with disabilities
- Guided clients to develop or regain physical or mental functioning by implementing specific interventions to improve daily living skills and sensory motor activities
- Supported clients on an individual basis with activities utilizing fine motor skills, gross motor skills, self-advocacy, and independence
- Provided, conducted, and participated in early intervention evaluations and assessments with OTR/L for to determine if OT services were necessary for client
- Performed administrative duties to develop successful interventions and supported program goals and objectives for each client
- Implemented plan of care, managed full caseload of clients, provided documentation, and communicated with family members daily regarding goals, interventions, and concerns for future goals

New Mexico AgrAbility Project

May 2021 – August 2021

Occupational Therapy Doctorate Student (OTD/S)

Albuquerque, NM

Supported success in agriculture for people with disabilities to improve quality of life through participation in agricultural production. Provided the highest-quality services for adults with developmental disabilities through providing a higher staff to client ratio; Assisted individuals with disabilities to work in the community in integrated settings and establish a better quality of life.

- Assisted individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in an Agri-Learning Program designed specifically for people with developmental disabilities who wish to access education and vocational supports around farming
- Contributed to client's desire to complete a year-long apprenticeship designed to prepare them to work on an existing farm or start a micro-business of their own (Mandy's Farm)
- Promoted support to clients with daily hands-on experience in growing vegetables, cultivating fruit and mushrooms, caring for small livestock, exploring aquaponics, and working with bees
- Guided individuals with Developmental Disabilities to achieve goals by structuring a positive, purposeful, and caring environment for living, learning, and working in the community

Relevant Coursework

OCT 753 – Occupational Therapy with Children and Youth I/II

- Consisted of hands-on laboratory tools to utilize while helping children in OT therapy sessions; Learned to explain the theoretical basis for sensory integration and the evaluation/treatment of sensory processing disorders in a pediatric setting
- Exposed to the importance of advocating for services needed for the child to support occupational therapy performance in various settings

OCT 726 – Occupational Therapy Practice I with Adults/Older Adults

- Learned to define the physical conditions and diseases that are seen in occupational therapy practice with adults
- Analyzed and evaluated the effects of disease processes including heritable diseases, genetic conditions, mental illness, disability, trauma, and injury on occupational performance
- Demonstrated activity analysis in areas of occupation, performance skills, performance patterns, context(s) and environments, and client factors to formulate the intervention plan
- Selected and applied assessment tools, considering client needs, and cultural and contextual factors.
- Administered selected standardized and non-standardized assessments using appropriate procedures and protocols

OCT 721 – Foundations for Occupational Therapy

- Learned to define the distinct value of the profession of occupational therapy
- Described theory development and acknowledged how the major theories influence contemporary occupational therapy practice

Work Experience

Denver Public Schools

August 2011 – May 2019

Special Education Paraprofessional

Assisted special education teachers in a Multi-Intensive (MI) center classroom; supported general education teachers in inclusion classrooms.

- Assisted special education teachers while facilitating a positive learning environment
- Promoted positive social and academic learning for students with disabilities
- Instructed students on an individual basis as well as assisted in small groups; supported students in mainstream classrooms and modified methods of teaching to produce effective lessons
- Expedited and provided positive services for students resulting in successful participation with peers
- Taught appropriate behaviors, modified specific activities, and encouraged students to develop confidence and independence while participating in mainstream classrooms, in the community, and at job sites
- Recognized and reinforced positive behavior in every aspect