Exploring OT practice in the U.S. criminal justice system: Occupational justice through a jail-based reentry program

World Federation of Occupational Therapy
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2. Describe Saint Louis University Transformative Justice Initiative

3. Explore collaborative program development and implementation

4. Examine the experience of a jail-based OT
Background:

The US leads the world in rates of incarceration
Who’s Behind Bars?
• 11 million people cycle through jails each year in the U.S.¹
• City of St. Louis has highest incarceration rate in Missouri.²
• 97% of individuals incarcerated will be released to the community.³

• OT programming in justice-based settings is rare.³
• Occupation-based programming supports healthy roles, habits, routines and activities.
DESCRIBE SAINT LOUIS UNIVERSITY’S TRANSFORMATIVE JUSTICE INITIATIVE
Transformative Justice Initiative’s OT Transition and Integration Program

EXPLORE COLLABORATIVE PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION
Collaborative Programming

Collaborative Approach

– Interprofessional partnerships

– Community members, volunteers, experts, etc.

– Social work, family and community medicine, nutrition and dietetics, law, psychology, career services, community health workers, case managers

– Functional community presentations
  • Activities focused on skill building for community living
Collaborative Programming

Participatory Approach

– Create visuals for “direction” of services

– Treat correctional officers with respect

– Work together to meet common goals
Collaborative Programming

Client-Centered Approach

- Storytellers
- Informal Interviews
- Strengths, Struggles, and Interests
- Learn from unique, lived experiences
EXAMINING THE EXPERIENCE OF A JAIL-BASED OT
Methods of Reflection

• Field Notes
• Session Logs
• Team Meetings
• Pausing for Reflection
• Feedback from OT group members

“We do not learn from experience...we learn from reflecting on experience.”  
–John Dewey
The Pursuit of Occupational Justice
Conclusion

- Saint Louis University’s OT-based Transformative Justice Initiative has implemented a collaborative, interprofessional program within an urban jail.

- Individual and team reflection prove to be effective methods of program development and implementation.

- Jail-based occupational therapists in reentry programming can assist correctional facilities in reducing rates of recidivism and promoting occupational justice.