



EmpowerED: Sexual Education & Support for All

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BACKGROUND

Common social misconceptions reinforce myths that portray individuals with IDD as being incapable of understanding the complexities of sexuality, incapable of being sexually active, and even deny sexuality as being an interest in their lives. ¹

Research has shown that individuals with IDD have poor sexual outcomes including increased risk for sexually transmitted infections & diseases (STIs & STDs), unplanned pregnancy, and sexual abuse. ²

Sexuality as an Overlooked Occupation in OT

Although sexuality is recognized in the Occupational Therapy Practice Framework (OTPF) as an activity of daily living (ADL), individuals with IDD (intellectual and developmental disabilities) are rarely provided the education or support needed to safely participate in this occupation.

An article published in the American Journal of Occupational Therapy highlighted that the OTPF recommends practitioners support clients' participation in sexual activity as an activity of daily living via formal education, however few practitioners provide this support due to limited education as OT students on sexuality with clients. ³

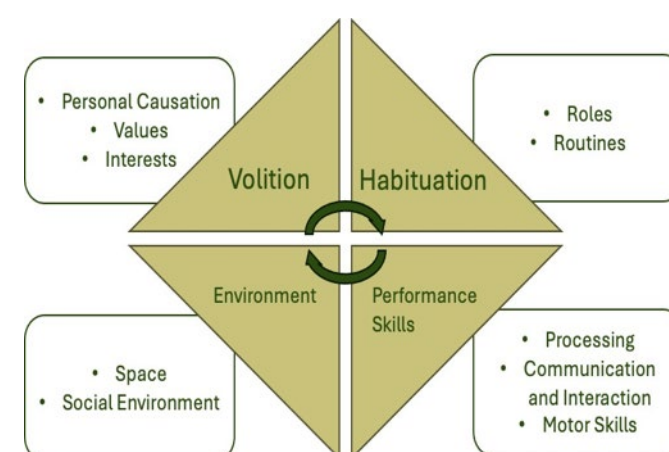
OTs can play a crucial role in supporting the IDD community by actively addressing **sexuality as a meaningful occupation** and implementing our **holistic approach** to promote autonomy, safety, and self-advocacy. Through **accessible, sensory-informed, and client-centered** supports, individuals with IDD can safely engage in healthy relationships.

This capstone project collaborated with SAVA's (Sexual Assault Victim Advocacy Center) prevention program, SOAR (Safety, Opportunities, All abilities, Resources), which empowers individuals with IDD through education, advocacy, and support to promote safety, autonomy, and informed decision-making.



THEORETICAL BASIS

The Model of Human Occupation ⁴



GOAL

The goal of this capstone project was to develop comprehensive, **inclusive sexual education resources** for SAVA's SOAR program, **empowering young adults with IDD** in Northern Colorado to build their **knowledge, confidence, and skills** for engaging in safe, healthy, and meaningful **relationships**.

OBJECTIVES

- 1 Conduct a formal needs assessment by completing informal/formal site staff interviews and participant observation sessions to guide development of deliverables.
- 2 Develop and implement OT-informed, accessible materials including social stories, educational handouts, and sensory regulation strategies to support participant understanding, engagement, and emotional regulation during programming.
- 3 Present deliverables to SOAR programming to promote carryover of learning, consistency of support, and long-term program sustainability.

DELIVERABLES



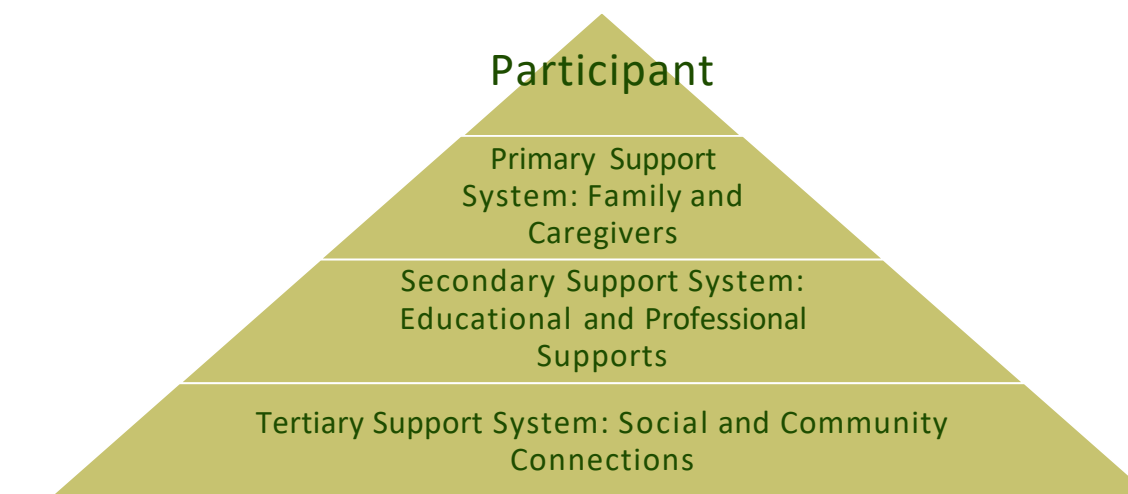
Scan the QR code provided to access deliverables.



OUTCOME EVALUATION METHODS

- Ongoing qualitative feedback was gathered through weekly check-ins with the site mentor, staff interviews, and informal staff conversations to assess accessibility and relevance of deliverables.
- Direct weekly observations of participants engagement during SOAR programming to assess influence of OT-informed sensory supports and materials such as social stories.
- Reflection and planning logs used to track progress towards objectives, guide revisions, and ensure alignment with OT principles and project goals.

FINDINGS



Implementing an OT's perspective of a **client-centered approach**, understanding the **system** surrounding an individual with IDD gives proper insight to the **supports and limitations** they experience when **accessing** sexual health information.

DISCUSSION

The **lack** of accessible and appropriate sexual health materials that are given to individuals with IDD are **limited, impacting** their occupational performance, engagement, and **overall quality of life**.

OTs can have an **immense impact** on the IDD communities' **access** and **knowledge** of sexuality. **Informing** colleagues, caregivers, and local communities of the **importance** of linking sexual health to daily participation and identity.

Collaboration between SOAR and the CSU OTD student **addressed this gap** by providing accessible and inclusive materials that **promote** safety, autonomy, education, and overall social participation for young adults with IDD in Northern Colorado.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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REFERENCES

Scan the QR code provided to access the resources utilized to complete this project and the logic model.

