

An Occupational Therapy Needs Assessment of Individuals who have Experienced Homelessness

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Description of Site

Ascencia is a temporary housing shelter for men, women, and families who have been homeless. Ascencia is dedicated to providing various services to help homeless families and individuals return to permanent housing as soon as possible. Mission Statement: "To end homelessness in the greater Glendale area, one person, one family at a time. We envision a community where people in need can find safe, affordable housing and access to resources to become self-sufficient (Ascencia, n.d.).

Summary of Needs Assessment

1. Occupational therapy providing services in the community to clients who are not living in the shelter
2. Occupational therapy being involved in client intake process
3. Having a licensed OT a part of the staff (K. Banks, personal communication, December 11, 2020)

Literature Review

- The literature review for this project was geared toward research that discussed identifying the occupational needs for this population, understanding daily occupational engagement of this population, as well as trying to learn more about the role of occupational therapy when working with the homeless.
- In terms of OT's role with working in this population according to the literature occupational therapist often work in multidisciplinary teams in this setting and often have to establish their role within these settings (Lloyd & Basset, 2012)
- Occupational therapy would be beneficial in addressing this population's decreased ability to participate in meaningful activity however, there continues to be an unmet need for full-time occupational therapists in this setting (Lloyd & Bassett 2014).
- The literature emphasizes that more research still needs to be done to find the relationship between occupation and transitioning out of homelessness (Marshall et. al., 2014).

Student Learning Objectives

1. By 14 weeks, occupational therapy will be established as a primary service at Ascencia
2. By 14 weeks a research study on the occupational needs of the clients at Ascencia will be conducted.
3. By 14 weeks, information on potential grants that can be utilized to fund full-time occupational therapy services will be provided.

Project Plan and Implementation

Research Design: Mixed-Method Research Study with the purpose of identifying what areas of occupation the clients at Ascencia needed the most support in.

Participants: 21 Ascencia clients who are over 18 living in the emergency shelter or in the community.

Data Collection: Convenience sampling was utilized for recruitment as participants were gathered on a volunteer basis. The student researcher was able to ask several case managers for permission to contact clients living in the community. Clients already receiving occupational therapy services were also asked to participate in this study.

Procedure: 19-question Likert scale survey was given to participants to complete followed by a 10-15 minute semi structured interview

Data Analysis: Frequency distributions were used to organize quantitative data and describe the participants' responses to the questionnaire. Qualitative data was analyzed and categorized into relevant themes reflecting and expanding upon responses of the participants during their interviews.

Evaluation and Outcomes

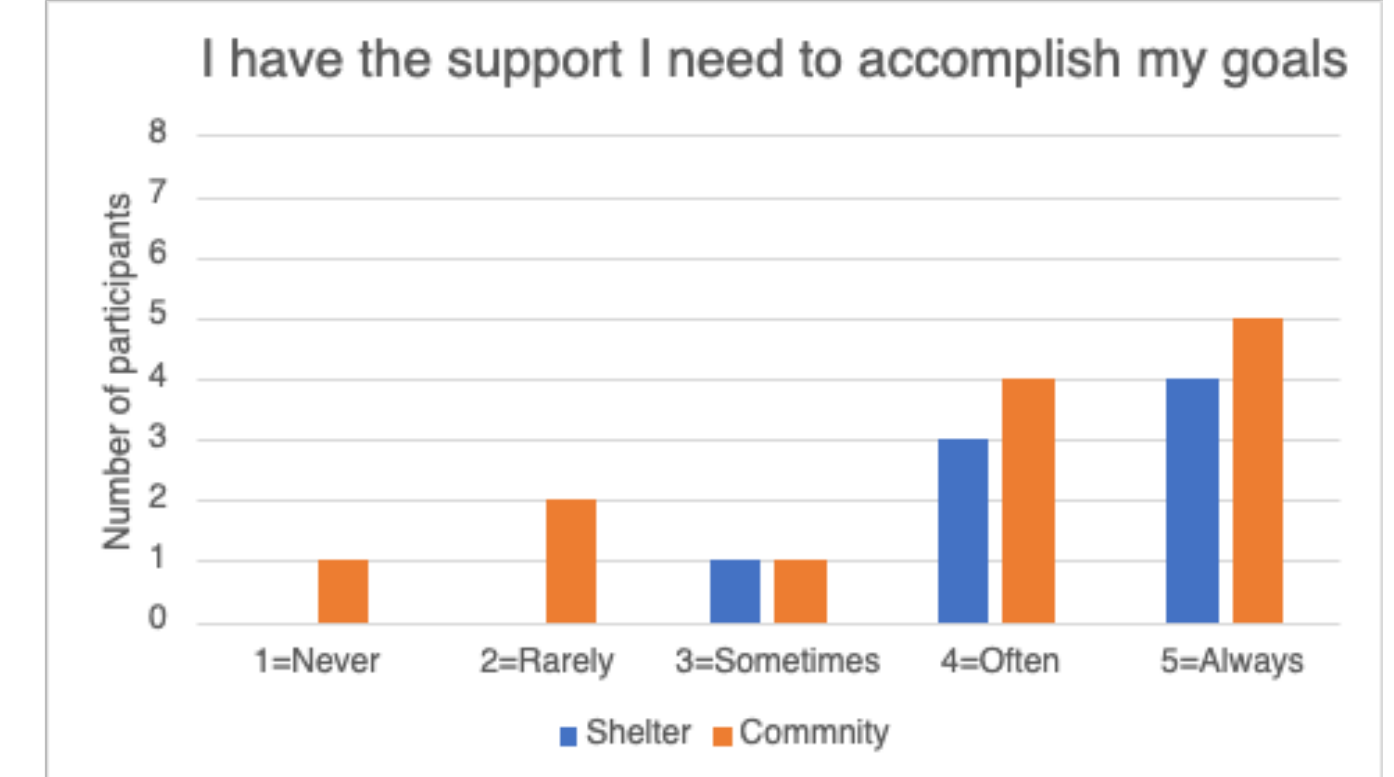
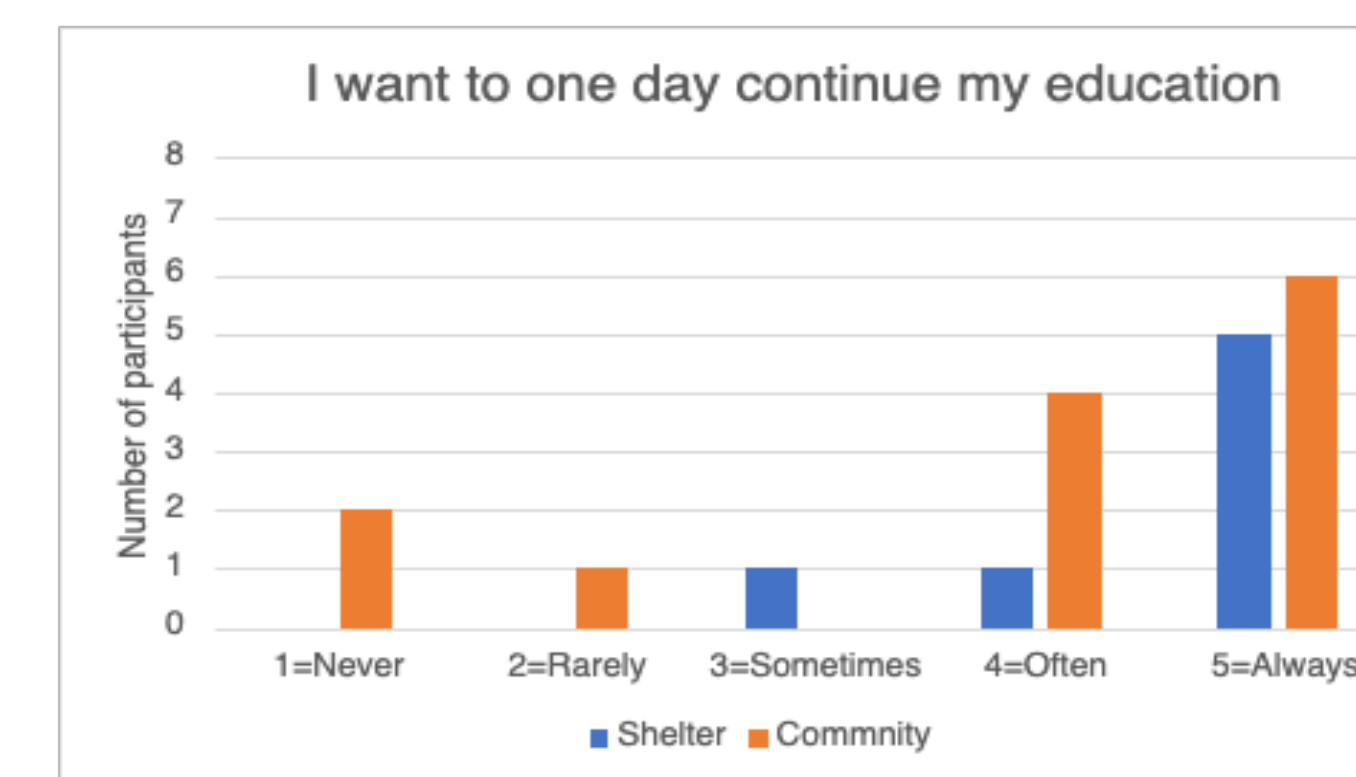
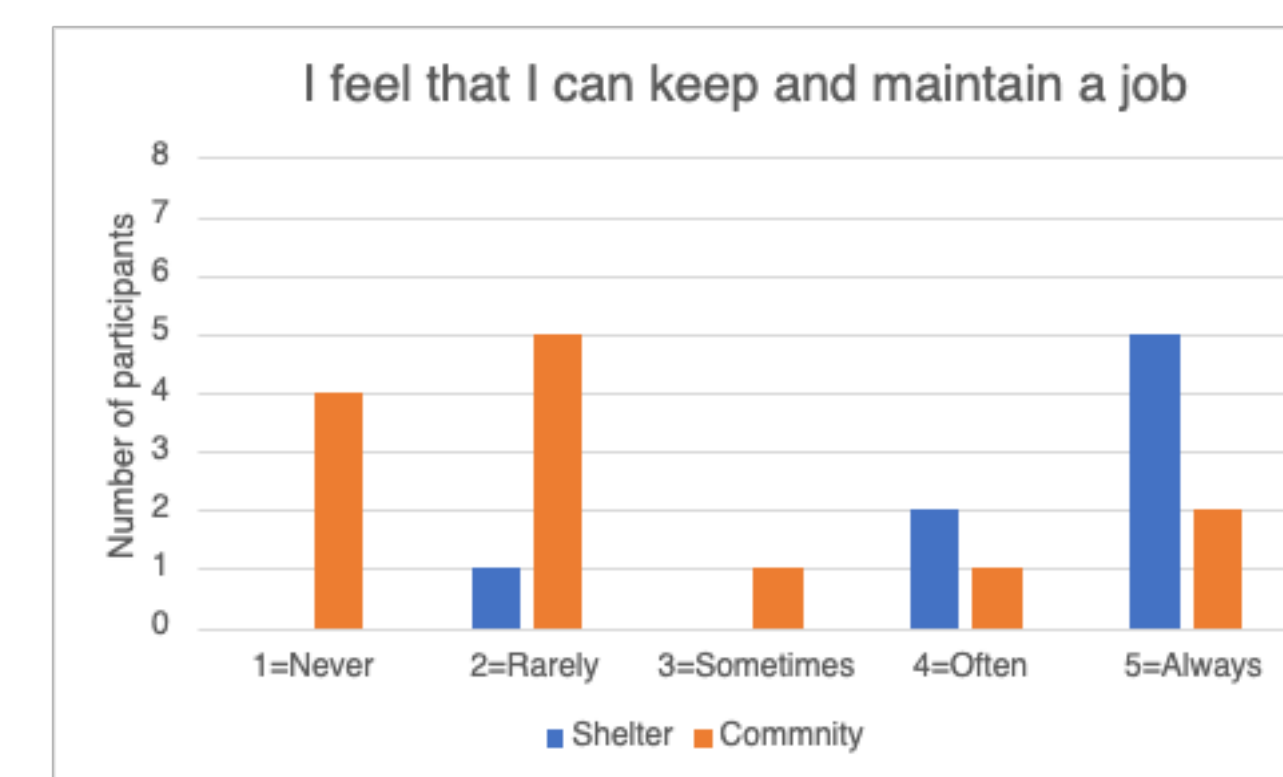
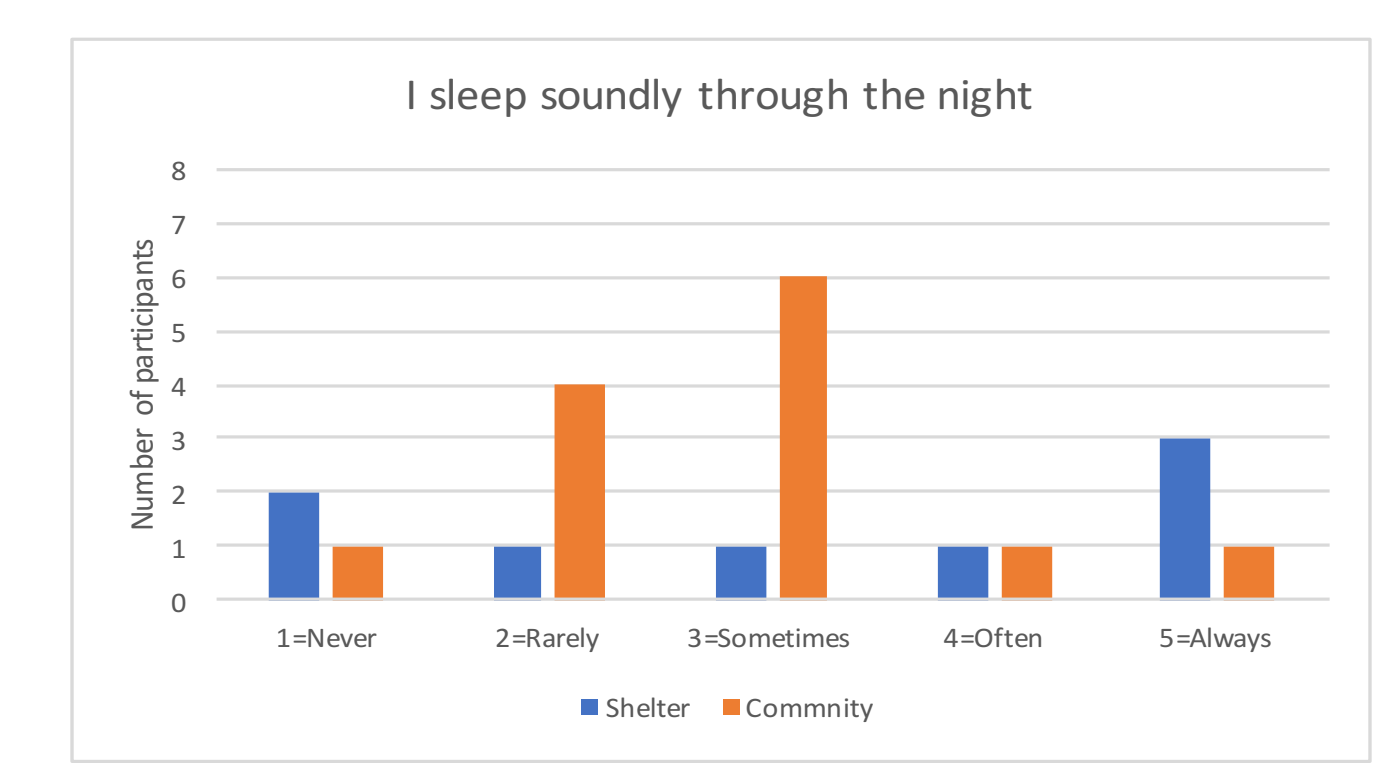
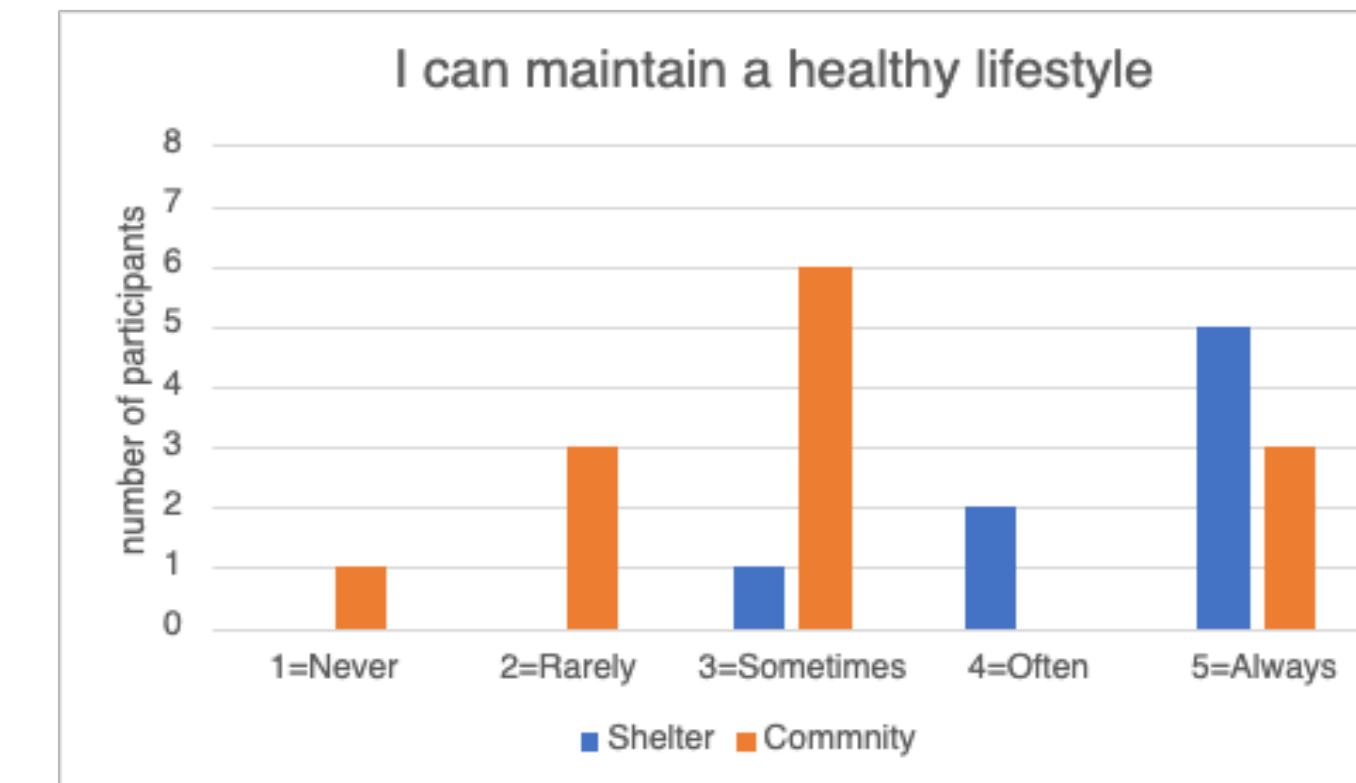
Qualitative Themes

- 1. Decreased Sleep Quality*
 - Difficulty adjusting to new environment
 - Inability to stay asleep, restlessness
 - Medical conditions
- 2. Difficulty with Health Management*
 - Difficulty establishing a healthy diet
 - Difficulty managing mental and physical disabilities
 - Aging population
 - Mental health is a major barrier to occupation
- 3. Desire to Continue Education*
 - Acknowledgement that education can provide more opportunities
 - Wanting to go back and finish
 - Acknowledgement that education is important in general
 - Mental health is a barrier to continuing education
- 4. Interest in OT Services at Ascencia*
 - Participants had no prior knowledge to what occupational therapy was
 - Majority of participants would prefer individual sessions to group sessions
 - Participants who lived in community concerned about transportation to shelter

Evaluation and Outcomes

Quantitative Data

- The clients living in the community on average had lower scores in the areas of sleep quality, financial management, maintaining a healthy lifestyle, and employment pursuits. Clients living in the community also reported a decreased desire to continue their education and decreased perceived support system compared to their counterparts living inside the emergency shelter.



Summary of Deliverables

The scholarly deliverables for this capstone project included:

- An occupational therapy, a modified version of an OT screening tool to be used for new emergency shelter move-ins. The tool is a brief way to identify occupational barriers and introduce new clients to occupational therapy in general.
- Resource packets regarding what occupational therapy is and areas OT is able to address along with additional resources on sleep hygiene, healthy eating, time management, and meditation resources were created to hand to new clients upon intake and move in.
- The findings from the research study on the occupational needs of the clients at Ascencia will be available at all times to those part of the organization.

Conclusion

This type of research study in order to provide further rationale for why OT should be playing a vital role in community based settings. Due to limited evidence on the topic of occupation and the transition from homelessness, future research should be geared toward assessing the effectiveness of occupational therapy interventions with this population. By expanding on research in this topic, stakeholders and those alike will be more likely to create more jobs for occupational therapists in the community.

Future Implications

- The data collected from this study is more reason why occupational therapy can and should be a vital service offered in settings such as Ascencia.
- Research such as this can provide further rationale as to why more jobs for OTs need to be created to serve this population.
- For Ascencia specifically, this study can be rationale for stakeholders to consider adding a licensed OT to their staff. This way, clients in the community are able to have access to services without having to come into the shelter.
- Future projects should take the results of this study and create programs and interventions for the areas of need identified.

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References

Available upon request

