



Improving Community Reintegration Outcomes Among the Forensic Mental Health Population

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Doctoral Capstone Experience (DCE) Site

- Gateways Conditional Release Program (CONREP) is a non-profit forensic mental health outpatient facility in San Diego, CA that provides court-mandated mental health services to individuals who were previously incarcerated and diagnosed with serious mental illness
- Gateways CONREP supervises adults released by the courts back into the community and provides psychological, psychiatric, case management, and occupational therapy services to their clients
- **Mission:** “To protect the public through the reduction, if not prevention, of re-offense by specified forensic patients”(Gateways CONREP Forensic Community Treatment Program, 2019)

Identified Needs at the DCE Site

1. Education, advocacy, and creation of occupational therapy resources for continuing support
2. Socialization engagement and leisure exploration/participation opportunities
3. Implementing a role and responsibility development program for improved community reintegration outcomes

Learning Objectives

1. By 14 weeks, the capstone student will design and implement a six-week occupational therapy-based program that promotes self-efficacy, role and responsibility development, and socialization skills to improve community reintegration for the forensic mental health outpatient population
2. By 14 weeks, the capstone student will develop educational presentations, resources, and create occupation-based group interventions for clients to promote carry-over of skills presented during the workshops
3. By 14 weeks, the capstone student will evaluate the six-week program to determine its effectiveness and impact amongst the forensic mental health outpatient population

Literature Review

- Individuals with severe mental illness are affected by mental health stigma as they are labeled as their mental illness and previous incarceration. This can cause deficits in performing necessary life skills, isolation, increase in psychotic symptoms, and overall decrease quality of life (Bond et al., 2015)
- Formalizing educational programs and focusing on client-centered care will increase comprehension success and increase carry-over of skills (Fernando et al., 2017)
- With individuals with severe mental illness, engaging in community volunteer work can promote community reintegration, feeling supported, and overall provide meaningful occupations in these individuals' lives (Pérez-Corrales et al., 2022)

Problem Statement

Due to a lack of societal mental health awareness, individuals with serious mental illness face adversity and alienation which creates difficulties for community reintegration, isolation, decreased participation in life skills, and low self-efficacy and self-esteem. Occupational therapists working in mental health settings can promote mental health awareness through program development to encourage and empower community participation through skill building and overall increase quality of life.

Program Description and Implementation

Primary Focus Area: Program Development

- Provide occupation-based program interventions relating to attaining and enhancing life skills, increasing self-efficacy, and encourage social participation leading to improved community reintegration outcomes
- Implementation of the six-week occupation-based program
 - Three groups per week: self-expression, community reintegration, and life skills
 - Individual caseload of six clients

Results

Quantitative Data

- Administered a pre and post assessment, the Life Skills Proficiency (LSP) Assessment (created by the capstone student), a task-based assessment observing **12 participants** and their life skill abilities
- Significant increase in life skills after program implementation shown in Figure 1

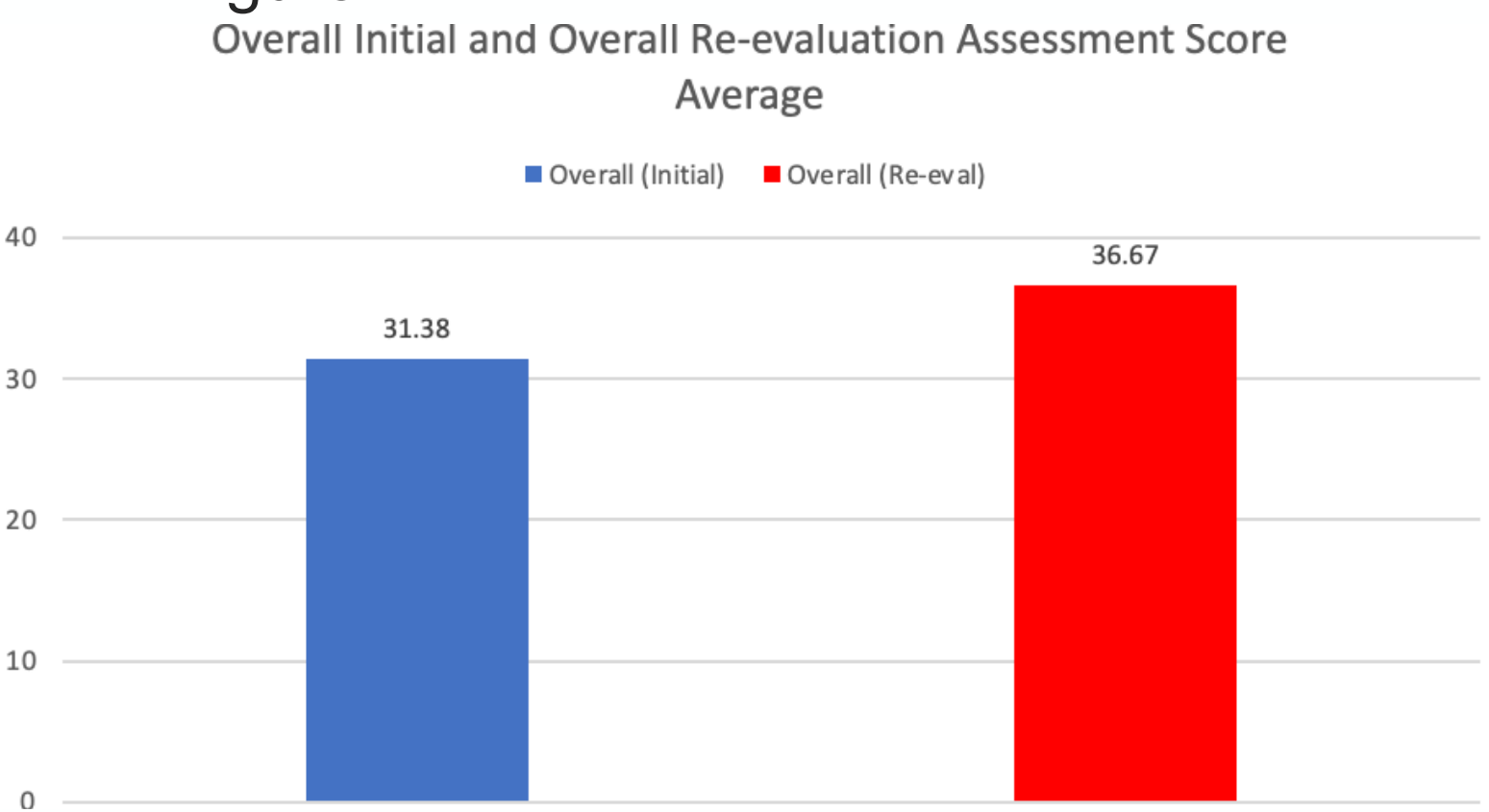


Figure 1 Overall initial score and overall re-evaluation scores based on LSP Assessment

Qualitative Data

- Post-program interview questions administered to groups and individual participants
- Thematic analysis of themes and participant statements

Life Skills

“I feel more independent with doing everyday things by myself.”

Leisure Activities

“I didn’t care much for art but when we’d do art activities during group, I realized I actually enjoyed it.”

Community Mobility and Exposure

We did a lot of practice with Google Maps. I liked the repetition, and it helped me feel more confident after a few times.”

Self-efficacy and self-esteem

“I am a happier person when I have OT because we do fun things and you [the capstone student] support me. It’s nice to have someone that helps lead you in the right direction.”

Discussion

The program’s results displayed an increase in community reintegration-related outcomes and overall positive effectiveness of the program:

Quantitative Data

- Pre-assessment average was 31.38 and post-assessment average was 36.67, indicating gains in life skills

Qualitative Data

- Participant statements reflect positive experiences and personal skill attainment after experiencing client-centered and occupation-focused interventions

Implications and Future Directions

Findings suggest specific aspects of the program may be improved:

- Longer program duration and additional time required to build client rapport
- Preparation and leeway to anticipate fluctuating psychotic symptoms (e.g., avolition, confusion, stress, anxiety, and suspiciousness)
- Funding resources for program
- Importance of advocacy and continuous occupational therapy services for this underserved population

Summary of Scholarly Deliverables

- Life Skills Proficiency (LSP) Assessment
- Group-based program presentations
- Educational handouts



References

