
Stephen B. Kern, Ph.D., OTR/L, FAOTA¹; Christina Kubica, MSW²
1. Professor & Director, Master of Science Program in Occupational Therapy, Thomas Jefferson University, Philadelphia, PA
2. Program Coordinator, InSPIRE. Nationalities Service Center, Philadelphia PA

Learning Objectives
1. Describe and discuss the occupational justice framework
2. Describe and discuss the application of the framework to the refugee resettlement process
3. Discuss how this non-traditional fieldwork training setting & model creates a model for development of professional habits

Background Information
A ten -year collaborative partnership between a refugee resettlement agency and a university occupational therapy program led to the development of a 12-week fieldwork education program that positively serves the needs of the partnership’s three key stakeholders: the organization; the individual refugee or family; and the clinical training of occupational therapy students within an interprofessional team approach.

Clients with extensive healthcare needs, including developmental disabilities and other health conditions are referred to the Innovative Support Program for Immigrant and Refugee Empowerment (InSPIRE) for case management and occupational therapy services. Typically, these clients are experiencing greater levels of difficulty throughout the resettlement process accommodating to daily life in the U.S. Clients receive services for up to a year.

Occupational Therapy Fieldwork Education Program
An integral component of entry-level occupational therapy education. Is the fieldwork experience. Each experience is
• Designed to promote clinical reasoning and reflective practice
• Support ethical practice through transmission of the values and beliefs of the profession
• Communicate & model professionalism as a developmental process and a career responsibility
• Expand knowledge and application of a repertoire of occupational therapy assessments and interventions related to human occupation and performance.

Through the fieldwork experience, students learn to apply theoretical and scientific principles learned in the didactic portion of the academic program to address actual client needs and develop a professional identity as an occupational therapy practitioner within an interdisciplinary context” (AOTA, 2012).

Fieldwork provides an in-depth experience in delivering occupational therapy services to clients, focusing on the application of evidence-based purposeful & meaningful occupations, administration, and management of occupational therapy services.

Students carry out professional responsibilities under the supervision of a licensed occupational therapist (OTR) and offers opportunities to observe professional role models in the field.

Selected 12-week Fieldwork Schedule

Fieldwork Schedule Weeks 1 - 3

Occupational Therapy Student Outcomes
Since its inception, the Occupational Therapy fieldwork placement at the Nationalities Service Center has been a positive experience for students.

Students consistently achieve greater than average passing scores using the AOTA Fieldwork Performance Evaluation (2002) in the areas of Basic Tenets of Occupational Therapy; Communication; and Professional Behaviors.

References:
• AOTA (2012). Fieldwork level II and occupational therapy students: A position paper. ARVT, 66(6, Suppl.), SS75-S77.

Participatory Occupational Justice Framework

Occupational justice describes “a vision of society in which all populations have opportunities, resources, privilege, and rights to participate to their potential on their desired occupations” (Whiteford & Townsend, 2011, p.65). The occupational justice framework focuses on “what people do every day on their own, and collectively; how people live to seek identity, satisfaction, and autonomy; how they organize their habits, routines, and choices to promote health” (Whiteford & Townsends, 2011).

In addition to attending to individual and family daily life at home, work, and school, there is also a concern in this framework for the aspiration of equity in social participation in civic society. This focus enables the professional to hone their awareness of regulation, policy, laws, economic practices, and other forces that govern what people do, want to do, and imagine what is possible. This leads to a practice of critical professional practice; in this case critical occupational therapy.

Using an occupational justice framework, the occupational therapy team implemented group and individual client-centered interventions to achieve general goals of participation in meaningful, health-promoting daily work, home management, and self-care activities. All care provided is participatory, collaborative, or person-centered, and empowerment-oriented.

Refugees arrive in the U.S. after peeling periods of displacement. During this time they experience various forms of occupational injustice, such as alienation, disruption, and deprivation from the routines of typical daily life which all contribute to diminished health status.

In this model, professional view health in the broadest of terms; including self and family management, education, employment, health promotion, and civic engagement. Intervention and outcomes focus on one’s ability to freely choose and access participation in these meaningful activities (occupations) while facilitating the resettlement process and encapsulation to daily U.S. life.