

Project Description & Sites

- **Areas of Study:** 1) Advocacy, 2) Program and Policy Development, 3) Research Skills
- **Practice Area:** Mental Health
- **Population:** Children ages 0-18 in Elkhart County, Indiana
- **Site:** The SOURCE, Hosted Through Oaklawn
- **Description:** My doctoral capstone project was focused on exploring occupational therapy's role in pediatric mental health promotion. Throughout my project, I attended weekly interdisciplinary team meetings, participated in specialty trainings, and observed various mental health services. Additionally, I was able to create educational resources, facilitate trainings with direct-service providers for children, and participate in consultative services with multidisciplinary mental health service providers, educators, child-care providers, and caregivers.

Needs Assessment

- Requests from The SOURCE's Director for collaboration with OT practitioners and current staff.
- Requests from mental health service providers at The SOURCE for access to trainings on sensory processing, self-regulation strategies, and support with consultation services.
- Limited access to formal occupational therapy services in Elkhart (long wait lists, financial barriers, etc.)



Literature Review

- Research has identified connections between Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and poor long-term outcomes for mental and physical health (Bomysoad, & Francis, 2020).
- Children who have experienced prolonged exposure to trauma are at an increased risk of experiencing sensory processing challenges (Yochman & Pat-Horenczyk, 2020).
- Research supports implementing OT mental health services at the community-level, within interprofessional teams, and through consultations with direct service providers in the community (Cahill et al., 2020; Wallace, 2014).



Christ | Scholarship | Service

- "The real issue in life is not how many blessings we have, but what we do with our blessings. Some people have many blessings and hoard them. Some have few and give everything away."
--Fred Rogers
- "A person's most useful asset is not a head full of knowledge, but a heart full of love, an ear ready to listen and a hand willing to help others." -- Kotaku Wamura

Mission & Vision Statements

- **Mission Statement:** To increase awareness of occupational therapy's role in pediatric mental health through collaboration with local pediatric mental health providers and local children's organizations in Elkhart County, Indiana.
- **Vision Statement:** To advocate for occupational therapy's role in pediatric mental health in order to prevent negative mental health outcomes for children and youth, to promote improved access to occupational therapy services, and support the wellness of the pediatric population in Elkhart County, Indiana.

Project Completion and Outcomes

- **Outcome Measure #1:** Research concepts related to occupational therapy and mental health within the pediatric population by analyzing journal articles, books, and related resources on this topic.
- **Outcome Measure #2:** Develop an in-depth knowledge of mental illness in pediatric populations.
- **Outcome Measure #3:** Advocate for occupational therapy's role in pediatric mental health through professional presentations.

Deliverables

- Evidence-Based Intervention Resource
- Annotated Bibliography
- Continuing Education Certificates
- Interviews with mental health professionals & Reflections
- Infographics on OT's role in Pediatric Mental Health
- Educational Booklet on Sensory Processing
- Survey
- OT Referral Guide
- Consultation Form & Documentation
- Fundamentals of OT Infographic
- Various Professional Presentations and Trainings



Future Implications for OT

- **Future Implications for OT:** Trainings, PowerPoint presentations, and printed educational resources are available to future Huntington University students and for continued use with The SOURCE with pediatric populations in Elkhart County, Indiana
- **Future Impact on my Career:** I will utilize my experience and knowledge of Trauma-Informed care, collaboration with caregivers, and sensory processing strategies to enrich my clinical skills as a future occupational therapist.

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KEY REFERENCES *Full reference list and image reference list available upon request

- Cahill S. M., Egan, B. E., & Seber, J. (2020). Activity and occupation-based interventions to support mental health, positive behavior, and social participation for children and youth: A systematic review. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 74(2), 1–28. <https://doi.org/10.5014/ajot.2020.038687>
- Wallace, K. (2014). Early intervention for young children at risk for developmental mental health disorders. In R. Crouch & V. Alers (Eds.), *Occupational therapy in psychiatry and mental health*, 5th ed. (pp. 229–247). Wiley Blackwell. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118913536.ch15>
- Yochman, A., Pat-Horenczyk, R. (2020). Sensory Modulation in Children Exposed to Continuous Traumatic Stress. *Journ Child Adol Trauma*, 13, 93–102. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40653-019-00254-4>