

# Improving Occupational Engagement in Transitional Housing: An OT Approach to Mental Health Conditions

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## BACKGROUND

### Defining Transitional Housing

- **The Bridge to Independence:** Structured residential support designed to help individuals transition from homelessness to stable, independent living.
- **More Than Shelter:** Provides environmental stability, daily routine, safety, and individualized goal development.
- **Major Routine Adjustment:** Residents must adapt to significant changes in expectations, responsibilities, and cognitive demands of daily living.

### Navos Community Partner

- **Navos ICSRP:** Serves adults with serious mental illness (SMI), often alongside histories of homelessness and/or substance use.
- **Flexible Lengths of Stay:** Uses individualized timelines rather than rigid discharge deadlines.
- **Embedded Skill-Building:** Staff collaborate with residents in their actual living environment to develop functional life skills and community participation.

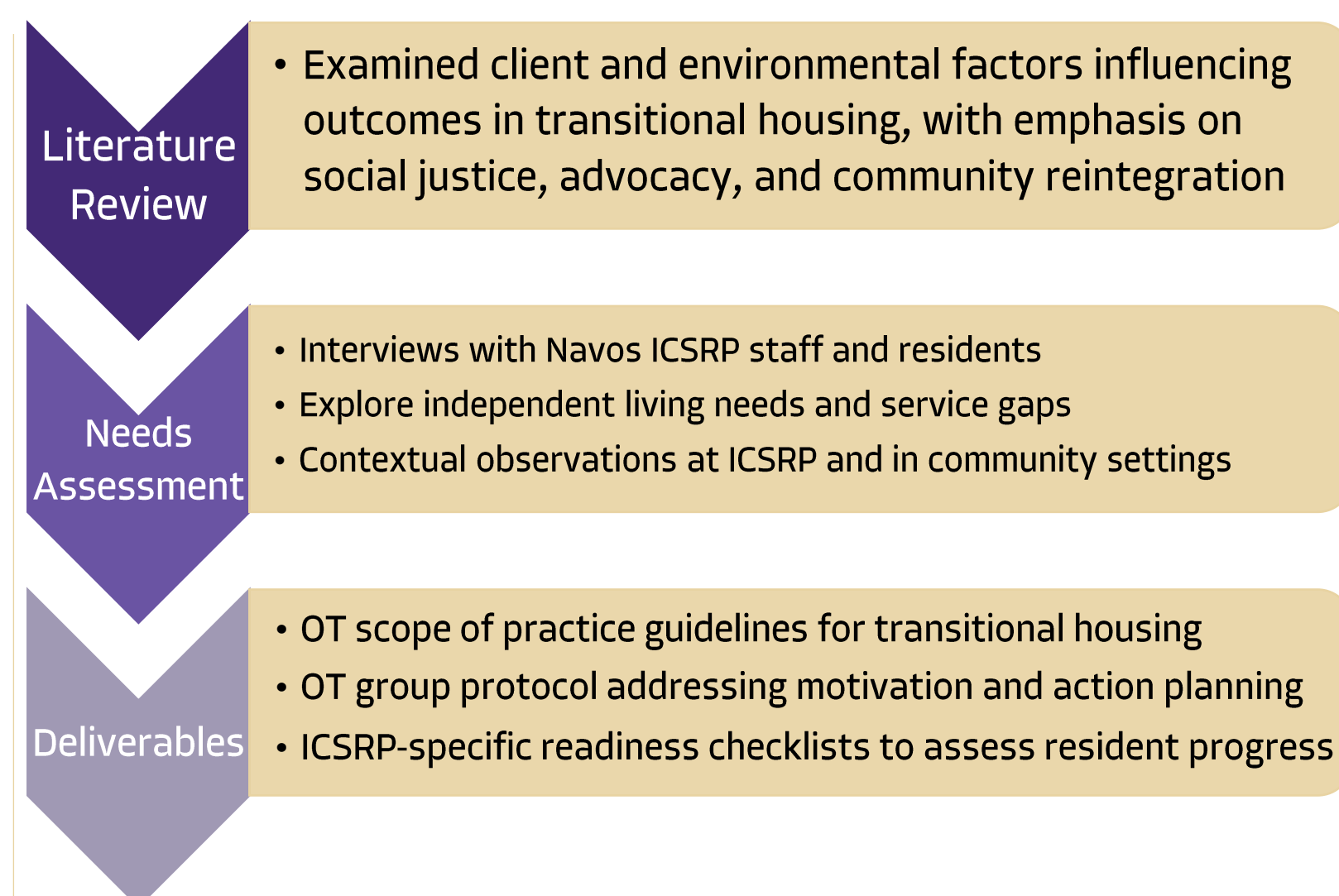
### Population Profile

- **Complex Clinical Histories:** Residents often experience SMI, chronic homelessness, trauma, and prolonged institutionalization.
- **Hidden Neurological Needs:** Co-occurring traumatic brain injuries (TBIs) are highly prevalent yet frequently overlooked in traditional systems of care.
- **Functional Barriers to Stability:** Neurocognitive impairments, executive functioning deficits, and reduced motivation can significantly impact long-term housing success.

## PURPOSE

- Explore the role of occupational therapy within the transitional housing program at Navos ICSRP
- Identify resident and staff priorities related to independent living and discharge readiness
- Support the development of OT-informed services and assessment tools
- Promote self-awareness, strengthen daily living skills, and enhance readiness for successful community reintegration and long-term stability with the developed tools

## PROCESS



## NEEDS ASSESSMENT

### Literature Review

**Evidence-based Practice:** Interventions which combine life skills training and cognitive strategies using meaningful activities in social or group contexts can help shift extrinsic motivation into intrinsic motivation.

**Trauma-Informed Care:** OTs should continuously advocate for social and occupational justice, respect client autonomy and choice, and address barriers at the systemic level.

**Holistic & Client-Centered:** In addition to evaluating individual client factors, effective OT for SMI should examine environmental contexts to adequately support long-term housing stability and engagement.

**Collaborative Interdisciplinary Care:** Ongoing staff training, consistent and connected teamwork across disciplines, and integrating OT models like PEO (Person Environment Occupation) help support positive outcomes for residents.

### Interviews & Group Observations

- Residents identified challenges with motivation when engaging in complex, multi-step tasks such as cleaning, cooking, organization, or grocery shopping.
- Staff corroborated that lack of motivation is a big factor impacting residents' occupational performance and engagement at ICSRP.
- Observations during weekly groups also highlighted gaps in service delivery, demonstrating a need for structured, client-centered activities that place more emphasis on supporting the residents' meaningful occupations and areas of growth.

## Sample Questions for Residents

- In what areas or activities do you feel successful?
- What do you feel is affecting successful engagement in daily activities?
- What is challenging at Navos ICSRP?
- What are some activities you need support with?

## ICSRP Resident Quotes

*"I expect to transition from Navos within the next 2 or 3 years and am on the waitlist for an apartment. Having my own space again will help me feel better and support my sense of stability and wellbeing."*

*"Sometimes it feels so hard to do things like taking out the trash."*

## DELIVERABLES

### OT Action-Planning Group Protocol

**Purpose:** To help participants identify motivators (extrinsic, intrinsic) for the purposes of self-awareness and action-planning throughout various life occupations, tasks, and activities, both preferred and non-preferred

**Main Activity:** Use ABCDE worksheets to work through an activity's barriers, changes that the resident may need to make, how they will do the activity, and a self-evaluation of their confidence in completing the activity

**Discussion:** Encourages residents to share, process, generalize, and apply what they learned in a collaborative and supportive space

### Readiness Checklist: Sample Statements

- I can usually identify effective coping skills when I face problems
- I can communicate my needs, opinions, and feelings effectively
- I am aware of the resources available to me
- I am able to use appropriate tools and strategies to complete tasks despite limitations

## OT Scope of Practice for ICSRP

- Focuses on functional outcomes and engagement, not just symptom reduction
- Bridges the gap between clinical care and real-world participation
- Improves routine consistency, habit formation, and task follow-through
- Supports long-term recovery, independence, and community integration

## FUTURE DIRECTION

Addition of an Occupational Therapist role at Navos ICSRP



## CONCLUSION

This project aimed to explore and define the role of occupational therapy within the ICSRP setting and develop practical tools, including an OT scope in mental health settings document, an action-planning group protocol, and a life skills checklist.

The tools created demonstrate how OT can be integrated into transitional housing programs to support resident autonomy, engagement, and independence. The tools were presented to Navos leadership and King County Executives for consideration of future implementation.

## REFERENCES

Please use this QR code to view our full list of references and project deliverables.

