Creating a Sensory Modulation Room at Greenhouse Ministries

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About Greenhouse Ministries

Since 1999, Greenhouse Ministries has been reaching out to underprivileged individuals and families in Rutherford County (Greenhouse Ministries, n.d.). Greenhouse Ministries is a faith-based, inter-denominational, non-profit organization that provides assistance with job skills, clothing, food, education, and counseling (Greenhouse Ministries, n.d.). The staff, volunteers, and occupational therapy students at Greenhouse Ministries also reach out to adults with disabilities to assist with attaining and maintaining skills to better participate within the community.

Abstract

The purpose of my project was to design and create a short-term sensory modulation room for individuals with mental illness who attend services at Greenhouse Ministries. A review of the literature was completed to determine what sensory processing issues impacted occupational performance of individuals with mental illness. From this review, donations from Greenhouse Ministries’ warehouse were gathered to establish an appropriate temporary sensory room within the space and budgetary constraints of the non-profit organization. A checklist of available and appropriate sensory items was developed to use for pilot testing the sensory modulation room. Qualitative observations were completed during the pilot testing along with quantitative results from the checklist. From the outcomes of the pilot testing, a report was compiled of recommendations including pricing of items for the future sensory room. In addition, a policies and procedures manual was composed to ensure safe and appropriate use of the room. Finally, a blueprint was drafted of an ideal sensory modulation room to implement in Greenhouse Ministries’ new establishment to be built in 2020.

What is a Sensory Modulation Room?

- A sensory room is a therapeutic space designed to promote participation in activities and self-regulation of emotions by using certain items to calm or alert the senses (Champagne, 2015).
- “Sensory room” is an umbrella term that encompasses different types of rooms including sensory modulation rooms and sensory integration rooms (Champagne, 2015).
- Current research has suggested that there is a positive correlations between sensory modulation dysfunction and mental health symptoms (Sutton & Nicholson, 2011; Champagne & Frederick, 2011).
- Sensory rooms in mental health settings are often therapeutic sensory modulation rooms that are used with the end goal for the individual to continue engaging in meaningful activities within the community (Champagne, 2015).

Why at Greenhouse Ministries?

- Services for individuals with mental illness have transitioned from a hospital-based medical model to an outpatient community, public health model (Castañeda, Olson, & Radley, 2013).
- With this transition, a focus has shifted to incorporating the Recovery Model in client care (Castañeda et al., 2013).
- Greenhouse Ministries uses the Recovery Model along with the Community Health Model developed by Joseph A. Olmstead.
- The main focus of occupational therapy when working under these models is to help individuals develop skills needed to function within the community by enabling independence, interdependence, and/or productive living (Moore, K., 2015).
- Occupational therapists adapt the context and environment to help individuals regulate emotions to better participate in meaningful activities, such as volunteering at Greenhouse Ministries.
- The sensory modulation room at Greenhouse Ministries is used to provide a “safe zone” for individuals to go to self-regulate and prevent crisis situations (Champagne, T., 2015).

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Goal

To organize, collect, and analyze data in a systematic manner for the design of an effective sensory modulation room for the clients at Greenhouse Ministries (ACOTE B.7.9).

Outcome

- An annotated bibliography of the current literature on sensory modulation programs for the treatment of adults with mental illness.
- A blueprint for the design of a sensory room for Greenhouse Ministries.
- Analysis of quantitative data from pilot testing the sensory modulation items.
- Written descriptions of how the clients interacted with the sensory materials.
- A written document including policies and procedures of the sensory modulation room.
- A comprehensive list of sensory modulation items that are appropriate for the room.

Review of the literature

Checklist developed of sensory activities

Temporary sensory room designed

Pilot testing with participants from Greenhouse Ministries

Results of the pilot testing analyzed

Recommendations and pricing report for future sensory room

Participant Results from Pilot Testing

Future Recommendations

- Expand sensory modulation room with more participants from Greenhouse Ministries.
- Implementing individual sensory modulation programs with participants based on the results from pilot testing.
- Attempt to get grant funding for the existing sensory modulation room.
- Create a volunteer and staff training module for operating the sensory modulation room.
- Establish a sensory modulation program for the home environment.