

HOMELESSNESS AND COVID-19: LESSONS LEARNED

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OBJECTIVES

- 1. Inform occupational therapy professionals about the needs of the homeless populations during the COVID pandemic.**
- 2. Distinguish between homelessness due to circumstances associated with COVID such as loss of jobs, as opposed to chronic homelessness due to problems such as mental illness, criminal history, and chemical dependency.**
- 3. Learn about the roles of occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants when working with the homeless at an emergency pandemic shelter.**
- 4. Understand the challenges homeless people face due to lack of access to technology and resources.**
- 5. Learn specific techniques used to help homeless people at a COVID shelter.**
- 6. Discuss the value of AOTA's Code of Ethics when working with people in an emergency COVID shelter.**
- 7. Discuss COVID homeless shelter experiences from the perspective of a multidisciplinary team, staff, and homeless clients.**

TENNESSEE STATE COVID SYNOPSIS FOR WEEK

08/06/2021

([HTTPS://HEALTHDATA.GOV/COMMUNITY/COVID-19-STATE-PROFILE-REPORT-TENNESSEE/J9QX-NQZB](https://healthdata.gov/community/covid-19-state-profile-report-tennessee/j9qx-nqzb))

STATE PROFILE REPORT
08.06.2021

TENNESSEE STATE SYNOPSIS

RATE OF NEW COVID-19 CASES PER 100,000

NUCLEIC ACID AMPLIFICATION TEST (NAAT) POSITIVITY RATE

NEW CONFIRMED COVID-19 HOSPITAL ADMISSIONS / 100 BEDS

RATE OF NEW COVID-19 DEATHS PER 100,000

COMMUNITY TRANSMISSION LEVEL

PEOPLE RECEIVED AT LEAST 1 DOSE

PEOPLE 18+ RECEIVED AT LEAST 1 DOSE

PEOPLE FULLY VACCINATED

PEOPLE 18+ FULLY VACCINATED

LAST WEEK

CHANGE FROM
PREVIOUS WEEK

276

+78%

15.9%

-0.2%

6.9

+65%

1.0

+24%

HIGH TRANSMISSION

3,113,971 people

45.6% of total pop.

2,982,116 people

56.1% of 18+ pop.

2,693,633 people

39.4% of total pop.

2,604,297 people

49.0% of 18+ pop.

COVID STATISTICS

- As of 8/7/21: 618,591 total deaths from COVID-19 in the U.S.A. (<https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#datatracker-home>)
- WHO estimates 3,000,000 COVID deaths worldwide, with 1.8 million reported, (<https://www.who.int/data/stories/the-true-death-toll-of-covid-19-estimating-global-excess-mortality>)

HOMELESSNESS AND COVID-19: LESSONS LEARNED

- Perceptions of the Homeless: Who are the homeless
 - Families including single parents
 - Men and women across the life span
 - Victims of domestic violence
 - Victims of natural disasters, pandemics, and other uncontrollable events such as house fires
 - Felons and addicts
 - Mentally, physically, and cognitively disabled



HOMELESSNESS AND LESSONS LEARNED



- Many people with disabilities who experience homelessness or are at risk of homelessness (e.g., those returning to the community from institutions such as jails, prisons, or hospitals) struggle to access the resources they need. Many suffer from disabling mental illnesses, co-occurring substance use, trauma, and medical issues that impact their ability to work. The path to recovery can be extraordinarily challenging when one is constantly struggling to meet basic needs. Having income and health care benefits is often a critical first step on the road to recovery. <https://soarworks.samhsa.gov/article/what-soar>

HOW CAN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ASSIST WITH THE EPIDEMIC OF HOMELESSNESS?

Within the *Framework*, *occupational therapy* is defined as the therapeutic use of everyday life activities (occupations) with individuals or groups for the purpose of enhancing or enabling participation in roles, habits, and routines in home, school, workplace, community, and other settings. Occupational therapy practitioners use their knowledge of the transactional relationship among the person, his or her engagement in valuable occupations, and the context to design occupation-based intervention plans that facilitate change or growth in client factors (body functions, body structures, values, beliefs, and spirituality) and skills (motor, process, and social interaction) needed for successful participation. Occupational therapy practitioners are concerned with the end result of participation and thus enable engagement through adaptations and modifications to the environment or objects within the environment when needed. Occupational therapy services are provided for habilitation, rehabilitation, and promotion of health and wellness for clients with disability- and non-disability-related needs. These services include acquisition and preservation of occupational identity for those who have or are at risk for developing an illness, injury, disease, disorder, condition, impairment, disability, activity limitation, or participation restriction. (adapted from AOTA, 2011; see Appendix A for additional definitions in a glossary)

HOMELESSNESS AND COVID-19: LESSONS LEARNED

- Activities of daily living such as bathing, dressing, and toileting
- Instrumental activities of daily living such as home maintenance, caregiving, and care of pets
- Work activities
- Leisure activities
- Education
- Rest and sleep
- Play and social participation

HOMELESSNESS AND COVID-19: LESSONS LEARNED

- Needs and barriers regarding the homeless

- Needs:

- Protection and safeguarding from environments that spread COVID
 - Housing and Food
 - Clothing
 - Transportation
 - Medical and mental health
 - Education (Hygiene, social skills, resources, computer literacy)
 - Identification (Social Security card, ID, birth certificate)
 - Income (Budgeting skills, banking skills)
 - Employment (Work experience, resume building skills, interview skills)
 - Childcare

HOMELESSNESS AND COVID-19: LESSONS LEARNED

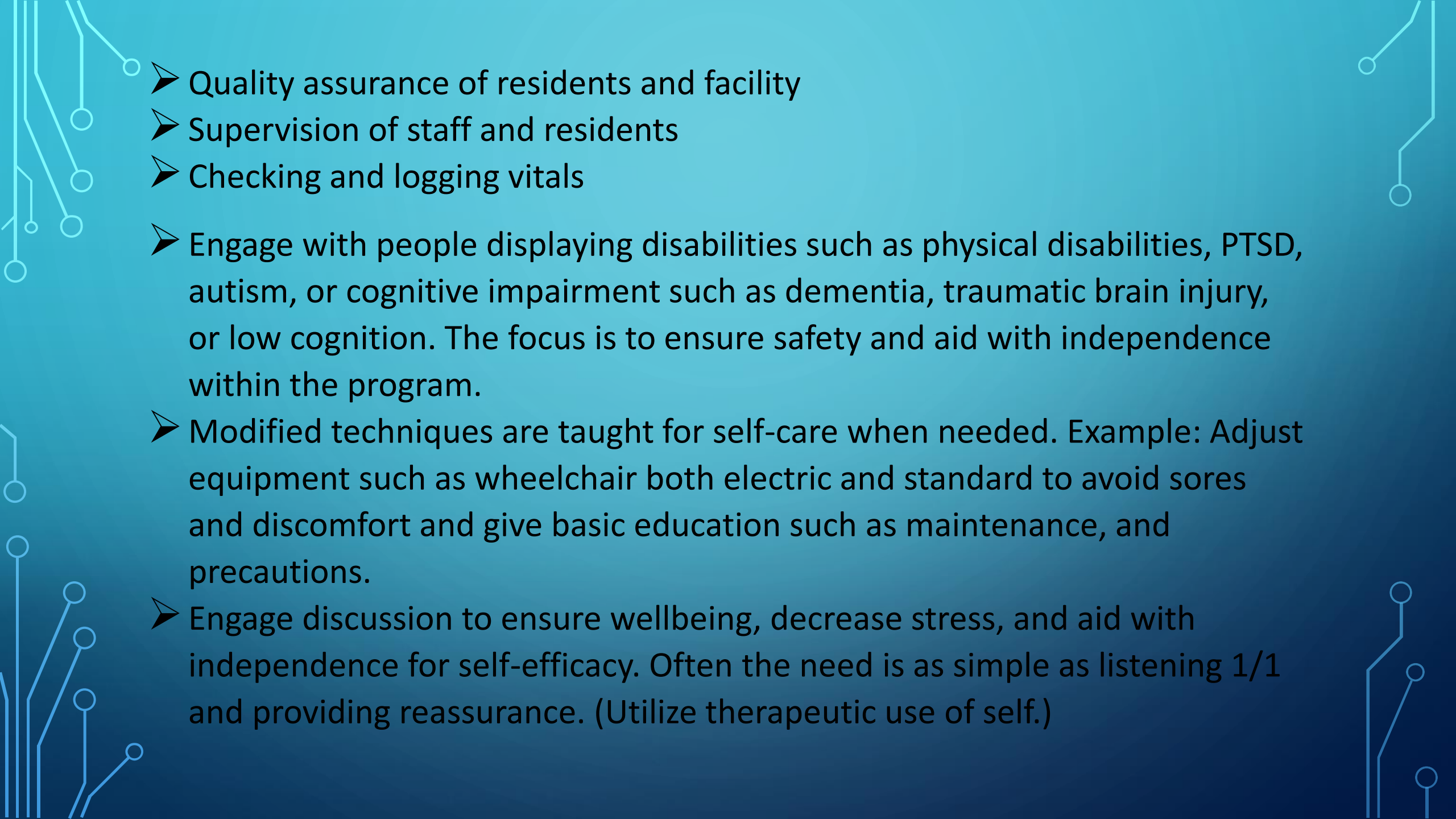
- **Barriers:**


- Mental illness
- Physical and cognitive disabilities
- Prejudice and stigma
- Chemical addiction
- Lack of education and low skill set
- Criminal history
- Child support obligations
- Access to technology
- Hygiene habits
- Criminal mindset and behaviors
- Limited resources available
- Family discord





HOMELESSNESS AND COVID-19: LESSONS LEARNED

- COTA/L Duties

- Duties begin with ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all residents. The care is multi-disciplinary including social work, nursing, EMS, and occupational therapy.
- Thaddeus F. Meyer Lead Occupational Therapist (COTA/L) duties and responsibilities.

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- Quality assurance of residents and facility
 - Supervision of staff and residents
 - Checking and logging vitals
 - Engage with people displaying disabilities such as physical disabilities, PTSD, autism, or cognitive impairment such as dementia, traumatic brain injury, or low cognition. The focus is to ensure safety and aid with independence within the program.
 - Modified techniques are taught for self-care when needed. Example: Adjust equipment such as wheelchair both electric and standard to avoid sores and discomfort and give basic education such as maintenance, and precautions.
 - Engage discussion to ensure wellbeing, decrease stress, and aid with independence for self-efficacy. Often the need is as simple as listening 1/1 and providing reassurance. (Utilize therapeutic use of self.)

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- A decorative graphic consisting of white and light blue lines resembling a circuit board or neural network, with small circles at the intersections, is positioned along the left and right edges of the slide.
- When needed CBT techniques are utilized to help the resident to focus motivation towards a guided personal goal. Goals range from dealing with the current environment, gaining employment, finding housing, stabilizing financially. The purpose is generally not for the COTA to do the work but instead to teach the residents how to complete the work on their own or in conjunction with the social workers.
 - Assist with activities of daily living among cognitively and physically disabled, elderly, mentally ill, and general population of homeless men and women.
 - One on one assistance teaching how to gain housing, insurance, EBT, SS disability, and any other needs to insure independence
 - Direct activities to enhance morale and aid with social participation and overall health
 - Small group activities with guided discussion
 - Skill building activities
 - Seminars to promote independence

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- Types of seminars / discussions (Group and one on one)
 - Life skills seminars including hygiene, resume building, application skills, interview skills, and work skills. This includes learning interview behavior, language, and proper attire.
 - Job search workshops learning how to utilize search engines to find employment.
 - Goal building skills and tools seminars learning how to develop a goal and follow it till completion.
 - Coping skills seminars learning about behaviors, triggers, negative and positive coping skills, and the process of change.
 - YouTube videos and TED Talks



LEARN MORE ABOUT COVID AND THE HOMELESS

- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/homeless-shelters/faqs.html>
- <https://nhchc.org/cdc-covid-dashboard/home>
- <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view>
- Tennessee_State_Profile_Report_20210806_Public.pdf
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/List-Of-Resources-Homeless.html>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/homeless-shelters/homeless-youth.html>