

Occupational Therapy in the Community Working with Populations at Risk: "Playing Together" – A Group Intervention for Children within the Foreign National Community

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Rationale: Occupational therapists serve as consultants and organizers of group work in communities around the globe to empower populations at risk for health problems and occupational deprivation. This article will describe a community-based group intervention targeting children within the community of foreign nationals in Tel Aviv. These children are described as a population at risk as a result of their facing the difficult challenge of adapting to a new culture. As a consequence, their occupational performance, health status, personal well-being and daily functioning may be compromised.

Method and Implementation: Two undergraduate occupational therapy students led a group comprised of 8, 5-6 year-old children in an urban kindergarten class. The children's parents are foreign workers and asylum seekers who arrived in Israel just a few months before the intervention was initiated. This group intervention was conducted in the kindergarten class and in the school playground. It focused on promoting social participation and

adaptation to activities within the educational framework. The intervention was based on mediation principles with the following goals: improved use of appropriate communication techniques, understanding and learning the basic rules of group and social participation within the kindergarten context, introducing the group process sequence and promoting skills to enhance joint play. **Results and Conclusions:** The results of the intervention indicated that the children made progress in the process of adapting to this framework and forming a social identity that enabled increased joint play experiences. These results demonstrated the efficacy of the intervention in improving social and cognitive functioning, thus supporting the need for occupational therapy group intervention among children at risk. However, the skills gained during the group intervention in the kindergarten context should be reinforced in the other environments they occupy so that they can transfer their skills to other contexts in the future.