

Capstone Project Scholarly Paper

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Introduction

In 2023, The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services reported that 38,654 children entered Child Protective Services in the state of Texas. Out of those, 4,963 cases were reported in Houston (Foster Care, n.d.). During these difficult and confusing times, therapeutic play can offer support and be healing to children. After thorough research, it is evident that there is a gap in knowledge and resources for foster parents (Larent et al., 2018). Enhancing the knowledge about trauma-informed care can reduce caregiver burnout and quality of life for children who are at risk of CPS.

Experiencing a traumatic event can significantly increase the risk of serious health problems, such as physiological and mental health issues, as well as an increase in tobacco, alcohol, and drug abuse (Stewart et al., 2023). Trauma-informed care (TIC) advocates for people to acknowledge the prevalence of trauma, create a safe environment, and promote resiliency (Grossman et al., 2021). TIC recognizes the presence of trauma and how the role of trauma may play in an individual's life. TIC looks at a person in a holistic way and emphasizes looking at the person's past and present and how that can affect their future (Brown et al., 2019).

Processes/Methodology

Throughout the capstone project, I allocated time to thoroughly research trauma-informed care, therapeutic play, and different activities and toys to promote developmental milestones. After analyzing the research and dissecting what is relevant to the foster care population, I curated educational resources and social media posts. The social media posts emphasized the importance of raising awareness for this population. I advertised the toy drive through social media posts with flyers and posts about

therapeutic play. To receive donations for the toy drive, an Amazon wish list was made and shared with family and friends through word of mouth. The wish list was also shared with the public through social media and emails.

Through the in-service presentation, I learned more about how to educate others. My newfound confidence and presentation skills will help me continue to raise awareness for this important topic. When I was a student working in home health pediatrics, I constantly struggled with coming up with different toys and activities during our therapy sessions. Due to the capstone project, I gained a wider range of knowledge of toys and activities to promote developmental milestones. As a future clinician who aspires to work with the pediatric population, this knowledge will be beneficial for my clients.

To ensure the sustainability of the capstone project, BEAR was provided with a QR code in a picture frame. This allows caseworkers and staff to scan and send educational resources to caregivers.

Outcomes

Three educational resources were made to be on display at the BEAR facility. A flyer was created to explain the importance of play and how it can lead to emotional regulation and improvements in mental health and behavior (Baura et al., 2023). A pamphlet on trauma-informed care was created to emphasize the importance of considering a person's past and present experiences, and how these experiences can impact their future. A guide was created with age-appropriate toys and activities for children from birth to 17 years old. A total of over 70 items were donated throughout the 14 weeks.

BEAR staff members and followers on social media platforms gained an increased awareness of trauma signs/symptoms and effects on a child's life.

A BEAR staff member mentioned, "Your presentation on therapeutic play and trauma-informed care was informative and valuable, particularly for those new to the topics. It covered essential information and provided a clear introduction to these complex concepts. Great job!" in the satisfaction/post-presentation survey. Staff members were unaware of these topics and during the Q&A, they were engaged and asked many questions to learn even more about the topics.

Conclusion

Spreading awareness of trauma and its effects on a person is one of the many ways to help! Being able to reduce caregiver burnout will be beneficial for the child's mental and physical well-being. Though there is little research on the foster care population in general, I hope this capstone project can help raise awareness for them in the future.

References

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