# Student Recruitment Initiatives Contest

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**Table of Contents**

Introduction …….……3

Marketing and Promotion of the Plan ……3

Effectiveness of the Plan ……..……...4

Cost of the Plan ……..…….4

Anticipated Goals ……4

Conclusion ……..5

## Health Promotion and Occupational Therapy Promotion

### Introduction

It is common practice to introduce programs that promote health and wellness to the community. As occupational therapists, we encourage individuals to engage in occupations and activities that improve or maintain optimal health and safety. For example, occupational therapists all over the country provide training to health care professionals and families on back injury and fall prevention. The New York Institute of Technology's Department of Occupational Therapy expanded these health promotion principles to include the fascinating science of medicine and rehabilitation in a high school setting. A burn prevention safety program was designed by occupational therapy faculty and students to raise community safety and awareness. The program targeted adolescents in high schools. This population presents a significant risk of sustaining burn-related trauma in the context of work and play. The program incorporated PowerPoint presentations with graphic images depicting conditions threatening adolescents in various occupational settings. The students were alerted to common hazards within their physical context and presented with graphic materials illustrating traumatic burn injuries. Age-appropriate materials were used for their shock value with the assumption that the students would refrain from engaging in activities that would be detrimental to their health and wellness. For example, the high school students examined common environmental hazards found when camping. In addition, the program included an introduction to occupational therapy and the role of occupational therapy in acute care and rehabilitation medicine.

The fundamental premise of community health promotion is education, an essential tool in primary prevention. The program was created with a twofold vision: first, to promote community health; and second, to market occupational therapy as a career to prospective students. The *Occupational Therapy Practice Framework* was an effective medium for educating prospective college students. The presentation of burn prevention was the "means" in which students would promote health and safety. Corollary to the means, the "ends" would market occupational therapy and promote student recruitment. The program introduced valuable information on fire safety and burn prevention while acquainting students with the occupational therapy profession. As part of the current curriculum, students were required to design and present an occupational therapy promotion presentation. The students completed the project within one academic semester.

### Marketing and Promotion of the Plan

Occupational therapy students were given a model designed by faculty and modified by occupational therapy students. The students customized the design to meet the specific needs of the target population age and occupation. The program was divided into two modules, a biomedical module and an occupational therapy module. The biomedical module included basic anatomy and physiology of the skin, common causes of burn injuries in adolescents and young adults, classifications of burn injury, and medical intervention. The occupational therapy model included an introduction to occupational

therapy and the many facets of practice and the role of occupational therapy in burn care. The occupational therapy module introduced the occupational therapy framework, philosophical assumptions, theoretical foundations of the occupational therapy, and its application to practice. Furthermore, students were presented with information on the dynamic and challenging role of the "burn therapist." The students presented information about potential hazards found within the home and community. The program included burn safety in the work place, during recreational activities, and babysitter safety.

**Effectiveness of the Plan**

The response from high school faculty and students was enthusiastic. For most of the students, this was their first exposure to the occupational therapy profession. Many of the students expressed an interest in the profession.

**Cost of the Plan**

The health promotion and occupational therapy promotion project did not require additional expenses. The cost of plan was nominal. Microsoft PowerPoint was used as the medium to present information to high school students. The PowerPoint software was made available to the students and staff through existing accounts. Students were required to perform research in burn care.

Resources:

American Occupational Therapy Association. (2002). Occupational therapy practice framework: Domain and process. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy, 56, 609*–639.

Malick, M. H., & Carr, J. C. (1982). *Manual on management of the burn patient: including splinting, mold and pressure techniques: For physicians, OTs, PTs, or orthotists*. Pittsburgh: Harmville Rehabilitation Center Educational Resource Division.

Piazza-Waggoner C., Adams, C. D., Goldfarb, I. W., & Slater, H. (2002). An assessment of burn prevention knowledge in high burn-risk environment: Restaurant. *Journal of Burn Care Rehabilitation, 23,* 342–350

Richard, R., & Staley, M. J. (1994). *Burn care and rehabilitation: Principles and practice.* Philadelphia: F.A. Davis.

**Anticipated Goals**

The project was introduced to high school students for the first time in September 2004. In the future, we expect to have our occupational therapy students reach neighboring schools with these presentations. Students will present pre- and post-questionnaires regarding the plan to assess their knowledge of burn prevention and the occupational therapy profession. We predict that the presentation will stimulate student interest and appreciation of the uniqueness of the occupational therapy profession, and in so doing, increasing student enrollment in professional and technical programs.

**Conclusion**

Health promotion is an important method for increasing awareness of occupational therapy. Health promotion is often used to increase back injury prevention practices and fall prevention in the older adult. This model was particularly useful because it addressed issues that are relevant to their context. In media today, adolescents are exposed to many of the issues discussed. There are graphic images in prime time television, video games, and cinema. Therefore, adolescents were able to identify with the subject matter and engage in a didactic acquisition of knowledge and skill. The health promotion model was important because it increases the awareness of burn prevention practices, and of occupational therapy as a rewarding career. Lastly, the program informs the community that occupational therapy can be found in many different areas of practice.