



# Incorporating Occupational Therapy into a Federally Qualified Health Center Serving American Indian and Alaska Native Communities: A Needs Assessment

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## INTRODUCTION

Seattle Indian Health Board (SIHB) is a local Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) serving American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) communities. AI/AN communities continue to experience health disparities, including statistically higher rates of chronic disease and disability<sup>1,2</sup>. The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act has created new opportunities for health care coverage by expanding services to include prevention<sup>3</sup>.

Primary care is an emerging area of practice in the field of occupational therapy (OT) as clinicians increasingly recognize the contributions that OT practitioners can make to primary care teams<sup>4</sup>. SIHB reached out to the University of Washington to determine the feasibility of adding OT to existing services in this community-based primary care center.

## METHODS

- **Investigation into SIHB's existing programming**
  - interviews with program facilitators on services, clients, and funding
  - observation of elders program & inpatient chemical dependency group
- **Review of relevant academic literature**
- **Inquiry into policy and reimbursement guidelines**
  - consultation with AOTA Director of Health Policy & State Affairs
  - review of AOTA position papers, conference materials, and webinars
  - consultation with local hospital & day program on reimbursement
  - investigation into FQHC & Indian Health Services regulations about "encounter" rates
  - research on Medicaid & Medicare reimbursement policies and procedures
- **Review of OT service provision models and administrative needs**
  - exploration of primary care and outpatient service delivery models
  - consultation with OTR providing primary care within FQHC
  - exploration of facility for potential treatment space and supplies
  - assessment of risks/benefits of hiring an employee vs. a contractor
  - review of relevant Washington state law governing OT practice
  - search of electronic medical record (EMR) system

## NEEDS ASSESSMENT RESULTS

- **Determination of need for OT**
  - EMR search revealed 1,895 patient encounters over 3-year period with primary diagnoses falling within scope of OT practice
- **Identification of how OT could uniquely contribute to programming**
  - examples of culturally-relevant OT interventions
- **Development of resources for OT position**
  - potential grants and sources of funding
  - cultural competency training materials
  - in-service materials to educate staff about OT
  - outcome measure to capture impact of OT on patient population
- **Final recommendations for OT position**
  - self-employed independent contractor
  - part-time with opportunity to expand services in response to demand
  - potential for future collaboration with UW OT department

## PROJECT COLLABORATORS



MOT students with SIHB provider team: Maddox, G., Berkeridge, T., Murphy, A., Griffith, V., Corpuz, B., Villalobos, S., Squetimkin-Anquoe, A., & Taylor, M.

## CULTURAL PRACTICES IN THERAPY: EXAMPLES

- Group interventions:**
- **Traditional medicine garden:** chemical dependency program  
*self-care skills, coping mechanisms, health-promoting behaviors*
  - **Indian dice game:** elders program  
*fine and gross motor skills, social participation, cognitive skills*
  - **Totem building:** domestic violence program  
*affirmation of client values, promotion of self-efficacy*
  - **Stomp dance:** diabetes programs  
*activity tolerance, energy management, compensatory techniques*
- Individual interventions:**
- **Dreamcatcher building:** chemical dependency program  
*healthy leisure activities, routine restructuring, self-care skills*
  - **Pottery:** neuromuscular rehabilitation  
*fine motor skills, coordination, social participation, resensitization*
  - **Traditional food preparation:** peripheral neuropathy  
*protective mechanisms, compensatory techniques*

## CONCLUSIONS

This project provided a unique opportunity to link OT with Seattle's AI/AN population. We assessed the need for OT services within a community-based primary health care facility and identified several areas where OT could be incorporated into current programming, such as elder care and treatment of chemical dependency and chronic diseases.

Future work could further develop culturally-centered practices to address the needs of members of Seattle's AI/AN community. The precedent set at this clinic could lay the foundation for other FQHCs to incorporate OT in order to provide rehabilitative services for medically-underserved populations across the nation.



## PURPOSE OF PROJECT

- **The focus of this project was to:**
  - identify the need for OT services for clients of SIHB
  - determine how OT services could be funded, including identification of billable services and funding sources
  - develop a proposal for integrating OT services into current programming
- **Potential areas of OT service include:**
  - preventive services in conjunction with primary care
  - inpatient residential and outpatient chemical dependency programs
  - day program activities for elders

## REFERENCES

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