Voting as an Occupation: Understanding OT’s Role with Accessibility to Political Activities of Daily Living (pADLs)

Cassaundra Bell, MSW; Amanda Fuller, OTS; Jenna Kruis, OTS; Jennifer Summers, OTD, OTR/L; Victoria Pruess, OTS
Introduction
Objectives

- You will understand of the current gaps that exist between voters with disabilities and those without.
- You will be introduced to voting as an occupation.
- You will experience potential barriers and facilitators within the occupation of voting that people with disabilities experience.
- You will gain an understanding of how occupational theories can be applied to this phenomena.
- You will explore the ways occupational therapy can increase political engagement among this population.
Statistics

- 30.1% of voters with disabilities reported experiencing difficulty in voting at a polling place compared to 8.4% of voters without disabilities in the 2012 election.

- Estimated that there would be 3 million more voters each year if people with disabilities voted at the same rate as the able-bodied population.

- Studies show that people with disabilities want to be part of the democratic process, but opt to stay home due to inaccessibility to voting booths.

Lehman, 2013; Schur, 2013; Schur, 2013
Political ADLs
Lived Experience

http://woodtv.com/2016/11/08/visually-impaired-voters-also-have-machine-issues

-Cassaundra’s Story
Simulation

We will split you into small groups

Each group simulates engaging with each part of the voting process through the lens of a different disability (visual impairment, intellectual disability, physical disability)

Prepare to discuss!
Simulation

1. Registration process
2. Enter the polling place
3. Fill out information form and validate ID
4. Obtain ballot and go to voting booth or accessible voting machine
5. Fill out ballot
6. Insert into tabulator
Person-Environment-Occupation (PEO)

based on diagram by Law et al
Literature Review: Personal Barriers

● Disempowerment
  ○ Psychological factors
  ○ Social Isolation
  ○ Generational differences

● Physical Disability
  ○ Mobility disability
  ○ Work preventing disabilities

● Intellectual Disability (ID)
  ○ Ability
  ○ Interest

Shur, Shields, Kruse, & Schriner, 2002; Matsubayashi & Ueda, 2014; Argan & Hughes, 2013
Literature Review: Personal Facilitators

- Empowerment
- Physical Disability
- Intellectual Disability

Schur & Kruse, 2000; Schur, Shields, Kruse, & Schriner, 2002; Schur, Adya, & Kruse, 2013; Agran, MacLean, & Kitchen, 2016
Literature Review: Environmental Barriers

- Physical Disability
  - Transportation
  - Polling Places
  - Absentee Voting

- Intellectual Disability
  - Limited Education
  - Lack of Support

Schur, 2013; Shur, Shields, Kruse, & Schriner, 2002; Agran, MacLean, & Andren, 2015; Agran & Hughes, 2013
Literature Review: Environmental Facilitators

- Policies
- Accessible Polling Places
- Trained Election Officials
- Support

Literature Review: Occupation

- Disparity of participation

- Barriers and facilitators within both the person and environment have contributed to the disparity in the occupation

Schur, 2013; Matsubayashi & Ueda, 2014
Occupational Justice Theory

Nilsson & Townsend, 2010; Stadnyk et al., 2010
Student Research
Preliminary Themes

“I want people to see me out there, doing you know, my voting, and want other people to do that too because I want other people to see even though we’re disabled we go out there and vote too, just like anybody else.”

“I used to vote in every primary, every small election. Now, I’ll wait until 2020.”

“I used my power chair to go to the... voting booth because it’s too fat to walk there and too short to bus really… I think that the assumption of being in my chair that I’m automatically gonna need special... access to the machinery... I didn’t need that.”
Next Steps
Call for Action

Brainstorm with the person next to you and write down three things that you will do to incorporate these concepts into your practice and life.
QUESTIONS?
References


References (cont’d)

