

## **Oral Histories of Persons with Disability: A Collaboration of Occupational Therapists, Persons living with Disability and Oral Historians**

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### *Introduction*

*Living with Difference: Oral Histories of Life and Disability in Kentucky*, is a project developed by occupational therapists funded by a grant from the Kentucky Oral History Commission. It will create a bank of oral histories of persons constrained from participation in society secondary to disabilities that will be housed both with the Kentucky Historical Society and Eastern Kentucky University. Disability is defined by WHO as "an umbrella term for impairments, activity limitations or participation restrictions". Persons who consider themselves disabled, or may be considered disabled by others, share their lifestories in the form of oral histories that will be publicly accessible.

### *Learning Objectives*

*Participants will:*

- 1. Understand similarities and differences in occupational therapy and oral history and benefits of partnership*
- 2. Appreciate that public and accessible lifestories contribute to the mitigation of the constraints that accompany disability*
- 3. Consider the many ways to contribute to health through occupation*

### *Discussion*

*As occupational therapy recognizes that narrative is one essential means for making sense of experience, this project serves both disciplines by facilitating discourse. Faculty, students and community partners are gathering these histories. Interviewers use open-ended questions to explore interviewees' life participation in relation to their experiences of disability.*

*The contexts for this collection of oral histories include Kentucky's status as the second-highest in the nation for population rates of disability, with nearly a quarter (22.6%) of Kentucky adults experiencing physical, mental, or emotional disability that limits activity, and society's ongoing trend towards inclusiveness in the United States, marked by the deinstitutionalization movement, the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the genesis and growth of the Independent Living Movement.*

### *Conclusion*

*As the project collects stories about participation in life, and how this may be impacted by disability, it informs the historical record with the voices of those who may be constrained by disability thus mitigating the constraint. It will provide a resource for students, families, community, researchers and interested parties. This project, the first of its kind in the nation, provides opportunity for understanding and discourse regarding the experience of living with disability.*