

0592

## **Global Aging in Criminal Justice Systems: An Occupational Perspective Mandate**

Stacy West-Bruce, Lisa Jaegers, Karen Barney  
*Saint Louis University, St. Louis, Missouri, USA*

**Introduction:** Addressing the unique needs of the growing aging population within criminal justice settings is an international issue. Older adults within these settings are vulnerable to abuse and exploitation, and at high risk for economic and social disparities. International standards are frequently ignored, resulting in unsafe prison conditions, prisoner mistreatment, and inadequate legal protections. Occupational therapists informed about the aging process are positioned to apply age-appropriate environmental and occupation-based assessments and interventions to facilitate environmental and behavioral improvements toward successful reentry outcomes in older incarcerated populations.

**Objectives:** 1. Explore the occupational and health needs of older adults in criminal justice settings, and 2. Identify and describe best practices in OT interventions supporting older adults in criminal justice settings and through reentry to mainstream society.

**Approach:** This project explores the occupational disparities, health, and environmental barriers experienced by older adults in criminal justice settings through a review of literature and evidence-based practice resources.

**Practice Implications:** Evidence-based OT interventions are needed to improve long term health and overall quality of life outcomes of older adults who are incarcerated. Potential OT roles include educating staff and residents regarding supportive environmental and behavioral interventions for those who are frail or need assistance, advocating for optimizing occupational options, and collaborating with staff to plan for community reentry.

**Conclusion:** Internationally, the population of older adults in criminal justice settings is increasing. Occupation-based programs have the potential to affect the environment, culture, general programming, and reentry services to improve the quality of life of aging persons incarcerated.