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Community Participation in Young Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

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Introduction: Young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) participate less in their communities than peers, although they express desire to participate and policies support their participation. Existing models of community participation for people with disabilities largely focus on the important interplay between an individual and his or her environment, but do not conceptualize occupation as an important component within models of participation. Additionally, few models provide a process to guide intervention.

Objectives: Participants will be able to: 1) Describe existing conceptual models of community participation, 2) Describe the value and role of occupation in promoting community participation, 3) Describe a process oriented model for community participation for young adults with IDD that includes occupation as an integral component, 4) Identify how to apply the new model of community participation.

Approach: A review of the literature, presentation of a new model, and a pilot qualitative study of young adults with IDD and their perception of community participation were completed.

Results: Thematic analysis from the qualitative study indicated that, among other things, the presence of an activity (or occupation) contributed to perceived community participation success and comfort. This is reflected in the new model of community participation that will be presented.

Conclusion: The proposed conceptual model can help guide interventions to increase meaningful community participation in young adults with IDD. Focusing on a small subset of the adult population (young adults) with IDD, leads to a greater understanding of specific challenges for this cohort.