



## Department of OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

# Enhancing Independent Living Skills in Young Adults with Down Syndrome

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### Background

- This project worked with the Find Your Way™ program at the Down syndrome Association of Greater Cincinnati. This program is a series of retreats and skill building classes for young adults with Down syndrome, ages 18-34
- Find Your Way™ aspects focused on throughout this capstone:
- **Cruise:** day-long retreat for individuals already living independently to set goals and practice skills
- **Navigate:** weekend-long overnight retreat for individuals hoping to move out in the next year
- **Tune-Ups:** skill building classes throughout the year focused on a variety of topics

### Purpose/Objectives

- Individuals with Down syndrome are less likely to live independently than typically-developing adults, so this capstone project aimed to increase skill acquisition for independent living skills to address this discrepancy in independent living

There is a need for occupational therapy services as young adults transition out of school and support systems. This can increase independence and decrease caregiver burden for aging caregivers.

### Research

After participation in Find Your Way™ retreat, caregivers reported their young adults improved in the following skills:

Meal preparation

Navigating the grocery store

Preparing a light meal

Following multi-step recipes

Preparing a hot meal

Kitchen clean-up following cooking

Caregivers were asked to rate their young adult's performance in IADLs following the retreat. Areas that still required support included:

- Emergency response
- Deep cleaning
- Laundry
- Social skills
- Online safety and skills
- Medication Management
- Budgeting

### Independent Living Binder

- Skilled observations and research results led to the development of the "Guide to Independent Living"
- Includes over 90 pages of visuals, handouts, and step-by-step guides for completing IADLs
- Separated into categories that young adults and/or their caregivers reported required the most assistance

#### Skills Addressed in the "Guide to Independent Living"

- Safety and First Aid
- Daily Schedules
- Online Safety
- Cooking
- Nutrition and Healthy Choices
- Meal Planning
- Grocery Shopping
- Laundry
- Cleaning
- Transportation
- Money Management
- Making Appointments
- Recipes

Pictured below are examples of handouts in the independent living binder



### Occupational Therapy in a Non-Clinical Setting

- Another key portion of this capstone was integrating an occupational therapy skillset into a non-clinical, community-based setting
- A social story and communication board were created for the Buddy Walk®, which were distributed to over 15,000 participants



- Provided input to staff for programming ideas and accessibility for individuals throughout the lifespan

### Conclusion

Retreats, skill building classes, and accessible guides are effective ways for young adults with Down syndrome to increase independent living skills. Occupational therapists have a unique skillset to apply this knowledge in non-clinical, community-based settings.

