

# UNIVERSITY *of* INDIANAPOLIS®

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*School of Occupational Therapy*

## **Evaluation of Adult Volunteer Program to Update Overall Course and Lessons**

Hayley Martin

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A capstone project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Doctor of Occupational Therapy degree from the University of Indianapolis, School of Occupational Therapy.

Under the direction of the faculty capstone advisor:

Jennifer Fogo, Ph.D., OTR

### **Abstract**

After completing the needs assessment with my site mentor, we discovered a lack of resources for adults with Down syndrome. With this information, we wanted to evaluate the current adult program at GiGi's Playhouse to create new resources and activities. This program evaluation and its research is provided to help show that new resources can improve an individual's perceived communication skills, collaboration, and independence. A binder was created to include a literature review, lesson plans, goals, resources, interviews, and applications for the program. Parents voiced their opinions on wanting participants to learn and practice communication (71%), teamwork (29%), and independence skills (29%) through a Google Form. The pre-survey was used to determine which skills would be most important to include in the binder. A final Google Form was sent out to parents and caregivers on satisfaction with program content, 57% reported to be extremely satisfied, 29% reported satisfied, and 14% reported that it meets expectations. Based on participant's communication skills, 14% were extremely satisfied, 71% reported satisfied, and 14% reported that it meets expectations. The E.P.I.C. binder can be utilized for future capstone students, volunteers, and staff members within GiGi's Playhouse to support adults with Down syndrome engaging in the community.

### **Introduction**

My doctoral capstone experience will occur at GiGi's Playhouse in Indianapolis, Indiana. GiGi's Playhouse is a Down Syndrome Achievement Center where individuals with Down Syndrome can participate in various group or one-on-one programs free of cost. Down syndrome (DS) is the most common chromosomal disorder in humans, affecting about one of every 675 births (Mai et al., 2019). A mother whose daughter, GiGi, was diagnosed with Down Syndrome created GiGi's Playhouse. GiGi's mother wanted to change how others looked at individuals

with a Down Syndrome diagnosis. At this time, GiGi's mother wanted to create a safe environment or organization just for them. In addition, she wanted to create an environment for families to come for resources and networking so that they could celebrate their diagnosis. So, a few months later, GiGi's family opened the doors to the country's first Down Syndrome awareness center, GiGi's Playhouse—the programs at this site range from the prenatal stage of life to adulthood (*About GiGi's*, 2022). GiGi's Playhouse's mission statement is to change how the world views Down Syndrome and to send a global message of acceptance for all. Their purpose is to change how the world views Down syndrome and to send a global message of acceptance for all. The different programs directed within GiGi's Playhouse are for individuals of all ages with Down syndrome. Programs include language, music, fitness, art, cooking, volunteering, career preparation, and tutoring.

GiGi's Playhouse also provides programs for adults looking for resources in careers and volunteering. Within GiGi's Playhouse, there are two different tracks that the adults can choose to take. Both of these opportunities are built and created to increase participant's participation through either volunteering or working (Hardee & Fetters, 2017). One route takes them on the volunteer track through E.P.I.C., and the other on the career track through GiGi University. GiGi University or GiGi U is for motivated adults with Down syndrome to achieve their highest potential in the real world. They will develop their wellness, communication, and career skills, emphasizing job interviewing, communication, money management, public speaking, customer service, computer skills, team building, and health (*About GiGi's*, 2022). This program is suited for adults interested in looking for employment opportunities in the future. There is a link between social functioning and employment success has been well-established (Connor et al.,

2019). My site mentor and I want to create resources and goals for social functioning but instead of the vocational aspect, the volunteer and community engagement aspect.

My capstone project is E.P.I.C., which stands for empowerment, participation, independence, and community. E.P.I.C. is a program for adults with Down Syndrome, opportunities for socialization and community involvement. To understand the barriers and opportunities in the social life of adults with Down syndrome, Dolva et al. (2019) found it is essential to acknowledge the extent of their experiences with friendship and the characteristics of their social participation patterns. While working and engaging within the community, participants will be able to do so with their friends each week in order to work on socialization at the same time (Deakin et al., 2018). Participants work on vocational, communication, and social skills to boost confidence and increase independence (Mihaila et al., 2020). It is crucial for individuals to work on social skills in this setting. Individuals with Down syndrome exhibited significantly more difficulties in building and utilizing these social skills (Barisnikov & Lejeune, 2018). When individuals with Down syndrome are able to have these improved communication skills, they have better chances of expressing their feelings to avoid emotional challenges as well (Foley et al., 2016). My project will focus on updating the current program.

My project aims to bridge the gap between the two programs better through program evaluation. The integration of program evaluation into the occupational therapy process can support program development and sustainability, and promote a solution-focused approach to attaining funding for community-based services (Umeda et al., 2017). I will put together a binder with a similar format for the E.P.I.C. program from GiGi University. The curriculum for E.P.I.C. will involve different resources such as applications, surveys, goals for each individual, and lesson plans based on four areas of communication, social skills/setting, teamwork, and

collaboration. We would like to share these goals and places with the community, so their volunteering experiences can fit their goals.

### **Background**

The executive director, my site mentor, and operations manager expressed their need for an improved volunteer program, E.P.I.C., at this location. I am interested in evaluating the E.P.I.C. program to find new ways to improve its success. This increased success will continue to grow individuals with Down Syndrome confidence and independence within the community.

Previously, a doctoral capstone student utilized a logic model to effectively evaluate the career program at GiGi's Playhouse, GiGi University. I plan to evaluate the volunteer program called E.P.I.C. using a similar framework. The previous doctoral capstone student created a binder with resources to outline coursework for GiGi University. The last student included within her binder a literature review, participant applications, background information about the program, lesson plans, and a timeline for each lesson. For E.P.I.C., I will compile a binder with a literature review, background information about the program, participant applications, current volunteer sites, potential volunteer sites, a list of participant/program goals, and examples of activities that fit under these goals. I will also utilize a logic model created by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to guide my project further. The purpose of this framework is to summarize the essential elements of program evaluation, provide a framework for conducting effective evaluations, clarify steps in program evaluation, review standards for practical program evaluation, and address misconceptions regarding the purposes and methods of program evaluation (*Framework for Program Evaluation* - CDC 2017). Being able to apply this

logic model can lead to improving existing programs. This specific logic model consists of six incremental steps: engage stakeholders, describe the program, focus evaluation design, gather credible evidence, justify conclusions, and ensure the use and sharing of lessons learned.

I have completed a thorough literature review for this project, which will set me up for success in program evaluation. I have researched and found many different resources for program evaluation regarding the Down syndrome community. I will also be attending the program each week to work firsthand with each of the individuals and will be able to see precisely how the program runs weekly. In addition to my literature review and participating in the program, I have completed research for models and theoretical frameworks to guide my research and program evaluation.

### **Model: Model of Human Occupation**

The model I chose for my Doctoral Capstone Experience (DCE) is the Model of Human Occupation (MOHO). I chose this model because I will incorporate social participation into my DCE, which fits my idea for this site and population. The central concept of MOHO is that the person leans towards occupational performance through volition, habituation, and performance capacity (Cole & Tufano, 2020). Social participation and communication fit into volition because the client may need to be motivated by something to participate socially. Habituation is also significant in communication and social involvement because many clients rely on roles and routines for their occupations. Some examples of this during communication are the time, place of interaction, and any positions or jobs included within the social process. Lastly, performance capacity is vital in social participation depending on the client's diagnosis, anatomy, cognition, or motor skills. These aspects, between volition, habituation, and performance capacity, can affect the client's social participation performance.

### **Project Design**

My project consisted of a program evaluation for GiGi's Playhouse adult volunteer program called E.P.I.C. After completing the needs assessment, the stakeholders at GiGi's Playhouse found it helpful to evaluate their adult volunteer program. This volunteer program has been in place at GiGi's for several years and could use updates. My site mentor and I found it would be necessary to evaluate the current program and implement new changes for the success of the adults within the group. We had also discussed the need for more resources for the adult population. There are so many different resources for children with Down syndrome, and that is typically not the case for adults (Popova & Wescott, 2019). . We wanted to continue to provide this resource for the adult participants while making it meaningful to their everyday tasks along the way.

The development of this project was guided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The CDC has their own theoretical framework for program evaluation that I found to be extremely helpful. Their model includes six connected steps in order to fulfill each step of the program evaluation process (CDC, 2021). The six steps include: engage stakeholders, describe the program, focus the evaluation design, gather credible evidence, justify conclusions, and ensure use and share lessons learned. I completed the first step of engaging with my mentor, who is the executive director, and the operations manager via Zoom and completing the needs assessment. During this step, I explained the purpose of what I could do for their organization and how this would be a collaborative process to determine what their site may need. From this point, we completed brainstorming the program and my actual project. Most of this process included researching for resources, credible evidence, and mapping out the timeline of the overall project. I began to focus on the evaluation design to determine the purpose, usability,

feasibility, and reality of this evaluation overall and check in with stakeholders for their point of view.(CDC, 2021). I also completed a literature review which was compiled of trustworthy and credible evidence to support this project idea.

I decided to conduct a survey I created and sent it out to parents and caregivers to complete. The survey was sent via Google Forms and I sent the study to all eight participants' parents/caregivers, with six parents/caregivers' responses and one participant's response. The survey consisted of a total of 5 open-ended questions.

- What are some goals you have for your participant in E.P.I.C.?
- What improvements or updates would you like to see with E.P.I.C.?
- What is your participant's favorite part of E.P.I.C.?
- What is your participant's least favorite part of E.P.I.C.?
- What is the main thing you would like for your participant to take away from E.P.I.C.?

The parent's answers to these questions allowed me to decide what the focus would be for the updated layout of this program. Many parents answered that they would like their participants' goals to fall under social skills, communication skills, being part of a team, social cues, independence, and working within the community. After meeting with my site mentor again to go over the results, we decided to have four focus groups for the layout of the program and lesson plans. We chose the four categories: communication skills, social skills or cues, teamwork or collaboration, and healthy relationships or life skills.

Deciding which topics were most relevant provided me with the best information for guiding lesson plans. Given the survey responses, five out of the seven answers explained having goals with communication or social skills (71%) (Figure 1). Many of the lesson plans I create

will focus on resources or games that can help improve participants' communication skills and interaction with one another. Two of the seven responses included goals for independence (29%) (Figure 1). These responses showed that it would also be essential to incorporate resources and activities that focus on participants' independence. Another 29% of responses indicated that it is vital for participants to know how to work as a team and collaborate with their peers (Figure 1). It was essential to my site mentor and me that this be a theme within the lessons, but it was validating seeing that parents and caregivers also have this goal for the participants.

My site mentor and I were mostly interested in parent's responses to what updates or changes that they would like to see to the program. This would be another source of vital information to take into consideration when guiding the rest of my project. The program only occurs once a week and only consists of eight participants due to travel purposes. With that, many parents expressed that they would love it if the program could happen more than once a week, and get rid of the application and interview process so more participants can participate. This type of response was present in at least two of the seven responses to this question. Two different responses were asking to have a schedule for each week, so they know what their participant will be doing during the program. A parent expressed that they find it hard to make conversation with their participant after the program when they are also unaware of what occurred during the class. During our meeting to go over the results, a large portion was spent brainstorming on ideas for how to update the class and providing new resources to fulfill the parent's expressed needs.

The project was carried out by creating a binder for the E.P.I.C. program at GiGi's Playhouse. The binder consisted of an explanation of the program, applications to the program, literature review, logic model, resources for individuals, resources for volunteer sites and

volunteers, goals for the program and individuals, and a list of each volunteer site with examples of possible volunteer activities to reach goals. It will be imperative that each of the resources provided within the binder are visually appealing to the participants. Most individuals with Down syndrome learn most effectively through visuals (Davis et al., 2018). Since the project was based on the parent's pre-survey, we wanted to make sure that these wants and needs were being met. My site mentor and I made sure to base all of the resources and lesson plans around skills that parents mentioned they wanted their participants to be working on. The main skills mentioned and included were communication, teamwork, and independence. Many parents expressed a need for a schedule for each week to know what their participant was engaging in each week. We made sure to create a resource that could be completed at the end of each session for parents to go over with their participant (Figure 4). This figure was created to allow participants to be able to discuss what they did each week with their family and friends. We also created a schedule to be handed out to parents that shows where the participants will be volunteering that day and what skills will be focused on during the session.

### **Project Outcomes**

In order to measure the outcomes of my project and the resources I had created, a post-survey through Google Forms which was sent out to all eight participants' parents or caregivers. Again, seven responded to the post-survey. Parents and caregivers were asked to report their satisfaction on multiple different items. Parents and caregivers were asked to report their satisfaction on a 5-point Likert scale. The answer choices were extremely dissatisfied, dissatisfied, meets expectations, satisfied, and extremely satisfied. The survey consisted of three questions for parents and caregivers to answer.

- Please rate your satisfaction with your participant's communication skills.

- Please rate your satisfaction with your participant's teamwork skills.
- Please rate your satisfaction with overall program content.

The results were sent directly to Google Sheets in order to determine means and interpret the data. I interpreted the data using bar graphs based on the percentage of each response. In regards to satisfaction on participant's communication skills, 14% reported meeting expectations, 71% reported satisfied, and 14% reported extremely satisfied (Figure 2). In Figure 3, you can see the results to parent's satisfaction with teamwork skills. 14% of parents reported it meets expectations, 57% reported to be satisfied, and 29% reported to be extremely satisfied. In Figure 4, it can be shown that 14% of parents report program content meets expectations, 29% report to be satisfied, and 57% are extremely satisfied with program content. The qualitative results showed the majority of parents and caregivers were satisfied with the overall product and how their participants are reaching their communication and team building skills.

Finally, I presented my project to my site mentor, program direction, and operations manager on my last week at the site. This presentation was completed virtually through Microsoft Teams. The staff was open to share their thoughts on my new resources and lesson plans that I had created. They were more than happy to have this new material for their program and were open to also sharing how this could extend to new projects in the future as well.

### **Summary**

The qualitative results showed overall parent and caregiver satisfaction with program content and participant's overall communication and team building skills. The new resources and lesson plans provided a new outlook for parents, caregivers, and participants in the updated E.P.I.C. program. The staff also showed great appreciation over the project and reported the benefits of having these resources. The new resources can be continued to share with more

families and organizations that collaborate with GiGi's Playhouse. The resources created can bring awareness to the Down syndrome community. The results also continue to show the importance of providing these occupational based skills for adults with Down syndrome, and how this can increase overall independence. With the addition of new lesson plans and resources that focus on communication skills, interpersonal relationships, team work, and social skills, it allows for participants to build a new sense of confidence and brings comfort to parents and caregivers.

### **Conclusion**

I believe this project was successful because each individual and family were accepting of my project and were willing to help at any point. The individuals and stakeholders were patient and flexible with me when plans did not go accordingly due to weather or schedule changes. GiGi's Playhouse will benefit from my project because it will provide a series of lesson plans and coursework for the participants to have for the next sessions. I have updated this information based on staff opinions and observations, as well as parent and caregiver surveys for the success of the participants. I have provided a plethora of information and resources for future volunteers to utilize when working with the E.P.I.C. group. These resources should in fact lessen the amount of work now needed for the current staff to complete or prepare for sessions. Unfortunately, due to time constraints, I was unable to see these resources being used at GiGi's Playhouse.

**Limitations:** Since I will not be on-site when the resources will be in use, there could be a potential for misunderstandings. Potential barriers could be that I do not have full control over what is being utilized and what is not. I will remain in touch with staff through phone and email, but there could be questions and misunderstandings without me being in person each week.

Another limitation to my project was the weather and schedule changes. This program only occurs once a week so if there were cancellations within volunteers or inclement weather, this would affect the program and their schedule. Overall, the strengths outweigh the few challenges that were experienced during the project.

**Recommendations:** For future projects or capstone students, I think that further research could be done in this area to further examine this kind of program. An example of future research is the program would need to be re-evaluated at least yearly to assess continued usefulness of resources and lesson plans. This would be beneficial to the participants and the site to make sure that they are receiving the best updated care. There is a need to strengthen connections with new volunteer sites and work more closely with these organizations. GiGi's Playhouse and most of these organizations have great partnerships, but it would be great to further these relationships and see what can be used to benefit one another. I also think it would be a great idea to engage the parents and caregivers even further. I took the initial step by reaching out to parents and caregivers through surveys, but I think discussions and interviews or even holding support groups could be beneficial as well for a future DCE student at GiGi's Playhouse.

**Implications:** Since my project focused on communication skills, social skills, team building, and independence, there is plenty of room for OT involvement. An OT is already on site at GiGi's Playhouse for a fitness class, but it would be great to have an OT volunteer for the E.P.I.C. adult program as well. An OT in this setting working with the adults can assist the participants with these skills that would impact their activities of daily living or when volunteering with the site. OTs are also present at this site to answer questions about transitional phases such as starting school, graduating high school, and finding jobs after graduation. There are so many possibilities for an occupational therapist within this kind of organization.

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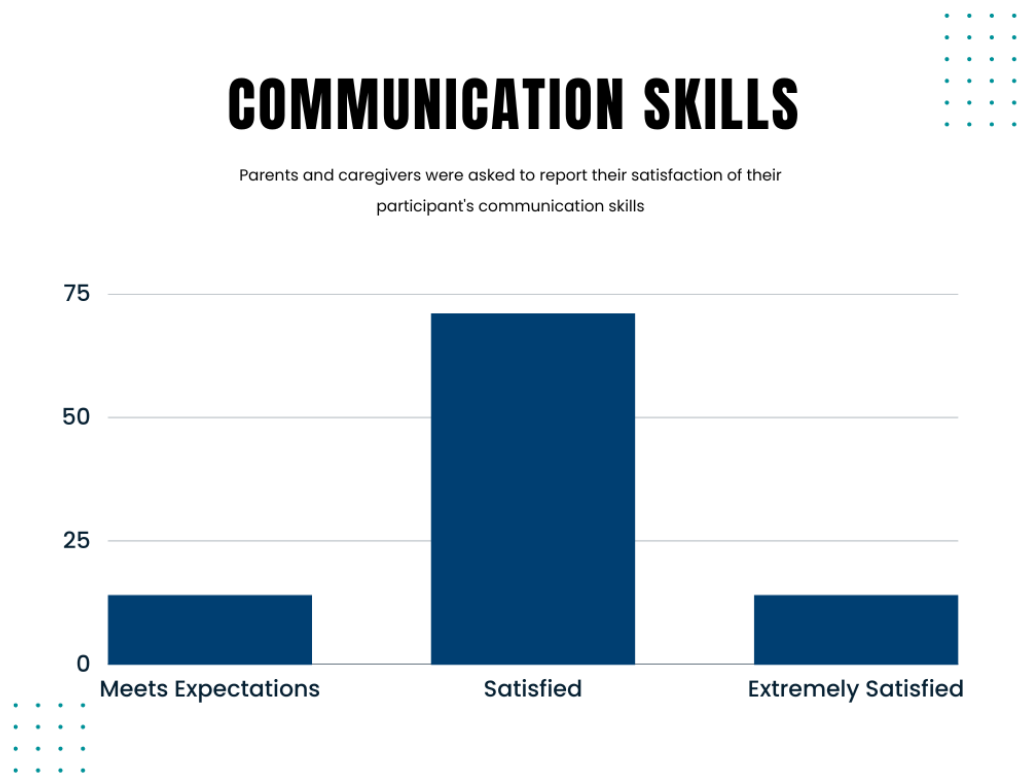
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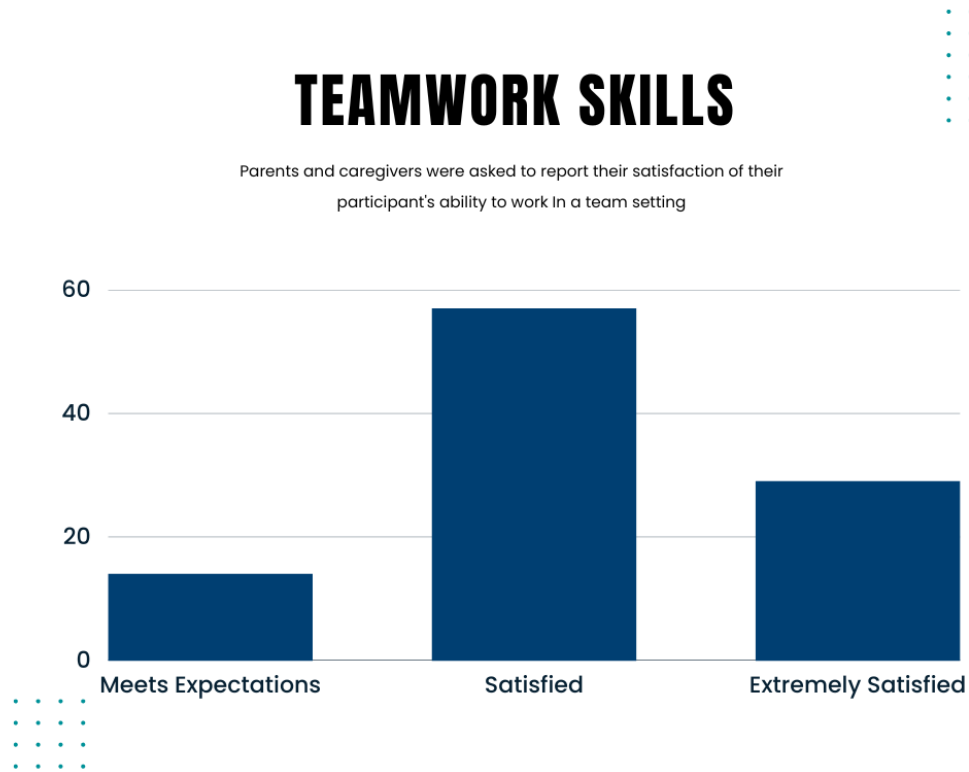
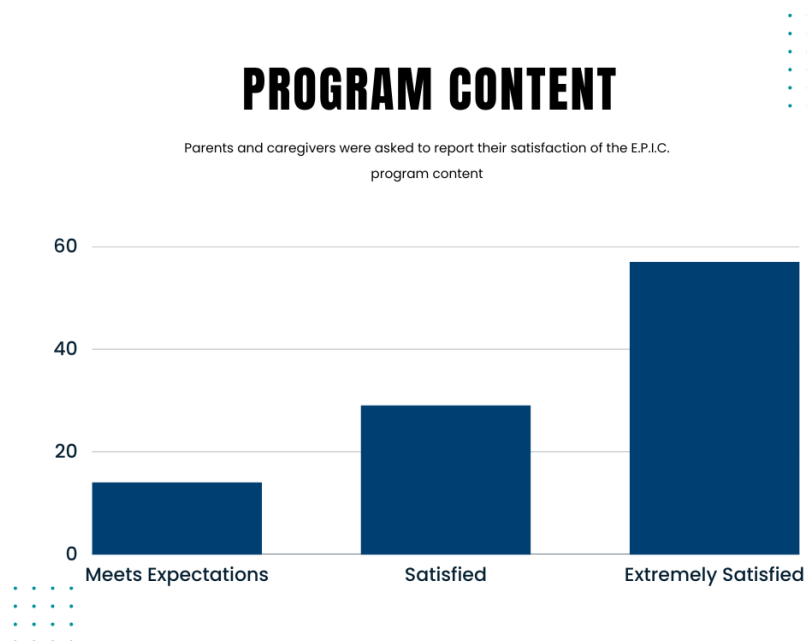
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**Figure 1**  
*Participant Goal Survey*



**Figure 2**  
*Satisfaction with Participant Teamwork Skills*



**Figure 3***Satisfaction with Participant Communication Skills***Figure 4***Satisfaction with Overall Program Content*

**Appendix**

<b>Week</b>	<b>DCE Stage</b> (orientation, screening/evaluation, implementation, discontinuation, dissemination)	<b>Weekly Goal</b>	<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Tasks</b>	<b>Date complete</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Orientation/Training</b>	<p><b>Complete online training modules for site</b></p> <p><b>Set up my site email with mentor</b></p> <p><b>Create rough draft of timeline</b></p>	<p><b>Tour of the site</b></p> <p><b>Meeting all other staff and members of the site to become familiar</b></p> <p><b>Explaining to other staff the goals of my project and what I plan to do while I'm here</b></p>	<p><b>Complete online trainings</b></p> <p><b>Meet members of the site and other staff</b></p> <p><b>Introduce myself to families involved with the site</b></p> <p><b>Join in on some of the group programs at the site and begin to orient myself with each program</b></p> <p><b>Look through different rooms and material closets to view what all is available for use at the site and orient myself to where all materials</b></p>	<b>1/13/23</b>

## EVALUATION OF ADULT VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

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				are located for each program	

2	<b>Screening/Evaluation</b>	<b>Finalize literature review</b>  <b>Discuss further needs for the site and capstone project</b>  <b>Finalize MOU</b>	<b>Gather more knowledge of each program and needs/goals for each</b>  <b>Brainstorming goals and needs for project</b>  <b>Write draft for introduction</b>	<b>Continue to research site's website and other organization's around the area to gain more resources</b>  <b>Complete introduction draft</b>  <b>Mapping out goals and looking at previous projects for resources</b>  <b>Looking at MOU and adding information where needed and updating where things have changed from the initial MOU</b>	<b>1/20/23</b>
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3	<b>Evaluation</b>	<p><b>Begin looking at progression of project</b></p> <p><b>Begin draft for background</b></p> <p><b>Continue attending group programs to familiarize with staff and individuals</b></p>	<p><b>Look at lit review to help when writing draft</b></p> <p><b>Researching past capstone projects to gain a better idea of program evaluation</b></p> <p><b>Researching and looking for models to add to my project for program evaluation</b></p> <p><b>Continue looking at previous resources and projects to gain more insight on my project</b></p> <p><b>Attend volunteer groups</b></p>	<p><b>Rough draft of background section complete</b></p> <p><b>Finalizing progression of project and brainstorming more of an idea</b></p> <p><b>Finalize some resources</b></p> <p><b>Found a model and theory to use with my project based on program evaluation</b></p> <p><b>Attend volunteer groups</b></p>	1/27/23
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<b>4</b>	<b>Implementation</b>	<b>Begin to plan for project implementation</b>	<b>Brainstorm all ideas for implementing project and what will be needed</b>	<b>Continue to attend group programs to gain more information and insight on the project</b>  <b>Reach out to members at other locations for resources for implementation</b>	<b>2/3/23</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Implementation</b>	<b>Communicating with sites</b>       <b>Creating SMART goals for each session</b>	<b>Reaching out to sites available for volunteering to further explain the purpose and objectives of the program so we can alter the volunteer tasks to better fit within the program</b>      <b>Creating possible SMART goals for either each individual or each program session and sending these to the volunteer sites ahead of time so they have this information</b>	<b>Reaching out to sites</b>  <b>Discovering appropriate SMART goals</b>  <b>Finding possible resources for each SMART goal</b>	<b>2/10/23</b>

<b>6</b>	<b>Implementation</b>	<p><b>Determining progression of program</b></p> <p><b>Determining different phases and length of time of program</b></p>	<p><b>Continue communicating with staff and other locations on ideas and previous programs</b></p> <p><b>Finalizing goals for determining how long the program will need to take place and evaluating if different phases may be needed</b></p>	<p><b>Finalize progression of new framework of program</b></p> <p><b>Finalize if multiple phases will be needed</b></p>	<b>2/17/23</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Implementation</b>	<b>Researching resources for each goal</b>	<p><b>Utilizing materials from past projects to compare</b></p> <p><b>Making sure resources are matching up with SMART goals that were created</b></p>	<b>Printing and finding resources for program and checking with staff to make sure all are connecting with what we are wanting to do</b>	<b>2/24/23</b>

<b>8</b>	<b>Implementation</b>	<p><b>Communicating with volunteer sites</b></p> <p><b>Looking into different phases and what is included in each phase to bridge over into other programs better</b></p>	<p><b>List of all volunteer sites</b></p> <p><b>Phasing out the process of volunteering and how it bridges into the career pathway</b></p> <p><b>Examples of activities that can be done at each site to fit with their SMART goals</b></p>	<p><b>Finalize list of volunteer sites</b></p> <p><b>Breakdown of each phase and adding into resource binder</b></p>	<b>3/3/23</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>Implementation</b>	<p><b>Creating binder of all current and previous resources</b></p> <p><b>Create survey to send out to parents/caregivers</b></p>	<p><b>Building binder of resources and finalizing</b></p> <p><b>Asking parents and caregivers questions about the E.P.I.C. program</b></p>	<p><b>Gathering all resources and phases and creating into binder for new framework</b></p>	<b>3/10/23</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>Implementation</b>	<p><b>Finalizing binder resources and making copies when needed</b></p>	<p><b>Sharing final ideas and developing</b></p> <p><b>Discussing with participants and staff for further feedback and critique</b></p>	<p><b>Completing binder of resources</b></p> <p><b>Sharing final ideas with staff and participants</b></p> <p><b>Meeting with other members at different locations to</b></p>	<b>3/17/23</b>

				<b>discuss final ideas as well</b>	
<b>11</b>	<b>Discontinuation</b>	<b>Prepare for dissemination</b>	<b>Making sure project is fully sustainable and ready to continue once capstone ends</b>	<b>Getting all resources together and finalized or printed to be viewed for future uses</b>	<b>3/24/23</b>
<b>12</b>	<b>Discontinuation</b>	<b>Preparing for dissemination</b>	<b>Finalizing all products of project</b>  <b>Meeting with site mentor to plan through any missing info or pieces</b>  <b>Gaining last minute ideas from site mentor</b>	<b>Making sure all binders and programs are set and ready to go</b>  <b>Printing out all extra copies of resources needed for final project</b>	<b>3/31/23</b>

<b>13</b>	<b>Dissemination</b>	<b>Wrap up project on-site</b>	<b>Final touches on project, resources, and lesson plans</b>	<b>Final meeting with group program</b>  <b>Printing out all resources needed for final project</b>	<b>4/7/23</b>
<b>14</b>	<b>Dissemination</b>	<b>Complete final dissemination</b>	<b>Complete final dissemination with site</b> <b>Complete final evaluation of site and experience</b>	<b>Present project to site virtually with site mentor, program director, and operations manager</b>	<b>4/14/23</b>