



Cleveland State
University

Department of Occupational Therapy

Social Prescribing

The OT Role You Were Made For

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Your Presenter



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Learning objectives

After this session, participants will be able to:



Describe social prescribing



Identify how occupational therapy practice connects to social prescribing



Determine at least 2 ways they can actively become involved in social prescribing

What is Social Prescribing (SP)?

Connecting people to non-medical, community-based programs and resources that meet the social and emotional needs affecting their health and well-being.



Referral

A health or social care provider identifies a non-medical need



Connection

A link worker explores what matters to the person



Community

The person engages in groups, activities, and services

Social prescribing shifts the medical question

**What is wrong
with you?**



To



**What matters to
you?**



Who benefits most?



Loneliness



Social isolation



Mental health challenges



Chronic conditions



Complex social needs

**These are the
people
*OTPs already serve.***

Examples of Social Prescribing

Challenge	Social Prescription	Potential Benefits
Isolation	Art classes, community gardening projects, cooking classes, group hiking, book club, volunteering	Reduced loneliness, improved mood, new friendships, improved mental health, increased social participation
Physical & mental health concerns	Group exercise classes, walking groups, swimming, personalized exercise programs, nature walks, forest bathing	Improved management of health conditions (cardiovascular disease, diabetes, etc.), decrease blood pressure, improved strength and endurance, decreased anxiety, depression, and stress
Financial Stress	Financial advice services, housing support, community support groups	Reduced stress and anxiety, improved financial situation, improved stability

OT: A natural fit

Occupational therapy is uniquely well-positioned to lead and expand social prescribing efforts, connecting people to community-based resources that support health and well-being, thus creating lasting impact for individuals and communities

Social Prescribing and OT

Shared values

- Person-centered care
- Holistic view of health
- Meaningful participation
- Social determinants of health

The gap

- OTP involvement in SP is inconsistent
- OT's role is underrecognized
- SP is not yet a standard part of OT education
- Few SP-focused fieldwork and capstone experiences

Why OT? More than a link worker

OTPs can bridge medical care and community support, and they bring skills most SP models lack



Occupational assessment

Identify what matters to the person and what gets in the way



Activity analysis & adaptation

Modify community activities so people can fully take part



Participation support

Build skills, routines, and confidence for lasting engagement

OTs in SP Literature

- OT values (meaningful activity, person-centered care, social participation) align strongly with social prescribing (Bradley et al., 2025; Elliott & Haighton, 2025; Rose, 2025; Viklund et al., 2026)
- OTs bring unique skills, including activity analysis and attention to barriers (Bradley et al., 2025; Elliott & Haighton, 2025; Rose, 2025; Viklund et al., 2026)
- Removing barriers (transportation, cost, emotional support) is part of making a prescription meaningful (Rose, 2025; Viklund et al., 2026)
- Role clarity and identity remain challenges in practice and education (Bradley et al., 2025; Elliott & Haighton, 2025)

OT in SP in action: Northeast Ohio



OTD Capstone Students

CSU OTD capstone
completed at Holden
Arboretum focusing on SP,
nature, and asset mapping



Nature-based programming

2027- CSU OTD student- community
SP initiatives for older adults

2027- CSU OTD student- Cleveland
Metroparks

Social Prescribing on Campus: Early Adopters

- **Stanford:** First major university with a comprehensive student program (Vaden HealthServices + SocialRx, since Jan 2024)
- **University of Michigan:** Experience Rx and Institute for Social Prescribing, co-directed through University Health & Counseling
- **University of Arizona:** Arizona Arts Rx (2025) with SocialRx, linking Campus Health, Student Affairs, and the Andrew Weil Center
- **Rutgers:** Community-focused green space initiative through RWJ Medical School, plusScarlet Arts Rx with clinician referrals and 100+ collaborators
- **Ohio University:** Bobcat ArtsCare, with students trained as link workers to support stress, connection, and well-being through the arts

The pivot: how OTPs can step in

Educate

1

Teach healthcare professionals about the benefits of SP

Integrate

2

Bring SP literature into OT curricula

Develop

3

Create SP-focused fieldwork and doctoral capstone experiences

Engage

4

Join SP networks and conferences

Get Involved



Social Prescribing USA Health Champions Group

<https://www.socialprescribingusa.com/health-professional-champions>



Ohio Social Prescribing Collaborative

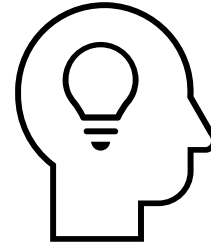
Statewide network building academic and
community partnerships

<https://ohiosocialprescribingcollaborative.com/>

Upcoming Conference

[CONNECTED FOR HEALTH: The
Inaugural U.S. Social Prescribing
Conference](#)

March 24-26, 2027 in Ann Arbor,
Michigan



What 'social
prescription' would
you write for yourself
today? (Answer in 1–3
words).



<https://www.menti.com/alhhhikhw71p>

Results

Poll Results



Final Thoughts

- SP is an opportunity if OT claims occupation at its center. It is growing “with or without us” (Gallagher & Lambdin-Pattavina, 2025; Rose, 2025)
- **The time to get involved is now**

Scan for references



Thank You

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