Secondary Practice & Transition

Safety First: OT's Unique Role with Secondary Students

KB
Kirsten Beshay, OTR/L, OTD
Occupational Therapist | KIPP Public Schools of Northern California

Presenter Background

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School-Based OT Practice
Occupational Therapist at **KIPP Public Schools of Northern California**, working with high schoolers in the Specialized Teaching Program (STP) for the past 6 years.

- Gradually noticed a gap between our focus in the classroom and the risks students would face after graduation.
- Concerns around abuse, supports that students receive later in life.
- Saw students need for training after in-class safety simulations

Specific Learning Objectives

OBJECTIVE 1
Identify OT Interventions
Identify three specific OT-led interventions for teaching secondary students essential safety skills, including digital citizenship, stranger awareness, and street-crossing.

OBJECTIVE 2
Formulate Action Plan
Formulate a concrete plan to integrate at least one instructional tool shared during the session into current practice.

OBJECTIVE 3
Draft Safety Goals
Draft measurable, transition-focused clinical goals that address emerging safety skills.

The Big Goal

Traditional Focus
Classrooms focus on routine ADLs (important!) while lacking a focus on safety training.

→

Safety Focus
OTPs can bridge the gap by equipping secondary students and their families for a safer future.

Don't get overwhelmed!
You can make a difference in a client's life after this session.

Vote

Poll

Start Poll 1

Significance of Topic & Evidence Base

Why Safety Education Matters

3x
Higher Risk of Sexual Abuse
Adolescents with disabilities face nearly triple the risk compared to neurotypical peers (Brendli et al., 2021; Smith & Harrell, 2013).

4.6x
Higher Risk of Sexual Abuse
for children with intellectual disabilities to neurotypical peers (Smith & Harrell, 2013).

OTPF-4 Core Domain Standard
According to AOTA (2020), *Safety and Emergency Maintenance* is an essential IADL necessary for occupational autonomy and independent living.

Evidence-Based Practice
OT-led life skills training bridges the transition service gap for individuals with IDD (Banzhaf et al., 2025).

Roundtable Activity #1

Turn & Talk: Uncovering Safety Gaps

3 Minutes

Prompt 1: Biggest Concerns

What are the top safety risks you worry about most for your adolescent clients?

Prompt 2: Barriers

What currently holds you back from targeting safety skills in your practice?

Be ready to share 1 key takeaway with the whole group when time is called.

Why OTPs?

Example Scenario: Crossing the Street

Intrinsic Profile

Person (P)

OTP Observes: An autistic student has challenges decision-making when a car slows and waves them along but isn't clearly stopping.

Extrinsic Context

Environment (E)

OTP Observes: The street is loud and crowded. Some cars do not stop when they see pedestrians waiting.

Meaningful Activity

Occupation (O)

OTP Observes: The class as learned the steps to cross at a different type of intersection.

Activity analysis is a big part of life skill development!

My Categories

5 Community Safety Domains

1. Police Interaction
Scenario role-play and disability disclosure cards

2. Pedestrian Safety
Crossing the street, safe public transit use

3. Stranger Awareness
Digital citizenship, privacy settings, and distinguishing trusted adults.

4. First Aid & 911
Identifying true emergencies, 911 caller scripts, and basic wound care.

5. Medical Literacy
Knowledge of diagnosis / providers / medications and articulating symptoms.

Category 1

Police Interaction

01

Teach why it matters.

Social stories, education about the role of police and where misunderstandings can occur

02

Make a plan.

Disability disclosure cards, etc.

03

Scenario training

Practiced through role-play or written scenarios

04

Parent education

Sharing therapy materials used for continued practice at home, parent coaching to practice skills in real world context; some police stations encourage visits/tours by families

Category 1

Police Interaction: Key Resources

01 **Disability Disclosure Cards**
Include personal information, including emergency contacts and diagnosis information

02 **Autistic Self Advocacy Network**
Self-determination resources helpful for self-disclosure

03 **Stanfield SafetySmart Curriculum**
Covers home and pedestrian safety, transportation use, emergency services access, healthcare navigation, and pharmacy resources

04 **BeSafe Curriculum**
DVD curriculum to help young people with autism or other learning differences learn the skills they need to interact safely with the police

05 **Talking to Kids with Autism about Safety and the Police**
Children's Hospital Colorado

06 **Personal Information Worksheet**
Include full name, address, and emergency contact names/phone numbers

07 **I'm Determined**
Resources to promote self-determination

08 **Everyday Speech**
Includes a variety of interactive lessons on life skill and safety topics

Category 2

Pedestrian Safety

01

Crossing the street

Review the steps, simulation / parking lot practice / real outings

02

Public transit use

Review the steps, simulation or real outings, role-playing safety scenarios within this context

03

Rideshare norms

Review the steps, simulation or real outings, role-playing safety scenarios within this context

04

Parent education

Sharing therapy materials used for continued practice at home, parent coaching to practice skills in real world context

Category 2

Pedestrian Safety: Key Resources

01 **Teachtown Life Skills Curriculum**
Includes modules on crossing the street

02 **Everyday Speech**
Includes a variety of interactive lessons on life skill and safety topics

03 **Wandering Prevention for Caregivers**
National Autism Association

04 **Wandering Prevention for Teachers**
National Autism Association

05 **Stanfield SafetySmart Curriculum**
Covers home and pedestrian safety, transportation use, emergency services access, healthcare navigation, and pharmacy resources

Category 3

Stranger Awareness

01
Digital citizenship
Review safe websites to access, avoiding viruses, education on keeping personal information private online

02
Puberty education
Curriculum specifically for people with disabilities that includes bodily autonomy, boundaries, types of relationships, etc.

03
Trusted adults
Scenarios involving safe vs. unsafe online interactions (e.g. scam emails, unknown DMs)

04
Parent education
Sharing therapy materials used for continued practice at home, parent coaching to practice skills in real world context

Category 3

Stranger Awareness: Key Resources

01 **"Are you cybersafe?" Quiz for Teens**
Patelco Credit Union

02 **Stanfield SafetySmart Curriculum**
Covers home and pedestrian safety, transportation use, emergency services access, healthcare navigation, and pharmacy resources

03 **Online Safety Resources**
Pacer Center

04 **Everyday Speech**
Includes a variety of interactive lessons on life skill and safety topics

05 **Sex Ed for Self Advocates**
Organization for Autism Research

06 **Relationships Decoded**
Relationship Education for People with Developmental Disabilities

Category 4

First Aid & 911

01

Hygiene

Identifying clean / dirty, "Don't touch poop", hand-washing and toileting

02

Basic First Aid

Caring for cuts and scrapes through scenario training and simulations, identifying when to seek medical attention, prioritizing safety in injury scenarios

03

"What's an emergency?"

Includes scenario training (such as 911 caller scripts), similar training to big vs. little problems

04

Parent education

Sharing therapy materials used for continued practice at home, parent coaching to practice skills in real world context

Category 4

First Aid & 911: Key Resources

01 **Emergency Plan Form**
Ready.gov

02 **Emergency Kit Checklist**
Ready.gov

03 **Emergency Plan Overview**
Ready.gov

04 **Water Safety Resources**
National Autism Association

05 **Personal Info Bracelet**
Custom order with relevant information

06 **Smart911 App**
Provides details you would need to tell 9-1-1 are immediately available in the event you cannot verbally provide them

07 **Everyday Speech**
Includes a variety of interactive lessons on life skill and safety topics

08 **Stanfield SafetySmart Curriculum**
Covers home and pedestrian safety, transportation use, emergency services access, healthcare navigation, and pharmacy resources

Category 5

Medical Literacy

01

Personal Medical Knowledge

Includes understanding one's diagnoses, providers, and medications

02

Articulating Symptoms

Includes interoception training, trusted adults to contact, social stories/scripts

03

Medication Safety

Training to identify potential side effects, correct dosages

04

Parent education

Sharing therapy materials used for continued practice at home, parent coaching to practice skills in real world context

Category 5

Medical Literacy: Key Resources

01 **Interoception Resources**
Kelly Mahler

02 **Stanfield SafetySmart Curriculum**
Covers home and pedestrian safety, transportation use, emergency services access, healthcare navigation, and pharmacy resources

03 **I'm Determined**
Resources to promote self-determination

04 **Autistic Self Advocacy Network**
Self-determination resources helpful for self-disclosure

05 **Choice Maker Self-Determination Curriculum**
OH transition curriculum

Vote

Poll

Start Poll 2

Considerations

A Note About High Needs Students

Often the discussion about interventions can leave behind students with extensive physical, behavioral, or communication challenges. Here are some considerations to consider for them.

01 Personal Info Bracelets

02 Social Stories

03 Parent Education

04 Hygiene

05 Water Safety

06 Saying No

07 Interoception

08 Puberty Education

09 Disability Disclosure Cards

10 AAC Access

Implementation

Structuring a 30-Minute Therapy Session

Sample OT Classroom Session

Do Now: Students complete a personal info worksheet	7 min
Slide Deck: Personal Space & Boundaries	10 min
Partner Practice: Personal Bubbles & Saying "No"	8 min
Exit Ticket: Personal space scenario worksheet	5 min

Roundtable Activity #3

Turn & Talk: Past Safety Interventions

3 Minutes

1. Success Stories
What is one specific safety topic you have addressed with a client or student in the past? What goals have you set?

2. Effective Visuals & Tools
What teaching modality worked best (e.g., practice scenarios, video modeling, community-based integration)?

3. Family Generalization
How did you ensure parents/caregivers carried over these strategies at home?

Share out: Elect one speaker to present a 30-second summary to the audience.

Writing Goals

Examples of Safety-Related Goals

01 **Crossing the Street**
By [DATE], [Student] will demonstrate the ability to press the crosswalk button, look both ways, determine if cars are on the street to pose a threat, and cross the street safely with 100% accuracy, with 1 verbal cue or less, in 4 out of 5 instances, as measured by staff observations and data collection.

02 **Personal Information**
By [DATE], when asked, [Student] will identify their full name, home address, and a parent's phone number with 100% accuracy, with 2 verbal cues or less, in 4 out of 5 occasions, as measured by staff observation and data collection.

03 **Hygiene**
By [Date], [Student] will independently identify clean and dirty from object-level examples with 100% accuracy when provided with visual supports, in 4 out of 5 opportunities, as measured by staff observation and data collection.

04 **Stranger Safety**
By [Date], [Student] will demonstrate with 100% accuracy how to safely respond in situations involving strangers (whether in person or online) with 1 verbal cue or less, in 4 out of 5 instances by staff observations and data collection.

05 **Self Advocacy**
By [Date], [Student] will demonstrate self advocacy skills by using a self-disclosure statement regarding autism and explain their need or behavior, given a script to follow, in a role play for 5 potential problem scenarios, with 100% accuracy in 4 out of 5 opportunities, as measured by staff observation and data collection.

06 **Emergencies**
By [Date], given a simulation of an emergency situation (e.g., fire) within a community setting and a visual with 3 steps of an emergency procedure, [Student] will physically complete all steps with 100% accuracy, with 1 verbal cue or less, in 4 out of 5 instances by staff observations and data collection.

Case Study

Parent Education

1. Background

Taylor is a 17 y/o girl who loves drawing and her art class in high school. She is largely non-speaking, uses an AAC, and appears to feel sick and uncomfortable during her monthly period.

Taylor's ability to report discomfort or a need is emerging. She is often observed to run to the calm corner unexpectedly on days when her dad reports that she is on her period.

2. Parent Education

The OTP and the speech therapist schedule a call with Taylor's dad. Her dad reports an upcoming annual doctor's appointment for Taylor and agrees to discuss Taylor's periods with the doctor and Taylor. The OTP and speech therapist discuss Taylor's AAC use and sensory items that have appeared to ease her discomfort in class. They introduce the concept of interoception and make a plan to send visuals home with Taylor in her backpack for dad to keep accessible to her at home.

3. Team Response & Plan

At her annual IEP, the student's team proposes a new goal focused on **interoception.**

New Goal: When visibly uncomfortable or upset, Taylor will demonstrate awareness of atypical internal sensations and communicate them to an appropriate adult (with visual supports available) with 1 verbal cue or less, in 4 out of 5 opportunities, as measured by staff observation and data collection.

Case Study

Addressing Parent Concerns

1. Background

Jose is a 15 y/o student who enjoys spending time with peers and discussing soccer. He's diagnosed with autism and ADHD.

Some students at his school have voiced concerns about their families being impacted by ICE presence in the area.

The school allows students to walk out to participate in a public protest regarding ICE presence.

2. Parent Concern

Jose's mom reports concerns around her son learning from peers to attend protests or speak aggressively to authorities.

She cites past publicized incidents between police and autistic teens and is concerned for his physical safety.

Jose's mom wants him to learn to safely cooperate with authorities.

3. Team Response & Plan

At his annual IEP, Jose's team proposes a new clinical goal focused on **self-advocating during problem scenarios**.

The team discusses helping him better understand his diagnosis of autism with his parents.

New Goal: Student will demonstrate self advocacy skills by using a self-disclosure statement regarding autism and explain his need or behavior, given a script to follow, in a role play for 5 potential problem scenarios, with 100% accuracy in 3 out of 4 opportunities as measured by observation, data collection and/or student work samples.

Vote

Poll

Start Poll 3

Hands-On Workshop Block

30-Minute Action Plan Creation

Work Time

Action Plan Worksheet

1. Identify 2–3 safety areas that are a priority for you.
2. Review resources and narrow your focus to one area.
3. Draft a safety-related clinical goal with a client in mind.
4. Select a tool and plan your next step.

Turn to the person next to you every 10 minutes to share your progress!

Evidence & Citations

References & Supporting Literature

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INTERACTIVE DISCUSSION

Final 20 Minutes

Questions & Discussion

Kirsten Beshay, OTR/L, OTD
KIPP Public Schools of Northern California

kirsten.beshay@kippnorcal.org
www.linkedin.com/in/kirstenbeshay

Thank You!

Takeaways

Pick one next step from this presentation or your worksheet.

→

Do one thing to put it in motion.

Don't get overwhelmed!
You can make a difference in a client's life after this session.

Safety First: OT's Unique Role with Secondary Students

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Section 1: Identifying Safety Priorities & Gaps

1. What are 2–3 safety skill gaps you currently observe in your clients?

- [ ] **Police Interaction** *(scenario role-play, disability disclosure cards)*
- [ ] **Stranger Awareness & Online Safety** *(scam awareness, trusted adults)*
- [ ] **Pedestrian Safety** *(crossing streets, public transit)*
- [ ] **First Aid & Handling Emergencies** *(identifying true emergencies, basic wound care)*
- [ ] **Health & Medical Self-Management** *(Knowledge of diagnosis, articulating symptoms)*

2. **Notes / Specific Observations:**

Section 2: Goal Drafting

Draft 2-3 clinical goals addressing your target safety skill areas. Refer back to the slides for examples if needed.

Section 3: Implementation Plan

1. Select one resource for each priority area from Section 1.

Domain	Resource

2. Pick **ONE** first priority resource and plan **ONE** action step. *(What will you do within the next 2 weeks?):*

3. Identify any collaboration partners. *(Special educator, speech therapist, family member, administrator):*