

Psychiatry Grand Rounds WCM Department of Psychiatry Psychology CE Announcement



**Weill Cornell
Medicine**
Psychiatry

Occupational Therapy in Behavioral Health: Empowering Recovery and Independence

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Zoom:

<https://weillcornell.zoom.us/j/92812036154>

Meeting ID: 928 1203 6154

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April 7, 2026



11 AM - 12 PM



Live Online

ABSTRACT

This presentation provides an overview of the vital role that occupational therapy can play in community-based behavioral health settings. It illuminates the unique lens used by occupational therapists and how this approach empowers clients to build the skills necessary to function at their optimal level of health and independence in the community. Project Renewal's first-of-its kind OT Department will be referenced as an example of how behavioral health providers can incorporate OT into their continuum of services, and how doing so will enhance positive health and housing outcomes for their clients in extraordinary ways. A brief case study will be shared to highlight the relational nature of OT, and how our holistic, client-centered, and strength-based approach promotes connections to care and meaningful participation in activities of daily living

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Identify how functional skill deficits serve as barriers to recovery and contribute to increased risk of rehospitalization, re-incarceration, and homelessness.
2. Describe how occupation-based treatment supports wellness and recovery and strengthens a client's ability to remain safely housed in the community.
3. Explain strategies for integrating occupational therapy services into behavioral health settings and interdisciplinary team structures.

SPEAKER

Robin Kahan-Berman is an Occupational Therapist who has championed occupational therapy in the behavioral health sector for more than 30 years. Throughout her career she has spearheaded groundbreaking initiatives that allow underserved individuals across shelter, supportive housing, and drug user health settings to uniquely access occupational therapy treatment. Ms. Kahan-Berman began her tenure at Project Renewal in 2009, where she has since been the driving force behind a first-of-its kind Occupational Therapy Department and a nationally recognized Occupational Therapy Student Training Program, which is creating a pipeline of future occupational therapy leaders in behavioral health. An expert in program design and evaluation, she has developed and scaled the award-winning HOPE (Helping Older People Engage) program for older adults in supportive housing; the HART (High-Acuity Response Team) for medically complex individuals with co-occurring disorders in supportive housing; and several other mental health and substance use disorder interventions in congregate housing and shelter environments. These accomplishments have benefited from Ms. Kahan-Berman's commitment to cross-sectoral collaboration, including partnerships with community-based organizations, academic institutions, advocacy groups, public agencies, and private donors. Ms. Kahan-Berman is a Clinical Instructor at Columbia University; she earned her Ed.M. at Harvard University and her BS in occupational therapy at Tufts University.

REFERENCES

1. Marshall, C. A., Cooke, A., Gewurtz, R., Barbic, S., Roy, L., Ross, C., Becker, A., Lysaght, R., & Kirsh, B. (2021). Bridging the transition from homelessness: Developing an occupational therapy framework. *Scandinavian Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 30(7), 953-969. <https://doi.org/10.1080/11038128.2021.1962970>
2. Wasmuth, S., Crabtree, J. L., & Scott, P. J. (2014). Exploring Addiction-as-Occupation. *British Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 77(12), 605-613. <https://doi.org/10.4276/030802214x14176260335264>
3. Swarbrick, M., & Noyes, S. (2018). Effectiveness of occupational therapy services in mental health practice. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 72(5), 7205170010p1-7205170010p4. <https://doi.org/10.5014/ajot.2018.725001>

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