**Introduction**

Intergenerational programming (IGP) is a method of bringing older adults and children together to participate in activities for their mutual benefit. IGP is shown in the literature to be beneficial for the development of children and includes implications for sustaining the cognitive and emotional functioning of older adults (for a review see: Travis et al., 1998). When participating in group activities with one another, children have the ability to learn unique skills from older adults, and older adults have the ability to mentor the children, exercising the remaining cognitive abilities that they have left (Camp et al., 1997).

Overall, such activities would contribute to the psychological, emotional, and physical health of both children and older adults. Specifically, we seek to implement a multidimensional approach to reviewing IGP in relation to four distinct areas: social interactions among children and older adults, motor skill development, fall prevention, and cognition.

**Emotional Benefits for Children**

**Long-term benefits:**
- Femia and colleagues (2008) found that after one year of socializing with older adults in an IGP-based program, children (kindergarten – 2nd grade) had a higher level of:
  - Social acceptance
  - A greater willingness to help
  - Greater empathy for older adults
  - Slightly more-positive attitudes towards older adults compared to controls.

**Short-term benefits:**
- Gaggioli and colleagues (2014) found that older adults who took part in an IGP-based program once per week over a three-week span had a decreased level of loneliness, with children having a more positive perception of older adults:

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<th>Loneliness: Descriptive Statistics and Pre-Post Comparison</th>
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- Children’s perception of older adults:

**Joint Activities, Balance, and Strength**

28 to 35% of individuals over the age of 65 sustain at least one fall over a one-year period as a result of decreased motor functioning (Granacher, 2011). IGP can help reduce the risk of falls for older adults by increasing balance, strength, and coordination through shared activities with children.

**Cognitive Benefits for Older Adults with Dementia**

**Increased affect (Jarrott & Bruno, 2013):**
- Increased independence (Camp et al., 1997):
  - Older adults successfully taught children tasks used to promote independence (i.e., using tools)
  - Apathy was reduced
  - Children were proud of the skills that they had learned
  - Older adults displayed care and patience while teaching the children new skills

**The Importance of Interaction**

In a study conducted by Larkin and Newman (2001), older adults who participated in IGP activities with children found themselves taking on a familial, grandparental role with the children. The following familial behaviors were observed:

- Positive encouragement, for the children and for teachers
- Modeling of skills for children to imitate
- Bonding with particular children
- Promoting language development (e.g., new vocabulary, other languages)
- Preparing food and helping with housekeeping tasks
- Encouraging good manners
- Assisting children with personal hygiene
- Offering hospitality to visitors
- A sense of humor and appreciation for young people

**The Proposed Program**

Our IGP-focused facility would model after a long-term care center for dependent older adults that would include a memory care unit, as well as an assisted living and skilled nursing facility. Within the long-term care center, we would include a daycare center for children ages six weeks to five years. Parents would drop off their children at the daycare center during daytime hours.

Groups of older adults with and without cognitive impairments would be scheduled to participate in activities with the children several times per day. Activities would be planned and monitored by child and adult care staff.

Some of these activities may include:
- Completing crafts
- Playing games
- Reading
- Cooking and baking activities
- Completion of activities of daily living
- Group exercise activities

**Program Benefits**

- Promotes independence, physical health, and well-being
- Helps reduce negative stereotypes
- Positive mentoring for children
- Decreases risk of falls among older adults
- Promotes positive social interactions
- Fosters and preserves adequate motor skill development

**Practical Considerations**

**Social dynamics:**
Intergenerational communication is maximized when activities are centered around an achievable task (as opposed to task-oriented activities). Activities must also be developmentally appropriate for both groups.

**Care providers:**
Direct care workers must foster collaboration among groups of children and older adults. Employees also need to be licensed and cardipulmonary resuscitation (CPR) certified, and must be able to meet the emotional and physical needs of both populations.

**Group exercise precautions:**
Group exercise activities must be monitored by certified personal trainers in order to ensure the safety of both the children and older adults. They must also be available to teach proper exercise techniques.

**Funding:**
Consideration must be given to Medicare and Medicaid requirements.

**References**


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