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FOR MORE INFORMATION

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Sinnissippi Centers New Sensory Room

Sensory rooms can be “a step above” traditional therapy for some clients

(Rochelle, IL)

Sinnissippi Centers' Rochelle office now has a sensory room that can be used for clients of all ages. Sensory rooms are spaces that have been specifically designed to give an immersive sensory experience for people with a variety of needs. The size and features of a sensory space will differ depending on the user and their needs. The main benefit of sensory rooms is that they are a humane and effective way for individuals to manage their stress levels and negative thoughts and emotions.

A sensory room typically uses lights, sound, colors, and other sensory cues to calm, engage, and help users to develop emotionally and cognitively. They are designed to help users engage with their senses, touch, sight, hearing, and reap the benefits of sensory stimulation in a safe and relaxed environment, regardless of their age or ability.

“We created a sensory room based on my personal experience with my son’s occupational therapy,” says Sarah Schulfer-Popp, Area Office Manager at Sinnissippi Centers’ Rochelle office. “It was created around the idea that many children and adults may be seeking sensory stimulation and this makes it hard to concentrate on anything else internally,” adds Schulfer-Popp. “Once my son started occupational therapy, his language started to develop rapidly as his sensory needs were being met. He is now a happy and extremely chatty 5 year old.”

“By creating a place where clients can experience increased sensory input, controlled, they are better able to free up internal resources to work on attention, focus, social skills, anxiety, and even other coping skills,” adds Schulfer-Popp.

In addition, a sensory room also creates a calm and safe environment for clients to have their sessions. “Kids have loved it so far, and I have taken one adult into the sensory room and she opened up more than she had before,” says Schulfer-Popp. “We had low lights, she sat on the bean bag, and had a weighted blanket on her. Her subjective report was that she feels safe in my office, but the sensory room was a step above that,” adds Schulfer-Popp.

The sensory room at the Rochelle Office features a Lycra swing, a crash pad, fiber optic lights, tap lights, wall panels, a felt story board, a bean bag to sit on, chairs with exercise balls in them, weighted blankets, weighted vests, social and emotional games, sensory bins, as well as some other things like a puppet theater, a calm down jar, a white noise machine with meditation exercises on it.

While sensory rooms are newer to behavioral health, they are supported by peer reviewed research and are readily endorsed by the Joint Commission (the nation’s oldest and largest standards and accrediting body in healthcare) and are being promoted by the National Technical Assistance Center, a division of the National Association for State Mental Health Program Directors.

Sinnissippi Centers operates two outpatient offices and a residential facility in Ogle County and is looking for office space to expand outpatient services in Northwestern Ogle County.

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