

Introduction to Level 7: “Out the Door”

Level 7 is the “Community Re-Entry” phase of rehabilitation. People in this situation are classified as mild tbi or post-concussive syndrome (PCS). They are typically seen in outpatient settings, vocational settings and community programs. Frequently those at this level are ambulatory and need to be able to leave the home or building to make their way in the community.

People at this level are aware of their cognitive deficits and are seeking ways to overcome those deficits by learning to use compensatory techniques. This phase of rehabilitation often requires long term intervention and accommodations so they person can resume their original role in life.

In the cognitive literature these activities are included in the category route-finding, path-finding , way finding. It is much more interesting to do route finding activities in the real world instead of simulation on a map or worksheet while seating in an office. Of course there are several other ways of navigating other than using a map – reading signs, attending to landmarks, using GPS, seeking directions from others - so these methods need to be evaluated during Level 7 activities.

Important to be socially appropriately to interact effectively in community settings. Safety is a major focus as people navigate sidewalks and roadways.

Overall goal: Navigate safely and efficiently in community settings as necessary to resume prior role in life

Level 7 performance characteristics according to 3 global elements:

- Interpersonal: asks appropriate people for help, articulates cognitive deficits, adjusts behaviour as needed
- Environmental: uses maps to locate unfamiliar places, cues to plan efficient route,
- Time: does time critical tasks first, estimates time for tasks accurately, adjusts work speed to meet time limits

Treatment activities at this level:

- “Community Scavenger Hunt”: navigate to establishments in the community to carry out complex tasks

Level 7 Goals:

- Interpersonal: admits he is lost or needs help, anticipates consequences of decisions on outings
- Environmental: plans efficient route to unfamiliar destination, attends to surroundings for safety
- Time: revises time schedule as necessary, estimates travel time during outing

Conducting sessions at Level 7

- The therapist pre-plans an outing (or scavenger hunt) and instructs the person to carry out the outing as independently as possible.
- Along the way the therapist coaches the person as to using compensatory techniques for safety, efficiency, social appropriateness
- Scavenger hunts in the community is the ultimate test of visual scanning.
- The activities can be graded in many ways - The person could plan a route one way – then find an alternative back.
- Maps can be provided or verbal directions dictated at the start of the session
- Talking with the person along the way in a natural manner can be a good way to determine if there are problems with attention.
- Multiple tasks can be incorporated into the activity such as calling someone to ask for something to pick up at the store or purchasing items.
- Using and keeping track of external compensatory devices such as phones, notebooks, checklists, clipboards are a realistic way of determining if a compensatory technique that works in the clinic will work in the real world;