Better Futures

Adrienne Croskey, MSW: Graduate Research Assistant

Charlie McNeely, BS: Near-Peer Coach

Breanna Bell: Youth Expert

Jessica Schmidt, MSW, PhD: Researcher

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Goal of the Project: Implement and test a comprehensive intervention to assist young people in foster care with serious mental health stressors to prepare for and participate in post-secondary education.
BACKGROUND:

- Casey Alumni Study found that over half of former foster youth have diagnosed mental health problems (Pecora, 2005).

- In Oregon, 70% of youth had a DSM diagnosis (Hogensen, J., 2007).

- 70-80% of youth in foster care and youth with serious mental health conditions aspire to go to college (McMillen, et al., 2003; Wagner, et al., 2007, Courtney, et al., 2004).

- Only 20% of youth in FC and 34% of youth with MH conditions enroll and attend college (Wolanin, 2005, Wagner et al., 2007).
**Better Futures**

**DESIGN:**

- Youth randomly assigned to Community As Usual (CAU) or intervention group
- Youth enrolled in 3 waves
- Intervention components include individual coaching sessions, summer institute and mentoring workshops
- Youth assessed 4 times
  - T1: 0 months
  - T2: 1.5 months (post SI),
  - T3: 9 months (post tx),
  - T4: 18 months (9 month follow along)
PARTICIPANTS:
Sixty-seven youth who:
- Currently are in foster care
- Experience a serious mental health condition
- Live in targeted geography
- Open to the idea of college

Wave 1:
17 youth, 10 intervention, 7 control

Wave 2:
25 youth, 15 intervention, 10 control

Wave 3:
25 youth, 11 intervention, 14 control

Overall Attrition: 9%
PARTICIPANTS: Race/Ethnicity

Control (n=31)

- Hispanic: 32%
- Native American: 16%
- African American: 10%
- Caucasian: 3%
- Multi-Ethnic: 0%

TX (n=36)

- Hispanic: 39%
- Native American: 8%
- African American: 6%
- Caucasian: 17%
- Multi-Ethnic: 22%
PARTICIPANTS: Placement Types

Control
- Non-Relative: 64%
- Kinship: 26%
- Group/Res: 7%
- Other (Independent): 3%

TX
- Non-Relative: 28%
- Kinship: 8%
- Group/Res: 0%
- Other (Independent): 0%
PARTICIPANTS: School Status

Control

- Sophomore: 3%
- Junior: 46%
- Senior: 50%

TX

- Sophomore: 3%
- Junior: 61%
- Senior: 36%

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# Better Futures

## PARTICIPANTS: Mental Health and Disability Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Control</th>
<th>Tx</th>
<th>All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Taking mental health medication %</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>48.6</td>
<td>39.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receiving mental health services %</td>
<td>64.5</td>
<td>72.2</td>
<td>68.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receiving special education services %</td>
<td>41.9</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td>35.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receiving developmental disability services %</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Intervention in more detail

Summer Institute:

• 10 to 15 youth, 2 Foster All-Stars and Staff
• 3 nights/4 Days in Dorms at Portland State University
• Partnership with PCC
• Daily Panels, Tours of PCC & PSU, Activities, and Workshops
• Evening Activities and Dinner

Mentoring Workshops:

• Bi monthly with 5 total
• Various panels of college students and transition agencies
• Potential topics include essay writing, wellness tools, field trips, allies, college supports, strategic disclosure, ILP and graduation timelines
• Meeting foster care alumni and adult allies
The Intervention in more detail

Near Peer Coaching:

• Minimum 2x per month for 9 months
• Meet with the youth in their environment
• Peer support and collaborative problem solving
• Self determination and empowerment lens
• Build relationships, offer resources and support
• Youth directed on their personally valued goals
• Skill building and experiential activities
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Major Strength of the Model is Near-Peer Support

Coaches are in college/voc. school and have lived experience with foster care and/or mental health

- Knowledge, credibility, experience
- Modeling through experiential activities
- Multi-level empowerment

Training and Support

- Role clarity and boundaries
- Strategic disclosure
- Self Care
Fidelity

Average number of total hours spent in active coaching: 27.37 hours

Average Experiential Time: 9.31 hours
Experiential time = supporting the youth to participate in an activity to take action toward a goal

Average Didactic Time: 7.13 hours
Didactic time = assist the youth to identify and work toward his or her goal; one-to-one time when you are talking about goals, barriers, and strategies, planning, etc.

Average Relational Time: 10.92 hours
Relational time = “getting to know you or catching up” time that do not relate to the youth goals or activities
Fidelity

11 skills could be introduced; fidelity across the 3 waves = 99.5%

17 experiences; fidelity = 89.7%

Average number of mentoring workshops attended: 3.47
Youth feedback on the coaching:

- It helped because we could talk about anything in life.
- Most of the time my coach could relate to what I've gone through.
- It did help me gain some more understanding of them as well as build trust. I could talk and open up to them as a result.
- It is easier to relate when the experiences are similar.
- It seemed like she knew what she was talking about.
- Nice to relate to you (the coach) and not an outside source.
- Someone who can relate. I mean, I think if you don't have someone who can relate it doesn't feel that comfortable or that much helpful.
Breanna’s feedback on the coaching:

- One of my goals was to learn to drive.

- I practiced with my near peer coach Charlie during our coaching sessions.

- My coach helped me get access to a car so that I could take my drivers test.

- I passed the test and accomplished my goal!

- Accomplishing this goal helped me as a college student because it was much easier for me to get to class since my campus is far away from where I live.
Youth feedback on the Summer Institute:

![Bar chart showing feedback on usefulness, enjoyment, interest, preparation, and confidence. The chart indicates a high level of positive feedback, with a lot of respondents indicating 'a lot' in each category.]

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Outcome measures

- Educational, employment, living status
- Self-determination (Arc, AIR)
- Mental Health (YEES, MHRM, YSR)
- Quality of Life
- Hope (Hopelessness Scale for Children)
- Post-secondary and transition planning (CDSE, ABE, TPA, post-secondary prep survey)
Outcome measures

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Results

AIR Self Determination

Mean Score

Time 1 | Time 2 | Time 3 | Time 4
---|---|---|---
Control | | | |
Treatment | | | |

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Results

Youth Efficacy/Empowerment Scale

Mean Score

Control

Treatment

Time 1
Time 2
Time 3
Time 4

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Results

Mental Health Recovery Measure

Control
Treatment

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Results

Quality of Life Scale

Mean Score

Time 1  Time 2  Time 3  Time 4

Control  Treatment

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Results

Hopelessness Scale

![Graph showing Hopelessness Scale with Time 1, Time 2, Time 3, and Time 4 on the x-axis and Mean Score on the y-axis. The graph compares Control and Treatment groups. The Control group shows an increasing trend, while the Treatment group remains relatively stable.]
Results

Career Decision Self-Efficacy Scale

- Mean Score

Time 1, Time 2, Time 3, Time 4

Control
Treatment

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Results

Assessing Barriers to Education

- Control
- Treatment

Time 1 | Time 2 | Time 3 | Time 4

Mean Score

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Results

Post-secondary Preparation

Mean Score

Time 1  Time 2  Time 3  Time 4

Control

Treatment

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Results

Transition Planning Assessment

- Control
- Treatment

Mean Score

Time 1
Time 2
Time 3
Time 4

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Enrollment in postsecondary at T4 (all)

- **Intervention**
  - 4-year: 40
  - Vocational: 10
  - Community: 50

- **Control**
  - 4-year: 20
  - Vocational: 0
  - Community: 30

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Enrollment in postsecondary (Seniors/GED)
Team Reflections on Better Futures

• What are the team’s experiences around Better Futures?
• What feedback, suggestions for improvement do you have?
• What have we learned from implementing this model? What do we keep, what do we change?
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Next Steps:

• Continued dissemination of Better Futures
• New Pathways submission
• Grant submissions for replication of Better Futures

Questions?
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