Self-Determination for All!
Supporting the self-determination and transition outcomes of young adults with serious mental health challenges

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Self Determination

Research and Training Center for Pathways to Positive Futures

- Increase visibility for transition-aged youth with mental health challenges

- Eight research studies, including three randomized control trials

- Website, blogs, interventions, publications, tools

- Discussing two projects today, both developed by co-principle investigators, Laurie Powers and Sarah Geenen.
Goal of the Better Futures Project- Implement and test a comprehensive intervention to assist young people in foster care with a serious mental health diagnosis prepare for and participate in post-secondary education.

Goal of the My Life Project- to test an intervention to enhance the self-determination of youth in foster care by promoting transition outcomes.
Self Determination for All!

- It is estimated that between 70% and 80% of adults with mental health diagnoses are unemployed. (The National Longitudinal Transition Study, NLTS, 2009)

- Found that only about 63% of students who received special education services for an “emotional” disability had held a job in the four years after leaving high school. (The National Longitudinal Transition Study, NLTS, 2009)

- In the U.S., 400,540 youth are in foster care each year. (Children’s Bureau, 2011)

- About 40% of foster youth are in special education (emotional/behavioral disabilities are most common)

- Casey Alumni Study found that over half of former foster youth have diagnosed mental health problems (Pecora, 2005). In Oregon, we found that 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, C., 2003)

- Only 20% of youth in FC and 34% of youth with MH conditions actually attend (Wagner M., 2007)

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A System to Navigate for youth with MH Challenges

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DESIGN:

- Youth randomly assigned to Community As Usual (CAU) or intervention group

- Youth enrolled in waves

- Intervention components include individual coaching sessions using the peer coach model,
  *Summer Institute and mentoring workshops

- Youth will be assessed during time in project

*Better Futures only

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Randomized intervention with participants who are:

- Currently in foster care
- Experience a serious mental health condition and/or disability
- Live in targeted geography
- Open to the idea of college or working on goals
- Open to having a coach
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PROJECT OUTCOME GOALS:

- Mental Health
- Postsecondary Preparation/Participation
- Employment/Career Engagement
- Recovery/Quality of Life
- Social Support
- Self Determination
INTERVENTION:

Summer Institute *:
- 10 to 15 youth, 2 Foster All-Stars and Staff
- 3 nights/4 Days in Dorms at Portland State University
- Daily Panels, Tours, 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 and resumes and job hunting

Peer Coaching:
- Minimum 2x a month to weekly for 1 year
- 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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Peer Coaching:

- Skills (problem solving, hanging tough, narrowing goals)
- Experiential Activities (completing FAFSA, exploring resources on internet, investigating mental health supports, informational interview to explore career area)
- Information (application time line, scholarships, youth let meetings)
- Minimum 2x per month to once a week
- Advantages to the Peer Coach Model
Self Determination definitions:

-Acting as the primary causal agent in one’s life and making choices and decisions regarding one’s quality of life free from undue external influence or interference. (Wehmeyer, 1996)

-Self-directed action to achieve personally valued goals. (Powers et al, 1996)

-The ability of individuals to control their lives, to achieve self-defined goals and to participate fully in society.

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Our definition:

- **Information** to be able to make decisions
- **Opportunities** to do activities, take risks
- **Support** from trusted others
- **Self-direction / other-direction skill**
- Incorporate accommodations as universal rather than special strategies
- Believe in *youths’ capacities and rights* to be self-determining and have typical lives, regardless of labels
- Use *strength based* theories and practices
- **Include** youth in decision making
- **Nothing** about them without them
Coaching Approach:

- Work through the students, not around them
- Respect individual differences in learning and maturity
- Help youth learn how to direct support
- Keep communication open and positive
- Recognize student-initiated goals and support them
- Interpret lack of follow-through as a need for more support
- Support youth around youth-directed goal development and achievement.

coaching vs. training

- Assist, encourage and challenge youth to successfully apply generic strategies to achieve personally-valued goals
Coaching Approach continued:

- Youth has mastery experiences
- Achieving bite-size goals
- Managing problems
- Academic success
- Youth attributes success to what s/he did and builds confidence
- Youth increases support network
- Strategies become “imprinted” in youth’s consciousness
- Learns about resources and accommodations
- Learning in a natural setting
- Building Partnerships
- Informed decision making

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Training and Support for Peer Coaches

- Coaches are in college/voc. school and have lived experience with foster care and mental health
- Knowledge, credibility, experience
- Modeling through experiential activities
- Multi-level empowerment
- Symbiotic Relationship
- Role Clarity and boundaries
- Strategic disclosure
- Vicarious Trauma and Self Care

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Questions for Melissa

• What gives you a sense of purpose and joy in your life?

• What was some barriers in your life that made it difficult to meet your goals and reach that sense of purpose?

• Talk about your experience in Better Futures. What were some highlights for you?

• How did your coach help you meet your goals?

• How was this program different from other support you have had in the past?

• Suggestions for providers on how best to assist youth to be successful?
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Alex:

• Proactive in regards to taking himself to Independent Living Program and getting a mentor

• Keeps going strong even when faced with difficult times

• Finished resume and cover letter and looked for a job

• Didn't know he needed a transition plan, and after talking about it, asked his caseworker about it and now attends ILP meetings

• Starting to take charge of his life (finishing high school, starting college, and obtaining accommodations such as ILP and a long-term mentor)

“I finally have someone to talk to who knows where I’m coming from and who won’t judge me”-Alex
Troy:

- Grades have gone up and graduated from high school
- Finished scholarships and financial aid applications, applied and got a job
- Finished college application, placement testing, and had scheduled to meet with his program’s advisor and is now in his second year of college

“My grades are good. I actually got an A and some B’s and NO D’s! and I feel a little bit more motivated. I like the snacks we get when working on stuff and keeps me coming back! Oh and the help with college stuff is cool too” - Troy
“Things People Never Told Me”

-Bills need to be paid every month

-Good to use a budget. If you master a budget, anything is possible!

-Apply to subsidized housing and for food stamps

-Buy a folder to keep track of all of your important paperwork!

-Finding your “community” or a place where you belong is key to surviving on your own. Creating a support system of like-minded people (people like you who like what you like) is important. You can also be part of many different communities for all the different parts of you.

-Go to school! Ask for accommodations and support when needed.

-It’s okay to feel lost. It’s okay to feel confused. It’s okay to be scared. It’s okay to cry when you’re frustrated. You’re not the only one experiencing these feelings. You’re not “crazy” even if you feel “crazy”. Call someone, go for a walk, draw (even if you think you can’t), write, listen to music (Pandora is an excellent choice!), and take a break to breathe.

-Health Care is important! Get checkups, utilize therapy and mental health services, get advice and information from reliable sources, etc. You are eligible for Chafee Medical - ask your case worker or ILP worker about it.
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Coaching Outcomes:

- Self-Determination and Self Efficacy
- Success in School/Community
- Development of Positive Support Systems
- Understanding Options and Responsibility
- Active in Futures Planning
- Making Informed Decisions about Life Directions
- Using Information, Skills and Opportunity to put life on track
- Positive Transition Outcomes
- Skills to achieve success
- Information to make informed decisions
- Support for independent action
- Opportunity to act on one’s own behalf
- Positive self-attribution
- Personal achievement

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Positive Outcomes:

- Inclusion and Interdependence
- Builds through mastery including learning how to manage challenges
- Young people with high self-determination are more likely to be employed and live independently (regardless of severity of disabilities or MH condition).
- Youth has mastery experiences
- Managing problems and achieving goals
- Academic success
- Youth attributes success to what s/he did and builds confidence
- Youth increases support network
- Strategies become “imprinted” in youth’s consciousness

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Ideas and Suggestions:

- Convey respect and appreciation for the young person and their culture(s)
- Is driven by perspectives and priorities of the young person. Is transparent but also “motivational” toward youth.
- Promote self-determination, self-efficacy (and related skills), and hopefulness
- Avoid coercion / ensure processes are transparent
- Create an environment that feels safe and predictable, but also allows for some level of experimentation and failure
- Include youth in program development, advisory boards and direct service
- Affirm and respect young people’s perspectives and experiences

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Ideas and Suggestions continued:

- Build skills and experience for adult roles: Education, employment, social skills, independent living
- Ensure that activities, therapy, classes feel relevant to personally meaningful goals (though goals can change)
- Focus as much on process as outcomes
- Functioning more important than diagnosis or clinical assessment per se
- Build positive connections to family, peers, community
- Interventions/approaches should be evidence supported to the extent possible
- Be transparent and instill trust
- Help them find that sense of purpose
- Make it joyful and fun
www.pathwaysrtc.pdx.edu – Pathways RTC

http://www.rri.pdx.edu/ - Regional Research Institute

http://www.pathwaysrtc.pdx.edu/pdf/fpS13.pdf - Focal Point

http://www.pathwaysrtc.pdx.edu/pdf/proj2-ThingsNoOneToldMe.pdf - Things people never told Me

http://www.fosterclub.com/ - FosterClub

http://www.youthmovenational.org/ - Youth Move

http://vimeo.com/37129686 - Project Youth Video
Questions?

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