Using Research to Improve Practice with Young People with Mental Health Needs: A U.S. Perspective

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Research Methods

- Consultation with advisory groups of youth and young adults aged 17-24 to plan study.
- Recruited 59 participants with self-disclosed mental health conditions and diverse racial identities to participate in focus groups:
  - 36 males
  - 23 females
  - Age range 15-28 (mean 19.5, SD 2.45)
- Trained youth researchers (who had experience with mental health services) facilitated 12 90-minute focus groups with questions focused on community integration and experiences with services.
- Discussions were audio-taped, transcribed, and analyzed.
Findings

Positive experiences with mental health services were related to:

◦ Practical assistance
◦ Independent living skills
◦ Provision of advocacy and leadership training

Positive relationships with service providers were associated with their personal qualities:

◦ Showed they cared, friendly
◦ Were honest, genuine
◦ Conveyed hope
◦ Had personal experiences of difficulties
Findings

- Negative experiences with mental health services were linked with:
  - Lack of information and access to support
  - Inappropriate diagnoses and services
  - Concerns about confidentiality
  - Inflexible services -- Loss of supports at age 18

- Poor relationships with service providers were associated with:
  - Not being heard
  - Discouraging attitudes about youth aspirations
  - Lack of involvement in decisions
  - Not believing service providers had their interests at heart.
The Pathways Transition Training Collaborative (PTTC) is a national advisory committee of young people with mental health service experience, family members, and service providers and researchers focused on developing research-based training for service providers:

- Developed core competencies.
- Offered graduate social work course
- Pilot-testing free 8-module asynchronous online training program that features narrated slides, video clips of young people, service providers, and family members, and interactive questions.
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<tr>
<th>Training Module Themes</th>
<th>Content</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>1. Partnering with youth and young adults</strong></td>
<td>Reviews core competencies gives an overview of the training series&lt;br&gt;Provides tools for collaborative relationships using positive development and empowerment approaches.</td>
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<td><strong>2. Promoting recovery</strong></td>
<td>Offers basic information on mental illness and resources for recovery, including diet, exercise, medication, peer support, and self-advocacy.</td>
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<td><strong>3. Meeting the needs of diverse young people</strong></td>
<td>Teaches skills to provide culturally responsive supports for young people from diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds</td>
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<td><strong>4. Providing individualized and developmentally appropriate services</strong></td>
<td>Features research findings about brain development and trauma specific to young adults&lt;br&gt;Addresses the implications for interventions.</td>
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<td><strong>5. Developing healthy relationships</strong></td>
<td>Focuses on strategies to overcome stigmatization and develop and maintain healthy relationships. Addresses the specific needs of LGTBQ young people.</td>
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<td><strong>6. Planning partnerships with providers of other services and collaborating to bridge service gaps</strong></td>
<td>Addresses attitudes and skills for cross-systems collaboration and strategies to overcome service gaps. Includes steps to obtaining accommodations.</td>
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<td><strong>7. Promoting support from family, peers, and mentors</strong></td>
<td>Offers strategies to promote and maintain support from family and peers.</td>
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<td><strong>8. Using evidence-supported practices and individualizing interventions</strong></td>
<td>Examines the features of best practices with young people based on positive youth development.</td>
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*Note. Competencies based on Jivanjee, Brennan, & Sellmaier (2012).*
Acknowledgments

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  - Eileen Brennan, Ph.D.
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  - Pathways Transition Training Collaborative members
  - Nicole Aue, Goutam Saha, and Martin Rafferty.

- See Pathways website for more information:
  - www.pathwaysrtc.pdx.edu/proj-trainingcollaborative.shtm