NAVIGATING THE TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD: SELF-ASSESSMENT OF SERVICE PROVIDER COMPETENCIES

PRESENTERS

Pauline Jivanjee, Ph.D., Co-Principal Investigator, Pathways Transition Training Collaborative, Research and Training Center for Pathways to Positive Futures, Portland State University

Eileen Brennan, Ph.D., Co-Principal Investigator, Pathways Transition Training Collaborative, Research and Training Center for Pathways to Positive Futures, Portland State University

Eliz Roser, Ph.D., Graduate Research Assistant, Pathways Transition Training Collaborative, Research and Training Center for Pathways to Positive Futures, Portland State University

Portland State UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT

The goal of the proposed presentation is to:

• describe the development of a self-assessment of direct service competencies

• to present findings on the effectiveness of the curriculum using this tool.

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Compared to other young people, those with serious mental health conditions have the most discouraging outcomes related to graduation from high school and engagement in post-secondary education, paid employment, and stable housing (Clark & Unruh, 2009; Wade & Dixon, 2006). They are also more at risk for substance abuse, early pregnancy, and involvement in juvenile and criminal justice in the transition years, and outcomes are even poorer for young people of color (Cross, Friesen, & Maher, 2007; Vander Stoep, Davis, & Collins, 2000). These difficulties are compounded by lack of access to evidence-supported developmentally appropriate programs (Jivanjee, Kruzich, & Gordon, 2007) and the need for well-trained service providers (Clark & Unruh, 2009).

PATHWAYS TRANSITION TRAINING COLLABORATIVE

A national advisory group of young adults, family members, and interdisciplinary representatives of universities, organizations and agencies that serve young people with serious mental health conditions and their families was created. This community of practice identified ten core competencies for service providers, which became the basis of a course offered to graduate social work students.

TRANSITION COURSE

The course focuses on developing skills for practice with young people with serious mental health conditions and their families across service systems (Williams & Sherr, 2009; Wolf-Branigin, Schuyler, & White, 2007). The course, "Improving Youth Transitions" was co-taught in Fall 2010 at Portland State University by a social work instructor, a young man with experience using mental health services, and a disability services coordinator who is a parent of a young adult with a serious mental health condition.

DEVELOPMENT OF SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL

Based on a literature search and consultation with the community of practice, the ten core competencies were used to generate a set of 15 items related to transition service provider activities. Following Bandura's (2006) procedure for constructing self-efficacy scales, students were asked to indicate their confidence level for successfully performing each task from 0 = "very little confidence" to 100 = "quite a lot of confidence." Students (n = 24) completed the instrument before receiving any class content, and completed the post-test on the final day of class (n = 14). Differences between pre- and post-test competency scores were determined using t-tests.

DATA

PRETEST

At pretest, students reported some confidence in their ability to perform transition-related tasks (average of 15 items; M = 57.5, SD = 16.1). Mean pretest scores ranged from a low of 43.13 (apply knowledge about mental health) to a high of 75.68 (communicate with diverse youth, families). The scale had high internal consistency as a measure of transition provider competencies (Cronbach's α = .94.).

QUALITATIVE DATA

The qualitative data was sorted into four categories as follows.

• Strengths
  » Great course, *very informational*
  » Please keep great speakers and instructors like (youth and family co-instructors)
  » Presenters gave great resources for youth!
• Areas of knowledge and/or practice skills to be added or strengthened in the course.
  » Knowledge of more transition age services in Portland
  » Actually seeing an IEP and ITP
  » More case studies, more discussion about diversity, more about actual tools to engage families
  » More YOUTH perspectives and what helped them (speakers could be youth or adults who went through the transition)
• What could be left out?
  » Reading facilitation.
  » Less time establishing the problem that exists… most of us took this class because we already see the problem.
  » The day about diagnoses could be shortened a little
• Any additional suggestions for changes and improvements?
  » Less lecturing, more discussion around reading and examples of working with youth in practice.
  » More hands-on application
  » Movies

POSTTEST

COMPETENCY	PRE-MEAN	POST-MEAN	SIG
1: Engage youth as collaborators	65.7143	84.6429	.006
2: Participate in advocacy	51.4286	81.4286	.002
3: Identify and challenge stigma	61.4286	85.5714	.002
4: Advocate for policies that respect rights and dignity	55.7143	86.0714	.001
5: Work with youth to challenge oppressive structure	51.4286	82.5000	.001
6: Form partnerships with families and providers	62.8571	83.9286	.003
7: Facilitate development and implementation of service plan	62.5000	87.5000	.003
8: Collaborate with young people to meet their needs	68.5714	87.8571	.013
9: Apply knowledge about mental health	48.5714	81.7857	.001
10: Build working relationships across systems	63.5714	81.4286	.011
11: Build on capacity of family members, peers, and mentors	68.5714	82.5000	.009
12: Communicate with diverse youth and families	75.0000	82.8571	.147
13: Sensitivity to preferences of diverse groups	69.6429	86.7857	.019
14: Evaluation of transition services	64.2857	82.8571	.003
15: Participate in program evaluation and research	63.5714	86.7857	.001

COURSE IMPROVEMENTS AND CURRICULUM ADAPTATION

Many of the suggestions offered by students will be implemented when the course is offered again in the fall of 2011. The instructors feature more programs that are local so that students have a better understanding of area-specific services. The content of the course will also offer more concrete examples for students, such as a sample IEP or transition plan. Students will also have more opportunities to practice skills through role-playing. Additionally, the assignments will be modified, as they were perhaps too demanding in the original syllabus. Lastly, the instructors will spend less time on describing the scope of the struggles that young adults and families face, and more time on practice competencies and how service providers can be helpful.

The students responded very positively to the co-teaching model, and the course will be taught again in this manner. The majority of feedback from the students was positive, and that they learned something to better serve youth and young adults with serious mental health conditions.

CONCLUSION

NEXT STEPS

The PTTC project will be developing training modules using materials from the transition course. The modules will be offered both in person and online, and will help train service providers in offering positive support services to young adults with serious mental health conditions.

Members from the Pathways Transition Training Collaborative are currently developing, along with project staff, training modules in the areas of medication and family involvement. Modules about post-secondary supports and employment will be developed in the following year.

REFERENCES

Arnett, J. J. (2003). Conceptions of the transition to adulthood among emerging adults in American ethnic groups. *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development, 100,* 63–75.

Bandura, A. (2006). Guide for constructing self-efficacy scales. In F. Pajares & T. Urdan (Eds.), *Self-efficacy beliefs of adolescents* (pp.307-337). Greenwich, CT: Information Age Publishing.

Clark, H. B., & Unruh, D. K. (2009). Understanding and addressing the needs of transition-aged youth and young adults and their families. In H. B. Clark & D. K. Unruh (Eds.), *Transition of youth and young adults with emotional or behavioral difficulties: An evidence-supported handbook* (pp. 3-22). Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.

Cross, T. L., Friesen, B. J., & Maher, N. (2007). Successful strategies for improving the lives of American Indian and Alaska Native youth and families. *Focal Point: Research, Policy, and Practice in Children's Mental Health: Effective Interventions for Underserved Populations, 21*(2), 10-13.

Jivanjee, P., Kruzich, J., & Gordon, L. J. (2007). Community integration of transition-aged individuals: Views of young adults with mental health disorders. *The Journal of Behavioral Health Services & Research, 35,* 402-418.

Vander Stoep, A., Davis, M., & Collins, D. (2000). Transition: A time of development and institutional clashes. In H. B. Clark & M. Davis (Eds.), *Transition to adulthood: A resource for assisting young people with emotional or behavioral difficulties* (pp. 3-28). Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.

Wade, J. & Dixon, J. (2006). Making a home, finding a job: investigating early housing and employment outcomes for young people leaving care. *Child and Family Social Work, 11,* 199–208.

Williams, N. J., & Sherr, M. E. (2009) Children's psychosocial rehabilitation: Clinical outcomes for youth with serious emotional disturbance living in foster care. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal. 26*(3), 225-234.

Wolf-Branigin, M., Schuyler, V. & White, P. (2007). Improving quality of life and career attitudes of youth with disabilities. *Research on Social Work Practice, 17*(3), 324-333.