

The AMP+ Skills Enhancement Training for Peer Support Providers

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The existing research literature identifies a number of key challenges to successful implementation of the Peer Support Specialist (PSS) role for youth and young adults with serious mental health conditions. Among the top challenges are a lack of clarity regarding the role and its specific activities, and a lack of high-quality, developmentally appropriate training and coaching to support the role.

Pathways RTC is exploring a response to these challenges by developing and testing an enhancement for the youth/young adult peer support role called *AMP+*. *AMP+* is intended to be an “enhancement” that complements other, more general trainings that PSSs may have received. *AMP+* focuses on building skills that PSSs need to support young people as they identify and carry out goals, plans, and activities in the community. *AMP+* responds to the challenges noted above by providing: a clear model for practice and reliable fidelity assessment; comprehensive training and coaching via the internet so as to comply with best practices while keeping costs down; training and coaching provided by peers experienced in these roles; and, a clear definition of skills related to “peerness” (i.e., the ways that peer support roles differ from other provider roles, and the how the unique aspects of these roles contribute to outcomes).

AMP+ is an adaptation and extension of the [empirically-supported Achieve My Plan](#) enhancement (i.e., “original” AMP) that is designed to be implemented by (non-peer) providers who work with youth and young adults to build self-determination and create person-centered plans (e.g., transition, treatment, Wraparound or other types of service/support plans). A randomized study showed that AMP was effective in building youths’ self-determination skills, engagement, and participation and alliance with the treatment team.

AMP+ was adapted from the original AMP intervention in a process in which researchers collaborated with young people who worked as PSSs. *AMP+* is delivered online to trainees in cohorts of about 5-15 PSS trainees. The training includes interactive web conferences spaced across several months. Between the web conferences, PSS trainees complete

homework assignments that include accessing an online clip library to view examples of expert—and not-so-expert—practice. PSS trainees also upload video recordings of their work with youth or young adults, and receive individualized feedback and coaching based on a reliable scoring system.

Pathways recently completed a pilot study of the *AMP+* enhancement. Findings show significant improvements in PSS trainee competencies for working with youth/young adults as assessed by raters' ratings of PSS practice in video recordings, and as assessed subjectively by the PSS trainees themselves.

Competencies were assessed in four general areas: using a youth-/young adult-driven approach, promoting skills, using a strengths approach (significant improvement in self-assessment only), and understanding the peer role. Additionally, PSS trainees' ratings showed a significant decrease in work-based anxiety, and they were also highly satisfied with the training/coaching experience. In future work, Pathways' staff plan to build on these findings by assessing the impact of *AMP+* on youth and young adult outcomes.

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