

Promoting Positive Pathways to Adulthood: Outcomes of an Online Training Program for Transition Service Providers

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To improve outcomes for young people with mental health needs, transition service providers require competencies grounded in research, with training designed to support applications in practice. Increasingly online platforms have been used to deliver cost-effective, convenient, and engaging service provider training with a variety of learning approaches.

Promoting Positive Pathways to Adulthood (PPPA)

is a research-based 10-module online program developed to increase the competencies of transition service providers.¹ PPPA was designed to foster mastery of core competencies for effective transition service provision, identified through literature searches, and refined by a collaborative group of service providers, researchers, young people, and family support providers.² Additionally, since organizational support is important for effective training, a toolkit of practice exercises was developed for staff teams working through PPPA, guided by their team leader.³

The training outcomes of PPPA were compared for two groups of service providers from 19 organizations randomly assigned to Group 1 (online training only) or Group 2 (online training plus team-based practice exercises from the toolkit). Most of the 63

participants were female, under 40, had at least a 4-year college degree, and were non-Hispanic White. Nearly half provided mental health (46%), social (49%), and/or transition-planning (46%) services. Participants worked an average of 2.2 years at their current position, and 8.5 years in youth transition services.

Prior to beginning PPPA, participants rated their level of confidence in performing transition-related practices using the Transition Service Provider Competency Scale (TSPCS).⁴ They then worked through each hour long module, and were required to pass a knowledge test (KTT) to access the next module. They also completed the TSPCS after passing tests at the end of Module 5 and Module 10. Group 2 participated in team-based toolkit exercises corresponding to each module, and completed additional measures.

Participants in the two groups were not significantly different on their personal characteristics or their TSPCS scores before the training. Both groups showed substantial improvement in their self-ratings of their competence over time, and their knowledge scores. Group 2 participants who worked through additional practice exercises in the toolkit with their team had significantly higher knowledge KTT scores than Group 1 had with online training only. There was a significant positive association between the number of additional exercises Group 2 members completed and their KTT scores after completing Module 10. Activities that were rated as interesting,

engaging, and culturally relevant were more likely to be considered helpful for practicing needed skills and application of modules to practice.

Results of this study demonstrate the effectiveness of online training for improving service providers' sense of competency and knowledge. Additional practice exercises were reported as helpful for improving knowledge of best practices and service needs of young adults with mental health challenges. When designing practice exercises, our findings indicate the importance of interesting, engaging, and culturally relevant team-based activities.

References

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