

## Research Project

### **Young Adults as Peer Recovery Workers: Perspectives of workers and supervisors**

Young adults (between ages 18-30) with mental health conditions experience high rates of unemployment, even though a majority of them want to work and have careers. Like their age-related peers, they perceive employment and career development as opportunities to be self-sufficient and become valued members of society. Unfortunately, these research has not identified any vocational intervention and support that effectively promote these employment outcomes

Young adults with mental health conditions are increasingly finding rewarding work as peer recovery workers/mentors (PRW). PRW is a general term referring to people in recovery from mental health and/or addictions issues who use self-disclosure to provide people with direct emotional support, aid in developing a recovery plan, and help navigating the health system. Employment as PRWs appear to introduce young adults PRWs to various career paths, as evidenced by those who have moved on to different jobs in mental health (as a peer or not), other health-related jobs, and/or higher education.

The purpose of this pilot study is to identify the facilitators of and barriers to the employment of young adults as PRWs. We plan to conduct focus groups at two (2) provider sites that employ (as staff or consultants) a number of young adult PRWs. At each of those sites, there will be one focus group for the PRWs and one for supervisors and overseers of PRWs. Jonathan Delman, the Principle Investigator, will work with the interested mental health programs to coordinate the focus groups. Focus groups will be scheduled at the convenience of the participants with respect for their schedules.

This study is being sponsored by the Learning & Working During the Transition to Adulthood Rehabilitation Research & Training Center (RTC), at the University of Massachusetts Medical School. The RTC's aims include conducting research to improve the poor employment outcomes for young adults with mental health conditions, as well as the potential for career growth. The RTC and this study is funded by the Federal Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR) and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

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