Development of Toolkit for providers employing young adult peers support workers: process and content

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Thresholds
The glaring need for a new way of generating good employment outcomes

- Low employment rates for young people with serious mental conditions have not improved, even with advent of supported employment
- Jobs via supported employment have been low paying and short term- many reasons
- One major reason is that workplaces are not always sensitive to the needs of people with mental health conditions:
  - Anxiety and other personal challenges
  - Workplace culture- discrimination, stigma, hostility
  - Disclosure and reasonable accommodations challenges
At least from my perspective: Experience

- Consumer
- Employer
- Employee
- Evaluator/Researcher
  - Evidence for what?
- Attorney- long time reasonable accommodation fanatic
Challenges most relevant to young adults

- Lack of work experience
- Anxious about starting a job search and working
- Services transitions
  - “Aging out” process
  - Adult system not meeting developmental needs nor prepared to do
- Educational attainment
- Recent criminal justice involvement
- Single parent with young children
The challenging nature of the peer position

Unique qualities
- Use their own recovery story with clients strategically
- Are role models/exemplars
- Advocate on behalf of client
- Engage in mutuality

Major workplace challenges
- Clash with existing model
- Peer job clarity and role confusion
  - Non-peer staff job responsibilities
- Provider workplace culture
  - Stigma
  - Discrimination
Research to practice: Capital facilitators reviewed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Capital Domains</th>
<th>Facilitating Factor</th>
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<td>Social- Workplace</td>
<td>Supervision</td>
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<td>Non-peer staff</td>
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<td>Social- Personal</td>
<td>Family, Significant others</td>
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<td>Psychological</td>
<td>Persistence</td>
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<td>Resilience</td>
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<td>Job confidence</td>
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<td>Cultural</td>
<td>Communication skills</td>
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<td>Human</td>
<td>Training</td>
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Research to Practice: 2 years to develop Toolkit

- Multi-dimensional experiences of co-authors
- Through Transitions RTC- SAMHSA/NIDILRR
- Existing and own research
- Advisory board
- Many focus groups and other meetings with young adult peers and employers
Key aspects of employment reported by young adults peers not ordinarily addressed in detail

- Organizational culture
- Criminal background
- Role of Human Resources
Chapters

I. Background
II. Young Adults in the Peer Provider Role
III. Conceptualizing and Structuring the Young Adult Peer Role in Your Agency
IV. Establishing an Organizational Culture that Supports Young Adult Peers
V. Recruiting, Hiring and Training Young Adult Peers
VI. Effective Supervision for Young Adult Peers
VII. Addressing Significant Job Difficulties Using the ADA’s Reasonable Accommodation Framework
VIII. Preparing and Engaging Non-peer Staff
IX. Infrastructure and Framework
Discuss- chapters and sections

See detailed table of contents handout
Employer incentives: Carrot and stick

- ADA enhancements
  - “Obvious”
  - “Disability”
- DOL regulation requiring federal contractors to set a seven percent workforce utilization goal for employing individuals with disabilities
- WIOA placing greater funding emphasis on both employer responsibilities and supporting young adults
- Tax credits/incentives- Apprenticeships
- Growth of young adult peer provider role
9 Takeaways

(followed by chapter(s) in which to locate)

First 5

- All staff should understand the purpose and unique qualities of the young adult peer role via orientation, training, teambuilding and supervision. [1, 3, 8]
- Individualized and regular supervision that is reflective and addresses career and skill development, wellness, and relationship development is essential for YA on-the-job peer success. [6]
- Establish YA peer provider job qualifications, functions and pay grade before starting the hiring process and in collaboration with HR. [5]
- Avoid job qualification exclusions related to criminal history; do not inquire about criminal history on job application or at the first interview. [5]
- Orientation and training for YA peers should clarify organizational policies, including those on communications, absences, accommodations, and health benefits. [5]
9 Takeaways
(followed by chapter(s) in which to locate)

Final 4

• Agency staff must understand the unique developmental experiences of young adults in today’s society. [4]
• When a supervisor is considering an accommodation or job support for a peer, start by identifying the job functions the person is having trouble with before focusing on the person’s mental health status and symptoms. [7]
• Organizational leadership must proactively address stigma and prevent discrimination toward young adult employees diagnosed with mental conditions. [4, 8, 9]
• Team building activities such as cross training, co-learning and mentoring are important approaches toward YA peers and non-peer staff developing high quality working relationships [8].