Transition for Students who have Mental Health Challenges:
Unique & Creative Supports

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Career and Workforce Development Redefined

Know someone close to you who has needed help at one time or another – for a mental health issue?

Know someone personally who struggles with a long-term, ongoing mental health condition?

Work with students who have mental health issues?

Activity
In Pairs:
What are the greatest challenges for these youth?
For Schools?

What the literature tells us about these youth
LOTS OF LABELS….

✓ Seriously emotionally disturbed
✓ Behavior disordered
✓ Mentally ill
✓ Diagnosed with ___ (fill in the blank)
  Schizophrenia, bipolar, depression, acute anxiety disorder, paranoia,….
✓ Troubled, vulnerable, at-risk
✓ Other?

And LOTS of…. Misperceptions

Complex needs; often overwhelming for both the youth and those people helping them.

Karpur, Clark, Caproni & Sterner, 2005

Youth with Mental Health Issues

Third largest category of students with disabilities in the U.S. (following speech impairments and LD).

U.S. DOE, NCES, 2002

How are they defined by IDEA?

Behavior exhibited over prolonged period of time; marked degree, high frequency; adversely affecting educational performance. Most commonly…

• Difficulty learning (not attributable to other factors)
• Struggle maintaining relationships
• Inappropriate behaviors under normal circumstances, often as reactions to anxiety and stress
• Pervasive unhappiness or depression
• Onset of physical symptoms due to personal/school problems
Approximately half of these youth drop out of HS.

2004 annual report to Congress

Only 40-50% are employed; compared to 85% employment rate for general population.

National Organization on Disability, 2004

Low participation rates in post secondary education and training

Bullis & Fredericks, 2002

Involvement in Juvenile Justice System

Estimated: nationally 300,000 – 600,000 youth cycle through juvenile detention each year (many with mental health issues)

Zhang et al, 2011

Often families relieved to have them "someplace safe; off the streets."

Ramon

Learning and performance issues

Difficult to:
• **Process information** (screen information, sort important from not important)
• **Initiate action** (often fear-related; appears as lack of motivation)
• **Concentrate** (characterized by distractibility; for some a side effect of medication; delusions)

Isabel

Interpersonal Issues

• **Social Isolation & Alienation** (may appear as apathy)
• **Variability of Functioning Level** (esp. with mental illness – periods of relative stability between episodes. Accommodating for “cycles” becomes important)

Eddie
Functional Analysis

Identifies when, where and why problem behaviors occur and when, where, and why they do not occur.

Sugai, et al., 1999

Challenge: Data inconclusive. Easily studied in controlled research; not easily implemented in educational settings.

Youth with Mental Health Issues

Have
- Talents (known & to be discovered)
- Interests/passions
- Dreams/hopes for the future
- Unique life experiences
- Needs for support
- Are more like us than different from us

(more coming up on this…)

Top of Mind ACTIVITY

In Pairs:

What are we doing or what can we do to assist these youth?

Career Transition Project (CTP)

2005 Eval Study (Tilson, Luecking, Schmid)
235 Youth (average age 17 at intake); 3 sites
- 57% male
- 54% minority
- 68% in segregated schools or classes
- 31% receiving SSI
- 41% arrested prior to intake
- 63% w/ diagnosed mental illness
- 71% prior experience with hospitalization
- 62% on medication
CTP OUTCOMES

- 81% achieved high school diploma or equivalent
- 93% experienced min. of one paid job while in HS
- 84% employed at time of graduation
- 19% enrolled in college immediately following graduation
- 1% incarcerated
- 57% continuing to receive outpatient mental health services
- 4% involvement with justice system while in project

Role of CTP Case Manager

- Champion
- Career counseling; job placement
- Central point of contact
- Connector

Exuded 4 personal attributes (more in a bit)

Service Needs Planning Grid

- Residential
- Career/Employment
- Mental Health
- Education
- Recreation
- Social
- Health (inc D/A)
- Financial
- Legal
- Family
- Community

Goals & Needs for Support

- Part of Transition Planning with teachers
- Student-Centered; student understanding of disability and support needs
- Often rapidly changing due to circumstances
- Required responsive team
- Wrap-around services
- Connections to "generic" supports and activities.
Status codes

1. Stable. No observed needs at this time
2. Fairly stable (may need additional "sideline support")
3. Unstable. Has needs for specific intervention
4. Extremely unstable (crisis intervention)

Weekly staffings; status codes and goals changed often, requiring flexibility.

CAFAS

Child and Adolescent Functional Assessment Scale (pre/post)
- Observation tool
- Youth’s behavioral functioning is rated across 8 life areas. Sub-scale and total scores
- Total: 0-240 points
  - Lower score, less challenges exhibited by the youth; fewer interventions needed
  - Now available online

CTP Pre/Post on CAFAS

- At intake: total scores ranged from 10-190 (Average 102)
- At follow up (4-6 months): total scores averaged 53 (substantial improvement, but still indicating youth “may need additional services beyond outpatient care”)
- 27% showed little change in CAFAS scores pre/post
- Findings consistent with review of youth records and case notes; 57% still requiring outpatient adult mental health care

From USA Today (last week)

- St. Louis
- Judge tired of “steady parade” of troubled youth in his court room
- 2009 – opened a school “Innovative Concept”
- Judge: school or jail?
- 3,000 students so far
- Graduation rate: 80%

Support System
Customized Employment: It Works!

Needs/challenges/barriers

Specific challenges

Might be related to:

- Disability
- Life circumstances
- Environment
- Lack of opportunity
- Experiences tightly directed by others
- Limited support
- Unimaginative interventions and services
- Other

Interesting…

From recent literature on successful youth outcomes….

CHAMPIONS

Theory of CASCADING EFFECTS

ASSETS/ABILITY TO SEIZE OPPORTUNITIES

Study by Tilson & Simonsen

Mechanics

Attributes

Principled Optimism

Cultural Competence

Business Oriented Professionalism

Networking Savvy
In summary…

WHAT’S IT TAKE?

Find & Cultivate CHAMPIONS

- Friends
- Practitioners
- Policy Makers
- Administrators
- Community members

Youth Success

Always hold out for Hope & Possibilities
THANK YOU
&
BEST WISHES!

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