



Mental Health Services within Postsecondary Education Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities

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Agenda



- Why: Rationale for Mental Health Services
 - How: Mason LIFE Program model for in-house mental health services
 - Who – staffing options
 - What - job description and scope of practice
 - How – policy and procedures
 - Cost-effective strategies
 - Outcomes
 - Questions
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Rationale for MH services

College Experience



- Standard challenges of college life
 - Transitional challenges entering college (Baker & Siryk, 1980; Lopez, Campbell, & Watkins, 1988)
 - Emotional adjustment difficulties among students with learning disabilities (Ryan, Nolan, Keim, & Madsen, 1999)
 - Adolescence to adulthood and mental illness (Pfeifer & Baker, 1994; Masi, 1998)
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Rationale

Mental Health & Wellbeing



- Prevalence of mental illness 25-40 % (Caine & Hatton, 1998)
 - Mild ID who are more likely to be diagnosed with psychiatric condition (Fletcher, et al., 2007)
 - Depression and Dysthymia
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Rationale

Summary



- Critical period to address mental health and development of self-determination
 - Prevention
 - Commitment to normalization and access to care
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Mason LIFE before 2011

- No access to campus health services
 - Referred off-campus
 - Senior staff provided direct support
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Decisions...

Off campus/Out of program

- **Pros:**
 - Long-term care from specialized providers
 - Clear boundaries for program services
 - Low to no cost
- **Cons:**
 - Communication with provider can be difficult
 - Missed time in program
 - Poor integration of services
 - Adaptation of policy and procedures for ID needs?

In-program

- **Pros:**
 - Convenience
 - Consultation (triage/meds/education)
 - Sub-threshold concerns
 - Self-determination/advocacy
 - Immediate, adapted, and integrated care
 - Support from trained professionals
 - Education for all!
 - **Cons:**
 - Resources (space and cost)
 - Added program responsibility
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Program Organization



George Mason University

College of Education and Human Development

Kellar Institute for Human disAbilities

Mason LIFE Program

Director

Research Program

Academic
Program

Integration
Program

Residential
Program

Employment
Program

Mental Health
Services

**Academic
Coordinator**

**University
Coordinator**

**Senior
Residential
Assistant**

**Employment
Coordinator**

**Clinical
Supervisor &
Mental Health
Liaison**

Congressional Internship, Internship Program, Community Integration

Office Manager



Who: Mental Health Providers

- Mental Health Liaison
 - Trainee in related field
 - Provides direct services to students
 - Attends staff meetings for consultation
 - Clinical Supervisor
 - Licensed mental health professional
 - Does not engage directly with students
 - Attends staff meetings for consultation
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Who: Staffing options

- Doctoral level students
 - Clinical psychology
 - Counseling psychology
 - Masters level students
 - MSW
 - LPC or LMHC
 - Other options
 - Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) trainees
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Who: Staffing



Take Aways

- Match the supervisor's licensure with the trainee's program
 - Match the level and type of trainee with student needs
 - The supervisor is responsible for the trainees decisions and work
 - Recruitment is difficult
 - Form relationships with university programs to recruit trainees
 - Email university departments (Psychology) to circulate training announcement.
 - Find out what the application cycle is for trainees in your area
 - Seek trainees from programs using empirically-supported therapy
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Scope of Practice: Assessment

- Do not do formal assessments
 - Do psychodiagnostic interviews
 - Multimodal assessment
 - Informs structure and content of therapy
 - Do provide referral
 - family therapy
 - medication evaluations
 - Long-term or specialized services
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Scope of Practice: Therapy

Individual and Group



- Evidence-based practice and supportive therapy
 - Dyads or couples
 - Group therapy
 - Process
 - Skills-based
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Scope of practice: Consultation

- Macro-level issues
 - Reporting laws
 - Confidentiality issues
 - Staff education of mental health concerns specific to our student
 - Integrated care for student issues
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Scope of Practice

Take Aways



- Define what student concerns will be addressed on- or off-campus
 - Use and adapt evidence-based practice
 - Consider groups
 - Who is the therapist serving?
 - Program, client, and parent wants and needs do not always overlap.
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How: Policy and procedures

- Consider
 - University and program policy
 - Legal regulations
 - Professional ethical guidelines
 - American Psychological Association (APA)
 - Three main areas to develop
 - Informed consent process
 - Confidentiality
 - Record-keeping
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Obtaining informed consent

- Presume capacity to provide consent unless otherwise proven
- Ability to make choices \neq comprehension
- Facilitate consent by adapting materials

(Goldsmith, Skirton & Webb, 2008 for review)

Informed consent content

- Sections 3.10, 8.02 and 8.04 of the American Psychological Association (APA) Ethical Principles of Psychologist and Code of Conduct
 - Purpose of meeting
 - Who is involved and training
 - What to expect
 - Right to decline and consequences
 - Record keeping and access
 - Limits of confidentiality
 - Opportunity to ask questions
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Informed consent example

- Purpose of meeting and what to expect



“I am a Mental Health Liaison. I am in school to be a psychologist. I am here to help you. Maybe you have something you want to talk about. Or maybe someone else is worried about you.”

“If you do want to talk, we can meet for up to 30 minutes at a time. I will be here to talk or listen until May. You can stop talking or seeing me at any time. You are not in trouble.”

Informed Consent example

- Confidentiality



“However, sometimes I will have to tell people outside the program what you say. This is the same for everyone because it is the law. These laws are to protect people and keep them safe.”

“If someone is hurting or has hurt

- an older person like a grandparent
- a child (someone under 18 years old)
- someone who is not able to protect themselves

If you are in danger of being hurt or hurting yourself, then I will have to tell someone else. Sometimes I may have to tell if you were hurt as a child (under 18 years old).

If you are harming or planning to harm someone else.

If the court or judge asks me for my notes.”

What about assent?

- Determined by functional ability and legal guardianship
 - If assent is required
 - Provide explanation
 - Seek assent
 - Consider individual's best interests and preferences
 - Obtain permission for legally authorized guardian
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Policy & Procedures: Confidentiality

- Sections 4.01, 4.02, 4.04, 4.05 and 4.06 of the APA Ethical Principles of Psychologist and Code of Conduct
 - Protect confidential information
 - Only discuss information germane to purpose of communication only with persons concerned with care.
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Record-keeping

- Keep mental health records separate from academic records
 - Accessible by approved staff
 - Who “owns” the records?
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Policy and Procedures



Take Aways

- Determine for each student who has legal responsibility to consent to therapy
 - Determine how you will decide consent or assent
 - Ongoing balance of legal, organizational and professional guidelines for developing policy and procedures
 - Collaborate and consult through development stage
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Cost-Effective strategies



- Compensation
 - Mental Health Liaison (16-24 hrs/wk)
 - Stipend or hourly pay
 - Course credit for program
 - Licensed supervisor (3 hrs/wk)
 - stipend
 - Duration – academic year only
 - Modality options – groups for psychoeducation
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Outcomes: Program & parents

- Consultation and education to manage unexpected situations
 - Consolidates direct involvement of program staff
 - Common language and system for prompting self-regulation skills
 - “More mature decision-making”
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Outcomes: Students

- Reduced isolation more engagement with peers
 - Less tearfulness
 - Active coping vs. avoidance
 - Developmental progress
 - Greater assertiveness
 - Thoughtful relationship decisions
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Outcomes

“It’s good to know because if you have any problems or if something comes up you can talk to her and she will help you.”

“My experience has been great and I think it is a good thing to have at college to know somebody and he or she can help you.”

“It’s good to have someone because I have been having a lot of problems that I can’t talk about outside of school and inside of school.”

“We focus on me being more social and not thinking about all the sad stuff...there are things that you have to do and have to focus on.”

“It helps me talk about issues that I have with people on campus. It helps me kind of not think about it too much.”

“It made me feel more calmer instead of feeling sad or mad about the situation.”

“From my experience was its good to know that we are all adults and sometimes we don’t realize what we are doing and then we need somebody to tell us, hey listen, I can see this would be best for you.”

“It helps me solve my problems.”

“She helped me through everything.”



Proposed timeline to get started

- September to December
 - Identify need for students and the program
 - Determine resources for trainee and supervisor compensation
 - Write job description for trainee position
 - December through January
 - Disseminate trainee announcement to local university departments (Psychology/Counseling/Social Work etc)
 - February
 - Interview trainees
 - Offer applicants to observe class or engage with students
 - March
 - Offer position to trainee
 - April to June
 - Hire a contract clinician from the community with the credentials matching the trainee's program
 - Summer break
 - Develop policy and procedures and all necessary paperwork
 - Obtain needed information from parents during orientation (i.e. legal guardianship for medical care)
 - Invite trainee to all program orientation activities for staff and students
 - Supervisor and trainee meet prior to student's arrival
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Necessary materials

- Adapted consent forms
 - Parent notification letter
 - Referral request process and paperwork
 - Session notes template
 - Adapted assessments
 - Visual aids for use in therapy
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Questions?

