Positive Youth Development Resources, Leadership Efficacy, and Transition Outcomes Among Young Adults in North Carolina Families United Programs

Mason G. Haber, University of North Carolina at Charlotte

Available at: https://works.bepress.com/mason_haber/13/
Positive Youth Development Resources, Leadership Efficacy, and Transition Outcomes
Among Young Adults in North Carolina Families United Programs

November, 2013

For more information, please contact:

Mason Haber
Assistant Professor
University of North Carolina at Charlotte
mhaber@uncc.edu
704-687-1337
Positive Youth Development and Transition Outcomes through North Carolina Families United Programs

Introduction

Since 2009, NC Families United has worked with a team at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte (UNCC) to evaluate its programs supporting transition to adulthood of youth ages 16 to 25 (i.e., “transition-age”) youth with mental health conditions. Two programs have been the focus of the evaluation: 1) an intensive case management program for youth, Transition Mentoring, which uses a promising practice to support youth in achieving their transition-related goals (the Rehabilitation for Empowerment, Natural Supports, Education, & Work [RENEW] model); 2) the Youth Leadership Series (YLS), a multi-session curriculum to help youth with mental health conditions advocate for themselves and their peers in the community.

Part I of this report describes characteristics of Transition Mentoring youth related to their positive development and resilience to challenges from May 2010 through May of 2013. Part II describes outcomes of Transition Mentoring youth related to education, employment, and housing. Part III presents findings on Youth Leadership Series (YLS) sessions held from 2011 through 2013, including data on characteristics and perceived needs of youth participants in the program and their perceived skills prior to and following their participation in the program.
Part I:
Positive Development Resources of Transition Mentoring Youth & Young Adults

This section presents findings from data collected on Transition Mentoring young adults related to their resources for positive development, including their hopes for the future, social connectedness and support, levels of self-determination, and perceived abilities to cope successfully with mental health challenges. Until recently, these data have been collected exclusively at enrollment; thus, for the current report, only enrollment data are presented. Future reports will describe change in positive development resources.

Method & Findings

Future Hopes:
Perceptions of Opportunity Scale Findings

The Perceptions of Opportunity scale includes 11 Likert scale questions on perceived importance of goals and optimism about achieving those goals ($N = 16$). The Likert scale for importance items ranges from 1 (Very Important) to 3 (Not at all Important) and for optimism items ranging from 1 (Good) to 3 (Poor).

- Means were computed to demonstrate average optimism about achieving goals among young adults entering the Transition Mentoring program.
- As shown in Figure I.1, the youth generally believe in the possibility of attaining the indicated life goals, with all goals perceived as having a “fair” chance of happening, on average, though youth reported somewhat less optimism regarding maturational milestones, such as employment and committed romantic relationships (e.g., marriage, long-term partner).

Figure I.1. Perceptions of Chances of Attaining Life Goals.

Perceptions of Chances Scale: 1= Poor, 2 = Fair, 3= Good
**Social Support:**

Assessment of Social Connectedness Scale Findings

The *Assessment of Social Connectedness* assesses the frequency of instances of support received from various sources (i.e., in their families, school) \((N = 15)\). The support questions are on a Likert scale from 1 (Not at all) to 4 (A Great Deal). Questions are also asked about risky behaviors among friends (e.g., drinking and drug use) and whether youth feel safe at home, in the community, and in school, in order to understand their exposure to hazards in supportive relationships and settings.

**Sources of Social Support**

- Proportions of youth reported receiving any support from various support sources were calculated and are shown in Figure I.2, below.
- Perceived support from friends and from a mentor were reported most frequently by youth.
- Relatively fewer youth reported receiving support from neighbors and school staff.

**Figure I.2. Proportions of Youth Receiving Support from Various Sources.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Proportion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>80.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>90.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbor</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>40.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>60.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health</td>
<td>80.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer/Work</td>
<td>60.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Types of Social Support**

- Means were also computed for each type of support. These are illustrated in Figure I.3; higher scores indicate more support.
- In general, the youth reported receiving about “only a little” of the forms of supports examined. None of the average amounts of forms of support exceeded a 3 or “moderate support”. The youth reported receiving more non-tangible support (e.g., time, advice, and emotional) than tangible support (e.g., money).
Figure I.3. Amount of Support by Type.

![Support by Type](image)

Support Scale: 1=Not at all, 2=A little, 3=A moderate amount, 4=A great deal

Risk Behaviors of Friends

Youth reported on a Likert scale of 1 (None) to 5 (Most) the frequency of the delinquent behavior of their friends whom provided them with support and assistance.

- Proportions of youth indicating that at least "some" of their friends engage in various risk behaviors are shown in Figure I.4. Most risk behaviors were reported as being uncommon in peer networks.
- Higher proportions of young adults reported having at least “Some” friends who drank or used marijuana than other risk behaviors; suspensions and property damage were least common.

Figure I.4. Proportion of Young Adults indicating risk behaviors by “Some” to “Most” of their friends.

![Risk Behaviors](image)
Safety

Youth rated how safe they felt in their communities, at home, and at school on a Likert scale from 1 (Never) to 4 (Always).

- Proportions “Always” feeling safe in the three settings are shown in Figure I.5, below.
- Most young adults reported always feeling safe at home; however, less than half of youth reported always feeling safe in their communities and at school.

Figure I.5. Proportions of Young Adults Reporting “Always” Feeling Safe in Community, School, & Home Settings.

Self Determination:

American Institutes of Research Self Determination Scale (AIR-SDS) Findings

The American Institutes of Research Self Determination Scale (AIR-SDS) scale assesses youth self-determination (i.e., actions, skills and levels of confidence related to autonomously identifying and achieving goals; N = 14). The AIR-SDS includes the following subscales: “Things I Do” (actions the youth takes that displays self-determination), “How I Feel” (how self-determined the youth feels), “What Happens at School” (if the youth believes self-determination is being encouraged at school), and “What Happens at Home” (if the youth believes self-determination is being encouraged at home). Likert scale responses are from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always). Findings are shown in Figure 1.6, below.

- Youth reported moderate levels of self-determination across all domains, suggesting some ambivalence among youth about their levels of self-determination
- On average, youth provided higher ratings on items assessing perceived feelings (the “Things I Feel” subscale) than actions (the “Things I do” subscale).
Coping with Mental Health Challenges:
Youth Empowerment Scale – Mental Health (YES-MH)

This scale examines young adults’ perceived empowerment in coping with mental health symptoms, managing their services, and advocating for change in the mental health system \((N = 16)\). Questions are answered on a Likert scale from 1 (Never or Almost Never) to 5 (Always or Almost Always).

- Means for the three domains (self, services, and system) and a total score are shown in Figure I.7, below.
- Young adults appear more confident about managing services than managing their systems or advocating for system change. On average, youth felt between “Sometimes” to “Mostly” empowered.

Figure I.7. Mean YES-MH Subscale Ratings.
Summary & Conclusions

Generally, youth tended to perceive themselves as “somewhat” or “sometimes” self-determined and empowered, showing some ambivalence about their abilities to access things they need and advocate for themselves in school and in their services. Similarly, while youth felt supported by friends and family, opportunities for bolstering neighborhood and school based social support were evident. Youth were optimistic about achieving goals generally, but somewhat less optimistic about achieving goals related to adult roles such as committed relationships and employment than adolescent goals such as relating well with friends.

Overall, findings regarding positive developmental resources suggest that youth entering Transition Mentoring tend to perceive themselves as resourceful. However, areas for growth were also identified that align well with objectives of the Transition Mentoring program to improve their levels of social inclusion, empowerment, and abilities to successfully transition to adult roles.
Part II: Outcomes of Transition Mentoring Youth & Young Adults

This section presents the transition-related outcomes of young adults Transition Mentoring in areas including employment, education, housing, and participation in the community.

Method

Program Participants

Outcome data are presented for young adults enrolled in the North Carolina Families United Transition Mentoring program from March 2009 to March 2013 with data at enrollment and at least one quarterly follow-up assessment (N = 9).

Instrument – NC TAPIS

Data were collected using the North Carolina Transition to Adulthood Program Information System (NC-TAPIS) Progress Tracker, which assesses progress of young adults with mental health conditions enrolled in transition services in various domains including employment, education, housing difficulties, coping with mental health symptoms, social support, and community inclusion. Types of indicators include objective indicators (e.g., presence or absence of competitive employment) and transition specialist rated indicators, adapted from the Adult Needs and Strengths – Transition-age Youth Version (ANSA-T; Lyons & Bell, 2003). Objective and specialist-rated indicators selected for this report are presented in Table I.1.

Table I.1. Outcome Variable Descriptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employed (Objective)</td>
<td>Employment in a permanent paid job, temporary paid job, and/or self-employed in a competitive work environment in last 90 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolled (Objective)</td>
<td>Enrollment in school or a vocational training program in last 90 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaged (Objective)</td>
<td>The young adult was employed and/or enrolled in last 90 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stable Housing (Objective)</td>
<td>The young adult is residing in a permanent dependent, independent, supported or semi-independent home setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health Interference (ANSA-T)</td>
<td>The young adult is experiencing interference in activities of daily living or adult role functioning due to mental health symptoms during the last 30 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any Supports (Objective)</td>
<td>The young adult has at least one adult whom they feel close to and trust in their support network, excluding the Transition Specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active Participation (ANSA-T)</td>
<td>The young adult’s integration in school, community, religious, or recreational groups is a significant or moderate strength</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Transition Outcomes

Table II.2 & Figure II.1 shows outcomes for young adults in Transition Mentoring with follow-up data (n=9). Due to the small number of young adults in this group, significance tests were not
conducted. However, the results indicate that increased percentages of young adults with positive statuses from enrollment to follow-up on all indicators, with proportions improving in certain areas quite substantial (e.g., Active Participation).

**Table II.2. Proportions of Youth showing Positive Statuses on Outcome Indicators at Enrollment and Follow-up TAPIS Assessments.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>% at Enrollment</th>
<th>% at Follow-up</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employed in Last 90 Days</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolled in Last 90 Days</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaged in Last 90 Days</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stable Housing</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MH Interference</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any Supports</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active Participant</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: n=9

**Figure II.1. Proportions of Youth showing Positive Statuses on Outcome Indicators at Enrollment and Follow-up TAPIS Assessments.**

**Summary & Conclusions**

Proportions of youth with positive statuses improved from program enrollment to follow-up on all indicators. **The improvements indicate that since enrollment, youth are more engaged (e.g., in school and employment), integrated into the community, more residentially stable, and show decreased interference with day-to-day functioning due to mental health problems.**
Part III: Youth Leadership Series Findings

Introduction

The Youth Leadership Series (YLS) is a modular curriculum to promote improved coping, interpersonal, self-advocacy, and leadership skills of youth and young adults facing challenges in transitioning to adulthood such as mental health needs, and increase participation of youth in North Carolina’s statewide youth-led self-advocacy organization (Youth M.O.V.E). Beginning in 2011, there have been three annual YLS, with two being conducted to completion.

Method

Pre- and Post- Series Surveys

A total of 19 young adults completed pre- and post- surveys. Surveys assessed youth interests in YLS topics and satisfaction with sessions on these topics. In addition, surveys assessed youth perceptions of their skills in areas targeted by YLS including:

(1) coping with the transition to adulthood and mental health recovery, including relevant laws, rights, coping skills, identifying resources, etc.;
(2) building positive relationships and negotiating conflicts;
(3) assuming leadership roles;
(4) planning for the future and goal setting (e.g. in education, employment);
(5) self-advocacy with mental health professionals or in public settings (i.e., public speaking)

Analyses

Mean youth interest, satisfaction, and objective achievement scores were calculated and plotted. Differences in pre- and post- YLS survey measures were tested for significance. Due to small number of youth participating in the series, non-parametric analyses (i.e., Wilcoxon tests) were conducted. Significance was assessed at the $p < .05$ level.

Findings

Youth Interests

As shown by Figure III.1, prior to the YLS beginning, across the three YLS, youth were most interested in sessions on building Positive Relationships and Staying Healthy (i.e., making plans to stay healthy and avoid emergency situations). Interest was the weakest for sharing of personal experiences and public speaking (Tell Story/Public Speaking).
Youth Interest Scale: 1=Not at all Interested, 2= A Little Interested, 3= Somewhat Interested, 4= Very Interested

Youth Satisfaction

Among youth in series one and three, average scores on all satisfaction items were 3 or greater ("Pretty Useful"), with averages closer to 4 ("Very Useful") for five out of seven sessions. The two lowest rated sessions (i.e., in the 3 to 3.5 range) were the Don't Freeze Up and Let's Talk about Drama

Achievement of YLS Objectives
• Youth perceptions of their *self-advocacy* abilities improved from pre- to post- surveys ($Z = -2.221$, $p = .026$).

• Improvements were observable for interpersonal skills and knowledge of YLS material, though these were not statistically significant given the small sample size.

• The youth, on average, had relatively high confidence in their abilities at the outset of YLSs, which may have affected the ability of statistical tests to determine an effect of program participation.

**Figure III.3 Youth Leadership Series Outcomes ($N = 19$)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pre-Series</th>
<th>Post Series</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>YLS Material</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal Skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leader Roles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can Achieve Goals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Advocacy*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*YS Outcomes Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4 = Strongly Agree

* = indicates significance at the $p < .05$ level

**Summary & Conclusions**

Youth participating in YLSs reported satisfaction with all sessions and experienced significant improvements in self-advocacy (e.g., with service providers, in public settings). Future aims of the agency could be to maintain contact and involvement with youth to assess their levels of involvement in North Carolina Youth M.O.V.E. or other statewide leadership positions.
References


Appendix B: Missing Data Report

Purpose & Method

Missing data can present problems to reports and analyses including statistical findings not representative or accurate to the true sample and at times, display problematic flaws in administration documentation and instrument distribution. Missing data are categorized into the following types: 1) “Necessary” missing data include correct skip patterns due to survey responses and data missing due to discrepancies between previous and current versions of forms; 2) “Missing in Error” data are responses missing due to inappropriately (not survey prompted) omissions of responses (e.g. items incorrectly skipped or not answered) and responses of “Don’t Know”; 3) missing entire forms (youth refusal, form not submitted within allotted time period to evaluation team, etc.).

Findings

Missing in Error Items

NCFU Special Instruments

“Missing in error” data was a minimal problem for the special instruments in FY 2012 – 2013. Items regarding residential information on the Youth Empowerment Scale appear to be omitted for three youth. However, aside from a few items, particularly the Social Connectedness Scale’s indicator of family assistance and number of friends, missing data from the special instruments appeared to be primarily due to inapplicability.

TAPIS

Although there were documented “missing in error” responses, for the Transitions Mentoring youth, specific items associated with relatively more missing responses tended to be missing systematically, but not identified as validly missing (e.g., Not Applicable response). For example, for a few youth large portions of education information is missing, without indicated as not applicable, although previous answers indicate the youth are probably not enrolled in school.

Missing Forms

NCFU Special Instruments

One ASC form was missing for a youth, while two AIR forms (one documented as a youth refusal to complete) were missing for the special instruments for FY 2012 – 2013. In addition, dates of assessment and school information, when requested, were missing for several of the youths on these instruments.

TAPIS

Baseline TAPIS responses appear to be missing for three youth.