

# TRANSITIONS RTC

THE LEARNING & WORKING  
DURING THE TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD  
REHABILITATION RESEARCH & TRAINING CENTER

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# Acknowledgements

The Transitions RTC aims to improve the supports for youth and young adults, ages 14-30, with serious mental health conditions who are trying to successfully complete their schooling and training and move into rewarding work lives. We are located at the University of Massachusetts Medical School, Worcester, MA, Department of Psychiatry, Center for Mental Health Services Research.

Visit us at:

<http://labs.umassmed.edu/transitionsRTC/index.htm>

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# It's not just finding a job: Findings from the Young Adult, Mental Health and Employment Study (YAES Study)

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# Presentation Goals

My presentation will focus on three main goals:

- Identify the general needs of TAYYA mental health consumers across the three established vocational support programs
- Identify social and cultural specific needs of Latino young adults across the three established vocational
- Provide recommendation for tailoring vocational support programs to young adult mental health consumers



# Background

- A rough estimate of the current employment rate for all adults with psychiatric disability is 22-25% - more than 75% of the population unemployed. Yet 70% of unemployed adults with a serious mental health condition (SMHC) want to work.
- Job placement services make the biggest difference between working and not working for individuals with a SMHC (Rosenthal, Dalton and Gerverey 2008).
- These vocational support initiatives come in the form of standard state Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model of supported employment, and the International Center for Clubhouse Development model (ICCD) designed to help individuals with disabilities prepare for and engage in gainful employment.



# Young Adult, Employment, and Mental Health Study (YAES)

- The YAES study is a research study that focuses on addressing employment disparities of young adults with a SMHC by examining their own experiences with three widely disseminated vocational support programs (Clubhouses, Individual Placement Supports, and standard state Vocational Rehabilitation services in Massachusetts).
- The study pays particular attention to Latino TAYYA as they are a group less likely to seek specialty mental health services and are the fastest growing racial ethnic group in the United States.
- They are also at high risk for negative outcomes including high unemployment and low educational attainment compared to their white counterparts.



# Significance

Knowledge gained through this study will improve our understanding of what young adults need in a vocational support program. It will also provide information for the design of the next iteration of culturally informed vocational support programs that will more effectively target at-risk youth and young adults with a SMHC while successfully retaining them in vocational support services.



# Methods

This study embraced Participatory Action Research (PAR) in principle and in practice by:

- Incorporating an partnership with Transition Age Youth and Young Adults (TAYYA) in the entire research process (developing the interview guide, conducting the interviews, screening participants, weekly meetings, data analysis and report writing)
- Employs the services of consultant Jon Delman who works with the TAYYA in research training activities including the nature of the Center grant, research and policy.





# Methods

- A one-time, one-hour semi-structured in person interview
- 57 TAYYAs between the ages of 18 and 30
- In the past or are currently using employment supports through clubhouses, IPS programs, or standard state VR services in Central MA
- 28% identified as Latino of the 57 participants
- Interviews conducted by young adults with lived experience



# Findings

Table 1. Demographics

<b>TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS</b>	<b>57</b>
Male	54%
Female	46%
Age range	18-30
Average Age	23
<b>ETHNICITY</b>	
American Indian/Alaska Native	5%
Black/African American	2%
Hispanic	28%
White (non-Hispanic)	59%
Multiracial	4%
Other (Did Not Know)	2%

<b>LANGUAGE SPOKEN MOST OF THE TIME</b>	
English Only	77%
Spanish Only	0%
Both English & Spanish	21%
Both English & Other (German)	2%
<b>MARITAL STATUS</b>	
Never Married	82%
Married	11%
Living as Married	2%
Separated	0%
Divorced	5%
Widowed	0%



# Table 1. Demographics cont...

<b>DIAGNOSIS: CO MORBIDITY HIGH</b>	
Participants w/1 Diagnosis	40%
Participants w/2 Diagnoses	44%
Participants w/3-4 Diagnoses	16%
Bipolar	56%
Depression	54%
Anxiety	37%
Schizophrenia	26%
Schizo-Affective	5%
Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)	4%
Others (Mood Disorder & Hypomania)	4%

<b>PHYSICIAN PRESCRIBED PSYCHIATRIC MEDICATION</b>	
Yes	96%
No	2%
No Answer	2%
<b>CURRENTLY TAKING MEDICATION</b>	
Yes	82%
No	18%
<b>HOSPITALIZED W/THIS DISORDER</b>	
Yes	81%
No	19%
<b>WORK MOTIVATION (Range = 12-48)</b>	
Non-Hispanic White	35.87
Hispanic	36.25



# Preliminary Findings

## Qualitative Data

### **Main themes coders agreed on:**

- For the majority of young adults, having a job means financial independence, sense of purpose and being part of society.
- For over half of the Latino participants in the study, having a job represented an escape from their mental illness “overcoming their mental illness.”



# Findings

## Qualitative Data

### **Main themes coders agreed on:**

- In general, all young adults need preparation in work readiness (communication skills, goal setting, resume building, interviewing skills), guidance in the job process, and supportive relationships (particularly from staff), school and workplace supports (understanding mental illness).
- In general, job support programs provided community integration.
- *Latinos* also expressed a need to feel included in vocational support programs, Spanish speaking or translators, and family understanding. Moreover, job support programs provided an opportunity to escape negative neighborhood influences (kept them “out of the streets”)



## Main themes coders agreed on:

The majority of non-Latino white young adults expressed an appreciation for staff members who understood their mental illness and friends who shared in recreational activities.

Compared to non-Latino whites young adults, Latinos were more likely to refer to program staff members as ‘family’ and expressed an appreciation for the opportunity to ‘prove’ themselves to other people.

The majority of Latino young adults identified feelings of being judged by their appearance and past experiences as a barrier to finding work whereas non-Latino white young adults identified the stigma of mental illness as a barrier to finding work.



# What are young adults saying?....



It should not be assumed that individuals in this photo have a mental health condition



When asked, “What does having a job mean to you?” Young adults said:

- **The majority of young adult participants:** “Uh, a job means to me that I am part of a society where you know, I’m working for a living you know, I’m doing what I need to do to help make someplace maybe better you know, keep it going, keeping things in order. So I feel working for me is very important to me and also the world cause I’m **part of the society** and helping them do things.”
- ~ *White non-Hispanic male, age 20*

**Latinos:** Um, having a job it’s like being independent. Being um, being free because like every time like I get a job doing something, I get proud of myself, feeling good because like at least I am able to have a job and ***without thinking of my disorders; to have like a free away from my disorders.***

~*Hispanic female, age 18*





When asked what they liked about their experience with job support programs, the majority of young adults talked about communication skills:

“I came to the program to learn what it takes to get a job. Also, to help me, try to help me with my social life. Try to become a better person cause of my Bipolar and stuff cause it wasn't easy for me to you know, communicate well with others and they helped me do that. Like, so they were really good to me so it's really helped me out. “

*~White non-Hispanic male, age 20*



# Job Support Programs

## Community Integration

...”because I don’t want to be at home all day just watching tv or surfing the internet. I want to actually be out in the community and being a **productive member of society** and working for a living. Helping a place do their business and actually get money for it. That would make myself proud because I’m actually doing something to earn money.” ~*White non-Hispanic male, age 20*



# Job Support Programs

## Goal Setting

Yea, ***I've bounced back and forth*** from what I wanted to do and where I wanted to go to school and what I wanted to go to school for and I went through where I wanted to be a nurse, and then I was like I can't do that so I want to do a CNA, I want to go to bartending school, I want to go to be an EMT. Like I've gone through all of this and she just, she just helps me to direct myself and... so now I'm working at Radio Shack and I know what I want to go to school for when I get the time cause she's helped me get that direction going, so.

*~American Indian/White female, age 21*



# Job Support Programs

## Job Process

“Um, a little like I learned about interviewing skills maybe a month after she helped me get a resume together and I was nervous and really not good with the interviews because I kind of chicken, not chickened out, but ***I like get really nervous and I stutter and mutter and I kind of stare off into space because I’m really nervous.*** I can actually never focus on the actual person, talk to them and answering the questions, so that’s one a little barrier that I’ve had.”

*~White non-Hispanic male, age 20*

*Latino young adult.* Cause I’m from, I’m from like the streets and like they, like they show me a different way to speak when you’re in a job interview. You can’t use like ‘yo what’s good’ and you got to say ‘hello, how you doing’ and like ***speak proper English.***

*~Hispanic female, age 18*



# Job Support Programs

## Supportive Relationships

*Sharing in recreational activities*

“I have friends here... other members around my age that we go to the movies and we hang out downtown and... people that I’ve known for almost a couple years now that I become really good friends with and that’s been great for me to have people in my life to care about and um... you know that someone cares about you. “

*~ White non-Hispanic female, age 20*



## Job Support Programs

### **Supportive Relationships**

#### *Opportunity to prove themselves*

It's a neat place, it's a good place for young adults; there's no doubt about that. If young adults come in here, seriously, they can leave with a lot of things in there. ...they're willing to give them a chance, help them, involve themselves in the work here so then they can *prove themselves* worthy of working outside the house. What I like about it is they teach you the basics like *good communication skills*, how to manage your illnesses while at work, how to take care of that so it doesn't affect your work...

*~Hispanic male, age 22*



## Job Support Programs

### **Supportive Relationships**

#### *Staff members as family*

“...I learned a lot for myself, I learned a lot how to be in the real world, I learned how to respect myself and others, ...I learned about love you know. That was one big thing about me, why I was ...depressed, and [Program X] is a family that just grows; it grows on you.”

*~Hispanic female, age 23*



## Job Support Programs

### **Supportive Relationships**

#### *Understanding their mental illness*



“It’s very straight forward, very honest. Nobody tried to hide anything here. We work together and um, that people ***understand that you have an illness*** but that it doesn’t have to hold you back and that it doesn’t have to dominate your life and you don’t have to be treated like you have an illness. Almost like the illness isn’t important in a sense because we are all in the same boat, we are all people together. Some of us just have different challenges than others. ”

*~White non-Hispanic male, age 22*





# Job Support Program

## School Supports

Um, for me the biggest challenge would be uh, lack of what I need for education. Like I would **like to be a teacher but I can't do that until I go to college**. So that's been like, I think for me school hasn't been a problem but it's been something that I've been pretty anxious about wanting to start but I have to um, take my SATs first. But I just kind of get discouraged from time to time because I think that I should be in school right now, but I do realize that I have plenty of time to go back and...~White non-Hispanic female, age 20



# Job Support Program

- *Mental Health Supports*

What's probably gotten in my way from getting a job usually is I have a very rocky work history because I've been hospitalized a lot. I think keeping a job, I think, I think one reason that's kept me from ***keeping a job*** is not having enough support at work. Um, I think a lot of times in the past I've had jobs I was not doing very well so I think that was a big part of it is, ***not being, having a control over my mental illness.***

~White non-Hispanic male, age 30



## When asked about barriers to employment, young adults said:



### Stigma of mental illness

“...when you go into any place, no matter what, no matter where, the minute it’s discovered you have a mental illness, people take a step back. The minute they hear that word, *mental illness, everybody takes a step back and they’re like ‘oh wait, mental illness, hold on.’ Nobody really wants to get involved because they think mental illness, that somebody that is mentally ill cannot help themselves. I’ve worked along with some of my fellow young adults, we’ve worked very hard to erase the stigma of mental health. A number of us are on Facebook and we, you know, we get discussion groups going, we set up things and we believe it’s wrong to segregate people that have mental health issues. It’s as wrong as segregating black and white back in the 50s and 60s, you know.*”

*White non-Hispanic male, age 25*



## Barriers to Employment

### Feelings of being judged

“ I guess you could say it’s my anxiety, my mental illness because like I kind of have a fear like nobody likes me or people judge me when I walk into places. I don’t know how to carry myself – have a mean face, a smiley face, I don’t know how to be. Like I’ve been in jail having to be a mean person or try to smile at people and being put down by the people that are supposed to be helping me, ya know, so it’s like they bring me down instead of helping me the way they supposed to so, I don’t know. I go in a building to get a job and it’s like, I don’t know how they looking at me so I don’t know how to act, ya know? I’m having a hard time so I’m thinking I can only [work] in a factory or a construction site or something like that where people ain’t really gonna judge me, I’m just doing hard labor.”

~ *Hispanic male, age 29*



# Social and cultural needs and considerations

## ***Spanish Speaking Staff (a need)***

I think having either Latinas or Latinos or people that can translate is a really really important thing because there's so many you know Latinos/Latinas, you know Hispanics and if, if let's say I came around or I was around, (X) calls me 'Hey can you stop in, I need a translator,' yea I can if I wasn't busy. So I think having able to translate for others um, is a big thing. ~*Hispanic female, age 23*



Social and cultural consideration in Psychiatric Rehabilitation Programs (Latino/a young adults) (**Socioeconomic status, Social Environment, Language, Stigma**)

### ***Spanish Speaking Staff (relate)***

- ***Cause like I love talking***, I love talking into my language because like it makes me feel important about what I am, like showing who I am. When I'm talking in English I be like yea I don't like talking in English. Yea, that's why I hang out with mostly Spanish people because I can just talk and talk and talk about, in Spanish, and then its hard to talk in English cause I was born in Texas and got raised in Texas so its hard and then I came here.  
*~Hispanic female, age 18*



# Social and cultural consideration in Psychiatric Rehabilitation Programs (Latino/a young adults) (**Socioeconomic status, Social Environment. Language, Stigma**)

## ***Spanish Speaking Staff (unity)***

Uh, they should have more people... if there was a couple members... I know I met a couple that are more strong in their Spanish than their English. They should have ***staff that are bilingual***. I think that would help out a lot and I don't think it's just in young adults... adults here as well because I've seen and I know that there are ***adults here that want to get involved as well but they tend to shy away because they can't understand the other individuals***. If we had somebody that can kind of break that language barrier down, that's a sweet goal to help both sides out then there would be more unity, you know. I think that's what should be a good goal for this program.

*~Hispanic male, age 22*



# Social and cultural needs and considerations

## *Neighborhood Environment*

So what are the barriers that are keeping you here?

“You have gangs, you have you know you have STDs that keeps you in the circle, you have drugs, you have people who are on Main Street all the time. You have, you don’t have places like this where you can come to. There’s not any programs that you can go to.. It creates, it creates outskirts (in reference to the job support programs).”

*~Hispanic male, age 18*





# Social and cultural needs and considerations

## *Don't fit in*

- Yeah I think there should be- among activity there should be something set especially, specifically for Latinos even though I don't come here often but I've seen other people that don't speak English very well and that I think they don't often as well because they ***don't think they fit in.*** Most of the people that I see here speak English.
- *~Hispanic female, age 25*



# Social and cultural needs and considerations

## ***Role of Family***

“Yes, like more support in the family because we’re very family oriented ya know. It’s all about our culture. It’s all about what we like, what are interests are, it’s all about how you know how as a community can work side by side and make better situations. More opportunities for younger, young adults and teenagers so that we can ***stay out of trouble and not do the wrong things. ‘Cause we’re more likely than any other nationality to drop out of high school and commit crimes and stuff or just not do anything at all and not do much for their lives but ya know.*** I don’t know. Maybe I’m stereotyping but some young women end up getting involved with a guy while they’re in school and you know she has a baby out of wedlock it would be impossible- nearly impossible for her to complete her studies.....”

*~Hispanic female, age 27*



# Social and cultural needs and considerations

## *No difference*

I don't think there's anything specifically that stands out. I think they're just like every other young adult, they just have a different background, different languages, I mean if someone spoke English and German because they're from Germany, that doesn't mean because they're German they want something different from other people their age ya know? Usually people just wanna feel normal and a part of something and I feel like that's what everybody's looking for and I feel like Latinas and Latinos aren't any different, regardless if they speak more than one language or not. They just wanna be a part of something and feel like they're accomplishing something. I think that goes for all young adults ~*Hispanic female, age 20*



# Discussion

- The social environment includes the groups in which we affiliate (e.g., race and ethnicity), the neighborhood in which we live, the way our place of work is organized
- Socioeconomic environment can cause: chronic stress, reduce access to resources such as appropriate mental health services, education, recreation, social support, employment opportunities, access to job interviews, reduced social interactions and social networks
- Low socioeconomic environments are characterized by high unemployment, drug use and availability, crime etc.
- Cost availability affects: children's academic achievement and socialization
- Quality of Housing affects: self identity, despondency, depression



# Recommendations

- Training in effective communication and interpersonal skills (for on the job and job seeking, wellness and stress reduction)
- Individualized assessment planning to identify strengths and interests
- Post secondary education is vital to develop skills and credentials to be employed – supported education. *Supported Education (SEd)* is an emerging evidence–based practice that has successfully addressed these kinds of challenges for people with serious mental illnesses but not readily available in all programs.
- Strategies to improve coordination of relevant state agencies (e.g., high schools, colleges, housing, employment, transportation)
- Mentor and peer mentoring (e.g., social networking opportunities, career fairs, social gatherings, social and community activities)



## Recommendations

- Responsive and compassionate service providers and friends play an important role in engaging young adults in vocational support programs, however, cultural and contextual factors influence how these relationships are shaped.
- Mental health literacy training for employers and teachers
- Interventions must provide ongoing responsive and compassionate support when needed by employees and employers
- Employment initiatives should be developmentally and culturally relevant
- Diversity and Inclusion (e.g., bilingual staff, Spanish translators, and training in stigma, discrimination and disclosure)



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