



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

Jonathan Delman, PhD, JD, MPH
*Assistant Research Professor,
Transitions Research and Training Center*

Vanessa Klodnick, PhD, LCSW
*Senior Researcher,
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

Capital Domains	Facilitating Factor
Social- Workplace	Supervision
	Non-peer staff
Social- Personal	Family, Significant others
Psychological	Persistence
	Resilience
	Job confidence
Cultural	Communication skills
Human	Training

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].