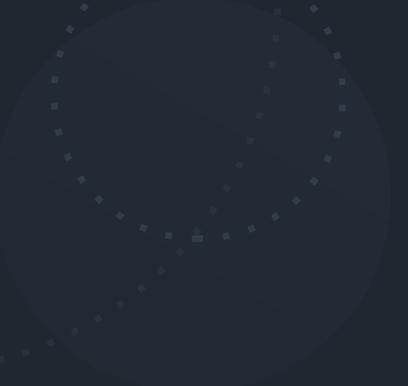# Preparing Transition Students with Mental Health needs for Increased Independence

17th Annual Illinois Statewide Transition Conference

Challenges facing individuals with significant mental health needs

Background

- Data indicates that by the age of 24, 75% of people with serious mental illnesses, such as schizophrenia-spectrum disorders, severe bipolar disorder, and severe major depressive disorder, begin to show symptoms (Bonnie et al., 2015).

- Additionally, in the USA, young adults aged 18 to 25 had the highest prevalence of serious mental illness, at 8.6%, compared to those aged 25 to 49 at 6.8% and those aged 50 or over at 2.9%. (Hiller-Venegas et al., 2022).

- Moreover, according to 2019 data from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration (SAMHSA), only 56.4% of young adults with serious mental illness obtained mental health care, compared to 65.1% of those aged 25 to 49 and 74.3% of those aged 50 or older (Hiller-Venegas et al., 2022).

Background

- Data shows that the rate of mental illness is high in late adolescence and early young adulthood (ages 16-24) however engagement in treatment is often low.

- This could be correlated to the fact that many individuals ages 16-24 report fear and uncertainty regarding mental health services when transitioning from youth services to the adult services (Manuel et al., 2018)

- Additionally, young adults (ages 16 to 24) with major mental illnesses confront particularly difficult problems, such as service impediments connected to moving from child to adult services (Manuel et al., 2018).

Ethnicity and Socioeconomic Status

- Data shows that discrepancies exist in mental health services among African-Americans and Hispanics/Latinos
- Beyond transition age, African-Americans and Hispanics/Latinos with mental illness are less likely to receive mental health care than their non-Hispanic white counterparts across all adult age groups *(Racial/Ethnic Differences in Mental Health Service Use Among Adults and Adolescents (2015-2019) | CBHSQ Data, n.d.)*.
- Moreover, data suggests low socioeconomic status and ethnicity (minority groups) are correlated to treatment dropout and low engagement (Moore,2018).

Barriers for Transition Aged Individuals with Serious Mental Illness

- Understanding the complexity of the new systems of care
  - Lack of understanding insurance procedures
- Developmental deficits in cognitive, social, and emotional skills can result from chronic mental illness.
  - Tasks that young adults already find difficult, like making autonomous decisions and managing their finances, can become more arduous as a result of these delays (*Just a Moment. . ., n.d.*).
- Stigma related to mental health
- Cultural and Ethnic Considerations
- Serious mental illness is also associated with lower educational levels, greater rates of unemployment, poverty, unintended pregnancies, substance abuse, homelessness, and involvement in the criminal justice system (Ojeda et al., 2020)

Tools for Success

Transition Tools

- The Assessment of Functional Living Skills (AFL's) was developed as a tools to identify needs for programming.
  - It helps assess vocational skills, living skills, and community participation skills.
  - It specifically goes into depth with how to identify service providers (i.e. DRS), how to communicate needs, etc.
- The AFL's can be done at any time during school to help identify transition goals fo the students
- They also assess independent living skills

Transition Tools- Cont

- The Employability/Life Skills Assessment (ELSA)
  - Tools used to assess common life skills including talking to other service providers, scheduling appointments, organizing meeting times.
- Explaining the Adult service providers
  - Vocational Services
  - Social Security Administration
  - Independent Living Facilities

Skills Needed to Effectively Manage
Mental Health Needs

Medication Management

Medication management is extremely important for individuals with mental health diagnoses to know how to do. It's important for the individual to know the following: name of medication, dosage, how to obtain scripts for refills, how to schedule an appointment, and why they are taking the medication.

Understanding Diagnosis

- Just like any other health diagnosis, your mental health diagnosis is important
- Helping transition aged individuals understand the importance of seeking a diagnosis can aid in:
  - Appropriate treatment options and services
  - Appropriate medications and dosage
  - Prevention of additional and future health risks and concerns
  - A diagnosis also indicates to the insurance company there is a condition that requires medical attention (private insurance, SSI, or public state insurance).
- When I understand my diagnosis, I can advocate for myself!

Understanding Insurance

- Understanding insurance can be a daunting task!!
- Know the basics
- Common types of health insurance include:
  - Private
  - Medicaid and Medicare
    - Medicare is a medical insurance program for people over 65 and younger disabled individuals. Medicaid is an assistance program for low-income patients' medical expenses.
  - Veterans Health Care
- Who do I call for benefits information?

Understanding Mental Health Services

Finding a provider

- Psychiatrist vs. Therapist

Inpatient

- What are some warning signs?

Support Groups

- NAMI
- Local Behavioral Hospitals
- Mental Health Nonprofits/Community resources

Questions to Ask a Potential Provider

- What type of insurance do you accept?
- What Type of Licensing Do You Have?
- Do you offer a Free Consultation?
  - Consider the "flow" of the conversation. How does the interaction "feel"?
- What Kind of Treatments or Modalities Do You Use?
  - Individual and group therapy
  - Mindfulness techniques
  - Prescription medication
  - Residential or outpatient treatment
  - 12-step programs
- How Will You Help Me Reach My Goals?

Strategies for Teaching Self Advocacy

Self Advocacy Techniques

- Self advocacy is the act of promoting and supporting our own interests
- There are 3 layers to self advocacy
- The first layer is personal
  - Be assertive and express your needs in a way that fosters respect
  - Practice good self care
  - Know your therapy and medications
  - Ensure your safety
- The second layer is community
  - Build up your team/develop good relationships
  - Maintain healthy work/life balance
  - Have support in place
  - Work with advocacy groups
- The third layer is government
  - Vote!
  - Inform your representatives- advocate with others about crisis supports

Self Advocacy Behavior Management

- Self advocacy helps promote self determination
  - Self determination is the belief individuals have the rights to direct their lives
- Identifying goals and needs based off the
- Self advocacy behavior management (SABM) is a 5 step process
  - Step 1- weekly report with another professional (i.e. teacher, counselor, etc). This is done to address major concerns
  - Step 2- Conference is done to identify struggles or additional supports and needs
  - Step 3- Goal development to address the needs
  - Step 4- Follow up conference on the effectiveness of the goals
  - Step 5- Adjust strategies to help be successful

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