

VCU-RRTC-IDD

VCU-RRTC on Employment of Persons with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

Strategies to Recruit, Engage, and Promote the Career Engagement in Technology Fields of Youth with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

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Overview of the RRTC-IDD

- RS1- Systematic Reviews of Employment Evidenced-Based Practices and Policies: Identifying Research Based Knowledge to Facilitate Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE) for People with IDD
- RS2- Evaluation of a Demand Side Approach to Connect a Large Corporation to Workers with IDD: A Mixed Method Study
- RS3- Evaluation of a Technology Early Career Preparation Intervention (TECH-Prep) for African American Youth with IDD: A Random Control Trial Study
- RS4- Cognitive Support Technology for Postsecondary Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder: A Randomized Control Trial at the Intervention Efficacy Stage of Research
- RS5- Effects of Parent Mentoring on the Competitive Integrate Employment Outcomes of Young Adults with IDD: A Mixed Method Study
- RS6- The Impact of Competency-based Training and Technical Assistance on the Competitive Integrated Employment Outcomes of Individuals with IDD: A Mixed Method Study

RS3- Evaluation of a Technology Early Career Preparation Intervention (TECH-Prep) for African American Youth with IDD: A Randomized Control Trial Study

- The purpose of the present study is to evaluate the efficacy of an early career preparation program, designed for youth of color with IDD to increase their technology career interests, self-efficacy, outcome expectancy, goal persistence, and positive post-school outcomes.
- **Social-Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT)** serves as a framework to guide the development and validation of the **Technology Early Career Preparation Intervention (TECH-Prep)** by incorporating empirically-supported, supply-side strategies.
- Participants in TECH-Prep engage in an eight-week SCCT-based workplace readiness skills program that is structured within employment within technology-based careers.
- Participants complete a four-week, paid summer internship with a technology company to utilize soft skills learned from the prior programming while learning basic skills for technology-based careers.

Project implementation opportunities, barriers, and strategies

- Impact of Covid-19 pandemic on project plan
- Recruitment
- Maintaining youth engagement
- Follow up and outcome evaluation

Impact of COVID-19

- Project commenced in October 2019
- Discussions began with Chicago Public Schools- Transition Services in October 2019 review plans for:
 - Recruitment
 - Implementation of the Tech-Prep training program
 - Considerations around the provision of paid internships (e.g., transportation, pay rate, scheduling, etc.)
- Initial plan were to develop and host in person programming for participants in Chicago
- In March 2020, COVID-19 ended the opportunity to provide an in person program for the foreseeable future
- Project team restructured the approach with colleagues at the Stout Vocational Rehabilitation Institute to offer the program online through a CANVAS shell

Recruitment

- Engaging youth with disabilities and their families can be challenging.
- Attempting to do so without “boots on the ground” or direct face-to-face contact can limit participation in recruitment activities.
- The initial email requests to participate, via CPS, resulted in four individuals being interested in participating.
 - Goal was 30 individuals per year (15 treatment, 15 control)
 - Substantial changes were needed to increase recruitment for the project

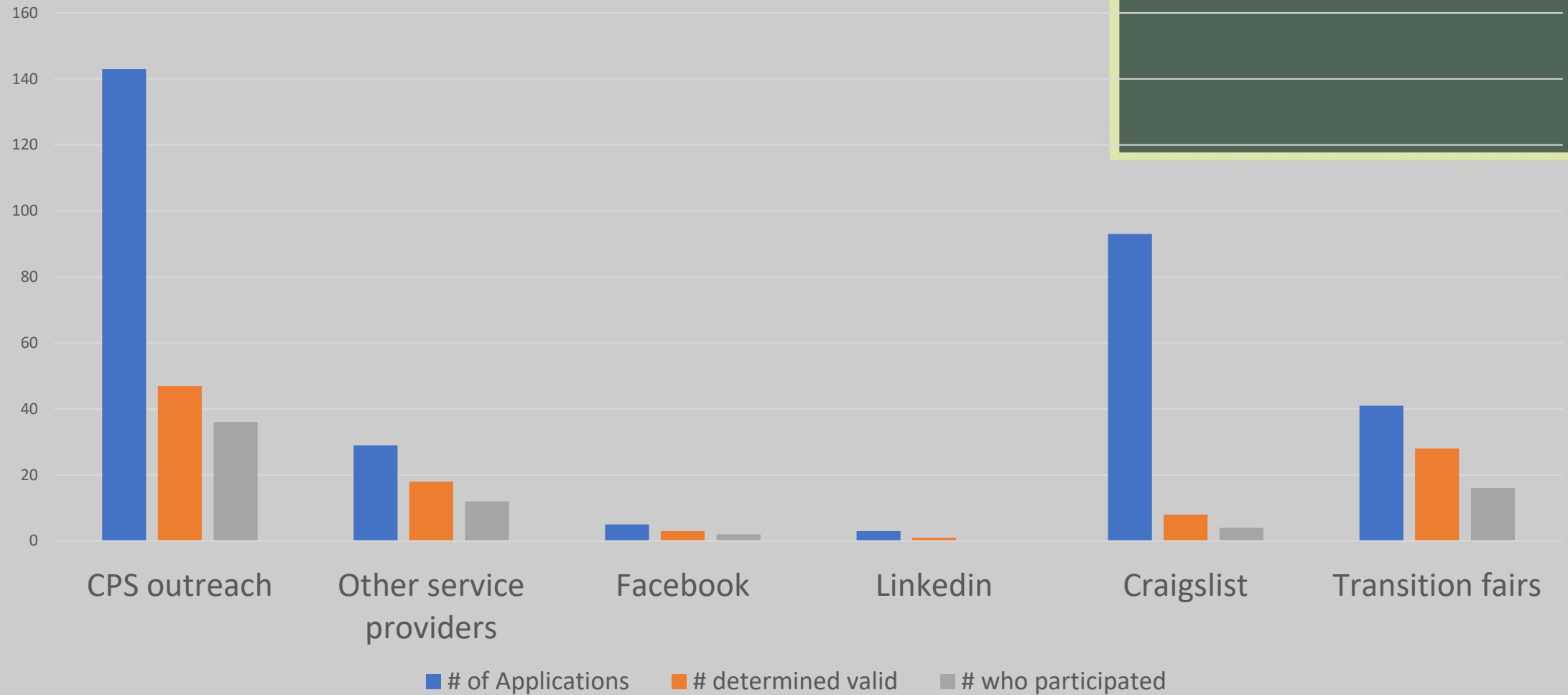
Recruitment Strategies

- Continued to work with CPS on distribution to special education teachers and their students
- Reached out to service providers working with the population of interest
- Developed additional materials about the program to inform youth and their families
- Created a YouTube video to provide an audio-visual presentation for families- <https://youtu.be/RxsMG1ChzT4>
- Distributed recruitment materials via different social media outlets
- Attended virtual, and just recently in person, career fairs hosted by CPS

Recruitment Strategies by Time Required

- CPS outreach- Initial discussions- 20 hours, ongoing meetings- 1-2 hours per month
- Transition fairs- 8 hours per fair, 2-3 fairs per year
- Other service providers- 1-2 hours per month
- Facebook- Page identification- 8 hours, posting less than 5 minutes
- LinkedIn- 5 minutes (posting)
- Craigslist- 5 minutes (posting), 8-10 hours of reviewing data on applicants to remove bot responses or responses from people outside the study parameters

Results of different recruitment approaches



Analysis

- Working directly with service providers (e.g., CPS) resulted in the most referrals and the highest yield of eligible participants into the study
- Craigs list had a very high recruitment rate but very few of these referrals were eligible to participate in the study:
 - High rate of fraud/bots required significantly more time to determine if the response was real and if the person met the intake screening criteria
 - Required the inclusion of a pre-baseline assessment interview for each person to determine if the submission was from a person and if they met the criteria

Takeaways on Recruitment

- Recruitment of younger individuals into research studies will be an ongoing challenge for researchers
- Incentives can help increase interest but also increase interest from groups looking to game the system
- Development and sustaining close relationships with service providers, word-of-mouth of past participants, and engaging families will have the highest yield with what amounts to comparable time to achieve as other strategies
- Using social media has the capacity to increase recruitment and draw from a novel population who may not respond to emails from school personnel, BUT:
 - Require substantial more effort in fraud and verification procedures
 - Qualitatively they may also appear different in the interest and engagement in the study

Maintaining Youth Engagement

- Two cohorts (Fall & Spring) for online intervention component
- Intervention consisted of an 8-week online program intended to increase:
 - Awareness of careers in technology
 - Workplace readiness skills to support effective integration into the work environment
 - Peer-learning and mentoring
- Participants who completed the online program were provided with a four week paid internship with a technology company located in Chicago, IL

Maintaining engagement

- Online program consisted of both synchronous and asynchronous components
 - Asynchronous
 - Readings, videos on different topics, virtual tours of technology companies (developed by SPR Inc), and interviews with professionals with disabilities or hiring managers at technology firms
 - Synchronous
 - Weekly sessions with participants to review information provided through asynchronous program, role play different scenarios and situations, and team building activities
- Peer mentoring- Select individuals who

Follow up and outcome evaluation

- Participants complete study protocol at application and again after completing the program.
- Research questions
 - What is the effect of the intervention on the character strengths (hope, resilience, optimism, self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, and subjective well-being) of high school students of color with IDD compared to students without TEC-P training?
 - What is the effect of TEC-P intervention on the SCCT outcomes (Intrinsic motivation to pursue a STEMM career, academic milestone self-efficacy, academic barriers coping self-efficacy, academic outcome expectancy, crystalized science and technology interests) of high school students of color with IDD compared to students without TEC-P training?
 - What is the effect of TEC-P intervention on post-school outcomes (HS graduation rate, postsecondary education in STEMM rate, and STEMM employment rate) of high school students of color with IDD compared to students without TEC-P training?

Follow up and outcome evaluation

- Sample
 - Treatment
 - N=47, mean age 20.4, 68% Black or African American, 25% Hispanic
 - Control
 - N=69 , mean age 21.3, 73% Black or African American, 22% Hispanic
- Data collection
 - Currently waiting for final surveys from most recent summer cohort to be submitted to conduct preliminary analysis on RQ 1 & 2

Follow up and outcome evaluation, continued

- RQ3
 - Of those who completed intervention in Years 1-3 (n=35):
 - 25 (71%) are either currently working and/or are attending post-secondary education program
 - Among those who are working (n=19), 47% are working in a technology-related area (e.g., computer repair, coding, debugging, IT services)

Qualitative evaluation

- Seven individuals from Years 1-2 participated in interviews to help the research team understand the facilitators and barriers to employment or future directions. They described the following:
 - Role of Local Education Agencies (LEAs)
 - Benefits of early exposure to work-readiness training
 - Capitalizing on the unique strengths of our participants
 - Value of Impression Management Training
 - Work-based learning experiences
 - Openness to new career directions

Summary

- The Tech-Prep project has recruited youth with disabilities over the last four years to participate in the project with one final cohort completing the program in Year 5
- Initial results support the impact of the intervention on promoting career interests in technology fields; impact evaluation of the program on underlying variables (e.g., SCCT) are pending.
- Youth and their families report a high degree of satisfaction with the program and appear to be achieving a high level of employment (albeit in areas beyond technology fields) and education

Thank you!

- Thank you for attending this presentation

- Questions?