Helping Individuals with a Recent Onset Psychosis Thrive: Tips on Supported Education

Jan 28th, 2021

CSS-SMI INITIATIVE

The Clinical Support System for Serious Mental Illness (CSS-SMI) is a Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) funded initiative implemented by the American Psychiatric Association (APA).
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DISCLOSURE

- No relationships with commercial interests or conflicts of interest reported.
LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the end of the presentation, participants will be able to . . .

• Describe recent research findings on the benefits of supported education in recent onset psychosis.
• Identify at least 4 accommodations that have been used in Individual Education Plans (IEP)s to help high schoolers living with psychosis successfully graduate.
• Outline at least 3 strategies to address cognitive challenges that can impair academic performance in psychosis.

Improvements in Instrumental Role Functioning are a Key Aspect of FEP Recovery

1. Return to work
2. Return to school
3. Starting up a new work or school program
People are living their lives and then they develop a **psychotic** illness . . .

- They may be going to school or working
- They have aspirations and dreams
- Their families may have had aspirations for them
- The psychosis may disrupt their education
- They may have had many prior successes or may have been struggling with performance issues for a longtime (e.g. been in special ed, having difficulties with their peer relationships, poor grades, etc.)
How Might Symptoms of Psychosis Impact School Involvement and Academic Success?

- Positive symptoms—hallucinations, delusions
- Negative Symptoms—amotivation, anhedonia, asociality
- Cognitive Problems—difficulty remembering, concentrating, perspective taking, attending

Impact of FEP Developmental Stage on Education

- Peer relationships & opinions very important
- Developmental goal is individuating from families
- High rate of substance use
- Desire to exert autonomy-sensitive to being told what to do, but they may not know what to do without guidance
- Normative for this to be a time of trial and error—trying on new identities—
  - Changing appearance, changing majors
- May be reluctant to think the psychosis is serious (e.g., “This is just a one-time thing”)
- Heavily influenced by social media—can be especially challenging in high school and college
Principles of Supported Employment and Education (based on Individual Placement and Support Principles)

1. SEE services are available to all people in CSC services
   a. SEE Specialist meets with all consumers early in program to explore possible work/school goals
   b. Continues working with consumers interested in work or school
   c. Re-engages consumer later in program if interest develops over time

2. People’s individual goals and preferences regarding their careers are honored and supported

3. SEE employment/education services assist people with obtaining meaningful competitive employment or training/school placements

Principles of SEE

4. SEE helps people to obtain accurate information regarding decisions about disability benefits and work incentive programs
   a. Initial benefits counselling can be problematic when done by SEE specialist—mixed message—"pursue work" but be judged "disabled".

5. SEE services work together with all other CSC services to be as helpful as possible for people

6. SEE services begin working with people when they say they are interested in working on their career through education, employment or both
Principles of SEE

7. SEE employment services help people search for and obtain employment quickly without requiring prevocational assessments (usually within 6 weeks of meeting the SEE worker).

8. SEE services provide follow-along supports for people after they have obtained a meaningful job, started an educational program, or both.

So, how well does this approach work???

• 2 recent trials providing unique information
Killackey et al., (2008) First Episode Study

- 41 consumers with first episode psychosis
- 6 months intervention
- Random assignment to either IPS in a specialized first episode tx program or treatment as usual (specialized first episode tx program and referrals to outside vocational programs)
- Allowed work or school as outcome
- Potential interest in work or school as an eligibility criterion

Demographic and illness variables of participants at baseline—Killackey et al., 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Treatment-as-usual group (n=21)</th>
<th>Vocational-intervention group (n=20)</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age, years</td>
<td>21.42 (2.21)</td>
<td>21.29 (2.39)</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender, male/female</td>
<td>17/4</td>
<td>16/4</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age at onset, years</td>
<td>20.47 (2.61)</td>
<td>19.95 (2.93)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of illness, months</td>
<td>12.25 (12.98)</td>
<td>15.68 (14.17)</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital status, n Married/defacto Never married</td>
<td>7/10</td>
<td>1/19</td>
<td>P=0.002</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Employment status by group over the 6 months - Killackey et al., 2008

Employment/School and enrollment status by group over the 6 months – Killackey et al., 2008
There was a significant interaction between group and time with respect to studying status, OR = 0.87 (95% CI 0.77–0.97, Wald $z = -2.37$, $P = 0.018$), after controlling for baseline study status. The odds ratio comparing studying status between the IPS and TAU groups at the 0–6-month time interval was significant, OR = 3.04 (95% CI 1.01–9.17, Wald $z = 1.97$, $P = 0.049$). No between-group differences were observed at 6–12 and 12–18 months ($P = 0.584$ and $P = 0.300$, respectively).

IPS and Clinical Based Work Training Groups in Recent Onset Psychosis (Nuechterlein et al., 2020)

- 69 young individuals who had developed non-affective psychosis in the past two years
- **Indicated a potential interest in work or school to join study**
- Randomized to IPS and workplace fundamental module OR referral to state vocational rehabilitation and social skills module
- All treatment embedded in comprehensive clinical care
- IPS lasted 18 months; titrated schedule
- Included a medication component so there was a 3 month stabilization period prior to randomization
Percentage of first-episode schizophrenia patients in school at study baseline, during initial six months, and during following 1-year period (Nuechterlein et al., 2020)

Percentage of first-episode schizophrenia patients in competitive employment or school at study baseline, during initial 6 months, and during following 1-year period. (Nuechterlein et al., 2020)
Why Do We Work to Keep Individuals in School?

• Over a life time, labor force participation and income rises with education according to the US Dept of Labor—(Brundage Jr, V. (2017)).

Labor force participation rises with education

[Chart showing labor force participation rates by educational attainment and gender, 25 years and over, 2015 annual averages]
Weekly earnings rise with educational attainment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Attainment</th>
<th>Median Weekly Earnings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral degree</td>
<td>$2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional degree</td>
<td>$2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master's degree</td>
<td>$1,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor's degree</td>
<td>$1,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate degree</td>
<td>$1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college, no degree</td>
<td>$1,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school graduates, no college</td>
<td>$1,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than a high school diploma</td>
<td>$1,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hover over chart to view data. 

On to the Ins and Outs of Supported Education for Individuals Experiencing a First Episode of Psychosis
Supported Education

“Our participants enrolled in a range of programs, including General Educational Development (GED) credentialing programs or vocational schools (20%), community colleges (60%), or four-year colleges (20%).”


Supported Education

“Assistance with study habits was...a key component of supported education. The cognitive deficits associated with schizophrenia often lead to difficulties with concentration, learning new information, and adapting this information to other contexts.”

Employment & Education

“In our sample of individuals with a recent first episode of schizophrenia, we found that the flexibility to orient IPS toward return to either school or jobs or both worked well. Of the individuals who successfully returned to school or competitive jobs ... we found that 36% selected school alone, 31% selected jobs alone, and 33% returned to both school and jobs.”


Supported Education

• The general strategies for supported education are the same as with supported employment, with a few differences

• Many participants will have some school hx—you can build on that. Questions include what kind of school(s) did they attend, when did they attend, did they graduate or receive a certificate? Were they in special education? Did they have an IEP?

• Supported education tends to be even more “hands-on” than supported employment—need to get into the nitty gritty of assignments, reading, following lectures, etc.
Working with High Schoolers

- Psychosis can disrupt learning and school adjustment
- Can help CSC participant pursue a 504 or IEP plan
- Can work with parents to the extent they allow
- Can help student with homework and learning strategies
- May or may not get access to school-ideal to build a relationship with school counselors
- Social development is crucial
- Academic work requires you be very “hands-on”
  - Schedules
  - Study habits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IEP vs 504</th>
<th>Individualized Education Plan (IEP)</th>
<th>Section 504 Plan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type of law</td>
<td>Special Education - Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA)</td>
<td>Civil Rights - Rehabilitation Act of 1973</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department</td>
<td>Department of Education</td>
<td>Office of Civil Rights</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Requirements for eligibility | Has a disability that:
  a) meets criteria under IDEA,
  b) significantly impacts educational performance, and
  c) requires specialized services | Has a disability that significantly impacts a major life function |
| What is typically included? | Specialized education services, accommodations, related services | Accommodations, modifications, and related services |
| Age limits | IEP offered through 12th grade or until age 21 when required | No age limits with a 504 plan |
| Where is the plan used? | Educationally, through the 12th grade
  Does not transfer to college | School, work, and college
  Eligibility and plan creation occurs at each institution |
| Discipline | A Manifestation Determination meeting must be held to determine if the offense is a manifestation of the disability by the 10th day of suspension
  Services are required during long-term suspension | A Manifestation Determination meeting must be held to determine if the offense is a manifestation of the disability by the 10th day of suspension
  May require reevaluation |
Individual Education Plan Referral Letter Example

Date: January 15, 2016

To: Steven Hannoy, Principal
Hope Elementary School
334 Ivy Rd.
Anytown, CA USA

Re: Grace Jones, Grade 3, Mrs. Andrew’s Class

I am writing to you because my child is experiencing difficulties in school. (Here you can list specifics). Grace continues to read below grade level. She struggles with classroom assignments and does not seem to understand the math concepts. She struggled last year and we tried some intervention strategies, but she is still having difficulties.

I am formally requesting that the school immediately begin a special education evaluation. Since this process can take up to 60 days, I would like to receive my procedural safeguards and the evaluation plan explaining the tests that may be given to my child within 15 days. Once I consent to the evaluation, I would like to be informed of when the evaluation will be scheduled.

Thank you very much for your assistance. I look forward to hearing from you and your staff. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Individual Education Plan

Evolved from the Individuals with Disabilities Act
Has 5 parts

1. Referral for evaluation—
   Parent request in writing
   15 days for district to respond
   15 days for parent to consent to the plan

2. Evaluation for disability—
   60 days to conduct the assessment
   Can involve administration of a variety of assessments as well as behavioral observation and review of records
Individual Education Plan

3. Determination of disability and sharing information with family/student in a meeting---School is looking for:
   • a discrepancy between performance and ability
   • limited progress, or deficiency in cognitive areas
   • evidence of emotional or behavioral disturbances
   • problems with fine or gross motor skills

Individual Education Plan

4. Development of IEP—
   • Can occur at the eligibility meeting and then be refined
   • School has 30 days to develop from the time of the determination of eligibility to develop the IEP
   • Parents/guardians have 10 days to appeal after viewing the IEP —can go to mediation
   • Requires at least yearly review
Individual Education Plan

4. Development of IEP con’t—

- IEP Includes:
  - Child’s present level of functioning
  - Strengths, weaknesses, abilities and educational needs
  - Area(s) of eligibility (based on the 13 categories named in IDEA)
  - Annual goals and objectives
  - Common Core Standards
  - Program placement
  - Accommodations and level of participation in assessments
  - Transition plan if 16 or older—what local resources are available for career exploration? Many state departments of education or departments of vocational rehabilitation offer programs like
    - Workability—Dept of Education
    - Healthy Transitions-Voc Rehab

The **IEP Team** usually consists of some combination of the following:
- Student (if appropriate and over age 8)
- Parent, guardian or representative
- School personnel
  - School administrator
  - Special education teacher
  - General education teacher
  - Professionals who performed the assessments
Individual Education Plan

5. Implementation of IEP—
   • Requires at least yearly review; updates are useful
   • Caregivers and SEE can monitor if it is being implemented as written
   • Can schedule meetings with the school counsellor when there is a concern

IEP Accommodations that Can Work Well for Individuals in First Episode Programs

Individual groggy in the morning because of medication ➔ shorter school days
Individual has difficulty with abstraction and concentration ➔ take more “hands on classes” such as physical education, photography, cooking, computers, art
Individual has difficulty with concentration and completing assignments ➔ negotiate fewer assignments
Individual gets overwhelmed at school ➔ can go for respite in nurse’s office
Accommodations grounded in FEP Treatment

Meetings with team may count as a health credit
Meetings with team may count as a physical education credit if the SEE specialist does something active with the participant in CSC—walks the high track with them
SEE specialist can help participants meet art credit requirements by taking them to museums, galleries, etc.
SEE and individual therapist can develop a plan with the CSC participant to manage symptoms at school

Referrals for Home Schooling/Continuation High School

- High Schools are often challenged by the needs of individuals with psychosis
- May refer out or encourage home schooling
- CSC participant may find the idea appealing
- The challenge is these settings are often problematic for those with difficulties in executive functioning—require a very high level of monitoring and support
Thinking about Applying to College

Keep an eye on the preferences of the individual in CSC program
Learn what kind of college counseling is available through the high school
Keep an eye on the academic calendar—if individuals are thinking of a 4-year competitive school, much of the school searches will happen junior year and applications due in Nov and Dec of senior year
The SEE can help with the admission process, but this is also a time to determine if the individual in CSC program can move forward with less support, which will likely be required in a college setting

And a Few words about Social Development in High School

• The burden of having to go back to school after an exacerbation—almost like "returning to the scene of the crime"—can be large
• Keep an eye on social development—
  • Are your participants going to events (football, dances)?
  • Do they belong to clubs?
  • Do they eat with others at nutrition?
  • How are they doing on group projects?
  • How is their attendance at school?
• Work with IRT to shore up social skills
College/Trade Schools

• College/Trade Schools—Important to visit if individual is contemplating enrolling—observe how the individual does on campus
  • Confident?
  • Anxious?
  • Comfortable? Excited?

College/Trade Schools con’t

• Many issues to address
  • Finances—FAFSA, Department of Voc Rehab
  • Degree program? Or just putting a “toe in the water?”—start light to achieve early success
  • Applications and acceptances
  • Learning about specific support for disabled students
  • Is a referral to state vocational rehabilitation an option?
College/Trade Schools, cont’d

• Linking students with disability or accommodation services at school
  • Accommodations may include having a note taker, early enrollment, more
    time for testing, special career counseling, tutoring
  • Typically need a DSM 5/ICD 10 dx
• Help students consider returning to school in small steps—
  • starting with 1-2 courses at first; consider cognitive demands

College/Trade Schools, cont’d

• Know the all-important dates at local colleges—
  • registration
  • first day of classes
  • drop day
  • finals
• Coursera (Yale Happiness Course), Khan academy—free online
  courses “to get ready”
Follow Along Supports for Education

- Work out a way to get regular feedback on how CSC participant is doing in class—ideally from professor
- Specialist can take a role in teaching study skills and reviewing homework
- Specialist can help individual improve his or her cognitive skills using handout in the manual
- Help individuals with socialization—participating in study groups or labs, need for small talk, talking about where to meet people on campus, where to set in a class to be most comfortable.

Supported Education—The Consequences of Becoming Unwell During College

“I had learned to be a student before I became ill. It gave me a great deal of satisfaction. My time was flexible. I could do the work without significant interaction with others (I need time to myself). In short, a menial job for me would have been much more stressful than being a student—so shooting high was actually less stressful than shooting low.”

GED Programs

- Some have a cost—any way to get scholarship
- Consider whether there is any in-person teaching or all online?
- SEE specialist can introduce student and self to teacher (with consent)
- May be able to get some disability accommodations
- Seeing the classroom set up can be very useful to helping student

Graduate/Professional School

- Most CSC programs will have 1-2 individuals in graduate school at some point
- SEE work will be behind the scenes
- Paying attention to bolstering executive functioning is important
- SEE specialist should try very hard to keep the student connected with academic mentors
Appendix 5- Coping with Cognitive Difficulties at Work or School

Dealing with Cognitive Challenges

• Educational handout—Navigateconsultants.org SEE manual
• Queries in all domains and then strategies to address
• Need to use with participant, not just give them the handout
• Can practice over several sessions
Dealing with Cognitive Challenges

- Attention and concentration
  - Take scheduled breaks
  - Remove distractions from the environment
  - Prepare a special place for studying and a routine
  - Say steps of a task aloud
  - Write down the steps of what you need to do

- Response speed
  - Overlearning
  - Completing timed practice test
  - Finding more efficient ways of doing things
Dealing with Cognitive Challenges

- Memory
  - Repeat back what you heard
  - Memory aids (notes, post-its)
  - Post steps of skills
  - Organize your workspace
  - Use mnemonics or associations

Dealing with Cognitive Challenges

- Problems in executive functioning
  - Use a scheduler
  - Plan each day the night before
  - Learn to recognize the signs of a problem at school
  - Get Help to solve a problem
  - Use the steps of problem-solving
The Role of Family in SEE

- Families can “make or break” whether consumers succeed at school by supporting or impeding efforts
- Relatives may be ambivalent about participant pursuing school goals
- Families benefit from understanding the SEE program
- Families also often want to understand issues regarding benefits and the impact of work or school
- Engage families in SEE whenever possible; consumers over 18 years old need to consent to family involvement and information sharing but shared decision-making paradigm can facilitate

Research Areas Still to be Addressed

- Data on cultural/racial differences in SEE and school success are lacking
- Long-term (5 year plus) outcome of participation in SEE not known
- Many programs use Peer support as part of their SEE programs with apparent success, but this has not been systematically evaluated
Resources

• Toolkit for students and their families:
https://www.nasmhpd.org/content/toolkit-back-school-support-full-inclusion-students-early-psychosis-higher-education-student
• SEE MANUAL—download at navigateconsultants.org

References

Questions?
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