

ABSTRACT

The Learning and Working During the Transition to Adulthood Rehabilitation Research & Training Center, University of Massachusetts Medical School, successfully conducted a state of the science conference, “Tools for System Transformation for Young Adults with Psychiatric Disabilities.” The conference was held at Georgetown University National Technical Assistance Center for Children’s Mental Health on September 24-25th, 2013.

We had two goals for this conference. Our first goal was to share and discuss the current state of research knowledge regarding practice and policy supports for strong educational and employment outcomes in young adults (ages 18-30) with psychiatric disabilities. We focused on implications for adult mental health and rehabilitation service systems, and the young adults with psychiatric disabilities in those systems. Our second goal was to engage all attendees in prioritizing the knowledge that future research should address, to guide these systems’ efforts, to better launch and support these young adults’ long-term careers. The process of the conference included, presentations of three state of the science papers that were written and completed prior to the event in the domains of employment, education, and system and policy as well as an introductory framework paper. Subsequently, a summary of written responses to each paper were prepared and presented by a panel of stakeholders which included: researchers, young adults, family members, and individuals representing underserved populations. The papers, responses, and an introductory framework were made into a compendium which was distributed to all conference participants, both before, and at the conference.

In attendance at the state of the science conference were federal and state directors and administrators of disability service systems, especially in the areas of employment and education, as well as those with experience and expertise as family and young adult representatives and researchers.

The structure of the conference included:

- Welcoming remarks from Charlie Lakin, Director, National Institutes on Disability Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR),
- Welcoming remarks from Jim Wotring, Director, National Technical Assistance Center for Children’s Mental Health,
- Welcoming remarks from Paolo Del Vecchio, Director, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration,
- Presentation by Maryann Davis, Director, Transitions Research and Training Center, on conference goals and framework for understanding young adults with psychiatric disabilities,