Changes in problem solving, readiness for advocacy, and participation: Comparing an environment-focused intervention with goal setting only for transition age youth with developmental disabilities

BACKGROUND

• Interventions that target environmental changes and task adaptations increase youths’ participation at home, school, and the community.¹
• Project TEAM (TEAM) teaches youth with DD to identify and resolve physical and social barriers to participation in a self-identified goal.²
• TEAM is a 12-week multi-component group intervention that includes: group sessions, individualized goal setting, and peer mentoring.
• TEAM teaches youth a problem-solving process called the “Game Plan” that incorporates cognitive-behavioral techniques.
• Hypothesis: TEAM will increase youth’s ability to problem solve environment barriers to participation, increase readiness for advocacy, and support attainment of self-identified participation goals more than a goal setting comparison condition.

METHODS

• Design: Quasi-experimental, repeated measures: baseline (B), after 12 weeks of TEAM or goal setting period (O), and 6-week follow-up (F)
• Participants: Convenience, matched samples. TEAM implemented in schools and agencies; 7 cohorts (5 New England, 2 Midwest; 4 agencies, 3 schools). The TEAM group (n=47, M = 17.49 yrs) had more youth with intellectual disabilities than the comparison group (n=35, M = 17.46 yrs).
• Measures and Analysis:
  - Project TEAM Test: Part 1 (knowledge of environment and modification strategies) & Part II (ability to problem-solve environmental barriers to participation). Analyzed estimated mean differences (EMD) between groups over time with linear mixed effect models.
  - Readiness for advocacy: Parent and youth report. Analyzed with Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test
  - Participation goal: Goal Attainment Scale. Analyzed with Fisher’s exact test.

RESULTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Between-group comparison</th>
<th>Knowledge and Ability to Solve Problems</th>
<th>Change in Readiness for Advocacy</th>
<th>Participation Goal Attainment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Part I, EMD (CI)</td>
<td>Part II, EMD (CI)</td>
<td>Youth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEAM: From B to O</td>
<td></td>
<td>Z= 1.38, p = 0.17</td>
<td>Z=1.89, p = 0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEAM: From B to F</td>
<td></td>
<td>Z= 2.44, p = 0.02</td>
<td>Z= 2.41, p = 0.04*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEAM: From B to F</td>
<td></td>
<td>Z= 0.69, p = 0.45</td>
<td>Z= 0.52, p = 0.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEAM: From B to O</td>
<td></td>
<td>Z= 0.41, p = 0.67</td>
<td>Z= 0.43, p = 0.61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• TEAM youth had more positive outcomes even though this group had a higher prevalence of intellectual disability; TEAM may provide youth with cognitive impairments the needed supports to problem solve environment barriers to participation, increase readiness for advocacy, and support attainment of participation goals.

• Project TEAM’s unique integration of cognitive-behavioral techniques, experiential and social learning, and universal design features may enhance youths’ comprehension, internalization, and generalization of the Game Plan problem-solving process to their everyday lives.

CONCLUSIONS

• TEAM youth had more positive outcomes even though this group had a higher prevalence of intellectual disability; TEAM may provide youth with cognitive impairments the needed supports to problem solve environment barriers to participation, increase readiness for advocacy, and support attainment of participation goals.

• Project TEAM’s unique integration of cognitive-behavioral techniques, experiential and social learning, and universal design features may enhance youths’ comprehension, internalization, and generalization of the Game Plan problem-solving process to their everyday lives.

KEY REFERENCE