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Developing Power Skills and Effective Partnerships with Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

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Friends Life Community

Mission Statement
“To create an opportunity for teenagers and adults with disabilities to develop socially, grow personally, and enjoy community as they experience life together.”

As a certified 501(c)3, Friends Life Community empowers each participant to live as independently as possible as they age out of high school and other traditional support programs. Through continuing education and job training, we provide our Friends with every opportunity to achieve their full potential and discover their place within the community and the world.”

Identified Needs of the Agency
• Needs were identified by Program Director and families
• Additional virtual curriculum needed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and inability to reach all Friends safely in an in-person capacity
• An interest survey was created and sent to the families to gather their perspective on strengths and differences of the Friends, as well as to determine what topics they would like to see in a life skills course
• Eleven responses were recorded and short answers were categorized into common themes:
  - Professional development for staff was requested to train caregivers on effective ways to work with the intellectual and developmental disability (IDD) population from an occupational therapist’s perspective

Capstone Goals
• Add to existing Power Skills course curriculum to further develop independence in activities of daily living (ADLs) and instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs), as well as improve soft skills such as self-advocacy, communication, goal setting, initiation, and leadership
• Develop an occupational therapy-based training module that will assist Friends Life staff, volunteers, and caregivers of those with IDD in improving participation and independence in Friends
• Improve knowledge of the population, build rapport, and identify wants and needs regarding daily functioning by spending time, both virtually and in-person, with Friends

Literature Review and Data Collection
• Individuals with IDD often present with impairments in adaptive skills and require assistance with completing ADLs safely, efficiently, and independently
• Self-awareness, psychosocial skills, and day-to-day functioning can be improved through group treatment that addresses both cognitive and emotional difficulties
• Individuals with IDD present with difficulties in the process skills 1) accommodates, 2) notices/responds, and 3) benefits, which may be improved by interventions that provide consistent opportunities for practice and that are focused on the development of habits, routines, adaptive skills, and self-awareness
• 6 interviews with professionals who have extensive experience in partnering with individuals with IDD were conducted to gather data on effective ways to work with the population. Important themes are identified below:
  - Targeting client’s interests
  - Using activity analysis
  - Peer support
  - Allowing mistakes
  - Setting goals

Outcomes of Capstone
• Implementation of an 8-week virtual Power skills course, edited after each class based on Friends’ needs and engagement during class, including suggestions for gradations to adapt for all abilities
• Friends’ improved knowledge in time management, initiation, goal-setting and attainment, creating healthy habits, effective hygiene, safety, home management, self-awareness, and making schedules

Online, evidence-based training for staff, volunteers, and caregivers on activity analysis, practical goal setting, task and environmental adaptations, and inclusion, including section quizzes and a final evaluation to assess skills learned
• Training module piloted by staff and other professionals then edited based on feedback received from grading rubric to improve effectiveness and readability
• Electronic and paper versions of training module and in-person and virtual life skills class curriculum, in addition to resources and worksheets used in class, provided to Friends Life to increase sustainability of project

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References Available Upon Request