Community Integration Program for Adults with Autism: A Grant Proposal

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Introduction

Problem:

• Research identified that adults diagnosed autism spectrum disorder (ASD) are likely to have difficulty in social situations (American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2013; Ormond, Shattuck, Cooper, Strezing, & Anderson, 2013). Leading to challenges in interpersonal relationships (Graetz, 2010; Orsmond et al., 2013; Orsmond, Wyngaaden, & Mailick Seltzer, 2004)

• Moreover, the lack of interpersonal skills affects their ability to maintain a romantic relationship (Byers, Nichols, & Voyer, 2013; Haelt, Callahan, Markovics, & Strouf, 2013; Hatton & Tector, 2010; Hellemans, Colson, Verbraeken, Vermeiren, & Deboutte, 2007; Mazurek, 2014; Muller, Schuler, & Yates, 2008; Renty & Roayers, 2006; Renty & Roayers, 2007; Robledo & Donnellan 2008)

• Research also found that adults diagnosed ASD are less likely to achieve a higher education and attain employment (Barnhill, 2007; Cimera & Burgess, 2011; Haelt et al., 2013; Howlin, Goode, Hutton, & Rutter 2004; Lounds Taylor & Mailick Seltzer, 2011; Mazurek, 2014; Renty & Roeyers, 2006; Shattuck, Narendorf, et al., 2012; Shattuck, Roux, et al., 2012)

• Lastly, research identified that adults diagnosed with ASD are likely to experience loneliness, depression and anxiety (Mazurek, 2014; Sterling, Dawson, Estes & Greenson, 2008; Trembath, Germano, Johanson, & Dissanayke, 2012; Wentz, Nyden & Krevers, 2012)

• Garcia-Villamisar and Dattilo (2010) recommended to integrate this often underserved population into their communities through supportive programs

Goal of the project: The goal of the project was to create an integration program for adults diagnosed with ASD in order to increase their quality of life (QoL) and independence skills. The areas of focus included: employment, mental health, and interpersonal relationships. The program was set to take place at the Autism Society of Greater Long Beach/San Gabriel Valley, as they serve community members affected by autism (Autism Society Greater Long Beach/San Gabriel Valley, 2014).
Social Work Relevance

• In the social work profession, the code ethics provides key values that are essential when working with consumers. This includes: competence, dignity, integrity, importance of human relationships, service, and social justice (National Association of Social Workers [NASW], 2008).

• The developmental disability community’s goals are to be included, independent, and productive (Aventi & Otis, 1994).

• For this program, the social workers will be providing education and other services for the participants. This will facilitate the inclusion and independence of the participants when in the community. The program was driven to address the importance of human relationships, dignity, and competence.
Cross-cultural Relevance

By exploring the monitored rates in children, approximations for adult rates can be assessed.

Number of children diagnosed with ASD (out of 1000) in the United States:

- 12.3 African American
- 12.3 Asian/Pacific Islander
- 15.8 Caucasian children
- 10.8 Latino (Baio, 2014)

In California
Students enrolled school diagnosed with ASD
- African American: 6,350
- Asian/Pacific Islander: 14,952
- Caucasian: 28,198
- Latino: 34,480
  (California Department of Education [CDOE], 2013)

In Long Beach
- African American: 228
- Asian/Pacific Islander: 188
- Caucasian: 342
- Latino: 516
  (CDOE, 2013)
Methods

Target population: Unfortunately, rates of adults diagnosed with ASD are unmonitored. However, data provided estimates that in the next decade 500,000 children diagnosed with ASD will reach their 18th birthday (AFAA, 2014). CDC in 2004 stated the rate of ASD was 1 in 125 children. The children used for that study were born in the year 1996, making them now at least 18 years of age (CDC, 2014).

Strategies used to identify and select a funding source: Online search engines (i.e., Google), the foundation center database (www.foundationcenter.org) and a federal grant search (www.grants.gov) were used to research potential funding. The federal search was unable to provide current grants that would meet the needs of a community integration program for adults diagnosed with ASD. The foundation center search produced the Pacific Life Foundation and the Maximus Foundation INC. The Google search identified the Weingart Foundation as a potential funder.

Selected funding source: Ultimately, the Weingart foundation was selected as the program’s potential funder. The foundation has a preference to serve disabled adults in Southern California and supports local chapters of national organizations, meaning the Autism Society of Greater Long Beach and San Gabriel Valley was an eligible organization (Weingart, 2014).
Methods

Sources used for the needs assessment: An extensive review of literature and of available statistical reports of the population were used for the needs assessment. Research was focused on population estimates, interpersonal relationships, employment, post-secondary education, mental health, socialization skills, romantic relationships, and independence skills.

Projected budget range and categories: The projected amount for the community integration program was $99,179 for the following categories:

• Salary for a LCSW with benefits at 30% and two stipends for each MSW intern totaled $79,463
• Direct operating costs include transportation, program materials, and miscellaneous expenses totaled $10,700
• Administrative fees @ 10% overall budget, $9,016
Program summary and description: The propose of the community integration program was to give the participants the tools they need in order to successfully build relationships, live independently, and increase their overall QoL. The Program will have 12 participants that will commit to 10 bi-monthly meetings and case management.

Population served: The target population for the program will include adults between the ages of 18 and 25, diagnosed with ASD. The participants will reside in the Greater Long Beach area and will be moderate to higher functioning individuals.

Sustainability: In order for the program to continue, the program director, with the assistance of the professional interns will create a manual with all the program’s materials. The manual will include the intake questionnaires, the evaluation measurements, goals and objectives, timeline and any other supplementary material. Additionally, the manual will be made available in a portable USB drive to update and create new items as appropriate. This manual will aid in future funding efforts.
Grant Proposal

**Program objectives:** The ultimate goal is to increase the QoL and independence of the participants. The following five program objectives are set to meet the goal.

• To coach the participants on effective engagement skills in order to increase their quality of interpersonal relationships.
• To use role play with participants in order to increase their effectiveness of interviewing skills.
• To educate participants about post-secondary education opportunities.
• To coach the participants on effective coping skills related to mental health in order to increase their self-esteem and decrease loneliness.
• To problem solve and coach participants on IADLs.

**Program evaluation:** The community integration program will be evaluated by its participants. The participants will complete both a pre and post test. The pre/post test will cover the participants baseline knowledge of interpersonal relationships, coping skills, engagement skills and IADLs. Additionally, the pre-test will also ask the participant to write their expectations of the integration program, the staff, and possible goals. Comparatively, the post-test will ask the participants to evaluate their satisfaction of the program, staff and their goal achievement.
Lessons Learned and Implications for Social Work

**Needs assessment:** ASD is monitored in children by the CDC, therefore finding the current rates of adults diagnosed with ASD were unavailable. However, past data can show approximate statistics. Due to the difficulty in finding data, only approximations were used to identify the population of adults diagnosed with ASD in the Greater Long Beach area. The student learned that this specific population is often underserved as the focus is on research and childhood.

**Identification of funding source:** During the identification of funding source research, the student has become more familiar with research terminology, program and geographical restrictions of the grant proposal process.

**Social work implications:** The NASW (2008) code of ethics highlights values that relate to the practice. The value of *dignity and worth of the person* addresses a social worker’s responsibility to identify interventions that create opportunities for growth. The program proposed would create the opportunities needed for this underserved population. Additionally, the program would address the value of competence. Two MSW interns will learn skills that they could build on as they continue in the profession. The student identified that social workers should work with adults diagnosed with ASD as rates have increased, creating a need for services.
References


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