During the six months of the study.

The participant's stage in the planning process

Used Facebook Messenger to create informational

log into The Arc's future planning tool, and then

engagement strategy aimed at encouraging and

Pilot design.

which engaged with families on a weekly basis

qualitative study, which has been completed, and

achieve an employment outcome.

Purpose of Study

Introduction

Using a Light Touch: Engaging Families Using Facebook Messenger

The pilots consisted of an

TABLE 1. EXAMPLE FACEBOOK MESSENGER PROMPTS

TABLE 2. PARTICIPANTS IN PILOT 1

Follow-up Interviews. At the conclusion of the pilot, we asked participants a series of qualitative interview questions about their experiences with employment since their participation in the pilot. We also asked them about their experiences with this pilot and what we could do to better engage families in the future. Our open-ended questions are provided in Table 3. What follows are findings from these follow-up interviews.

TABLE 3. SAMPLE FOLLOW UP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Process Questions

“Have a web page kind of thing. But you could do it through Facebook. Okay. Just this somewhere that explains everything that you’re offering and how to contact you...”

“A website letting people (in) earlier on getting them in the loop and then say, “Have a web page kind of thing. But you could do it through Facebook. Okay, just this

Families want face-to-face interaction; technology plays a support role.

While most participants admitted that there are advantages to using technology as a way of engaging with families around employment, they also stated that technology cannot replace the importance of face-to-face interactions and getting to know the person with a disability.

“I am a fan of texting because it doesn’t take a long time on the phone and it really helps to stay in touch, but it’s a supplement... You [still] need the face-to-face meeting and you need email and keep in touch with what’s going on, but texting gives you the communication that technology is vital.”

“I’m one who i hate emails. I hate emails. Because in my head, I know what I want to say so I might get被认为 wrong if they come in through the message, that’s the same way [with apps]. It could be perceived wrong...I would rather talk to somebody.”

Service providers should know about peer-focused opportunities for families.

Families said that employment support providers need to look about peer-focused methods of support to increase their effectiveness. Participants said that agencies often provide inconsistent information, and that their peer networks were really the place they went to get accurate guidance.

“I actually am a real networker and I met someone back when [my son] was a baby who, who helped me into this whole world. And so I rely on groups...you know, maybe you could get like a group of parent liaison or something to interact with people.”

Knowledge around employment needs to be translatable and usable by individuals and families.

“The [state agency’s] website had some movies, some little videos of some people who were in different living situations... That was extremely helpful because it showed that there’s some way for the parents to gauge what skill level is required from the kids...”

In our previous work (Kramer, Bose, & Shepard, 2017), we saw a disconnect between the evidence base in the research literature and the way families are presented to them. Families have indicated that toolkits, guidance documents, and trainings can be confusing or lack information, and cite the need for more individualized, personal approaches.

In our previous work (Kramer, Bose, & Shepard, 2017), we saw a disconnect between the evidence base in the research literature and the way families are presented to them. Families have indicated that toolkits, guidance documents, and trainings can be confusing or lack information, and cite the need for more individualized, personal approaches.

Information needs to be placed around employment.

Participants noted that families’ expectations about employment can be increased, which poses some challenges to finding scalable, sustainable approaches to engaging with families around employment.

This pilot study suggests that online, virtual strategies, potentially with a face-to-face component, can play a supportive role in building relationships between families of people with disabilities and employment service providers.

TO LEARN MORE

Contact: John Kramer at john.kramer@umb.edu

REFERENCE


The Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Advancing Employment for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities is a project of ThinkWorks at the Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR Grant # 90RT5028-01-00). NIDILRR is a Center within the Administration for Community Living (ACL), Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.

www.ThinkWork.org/rrtc

NIDILRR, ACL, HHS, and you should not assume endorsement

Institutional Review Board.

Participants were recruited through

The project is a collaborative effort of the University of Massachusetts Boston and the University of Massachusetts Lowell and is funded by NIDILRR, Grant # 90RT5028-01-00. The contents of this brief do not necessarily represent the policy of NIDILRR, ACL, HHS, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.

John Kramer, PhD, John Shepard, BA, Jennifer Bose, MS, and Jennifer Sulewski, PhD

University of Massachusetts Boston

Discussion and Next Steps

The findings from this pilot study suggest that engaging with families around influencing an employment outcome is complex, and has implications for in-person and virtual strategies.

Participants stated that face-to-face interaction is desired, which needs to be increased, which poses some challenges to finding scalable, sustainable approaches to engaging with families around employment.

This pilot study suggests that online, virtual strategies, potentially with a face-to-face component, can play a supportive role in building relationships between families of people with disabilities and employment service providers.

TO LEARN MORE

Contact: John Kramer at john.kramer@umb.edu

REFERENCE


The Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Advancing Employment for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities is a project of ThinkWorks at the Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR Grant # 90RT5028-01-00). NIDILRR is a Center within the Administration for Community Living (ACL), Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.

www.ThinkWork.org/rrtc

NIDILRR, ACL, HHS, and you should not assume endorsement

Institutional Review Board.

Participants were recruited through

The project is a collaborative effort of the University of Massachusetts Boston and the University of Massachusetts Lowell and is funded by NIDILRR, Grant # 90RT5028-01-00. The contents of this brief do not necessarily represent the policy of NIDILRR, ACL, HHS, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.