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**DEVELOPING A PEER MENTOR TRAINING GUIDE FOR AN INCLUSIVE
POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION PROGRAM**

by

Rosemary Peters

A Capstone Project Presented to the
FACULTY OF OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY
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In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY DOCTORATE

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CAPSTONE FINAL PAPER APPROVAL FORM

The Capstone Final Paper is the final product that the OTD students need to complete to report his/her Capstone Project and his/her Capstone Experience.

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We, the undersigned, recommend that the Capstone Final Paper completed by the student listed above, in partial fulfillment of the degree requirements, be accepted by Georgia State University.

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Abstract

The IDEAL program at Georgia State University is an inclusive postsecondary education program for young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). The purpose of this capstone project is to create a peer mentor training guide to ensure consistent training and competence of peer mentors in providing social, academic, and employment support. The goal is to provide comprehensive peer mentor training reflecting best practice standards, so students receive high-quality support in the inclusive postsecondary education (IPSE) program. An informal needs assessment was conducted with the program manager, followed by a literature review. Sample peer mentor training manuals were reviewed, and a new guide was created and approved. Edits were made based on feedback and the program manager approved the final training guide. The output of this project was a comprehensive, evidence-based peer mentor training guide. The short-term impact is that the peer mentor training guide met the site's immediate needs of providing comprehensive training for peer mentors to provide academic, social, and employment support. The long-term impact is that the services IDEAL peer mentors will provide to mentees are enhanced, and students with IDD may have better outcomes during and after completing their IPSE programs. This capstone project involves creating a new peer mentor training guide to meet an immediate need of Georgia State University's IDEAL program. The guide will facilitate and promote improved training and preparation of peer mentors who support students with IDD in pursuing academic and career advancement. While this capstone project endeavored to create an evidence-based peer mentor training manual, further research is necessary to delineate best practice guidelines for peer mentor training.

Table of Contents

Summary	1
Chapter 1 Literature Review	4
Chapter 2 Needs Assessment	10
Chapter 3 Capstone Experience Protocol	12
Chapter 4 Results	19
Chapter 5 Discussion	22
References	26
Appendix	31

Summary

Inclusive postsecondary education (IPSE) programs provide college experiences to young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), encompassing opportunities for academic growth, career development, independent living, and social enrichment (Stinnett, Lazo, & Pound, 2023). Occupational therapy has an increasing presence and role in IPSE programs, ranging from program development and research to direct support of students through campus life skills training or assessing a student's need for assistive technology (Blaskowitz, Carretta, & Pustorino-Clevenger, 2021). Another avenue for occupational therapy to contribute towards IPSE programs' success is training peer mentors, who are paid or volunteer matriculating students. Cargiulo & Blaskowitz (2022) propose that “an occupational therapy-driven training program for student peer mentors can help establish best practices in support of students with IDD attending IPSE programs.” IPSE programs have demonstrated improved employment outcomes for young adults with IDD compared to those without postsecondary education (Grigal et al., 2021). However, not all IPSE programs provide equal resources and opportunities for career development and employment (Papay, Grigal, & Choiseul-Praslin, 2023). A potential solution is to utilize peer mentors as job coaches following supported employment models, which are established best practices for people with IDD, to increase IPSE students' career development opportunities (Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Disabilities, n.d.; U.S. Department of Labor, n.d. Employment First).

Purpose

The purpose of this capstone project is to create a peer mentor training guide to ensure consistent training and competence of peer mentors in providing social, academic, and employment support. The ultimate goal is to provide comprehensive peer mentor training that

reflects best practice standards so students receive high-quality support in the inclusive postsecondary education program.

Specific Aims

The specific aims of this capstone project are:

1. The student will familiarize themselves with the IDEAL program operations to understand the site's needs regarding the peer mentor training guide.
2. To prepare for writing the peer mentor training guide, the student will complete a needs assessment with the program manager, a literature review focusing on IPSE programs and peer mentors, and learning modules on supported employment from an accredited source.
3. The student will create a peer mentor training guide for GSU IDEAL to ensure the competence and consistency of peer mentors' training.
4. The student will contribute to the sustainability of IDEAL employment programming by providing educational materials for parents, students, and peer mentors, including a handout on supported employment and a sample pre-employment skills workshop.

Short-term and Long-term Impact

The outcome will be a comprehensive peer mentor training guide. The training guide will include a PowerPoint presentation and a training quiz. The training guide will cover peer mentor responsibilities regarding academic, social, and employment support. The training guide will also provide education regarding IDD and disability rights. The significance of this project is that the IDEAL program will have a new peer mentor training guide that reflects best practice guidelines and improves mentors' knowledge of working with young adults with IDD. Unlike the previous version, this training guide will address job coaching. When peer mentors are properly trained in

job coaching practices, they can appropriately challenge IDEAL students to improve their job skills, excel in internships, and build valuable employment experience before graduation.

CHAPTER 1

Literature Review

Overview of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

Intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) impact an individual's physical, cognitive, and/or emotional development. Intellectual disability (ID) is present at birth or before age eighteen and results in deficits in “intellectual functioning or intelligence, which include the ability to learn, reason, problem-solve, and other skills” and “adaptive behavior, which includes everyday social and life skills” (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2021). Approximately 6.5 million people in the United States have an ID (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022b). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention defines developmental disabilities as “a group of conditions due to an impairment in physical, learning, language, or behavior areas” (2022b). The causes of IDD include genetic and chromosomal conditions, trauma at birth, a mother’s exposure to toxins or infection during pregnancy, as well as unknown causes (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022a). Not every person with a developmental disability will have an intellectual disability. For example, only 30-50% of people with cerebral palsy (CP) will have a co-occurring ID (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2023). Intellectual disabilities are classified as mild, moderate, severe, and profound. This classification used to be based on IQ test scores alone. Now, it includes daily functioning skills and the level of support needed to provide a broader perspective of an individual’s disability (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2015). This expanded definition aligns with the holistic approach of occupational therapy (OT), which accounts for various contexts, performance patterns, performance skills, and client factors when planning supports and interventions based on the client’s needs (American Occupational Therapy Association, 2020).

History

People with intellectual and developmental disabilities have been historically disenfranchised. In the mid-19th century, several training schools were developed around the U.S. and Europe to provide academic and life skill education and promote physical development for youth with IDD. These training schools were often based on Edouard Seguin's sensory training method (The Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities, n.d). Training schools appeared to help children with IDD by removing them from poor houses where they suffered abuse and neglect. However, training schools evolved into “custodial institutions” where abuse and neglect ran rampant (The Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities, n.d). Instead of providing education and training for people with IDD to benefit from and return to living in supportive and inclusive communities, custodial institutions were a place to provide shelter and supervision to keep people with disabilities out of jails and poorhouses. While some families and employees spoke out against the abuse occurring in institutions, it was not until the 1972 televised exposé by ABC journalist Geraldo Rivera of Willowbrook State School that brought awareness to the injustices occurring at not only Willowbrook but institutions around the U.S. (College of Staten Island, n.d). Class action lawsuits, such as *Welsh v. Likins* and *Olmstead v. L.C.*, fueled the closure of institutions, beginning the deinstitutionalization movement and promoting community living as the alternative (The Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities, n.d). Despite living in communities, people with IDD still face difficulties accessing inclusive employment and education opportunities.

Employment

Disabled Americans continue to face injustices in the employment realm due to a law that allows people with disabilities to be paid subminimum wages. Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act originated in 1938, creating a law that people with disabilities could be paid

subminimum wages. In Georgia, there are currently 245 workers with disabilities being paid subminimum wages in sheltered workshops (Farkas, 2024). These workshops are promoted to help people with disabilities gain job skills to get jobs in their communities that pay at least minimum wage. However, the sheltered workshops do not assist disabled workers in applying for jobs in the community. The implication is that sheltered workshops can manipulate these individuals by keeping them in the workshop and exploiting their labor (Farkas, 2024). The government has recognized supported employment as the solution to helping workers with IDD transition from jobs in sheltered workshops making at least minimum wages at jobs within their communities (Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Disabilities, n.d.; U.S. Department of Labor, n.d. Employment First).

The government has created laws and funding to encourage states to provide supported employment programs. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) is a federal law “designed to help job seekers access employment, education, training, and support services to succeed in the labor market and to match employers with the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy” (U.S. Department of Labor, n.d. WIOA). Signed into law in 2014, the WIOA supports Americans, including those with intellectual and developmental disabilities, to achieve competitive integrated employment within their communities. WIOA defined Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE) as the goal for Americans with disabilities. Specific requirements of CIE protect workers with disabilities from labor exploitation and ensure workers are paid real wages in integrated community settings. State vocational rehabilitation agencies or departments may provide supported employment services or contract with companies that provide these supported employment services (U.S. Department of Labor, n.d. CIE). While supported employment services are improving, people with disabilities face long waiting lists to receive

supported employment and other related services. In Georgia, over 7,000 individuals with disabilities are on the waiting list for Medicaid funding for home and community-based services, many of whom may use this funding to qualify for supported employment services (Nolin, 2024).

Education

Similar to the difficult history of disabled Americans fighting for rights to employment and fair wages, accessible public education is another area where people with disabilities have been disenfranchised. Children with disabilities could be denied access to public schools until a law passed in 1975 guaranteeing the right to a free, appropriate public education, now known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). Under IDEA, students receiving special education services should receive support for transitioning from high school to adulthood (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). However, there is a lack of transition services for young adults with IDD (United Disability Services, 2020). Students with IDD typically graduate high school and attend an adult day program or stay home with their families (Georgia Inclusive Postsecondary Education Consortium, n.d.-a). Neither of these options truly supports the individual with IDD to be fully involved in their community. People with IDD can live and work independently with proper support, but the waiting lists for funding to hire support staff or job coaches are long (Nolin, 2024). In 2010, the U.S. Department of Education funded the creation of inclusive postsecondary programs nationwide known as Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disability (TPSID) (Think College, n.d.). There are now 333 inclusive postsecondary education (IPSE) programs in the United States trying to bridge this support gap by facilitating access to higher education, independent living opportunities, and employment (Think College, 2024).

Researchers are studying various program outcomes, including employment, as IPSE programs experience growth and increased support and funding. People with IDD typically experience high unemployment rates. Yet, current IPSE outcome research shows 59% of respondents having paid employment one year after graduation, starkly contrasting the 19% national employment rate for adults with IDD (Grigal et al., 2021). A 2023 study by Papay, Grigal & Choiseul-Praslin investigated the different types of IPSE employment preparation experiences. While some programs require students to have paid employment experiences at some point in their enrollment, this study found unpaid internships and volunteer activities are the most common employment preparation opportunities. This study also found that volunteering is not an evidenced-based predictor of post-school employment, and “the odds of having a paid job at exit were 47.385 times greater for students who had paid employment in the program than those who did not. The odds of having a paid job at exit were 3.118 times greater for students who had work training in the program than those who did not” (Papay, Grigal & Choiseul-Praslin, 2023). Based on this research, it is clear that paid employment experiences need to be the goal for employment development within the IPSE curriculum so students can continue to participate in their communities through employment after completing their education.

Occupational Therapy and Inclusive Colleges

IPSE programs provide young adults with IDD a normative pathway to adulthood and employment that is typically expected of non-disabled counterparts (Uditsky & Hughson, 2012). From the literature, it is clear that people with IDD face greater challenges in achieving employment and educational opportunities, and inclusive colleges are improving access to higher education as well as competitive employment. From an occupational therapy lens, IPSE programs providing inclusive education and employment opportunities are an avenue for young adults with

IDD to achieve occupational justice, defined as “a justice that recognizes occupational rights to inclusive participation in everyday occupations for all persons in society, regardless of age, ability, gender, social class, or other differences” (Nilsson & Townsend, 2010). OTs can contribute to IPSE programs in various ways, including peer mentor training (Cargiulo & Blaskowitz, 2022). IPSE programs utilize peer mentors, who are matriculating college students, to help guide and support students with IDD in many areas of college life, including academics, employment, independent living, and campus involvement (Krech-Bowles & Becht, 2022). The main objective of this capstone project is to develop a comprehensive peer mentor training guide, aiming to establish consistent training practices and ensure the competence of peer mentors in delivering social, academic, and employment support. By adhering to best practice standards, the ultimate goal is to enhance the quality of support provided to students within the inclusive postsecondary education program.

CHAPTER 2

Needs Assessment

Overview

An informal needs assessment was completed with the IDEAL program manager. The informal needs assessment gathered rich information regarding the site's needs. The IDEAL program has several potential areas where occupational therapy could implement programming or services to improve the program's sustainability, including independent living skills, employment skills, and improving training of peer mentors. The IDEAL program management noticed a need that they could not connect their students with employment services due to long wait lists at agencies. The IDEAL program is now providing these services and getting reimbursed from state vocational rehabilitation funding. Based on the immediate needs of the site, the program manager determined that peer mentor training was the most immediate need that the capstone experience could focus on. The IDEAL program has been hiring new peer mentors and has not had an adequate training program for the peer mentors. Additionally, the old peer mentor training did not include information on supported employment and job coaching. The capstone student agreed to create a new peer mentor training guide for the IDEAL program.

The following questions were asked during the informal interview regarding the training guide:

1. How long should it take for the peer mentor to complete training using the guide?
2. Are there any guidelines for peer mentors as employees or volunteers that should be included in the training guide? (i.e. consent forms for media/press releases, a statement on professional behavior and/or expectations, etc).
3. Should background knowledge on disability studies and disability rights be included? How in-depth should this background knowledge be?

4. How should knowledge and skills be measured after peer mentors complete the training?
5. What method should be used to track who has completed the peer mentor training?
6. What platform should the peer mentor training utilize? (i.e. pencil and paper, or virtual using PowerPoint, Qualtrics, etc)

Needs Assessment Results

The needs assessment results are as follows: Firstly, the training guide should be designed to be completed asynchronously. Originally, the program manager led a live, in-person training with a few peer mentors each semester. The program has increased in size and hires peer mentors continuously, so live, in-person training is no longer feasible. The original training PowerPoint was brief, as much of the training took place in live discussions. The newly created guide is more robust to replace the live discussion dynamic. The peer mentor training guide should be in a PowerPoint presentation and take a peer mentor no longer than two hours to read through the material and complete the accompanying quiz. The peer mentor training guide must emphasize the roles and needs of peer mentors providing academic and employment support. The peer mentor training guide needs to give an overview of the Disability Rights Movement and intellectual and developmental disabilities. The training guide should convey the purpose and significance of inclusive postsecondary education programs. The training guide should include information on advocacy. The training guide should include a quiz at the end to test the knowledge of peer mentors after completing the guide.

CHAPTER 3

Capstone Experience Protocol

Site Description

Mission

“The mission of IDEAL is to prepare students with intellectual and developmental disabilities with job skills for employment while providing access to university education, resources and support that lead to higher levels of self-determination, meaningful employment, greater independence, and a higher quality of life” (Georgia State University Center for Leadership in Disability, n.d.-b).

IDEAL Program Goals

“Academic Enrichment: To advance students’ academic knowledge skills and facilitate lifelong learning, specifically in the areas of film, television, media, and digital expression.

Career Development and Gainful Employment: To bolster students’ work experience and career development, preparing them to seek, obtain, and secure employment, having gained job readiness skills, knowledge of work etiquette, and skills specific to their focus of study.

Independent Living: To prepare students for responsible decision-making and develop essential skills for living independently in a setting or context of their choosing.

Self-determination: To support students’ emotional and social growth, leading to meaningful relationships, greater self-knowledge, advocacy, and confidence beyond college life. To help students build effective interpersonal and intrapersonal communication techniques for success in college, career, and life.

Campus & Community Engagement: To establish and expand students’ relationships with the broader Georgia State University community and alumni by engaging in campus coursework and extracurricular activities.” (Georgia State University Center for Leadership in Disability, n.d.-b).

IDEAL Program Services

IDEAL is an inclusive postsecondary education (IPSE) program at Georgia State University (GSU), housed within the Center for Leadership in Disability. IDEAL serves students with IDD. IDEAL students are enrolled at GSU and audit university courses alongside degree-earning students. IDEAL students choose courses in areas of interest. Upon completion of the four-year program, IDEAL students earn a GSU Certificate of Career Readiness awarded by the College of Education and Human Development. IDEAL students are connected with job internships and job coaches following a supported employment model. Other services IDEAL provides include courses and support for social skills and healthy relationships. The program plans to provide a curriculum on independent living skills in the future. IDEAL students have access to all activities and resources on campus as degree-earning students, including the recreation center, student center, library, sporting events, and more. (Georgia State University Center for Leadership in Disability, n.d.-b).

Clients served

IDEAL students are young adults with various types of intellectual and developmental disabilities, including but not limited to Down syndrome, cerebral palsy, and autism. IDEAL students likely earned a special education diploma or alternative diploma in high school and would be denied entry to college for a degree program based on this status. Most IDEAL students are classified as having a mild to moderate intellectual disability. IDEAL students live in Atlanta and the surrounding suburbs. Many take public transportation or rideshare to campus. Many IDEAL students graduated from schools in the following counties: Dekalb, Fulton, Gwinnett, Rockdale, Henry, and Paulding. The student demographics of IDEAL as of January 2023 are 16.7% female,

83.3% male, 83.3% Black or African American, 8.3% Indian, and 8.3% White (Georgia State University Center for Leadership in Disability, n.d.-b).

Key Roles

Program Managers: IDEAL has two program managers. The first manager has a background in clinical rehabilitation counseling and special education. They manage the program's overall operations and the peer mentors, interns, and other volunteers, as well as employment development for students. This involves connecting students with job internships, writing contracts for internships, and scheduling peer mentors to support IDEAL students at their job internships as needed. The second program manager is a former special education teacher who manages the curriculum for students, modifies course assignments as needed for students to participate in their courses, and collaborates with instructors and professors if there are any concerns about student performance in classes. In the future, the program would like to hire an additional staff member dedicated to managing and coordinating peer mentor support.

Case Managers: Interns from the clinical rehabilitation counseling (CRC) program at Georgia State University act as case managers for IDEAL students. As case managers, they complete Student Transitioning to Adult Roles (STAR) plans with each student and help them identify academic, employment, and social goals. Throughout the semester, the case managers will meet with their assigned students and track progress on their STAR plan goals, identify any areas of concern, and work with the student, peer mentors, parents, or other IDEAL staff to resolve issues and help IDEAL students succeed in their various roles. Case managers might also assist a student in writing a resume or preparing for job interviews.

Peer Mentors: Peer mentors are undergraduate students who support IDEAL students in attending classes, completing homework, and participating in extracurricular activities. They also

help students learn to navigate campus, explore clubs, and build a social network. Peer mentors may be volunteers, paid through federal work-study, or earn experiential learning credit for a university course. Peer mentor hours vary from two to ten hours each week.

Protocol for Developing the Training Guide

The IDEAL program manager needed an updated peer mentor training guide that reflects current best practice guidelines. The following steps were taken to update the peer mentor training guide. First, the capstone student familiarized themselves with the IDEAL program by working as a peer mentor for the IDEAL program. The capstone student spent time in the IDEAL office getting to know staff, peer mentors, and IDEAL students. The capstone student learned about the IDEAL students' and peer mentors' needs. The capstone student attended classes as a peer mentor with an IDEAL student. These steps provided on-site experiential learning to aid in the creation of the peer mentor training guide. Next, the capstone student conducted a needs assessment with the program manager, discussed in detail in chapter 2. The needs assessment provided detailed answers about how to develop and improve the peer mentor training guide. After completing the needs assessment with the program manager, the capstone student reviewed the following sources to prepare for creating the training guide: Think College website and sample training manuals, the Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE), and the principles of the Georgia Inclusive Postsecondary Education Consortium (GAIPSEC) (Association of People Supporting Employment First, n.d.; Georgia Inclusive Post Secondary Education Consortium, n.d.-b; Think College, 2020). The capstone student read each sample manual and took notes on important aspects to include in the training manual. Academic literature on peer mentor training was reviewed. To learn more about job coaching, the capstone student completed learning modules on supported employment from APSE.

Next, IDEAL's previous PowerPoint presentation on peer mentor training was reviewed. Outdated, repetitive, or unnecessary components were deleted. The capstone student noted what significant topics or knowledge was missing. A new outline for the training guide was developed following specifications and requirements from the needs assessment with the program manager. The program manager approved the newly created outline. New topics were added to the training guide, and information was updated and revised from the previous manual. A quiz was created to test peer mentors' knowledge upon completing the training guide. The program manager reviewed a draft of the training guide and provided feedback and suggestions for edits. The edits suggested by the program manager were completed. The program manager approved the final version of the peer mentor training guide. Management was informed of the training guide and implementation procedures.

Summary of Sources

Think College is the national think tank promoting research and advocacy for IPSE programs. Think College provides technical assistance to IPSE programs around the U.S. as well as resources for students and families who are interested in attending an IPSE program (Think College, 2024). Think College has sample peer mentor training manuals from various IPSE programs (Think College, 2020). The capstone student utilized Think College to find research articles, sample peer mentor training manuals, and other information for the peer mentor training guide.

The Georgia Inclusive Post Secondary Education Consortium (GAIPSEC) works to help connect students, parents, and educators with resources and information regarding the nine inclusive colleges in Georgia (Georgia Inclusive Post Secondary Consortium, n.d.-b). GAIPSEC also promotes collaboration and advocacy efforts between the nine inclusive colleges in Georgia.

GAIPSEC lists five principles that guide the development and operation of IPSE programs in the state: inclusive, academic, accommodated, employed, and evaluated (Georgia Inclusive Post Secondary Consortium, n.d.-a) The capstone student followed the five principles as a guide for creating the peer mentor training guide, ensuring that the peer mentor training of GSU IDEAL reflects the principles of GAIPSEC.

The Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE) describes itself as “the only national organization focused exclusively on Employment First to facilitate the full inclusion of people with disabilities in the workplace and community” (2022). APSE provides training and credentialing for Certified Employment Support Professionals as well as workshops and technical assistance for individual and group providers of supported employment services. The capstone student completed APSE training modules on supported employment. The student referenced information and strategies from APSE when writing the peer mentor training guide sections focused on job coaching.

Justification of Program Elements

The elements included in the training manual were chosen based on the needs assessment with the site mentor and/or literature review. The training guide format is a PowerPoint accompanied by a quiz. The program manager chose this format for the needs assessment. Real-life examples and problem-solving scenarios were included in the guide to give peer mentors practical solutions. The quiz includes nine true or false and multiple choice questions to test if peer mentors retain the information from the training guide. This quiz is helpful to make sure peer mentors are prepared to put the knowledge learned into practice. Additionally, the quiz results provide an electronic record to the IDEAL program manager of who has or has not completed the peer mentor training. The training guide should effectively meet the site's needs because a thorough

needs assessment was completed with the program manager to ensure the new training guide is relevant to the site's needs. The training guide follows recommendations from Think College, the think tank for inclusive college programs.

CHAPTER 4

Results

Intended Participants

This program's intended participants are undergraduate students at Georgia State University who are peer mentors for the IDEAL program. These undergraduate students are volunteers or paid through federal work-study. The peer mentors may or may not have any background working with people with disabilities. The training could also be extended to interns from the clinical rehabilitation counseling program (CRC) which partners with IDEAL. While the CRC interns do not act as peer mentors, they would benefit from the training guide and receiving education on disability rights, etiquette, and general program values. It would also be helpful for the CRC interns to have a better understanding of how peer mentors should complete their duties since CRC interns act as case managers and frequently interact with peer mentors.

Program Description

The peer mentor training guide is a forty-two-slide PowerPoint accompanied by a nine-question quiz with a mixture of multiple choice and true or false questions. The recommended use of the training guide is for newly hired peer mentors to complete the training guide by reading through the slides. After reading the training guide, the peer mentors should take the quiz to test their knowledge. The quiz allows program management to track who has completed the training.

Below is the outline of the training guide:

- Introduction to IDEAL
- Overview of Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities
- History of Disability Rights
- Significance of IPSE programs

- IDEAL Mission and Values
- Who's Who at IDEAL
- Chain of Command
- Role of Peer Mentors
- Expectations & Procedures
- Job Coaching
- Support Strategies for Mentors
- Examples of Peer Mentor Support
- Quiz

Each topic included in the training guide serves a purpose. The mission, values, chain of command, expectations, and procedures are for technical purposes in most organizations' general training for new hires. The training guide provides a generous summary of the Disability Rights Movement and the role and significance of inclusive colleges. This was included because most peer mentors are not educated on these topics, and they must understand the seriousness of the opportunity for students with IDD to participate in higher education after being historically disenfranchised.

Peer mentors are facilitators for inclusion on campus and modeling independence, self-determination, and self-advocacy for mentees with IDD. Therefore, education on understanding bias, as well as explaining topics such as a person-first language, was included in the training guide (National Institutes of Health, 2024). These knowledge areas are critical for anyone working with individuals with IDD, but especially for peer mentors. Many of the students with IDD have not had the opportunity to make choices for themselves. Now as college students, individuals with IDD have the responsibility and freedom to make their own academic choices. Fostering self-

determination and effective cueing was utilized in research on an occupation-based, holistic approach to peer mentor training conducted by Cargiulo & Blaskowitz (2022). This resulted in increased peer mentor confidence. Additionally, self-determination is one of the goals of the IDEAL program (Georgia State University Center for Leadership in Disability, n.d.-b). Therefore, this peer mentor training guide included information on self-determination and how to provide proper cueing so that peer mentors elicit the mentees to make their own choices. This training guide teaches peer mentors to presume competence and not make assumptions about the abilities of the mentees.

Implementation

Management was informed of the training guide and will implement it with new hires before their first shift. This program is designed to be implemented virtually and asynchronously. Newly hired peer mentors would read the PowerPoint slides and then complete the training quiz. However, if this training were modified to be implemented as a live group workshop, some background knowledge of IPSE programs and peer mentoring would be necessary. A lead peer mentor or a program manager could facilitate live training.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

Impacts

This capstone project aimed to create a peer mentor training guide to ensure consistent training and competence of peer mentors in providing social, academic, and employment support. The ultimate goal is to provide comprehensive peer mentor training that reflects best practice standards so students receive high-quality support in the inclusive postsecondary education program. The output of this project was a comprehensive, evidence-based peer mentor training guide. The short-term impact is that the peer mentor training guide met the site's immediate needs of improving the preparation and training of peer mentors to provide academic, social, and employment support. This training guide specifically emphasized job coaching as the previous training guide did not include employment information. Since GSU IDEAL has recently begun providing supported employment services, training peer mentors on job coaching principles will improve the success of students with IDD in their job internships. This training guide also provides valuable education on advocacy, fostering self-determination, and the significance of inclusion on college campuses. The potential long-term impact is that by providing evidence-based training for peer mentors, the services they provide to their mentees are enhanced, and students with IDD may have better outcomes during and after completing their IPSE programs. Specifically, the goal is to have improved employment outcomes for graduates of the IPSE programs.

This project could be continued as a research project to determine the efficacy of the training guide for newly hired peer mentors. Additionally, it could be continued by evaluating and comparing peer mentor training methods at various IPSE programs. Another potential research or

doctoral capstone project would be to expand the training guide created by the capstone student and implement the training at other IPSE programs.

Limitations

This project was completed in a fourteen-week semester, so outcomes were limited due to time constraints. This capstone project only developed a training guide and did not have time to implement the evidence-based training guide. If more time were available, the capstone student would have made voiceover recordings explaining information in the PowerPoint. It would have also been beneficial to consult other IPSE programs and inquire how they conduct peer mentor training for recommendations. Additionally, there was insufficient literature to conclude best practices in peer mentor training. The capstone student found research suggesting that peer mentors have increased confidence after completing a training program designed and implemented by OTs (Cargiulo & Blaskowitz, 2022). However, this research did not provide examples of how to structure and implement peer mentor training. Additionally, there were limited sample manuals on the Think College website to reference when developing this peer mentor training guide. While this capstone project endeavored to create an evidence-based peer mentor training manual, further research is necessary to delineate best practice guidelines for peer mentor training.

Sustainability Plan

The training guide can be administered virtually, asynchronously, at no cost. The program has access to the files in its shared drive so that program management can easily access them and provide the training guide to newly hired peer mentors. The program manager approved the implementation and sustainability plans.

Implications for Occupational Therapy

IPSE programs focus on building students' academic, social, career, and independent living skills (Miller et al., 2018). IDEAL's newly created peer mentor training guide emphasizes these skills with less focus on independent living. Georgia State University is a primarily commuter college, and IDEAL students commute to campus instead of living in campus housing. This makes it difficult for the IDEAL program to support students in gaining independent living skills (ILS), as most students live at home with their parents. Some IPSE programs have on-campus student housing opportunities and facilitate growth in ILS. Currently, IDEAL cannot provide programming focusing on ILS due to a lack of facilities on campus to complete these skills (i.e. access to a kitchen or laundry room). Additionally, IDEAL must prioritize peer mentor support toward student success in the coursework and job internships.

The capstone student recognized the site's need to address ILS and proposed a partnership between the Georgia State Occupational Therapy program and the Georgia State IDEAL program. This would be an opportunity for occupational therapy students to engage in a nontraditional community-based fieldwork experience serving young adults with IDD through the context of building and strengthening ILS. In occupational therapy, ILS falls under instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs) (American Occupational Therapy Association, 2020). GSU's OT program has access to a simulated apartment used to practice lab skills such as bed mobility, bathroom transfers, or using adaptive equipment in the kitchen. This simulated apartment has a kitchen and living area, two small bedrooms, a bathroom, and a washer/dryer. Using this simulated apartment, GSU OT students could utilize group and individualized approaches to teaching IADLs to IDEAL students.

The capstone student coordinated a meeting between the IDEAL program manager and the GSU Academic Fieldwork Coordinator to discuss possibilities, resulting in both parties eager to

create this new collaboration. This partnership would support the GSU OT program by providing a long-term and sustainable nontraditional fieldwork site. Finding fieldwork sites each year for three cohorts of GSU OT students is challenging, as is keeping sites local for the level one fieldwork experience as students are in full-time classes. This partnership would create an on-campus fieldwork site, preventing OT students from having to commute off campus. The partnership would support the IDEAL program by providing consistent programming focusing on ILS skills, which is part of the IDEAL program goals and mission. Additionally, the IDEAL program would not have to dedicate paid employees or peer mentors to run this program as the OT students would complete the work supervised by faculty and/or a licensed and registered OT.

Conclusions

This capstone project resulted in an evidence-based peer mentor training guide to meet an immediate need of Georgia State University's inclusive college program, IDEAL. The peer mentor training guide will facilitate and promote improved training and preparation of peer mentors that support students with IDD in pursuing academic and career advancement. The capstone project completed by the occupational therapy student with GSU IDEAL provides a foundation for a partnership between GSU OT and IDEAL that will positively impact occupational therapy students and college students with IDD.

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Appendix

Consent for photo release

Photo Release Consent for Doctoral Capstone Project

The capstone student, Rosemary Peters, used photos of IDEAL students as well as the IDEAL logo in the Peer Mentor Training presentation, as well as the final capstone presentation. The peer mentor training presentation is included in the appendix of the student's final capstone paper. The IDEAL program manager and capstone site mentor, Spenser Norris, gave the capstone student permission to use these photos and the IDEAL logo in the presentations. All IDEAL students sign a photo release form when applying to the IDEAL program. All students represented by photos in the presentations have a signed release form on file with the IDEAL manager.

Student Signature: *Rosemary Peters*

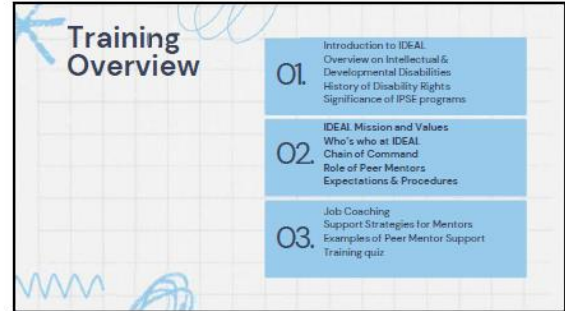
Date: 4-19-2024

Site Mentor Signature: *Spenser Norris*

Date: 4-25-2024



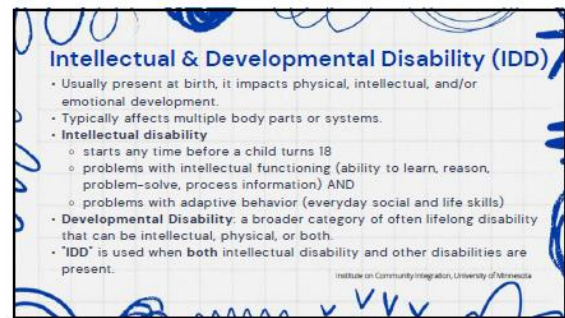
1



2



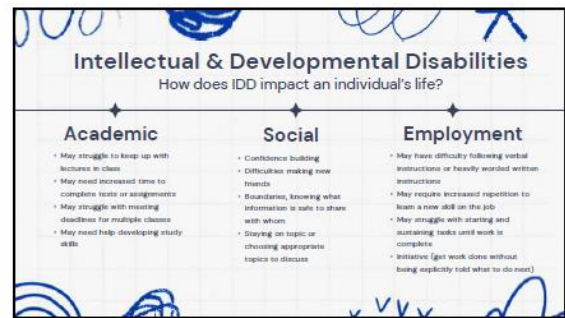
3



4



5



6

Disability Rights Movement

- Inclusive colleges are groundbreaking movements when we look at the context and lived experiences of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in the US
- As a peer mentor, you will become an advocate in your communities and future workplaces for inclusion.



7

Disability Rights



8

Inclusive Postsecondary Education

Historically, young adults with IDD finish high school and have little to be involved in. People with IDD have very low employment rates. This is due to various societal barriers.

In the last 30 years, PSE programs like IDEAL have allowed young adults with IDD to experience the normative life path of college that is typically expected of non-disabled young adults.

It has been shown that higher education leads to better health outcomes and longevity, higher rates of self-reported happiness, and more social participation (McMahon, 2009).

Graduates with even some postsecondary education earn more and have a lower unemployment rate than those who have not attended postsecondary education at all (U.S. Census Bureau).



9

OUR MISSION

The mission of IDEAL is to prepare students with intellectual and developmental disabilities with job skills for employment while providing access to university education, resources and supports that lead to higher levels of self-determination, meaningful employment, greater independence and a higher quality of life.

10

IDEAL VALUES

- Self Advocacy
- Self Determination
- Interdependence
- Mutual Growth
- Inclusion
- Community Integration

11

WHO'S WHO AT IDEAL



- Executive Director, Program Manager**
Expands, enhances program operations, development and fundraising, and empowers the students. She also manages job coaches.
- Job Coaches, Program Manager**
Job coaches educate & facilitate, professional and teacher and manage academic goals in class.
- Case Managers**
Investigate any issues from the Community Based Learning and program, assist students, is assigned to a case manager. Case manager helps student deal with academic. Case manager is also involved in guide to meet with assistance.
- LEADERSHIP MODEL**
The lead case manager identifies the target group of case manager. The lead case manager helps identify the needs of students and case manager. Case manager is also involved in guide to meet with assistance.

12



13

Peer Mentors

Designed to provide the individualized support necessary for IDAL students to thrive at Georgia State.

Peer Mentors work with IDAL students to achieve academic success, develop a social network, and establish healthy and independent lifestyles.

Peer mentors may be assigned to work with a student in various areas:

- Attending class or homework/study hall
- Job Internship or volunteer position
- Social activities (lunch, gym, campus club, sports events)

Image: Georgia State, Student and peer mentor are while working on an assignment.

14

Mentors & Mentee

A mentor is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A student who Is a graduate Is a peer mentor Has completed the IDAL training Is a student who has completed the IDAL training Is a student who 	A mentee is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A student who Is a student Is a student who Is a student who Is a student who Is a student who
A mentor is NOT: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A student A student who A student who A student who A student who A student who 	A mentee is NOT: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A child A student A student A student A student A student

15

Key Rules

- Do not transport a student to your school vehicle.
- Do not exchange money or personal gifts with students.
- Be present for your IDL and not attend to the school for you. Provide your IDL hours unless you cannot not a day.
- Keep an accurate log of hours you work and check in / check out appropriately.
- Be a good example for your mentee. Be responsible in class that looking to class.
- Monitor faculty behaviors. Notify the chain of command if a student contacts you unnecessarily or inappropriately.

16

Peer Mentor Roles & Expectations

General Duties <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weekly check-in with lead peer mentor Communicate issues and concerns to lead peer mentor & chain of command as needed Temporarily off your hours, attend other IDAL support, case manager, etc. Example: If emailing a student about their homework assignment, CC Josh and the student's case manager 	Around Campus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help students learn to navigate campus to and from sites via walking, bus, metro, MARI Help students manage their schedule (arrive on time for class or the bus) Help students explore campus (library, gym, student center) Help students make healthy choices (drink to moderation, choose a healthy lunch) Connect students with campus organizations and events of interest (clubs, sports)
--	--

17

Peer Mentor Roles & Expectations

Academic Support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preparing for class by reviewing notes and material Debriefing after class by summarizing key points and reviewing notes Help students create a homework schedule based on syllabus/assignments Help students check email, complete IDL assignments Help students rehearse class presentations (practice giving an IDL talk, speed, confidently, provide constructive feedback) 	During Class <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assist students during group activities Help students determine WHAT and WHY to share in class discussions (don't interrupt others, stay on topic) Support students to communicate with peers in class Assist students in completing in-class assignments/activities Assist students with in-class organization, note-taking, and time management
---	---

18

Making an Assignment more Accessible

copied the textbook assignment directly into the student's notebook. The student struggles with typing text and links from looking at a computer to the notebook. The simplified rubric process. The student still completed the assignment per the rubric, so this is an accommodation.

The image shows a student's notebook page. On the left, there is a printed rubric with columns for 'Criteria', 'Points', and 'Comments'. The student has handwritten notes in the 'Comments' column. On the right, there are handwritten notes and a drawing of a red apple. The text above the notebook explains that copying the assignment into the notebook is an accommodation for a student who struggles with typing and switching between a computer and a notebook.

19

Accommodations and Modifications

- An **accommodation** changes how a student learns the material.
- A **modification** changes what a student is taught or expected to learn.
- Accommodation example: A student gets extended time to complete a test.
- Modification example: The test assignment asks students to complete 5 molecular paintings. The instructor agrees to a modification and allows the student to submit 2 paintings instead.
- Some I/DD students complete their coursework per the syllabus with no or minimal accommodations.
- Some I/DD students require more modifications.
 - This could be arranged with the student, the course instructor, and both (academic success).
- If you or the student you support are unsure about assignment expectations, just ask!

20

"Do with, not for"

Peer mentors should be a GUIDE, not an ASSIST.

The slide features a decorative border with blue scribbles. The text is centered and reads: "Do with, not for" and "Peer mentors should be a GUIDE, not an ASSIST."

21

Mentoring Mindfully Self-Determination

- The freedom, authority, and support to exercise control over their lives.
- Historically, people with IDD were denied the right to self-determination.
- Inclusive colleges support young adults with IDD to be autonomous and make decisions for their future.
- This includes academic, social, and career endeavors.
- Peer mentors can support, model, and facilitate self-determination in different ways.

© 2014, Justin Steinhilber, 2015

The slide features a decorative border with blue scribbles. The title is "Mentoring Mindfully Self-Determination". The text lists five bullet points about self-determination for students with IDD. A small copyright notice is at the bottom right.

22

Mentoring Mindfully Self-Determination Examples

- Daily Dialogue
 - Example: Choosing how to spend downtime on campus.
 - Allow the student to choose what to do in free time. If they need ideas, give suggestions. The choice is theirs.
- Share Personal Examples
 - "My parents told me to study biology, but I chose math. I am capable of choosing a major that is meaningful to me."
- Guidance and Cues
 - Example: You know a student is behind on a project.
 - DON'T tell the student directly, "Do your homework."
 - DO ASK, "How is your project going? Do you need help making a plan to finish the project? Is there a task you need assistance with?"

The slide features a decorative border with blue scribbles. The title is "Mentoring Mindfully Self-Determination Examples". The text lists three categories of examples with sub-bullets.

23

Mentoring Mindfully Motivational Interviewing to Support Self-Determination

- Open-ended questions: Avoid asking "yes" or "no" questions. Open-ended questions allow to deepen a conversation.
- Affirmations: Pointing out a student's strengths, efforts, achievements, and good qualities helps encourage the student.
- Reflections: To reflect, simply restate, in different words, what the student has just said or is trying to say. Reflections show that you are truly hearing the student. It is okay if your reflection is incorrect because the student will correct you.
- Summaries: Notice the student's key points in the conversation and use them to create a summary. This summary brings together what has been said so far and communicates to the student that you have been listening.
- Be Curious: Curiosity shows the students that you care and are genuinely interested in listening, understanding, and helping them.

The slide features a decorative border with blue scribbles. The title is "Mentoring Mindfully Motivational Interviewing to Support Self-Determination". The text lists five bullet points about motivational interviewing techniques.

24

Mentoring Mindfully

Increasing Awareness of Implicit Bias

- **Implicit biases:** Unintended bias or unconscious bias refers to stereotypes or beliefs that affect our actions in a discriminatory manner.
- Most bias related to students with disabilities groups is **unintentional**.
- **Examples:**
 - Assuming that a student with a disability cannot complete some class activities.
 - Asking a student with a disability to take on a specific role (e.g., notetaker) during group work because of the assumption that it is the only way the student can contribute.
- Let the student **demonstrate their capabilities** before assuming otherwise.

25



"ASSUME THAT I CAN, SO MAYBE I WILL." World Down Syndrome Day Awareness Campaign 2024

26

Mentoring Mindfully

Disability Etiquette & Accessibility

- Always interact with dignity and respect.
- Address the person with the disability, not their support staff.
- Use **person-first language** as appropriate.
 - Some individuals and/or groups prefer identity-first language.
 - Main examples are the Autistic & Deaf communities.
 - Ask the individual their preference.
- Ask before assisting a person with a disability. Let them indicate the level of support they need.
- Do not let the fear of saying/doing something wrong prevent you from getting to know or engaging a person with a disability.

27

Person-First Language (Default, formal, academic/writing)	Identity-First Language (Informal or when someone has specified their preference)	DO NOT USE THIS! (These terms may have been used in the past but are offensive in part)
People with disabilities	Disabled	Handicapped, crippled
People who use a wheelchair	Disabled, wheelchair user	Wheelchair-bound, wheelchair confined
Person with communication and/or developmental disability/learning disability	Disabled	Retarded, feeble-minded, slow, imbecile
Person without a disability	Non-disabled, non-disabled	a normal person
Accessibility icon or parking spot		Handicap/parking, handicap/parking
Non-speaking person using a communication device, person using alternative communication	AAC user, not speaking	Nonverbal, mute
Person with Down Syndrome		Tri-Downs?, mongrel(s)
Person with Autism	Autistic, on the autism	"lower autism" "high functioning autism"

28

Mentoring Mindfully

Disability Etiquette & Accessibility

- Consider the **extra time** needed for a person with a disability to complete a task. For example:
 - Increased time to absorb/learn new material or perform new skill
 - Increased time to communicate if using Adaptive/Augmented Communication Device (AAC)
 - Increased time to navigate buildings or travel using a wheelchair and/or other mobility aid.
- Give **undivided attention** to a person speaking.
- If you cannot understand someone's speech, do not pretend you understood. Ask them to repeat or explain again.

29

Mentoring Mindfully

Disability Etiquette & Accessibility

- **IDEAL:** students have a variety of disabilities including Down syndrome, autism, cerebral palsy, etc.
- Some students have open discussions about their disability.
- Some students prefer to be more private.
- If information is shared with you in confidence, be respectful and do not share with others.
- (This applies to all people with disabilities. Always respect a person's right to privacy.)

30

Communication & Advocacy

- Each student has individualized goals.
- Each student has unique support needs.
- The IDEAL student determines how much support they need in what areas.
- If you are unsure if a student wants or needs help, just ask.
- Peer mentors should help advocate for IDEAL students' needs, but also encourage and model self-advocacy.
- The goal is that support is scaled back over time as a student gains confidence and experience.

31

Peer Mentor Roles & Expectations

Job Coaching

- Supported employment helps people with disabilities acquire and maintain competitive employment.
- IDEAL helps connect students with job internships.
- IDEAL peer mentors may serve as job coaches for students at internships.
- A job coach helps the IDEAL student learn job tasks and be successful in their role.
- As with support on campus, the goal is fading support over time.

32

Job Coaching: Process and Tips

The Process

- SRM manager (Dawson) contacts with potential employer and forms a contract.
- The contract states the expectations of the student at their internship, specific job duties, hours, goal or support internship, etc.
- The assigned peer mentor/job coach should read over the contract to understand expectations.
- Job coaching tasks differed for different jobs and different students.

Job Analysis

- Obtain clear expectations from the employer.
- Organize job tasks sequentially and include the time to complete each task.
- Prioritize this list or have it stored on the SRM center's phone so it can be checked off or referenced each shift.
- Identify tasks the student does well and where they need more support.
- Prioritize the strengths and problem areas to address each area.

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33

Job Coaching: Cues, Reinforcement, Feedback

- When learning new tasks, the job coach can provide verbal, visual, auditory, and/or tactile prompts.
- Identify and promote the use of natural reinforcers and natural cues.
 - Natural cue example: All workers look out simultaneously for lunch. When the employee receiving support sees everyone line up to check out at lunchtime, they remember it is time to stop for lunch.
- The goal is to fade reinforcers and prompts over time as independence increases on the job.
 - Example: Joe's job coach creates a daily task list as a visual prompt. Joe can check off each task with a dry-erase marker and start over each shift. Over time, Joe memorizes his job tasks and refers to the task list often.

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34

Job Coaching: Task Analysis

- Task analysis is the process of breaking a skill down into smaller components.
- Task analysis can teach the job duties/skills one small component at a time.
- Task analysis can help identify specific components of a job task where a person needs more support or training to improve performance.
- Examples: Fine motor difficulty vs. executive functioning difficulty.
- NOTE: Professional job coaches have elaborate processes for task analysis, and often use elaborate examples and a sample sample.

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35

Sample Task Analysis: Cooking

Scrambled Eggs

You will need:

steps

-
-
-

Make your own visual recipe at www.ideal.org

36

