Personal Growth in Youth with Disabilities: The Role of Residential Immersive Life Skills (RILS) Programs

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Background
• Young people with disabilities often have limited opportunities to develop life skills and peer relationships.
• Residential Immersive Life Skills (RILS) programs can provide youth with disabilities with opportunities for personal growth and support their transition to adulthood.
• Since 2011, we have investigated the active ingredients and outcomes of RILS programs to understand what works. For a complete list of publications, visit: hollandbloorview.ca/research-education/bloorview-research-institute/research-centres-labs/oipr-team/publications

Objective and Methods
• To integrate the findings from 9 articles that captured the perspectives of youth, their parents, and program staff.
• These studies included
  • Interviews and thematic analyses
  • Quantitative outcome measures
  • Mixed-methods research

Residential immersive life skills (RILS) programs provide opportunities for meaningful, challenging, and supportive experiences that can propel youth on a new trajectory as they transition to adulthood

Key Findings
• RILS programs prepared youth for their futures by providing opportunities to:
  • Acquire essential life skills
  • Develop supportive peer relationships
  • Establish new mindsets that improve self-awareness and increase motivation
  • Increase self-confidence and self-efficacy
  • Fulfil basic needs for relatedness, competency, and autonomy

• RILS establish new mindsets that reflect:
  • Enhanced self-awareness
  • Personal growth, increased self-determination and self-efficacy, and enhanced preparation for adult life
  • Increased motivation, initiative, and responsibility
  • Greater community involvement

• Longer-term outcomes for youth post-program varied depending on each person’s needs and goals

Conclusions
• Positive changes in one area have the potential to facilitate other adaptive changes
• For some youth with disabilities, residential immersive life skills programs can act as a life-altering turning point

I would say out of the whole experience, she came back a different kid. She came back confident... like almost like a take charge kinda personality... I didn’t think anybody could change in [X] days like that, but they can.

Collaborators: Thanks to the OIPR Research Team, and to collaborating research sites across Ontario.

Funding: Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) grant 175058, and the Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital Foundation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Type of Study</th>
<th>Research Objectives</th>
<th>Participants</th>
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<th>Assessment Tools</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>King, McPherson et al.</td>
<td>Observation and interview</td>
<td>Observed program opportunities and service providers’ perceptions of opportunities</td>
<td>7 service providers</td>
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<td>King, Hartman et al.</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>Meaning of after-hours social experiences</td>
<td>5 youth</td>
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<td>Duff, McPherson et al.</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>The method and practice of teaching in programs</td>
<td>9 youth</td>
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<tr>
<td>Duff, McPherson, &amp; King</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>Youth’s thinking of their own emotions and other’s emotions</td>
<td>9 youth</td>
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<td>King, McPherson et al.</td>
<td>Observation and quantitative outcome</td>
<td>Opportunity-experience link and experience-outcome link</td>
<td>29 youth</td>
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<td>King, Kingsnorth, et al.</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>Parents’ views of the benefits of programs</td>
<td>10 parents</td>
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<td>King, Kingsnorth, &amp; Tajik-Parvinchi</td>
<td>Interview and quantitative outcome</td>
<td>Changes in aspects of self-determination over time</td>
<td>27 youth</td>
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<td>Tajik-Parvinchi, Kingsnorth &amp; King</td>
<td>Quantitative outcome</td>
<td>Youth changes in self-determination and self-efficacy due to program participation</td>
<td>38 youth (27 RILS and 11 non-RILS youth)</td>
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<td>McPherson, King et al.</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>Parents’ expectations and aspirations regarding program participation over time</td>
<td>12 parents</td>
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Main finding in plain language, emphasize important words
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