Progress-to-Date:

The online training, A Toolkit for Understanding Developmental Disabilities in the Child Welfare System is complete. There are four 15-minutes modules including interactive activities that provide immediate feedback to caseworkers. A case study demonstrates the entire process from identification to location of supportive resources.
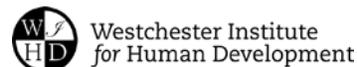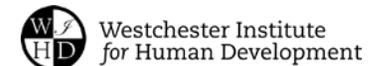
Next Steps:

Presentation of toolkit to caseworkers in DSS with a pre- post-test to determine effectiveness of the training tool.

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INCREASING LEVELS OF KNOWLEDGE AND EXPOSURE:

DEVELOPMENT OF ONLINE CASEWORKER RESOURCE REGARDING CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

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LEADERSHIP EDUCATION IN NEURODEVELOPMENTAL AND RELATED DISABILITIES (LEND) PROGRAM

Westchester Institute for Human Development

University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities

and

New York Medical College

Background:

In the literature and previous SEBM projects, children with developmental disabilities are overrepresented in the child welfare system; 28% - 50% of youth are diagnosed with a developmental disability. Prevalence rates are hard to determine because of inconsistent methods for tracking these children. Currently this rate reflects only children already diagnosed; children without existing diagnoses are not included.

The reality for children with developmental disabilities in the child welfare system highlights poorer outcomes than their typical counterparts. They are more frequently removed from families, stay in foster care longer and reunification with family is less likely. Once leaving foster care, they exhibit more mental health needs, are at a higher risk for homelessness and are less likely to be gainfully employed.

Prior SEBM project results show caseworkers reported needing, professional training in developmental disabilities and gaining information to access to disability-specific services. Caseworkers noted difficulty obtaining accurate information about disabilities from both informal and formal resources, which leads to problems around effective case planning for these children.

Our literature review focused on best practices for online trainings. Research showed that online training can be as or more effective than traditional learning. Specific ways of increasing knowledge retention are use of user-controlled multi-media (pause/ playback buttons), immediate corrective feedback in the exercises and presenting clearly defined learning objectives. Lastly, material should be structured in short, interactive and visually engaging modules.

Objective(s):

To design a user friendly online resource for caseworkers working with children and families affected by developmental disabilities. This online resource will address increased knowledge about developmental disabilities, exposure to the issues people with disabilities might face and comfort with specialized case planning needs.

Methods:

First a literature review on "best practices" for online trainings was conducted. Next a detailed script regarding content, voiceover and specific interactive activities was written. Then all materials were merged utilizing Adobe Captivate software creating the final training product. Evaluation for content and user friendliness will be completed by Westchester County DSS caseworkers recruited to complete the training and provide feedback. Finally revisions will be made on toolkit.

Community Partner(s):

Jessica Grimm, Executive Director of Bravehearts NY served as our community partner. Bravehearts is a youth-led non-profit organization comprised of former youth in foster care. Ms. Grimms identified themes related to caseworkers that impacted our project.