

# TIPS & TRICKS FROM RESEARCH AND EXPERIENCE: HOW TO SUPPORT THE EDUCATION GOALS OF YOUNG ADULTS WITH MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS

---

Laura Golden, B.A. & Raphael Mizrahi, B.S.

Transitions to Adulthood Center for Research (Transitions ACR)  
Systems and Psychosocial Advances Research Center (SPARC)  
University of Massachusetts Medical School – Worcester, MA



*The Transitions to Adulthood Center for Research*

# Acknowledgements



The mission of the Transitions to Adulthood Center for Research is to promote the full participation in socially valued roles of transition-age youth and young adults (ages 14-30) with serious mental health conditions. We use the tools of research and knowledge translation in partnership with this at risk population to achieve this mission. Visit us at: <http://www.umassmed.edu/TransitionsACR>

*The contents of this presentation were developed with funding from the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research, and the Center for Mental Health Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, United States' Department of Health and Human Services (NIDILRR grant number 90RT5031). NIDILRR is a Center within the Administration for Community Living (ACL), Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The content of this presentation does not necessarily represent the policy of NIDILRR, ACL, HHS, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.*



*The Transitions to Adulthood Center for Research*

# What is the Transitions ACR?

## National Center that aims to:

- Improve supports for the successful completion of schooling and movement into rewarding work lives among young people, ages 14-30, with serious mental health conditions (SMHC)

## How do we do that?

1. Conduct research that supports the employment and education goals of YA
2. Develop and translate knowledge to the public
3. Infuse Participatory Action Research (PAR) into all ACR activities



# Mental Health on Campus

- 50% of all lifetime cases of mental illness begin by age 14 and 75% by age 24.<sup>1</sup>
- College is a stressful, transitional period <sup>2</sup>
  - Social pressure
  - Academic pressure
- 64% of young adults who leave college say it is due to mental health concerns.<sup>3</sup>



# Academic Challenges to Students with SMHC

- Attendance
- Concentrating for long periods of time
- Time management
- Managing stress related to tests and assignments
- Speaking up in class
- Working successfully in groups
- Advocating and communicating with faculty



# Barriers to Accessing Services on Campus

- Dedicated mental health counselors and accessibility (disability) coordinators are available on most campuses but...<sup>4</sup>
  - Lack of education that services exist on campus is a barrier to receiving services
  - Lack of education about eligibility for services
  - Stigma around eligibility for services
  - Internalized/externalized stigma around receiving services



# Stigma/Discrimination

Excerpt from qualitative interview with college student:

- “I: ...what was a reason that you felt uncomfortable or might have felt uncomfortable?”
- P: Just because I wouldn’t want them to think that I was using it as an excuse or... And also sometimes professors don’t really care about that sort of thing. And I would have—I would feel embarrassed if it was that sort of situation.”



# Barriers to Accessing Services on Campus (cont.)

- Long wait times to receive services
- Additional evaluation testing required to receive services
- Difficulties using accommodations with professors





# ACCOMMODATIONS

---



*The Transitions to Adulthood Center for Research*

# Typical Accommodations

Accommodations = changes in how a student participates in courses

## Testing Supports

- Extended time on tests
- Breaks during tests

## Attendance Accommodations

- Classroom Break
- Flexible Attendance

## Inside the Classroom

- Audio recording
- Note taking



# Reasonable Accommodations

- Limiting or changing the way demand responses are requested
  - e.g., limiting calling on a student unless their hand is raised
- Reframing participation questions or in-class feedback
  - e.g., restating questions in clear terms



# Reasonable Accommodations

- **Advance warning or pre-processing**
  - e.g., professor lays out what will happen at beginning of class
- **Reducing distraction**
  - e.g., enrolling in classes with small # of students



# THE PASS PROGRAM

---

Academic peer coaching



*The Transitions to Adulthood Center for Research*

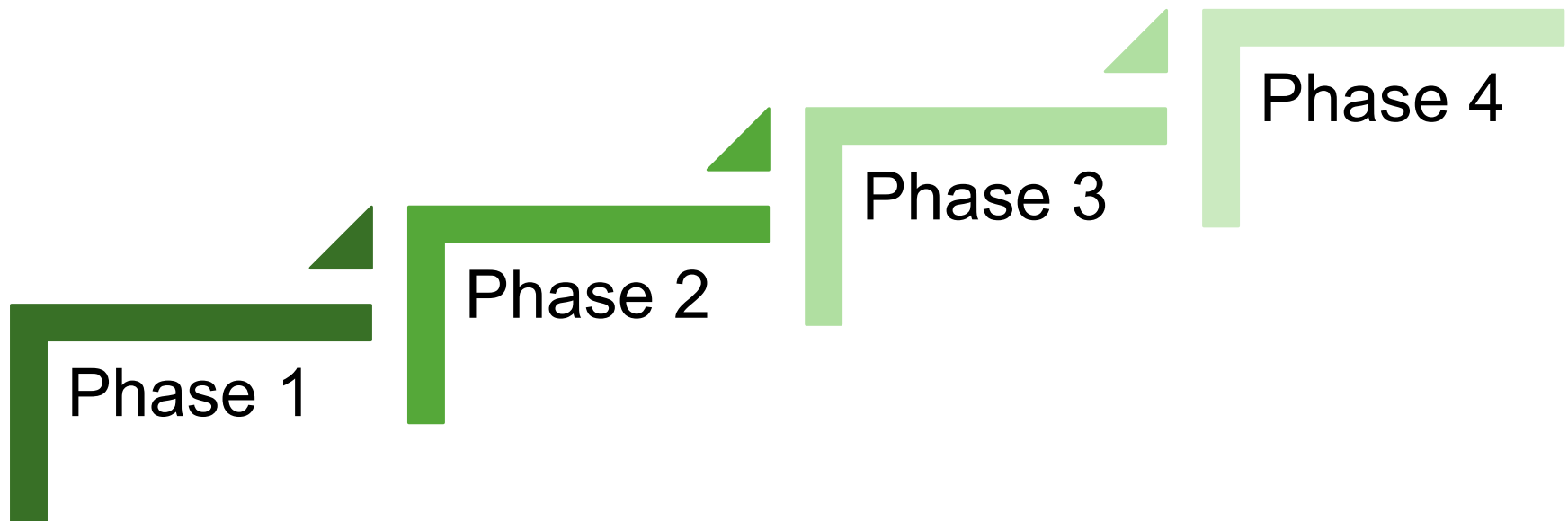
# The Power of Peer Support

- Students *overwhelmingly prefer* to turn to one another in times of difficulty because they value the voices of their peers.<sup>5</sup>
- This is “...a largely untapped option for colleges to expand support and assistance to students beyond the traditional menu of counseling center services.”<sup>6</sup>

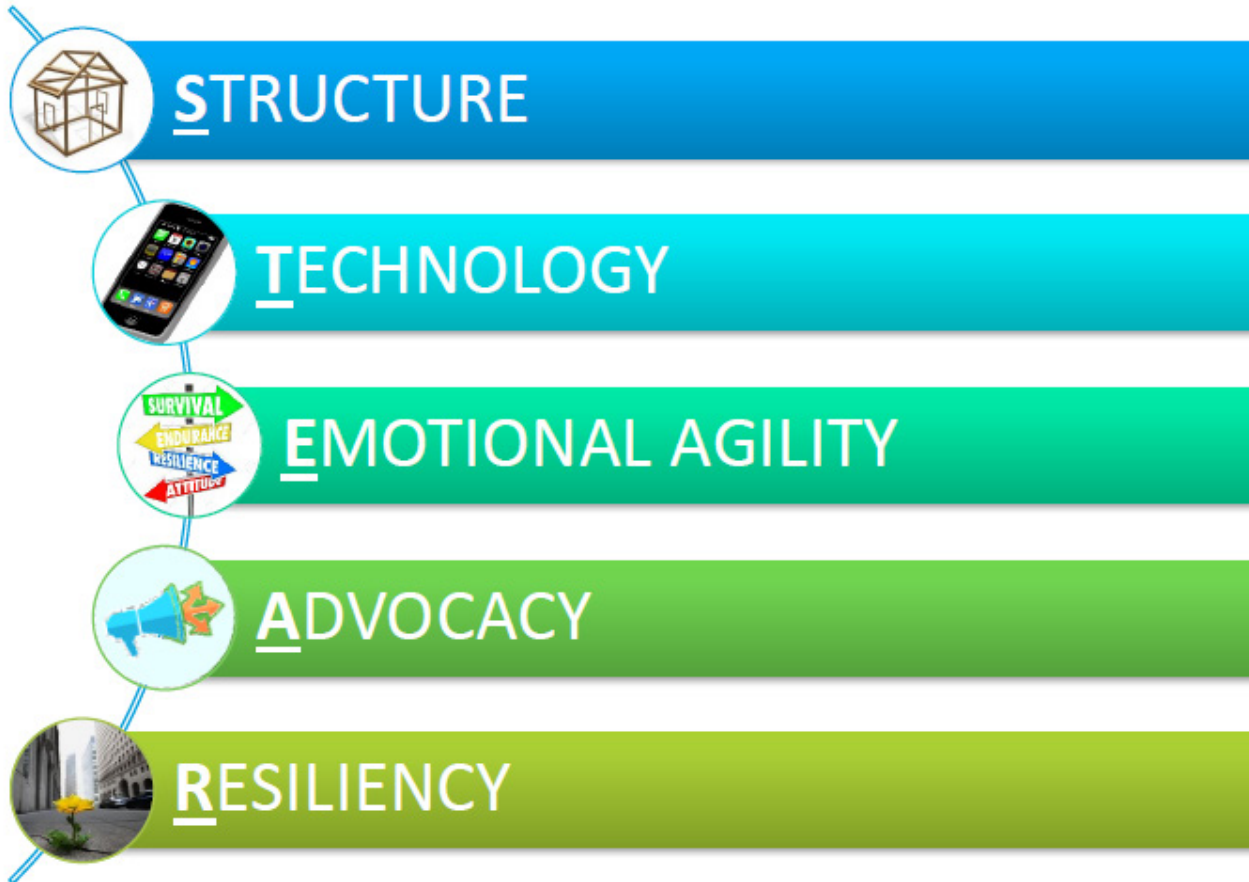


# The PASS Program

an empirically supported peer coach intervention to help students with MHC succeed academically



# PASS Core Competencies





# IN CONCLUSION...

---



*The Transitions to Adulthood Center for Research*

# Takeaways

1. Discussing potential mental health challenges on campus
2. Researching/informing about campus services
  - Reach out early even if no immediate need
  - Get additional testing if needed
3. Thinking about outside-the-box accommodations
4. Peer support benefits
5. Empowering young adults about their mental health rights on campus



# Sources

1. National Alliance on Mental Illness. (2016). *Mental health facts: Children and teens*. Retrieved from <https://www.nami.org/NAMI/media/NAMI-Media/Infographics/Children-MH-Facts-NAMI.pdf>.
2. Rhodan, Maya. (2016). Why college is a risky time for students' mental health. *TIME*. Retrieved from <http://time.com/4473575/college-mental-health-guidebook/>.
3. Gruttadoro, D. & Crudo, D. (2012). College students speak: A survey report on mental health. *The National Alliance on Mental Illness*. Retrieved from <https://www.nami.org/collegesurvey>.
4. BestColleges.com. (n.d.). *College guide for students with psychiatric disabilities*. Retrieved from <https://www.bestcolleges.com/resources/college-planning-with-psychiatric-disabilities/>.
5. Morse, C. C., & Schulze, R. (2013). Enhancing the network of peer support on college campuses. *Journal of College Student Psychotherapy*, 27(3), 212-225.
6. Kirsch, D. J., Pinder-Amaker, S. L., Morse, C., Ellison, M. L., Doerfler, L. A., & Riba, M. B. (2014). Population-based initiatives in college mental health: students helping students to overcome obstacles. *Current psychiatry reports*, 16(12), 525.



# Thank You!

Contact us at:

- [Raphael.Mizrahi@umassmed.edu](mailto:Raphael.Mizrahi@umassmed.edu)
- [Laura.Golden@umassmed.edu](mailto:Laura.Golden@umassmed.edu)

## STAY INFORMED!

Sign up for our e-mail newsletter for our products and announcements!

Text **TRANSITIONSACR** to **22828**

Visit us at  
**[umassmed.edu/TransitionsACR](http://umassmed.edu/TransitionsACR)**



*The Transitions to Adulthood Center for Research*