

Prevention, Access, Self-Empowerment and Support (PASS) - The Impact of Mentoring on Wellness

CCSI's [PASS program](#) is an innovative, curriculum-based, statewide prevention program that works with teens who experience challenges in their daily lives, or whose parents are seriously and persistently mentally ill. PASS utilizes a strength-based approach to helping individuals, families and communities to develop the resources needed to maintain healthy lifestyles. It focuses on the development of a culturally competent, inclusive system of support that fosters wellness, self-help, empowerment, advocacy, support, and education. A key aspect of PASS is mentoring. Junior and adult mentors help the adolescents apply the strategies taught in the program to their unique life situations. Junior mentors are young adults who have graduated from the PASS program and have chosen to become peer supports for program participants.

James A. Railey, a PhD candidate at New York University's Silver School of Social Work, has been interviewing past participants of the PASS program for his doctoral dissertation. This research was a qualitative study, not an evaluation of the PASS. Mr. Railey specifically examined how mentorship may be a viable complement to behavioral health and supportive services, including services that help prepare youth for transition into adulthood. This study looked at such factors as pathways leading into PASS, how mentoring was experienced, and the relevance of those experiences on adulthood and overall well-being. The innovative mentoring approach used by PASS, having past program participants serve as Junior Mentors, provides a unique opportunity to explore first persons' experiences with the program as a participant and as a Mentor.

Mr. Railey has shared some preliminary insights related to this study:

- Findings suggest participants who came into PASS from both formal (child servicing) and informal (community/family) systems benefitted from their participation in PASS.
- Insights into pathways into the program, and engagement in services may have some relevance for how traditional care-giving systems offer services to consumers. Participants' experiences suggest a valued service system.
- Participants highlighted a transformative process, notably moving from an initial sense of hopelessness pre program, to an instillation of hope and empowerment to achieve life's goals.
- Participants provided a window into the program's ability to culturally adapt evidence-based practices, as well as innovate practices that pre-date implementation in or that are now gaining traction in mainstream culture.

The dissertation defense is scheduled for December 2017. We look forward to sharing the final findings of the study with you in a future Newsletter, as well as recognizing the next PASS Graduating Class in December 2017!