

Youth Leadership Benefits Engagement and Resiliency

Melody Riefer: Good afternoon. Or good morning, based on where you're located. We would like to welcome you to the Recovery to Practice webinar this month, where we are focusing on transition age youth. This is a brand-new series that we will be providing three different webinars, looking at different areas of focus for transition age youth, and we are so glad that you could join us for this particular webinar.

I wanted to let you know that this webinar is supported and funded by the Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration. We are so grateful for this support and the opportunity it creates to help behavioral health and general health care practitioners improve delivery of recovery oriented services, supports and treatment.

Now, the views, opinions and contents of the presentation are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views, opinions and policies of SAMHSA or the Department of Health and Human Services. But we have a couple of great experts who are really going to help inform our understanding of the role that young adults can play in leadership. But, before we begin, a couple of housekeeping details, please use the chat boxes on your screen to request technical assistance, to pose questions to the presenters, or to share ideas with one another. Now these pods are different. The tech questions and topic questions should go in the box labeled tech and topic questions. But the chat can happen in the pod labeled participant chat. You're welcome to use both, but do try to use them for their labeled purpose. Additionally, we will include time at the end of the presentation to address any of the questions that you have entered through the tech and topic questions pod, and we will be able to answer any questions that you pose after the presentation is completed.

Also at the end of our time, I will tell you how you can go about getting continuing education hours or certificates of attendance for your time with us today. It will be helpful to note that during the presentation, when you see an endnote number, this will correspond to a document that's listed on the reference slide at the end of the presentation. You can also download that reference page now by clicking on the download pod and have access to the PowerPoint slides, and more complete, biographic outlines of our presenters.

Now, let's move on to reason we are here. I would like to introduce our presenters who will be sharing their knowledge and experience with us today. Amanda Costa is a research project director at the transitions research and training center located at UMass Medical School Department of Psychology. She co-leads the participatory action research initiatives at SPARC, and works with Kate Biebel, who is our second presenter.

Dr. Biebel is an associate professor of psychiatry at the UMass Medical School. She is the deputy director of the Systems and Psychosocial Advance Research Center, and a faculty member of the Transition Research and Training Center.

We are looking forward to the information that they share, and I will let you know that having worked with these two women in preparation for this webinar, I find them to be smart, entertaining, and truly concerned about this topic. SO, I will turn this over to our presenters so they can have as much time as possible to share with us. Thank you for being here folks, and I look forward to your presentation.

Amanda Costa: Hi everyone, Kate and I are super excited to be here today, and we will try to live up to that glowing description of us. We're really happy to speak to you about youth leadership, and hope to make this presentation engaging so we'll have a couple activities because we'd love to hear from you guys about your thoughts of benefits of youth leadership and engagement as well. I do want to start just by thanking our funders, NIDRR and SAMHSA, without them we would not be here today and also acknowledging the wonderful work we have done under our leader and director Mary Anne Davis.

So, getting started, I would like to just give you a little sense of who we are, and where we come from. Kate and I are both researchers at the UMass Medical School in the Department of Psychiatry, and we work in a center called the Transitions Research and Training Center. And the main focus of the Transitions RTC is to improve support for education and employment goals of young adults so they can move into rewarding work and school lives. We consider young adults ages 14 to 30, and we typically focus on youth with serious mental health conditions. We are a research shop located within a larger center, the Systems and Psychosocial Advances Research Center, the SPARC is what we like to call it because we know it can be a bit of a mouthful, and that focuses on a range of psychosocial research from transition age youth, to juvenile justice and integrated care, and really focusing on infusing mindfulness and wellness in organization work.

So, we are one of two research and training centers in the US that are focused on young adults with serious mental health conditions, our sister center is Pathways Research and Training Center located in Oregon and we're here in Worcester Massachusetts. If you Google Pathways RTC and transitions RTC will be one of the first links, so you can find out more information about us and check out our resources there.

We have three distinct arms in our research center, so we focus primarily on research, knowledge translation and dissemination of the research findings and getting the information out there to all of the communities that we serve, and providing technical assistance to organizations who are really interested in doing similar work or implementing youth voice into the work that they do. Like I said, we are a part of the UMass medical school, and within SPARC.

So, sharing a little bit about why we are here today talking about young adult leadership, our center is focused on something we call participatory action research. And we infused the participatory action research into all of the work we do here by employing young adult staff, both full-time and part-time, who infuse their voice into all of the activities that we do in the center. And Kate and I were talking about

this, we were pretty blown away by the fact that once we did the math, our center is made up of 25% of our entire staff being young adults who are working to infuse youth voice in the work we do. Our work is also guided by a national youth voice by our advisory board, which is made up of 10 members across the U.S, who help infuse a diverse perspective and a national perspective into all of our work. We have over eight years of experience with our centers supporting young adults in leadership roles within our organization. We primarily focus on conducting participatory action research to infuse youth voice in our work, but we also lead and participate in local, state and national mental health advisory councils, which we'll talk a little more about later. And so that's one really fun way we get to engage in our community and also implement youth voice here in our center. Kate and I also co-lead a center wide PAR initiative that will chat about in more detail later, to help build the capacity to make us experts to help other organizations who are interested in conducting participatory action research. So, today the main questions that we want to address and hope we can talk to you about and get your thoughts on, are how do you define leadership in general? And then, why does young adult leadership matter? We are going to set spend 60 minutes to talk about this so let's set the stage for what are the important features about young adult leadership, and why does it matter if you're incorporating young adult leadership into your organization. And then lastly, we want to get super concrete, I think when you talk about youth leadership a lot it can be very high-level and youth leadership is important, and then we walk away and a lot of folks say yeah but how do we do it where we are, and what can it actually look like on the ground. So, we will focus a lot of our time thinking about how do you actually build these concrete youth leadership opportunities, and so Kate and I will talk about some examples from our center and ways that we've been able to do that to help you be able to do that within your work.

So, to start off we want to just start thinking about how do you define leadership. When you think about what a good leader looks like, what does that actually mean? So, I'm hoping we can all take a second and start to think about that right now together. So, in order to talk about fostering youth leaders, we have to be on the same page about what we think of and what it means to be a leader. So, if you can all take a second to write it on a piece of paper, what you describe and define as a leader. So, if you could just take a moment and start jotting down, what does it mean if you were going to start being a leader, what's the word that comes to mind for you. And I am going to give everyone a second to think about that.

So, as you're starting to write that down, we will open up what we are actually calling a popcorn chat. So, the screen is going to change in a moment and you will have the chance to type in one single word that pops in your mind when you hear the word "leader" or think of the word leadership. And some people are a head of the game, people are already starting to type things in. So, some of the things that are starting to pop up are reliable, inspired, leading from the heart, willing to take reasoned risks for the good of the whole, oh that's clever I like that one. I see there are a bunch of great answers and they are kind of going all over the map. They are going from being collaborative, but also having some vulnerability. Some of the one that popped up a couple of

times are being fair and positive, and being humble but also being smart about being humble. Self-determination and being true and serving as a mentor. So, looks like a lot of the things that we will be talking about are already coming up from the audience in terms of leadership and actually what it means to be a good leader. Other ones are still popping up are open-minded, focused, passionate, and directed. And some people I am noticing are typing into the participant chat as well, so if you guys want to pop these words into the popcorn chat, we are actually going to be making a cloud of all the words that we find, a kind of a word cloud, to help us think about how leaders are described based on your thoughts.

So, I am going to give you guys another minute because it looks like some people are still typing. But it looks like the themes which are coming out are being a good listener, being a mentor, being confident but also taking risks, so not being afraid to take smart risks and being mission driven. So, really focusing on how to be driven and lead others, but also a lot of these tools seem to talk about leading yourself, the skills you need to have internally in order to be an external leader. So I will give you one more second, it looks like two more people are typing in. These are great answers, and I think you're shaping what we're hoping to talk about with regards to what leadership really means.

Okay, so, what we want to talk about is, from what the words you guys used to describe, they all seem to fit in these two pieces of youth leader definition I find really interesting about what it means to be a youth leader. A lot of times when people talk about leadership they often confuse it with what we have call youth development. So, we really want to frame leadership as a distinct area of youth development with a focus on mastering certain skills necessary for effective leadership, a lot of the things you guys brought up, like responsibility, teamwork, and vision are the big pieces that we focus on when we talk about what it means to be a youth leader. There is a center called the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth, and they kind of define leaders as having two main components: the ability to lead others and the ability to lead self. And I think that is really important to note, because I think often when people talk about someone who can be a youth leader, the main quality they describe is the ability to lead others and we really think it's important to be able to lead yourself, and be a self-leader to then be able to shape and model for the other people around you.

So, in describing what it means to lead others, and yourself, we broke it down as a paving the path for learning and doing when you're leading others. You want to be able to take personal responsibility for the outcomes of the groups you are leading, but also to show the way by paving the path for others to follow. But at the same time, we want to fulfill this component of being able to lead yourself, so especially when it comes to youth mental health, I think it's important for young adults to be able to recognize and set goals for their own self-efficacy and self-advocacy, as a young adult myself I know that I need to recognize my own individual weaknesses and strengths in order to lead the people around me. And I need to look at my own personal change and growth with my own mental health management. So, I cannot lead others and support others until I am able to support myself and have my own mental health management and support under control. So, I think, we want to frame the

youth leadership as a two-tiered component, where you're really focusing on supporting others, but also thinking about how do I lead myself and my own growth in order to help others grow once I am capable of doing that.

Now, why does young adult leadership matter? We will talk about these components of youth leadership and focusing on what it means to be a youth leader, but why, why should it matter to you and your organization? What the benefits of having youth leaders in your community?

So, first and foremost, youth leadership leads to increased engagement and resiliency. There's plenty of research out there that says young adults who have a voice in the services that they are engaged in and committed, have a higher engagement rate and lower dropout rate so if you're asking young adults to lead the development of their services, they are more likely to stay in those services, they will be more engaged in those services, and be more committed to participate. Meaning, they will have higher achievement, so they are more likely to acquire stronger work ethics, to gain valuable life skills, like negotiation and resiliency, and they really are having opportunities to increase their self-efficacy and self-determination, which leads to increase mental health, better coping skills and better habits. So, when you introduce youth leadership into the development, you're helping young adults increase their own skill development while also making your organization better equipped to serve and engage young adults long term.

When young adult leaders are involved, it also leads to young adult friendly sources, you may develop a service that all the folks that are in the organization think is young adult friendly, but then you have adults come in and they are dropping out of the services and they are not engaged. When you have young adults at the table talking about taking a leadership role, and thinking through the issues faced by young adults, it improves decision-making, it generates discussion, and it makes the scenarios you are developing most relevant to the young adults themselves. We always say you cannot talk the talk unless you can walk the walk. And when you have young adults at the table they are able to say, as a young adult myself, myself and my peers need these things and you need to be thinking about that in order to make a relevant service for us. And again, by having young adult leaders talk about young adult friendly services, it increases that access and engagement.

And then, thinking about peer services, young adult leadership enhances peer support. So, when you have people with lived experience providing services and support to their peers, they are serving as a leader and a mentor to each other, and they are serving as a model for others, this is what I did in my recovery. These are the barriers I have faced in this is how I overcame them. When you advocate for services that you have work for you, you're providing a pathway of serving other youth in your community for what you see worked on a personal level. And to me as a young adult when I hear it directly from another young adult saying I have been there, I have done that, this is what I tried, it means so much more to me than to hear it from a provider who might not necessarily lived that experience and does not understand from the ground what it can look like for me. And the most important thing we say for why it matters, because young adults are the next generation of leaders in the mental

health community and in the world itself. So, by promoting leadership you're promoting leadership in the community and beyond. Which is super important.

So, I am going to turn it over to Kate now, and she is going to talk about how we build young adult leadership opportunities.

Kate Biebel: Thanks Amanda. Following Amanda is always a bit challenging but I will try and do my best. So, the frame here for us is about how we have actually built young adult leadership opportunities here both at the learning and working center as well as at our larger parent center SPARC. The steps that I will talk about are things that we have done here and we have been doing this work now for over eight years and we're going to be really honest with you about the things that have worked really well, and the things that haven't. This is still really a work in progress, so we are excited to share this with you and get your thoughts.

So, for us, when we think about building a young adult leadership we have identified that it is a four-step process. First is to really define what leadership involvement means for us and for our center. For us, it's really thinking about what is the foundation, what are the frameworks and the values that we have around young adult leadership. And also, because we are researchers we really emphasize creating some system of measuring and documenting and evaluating how we are facilitating young adult leadership.

The next step we are going to talk about is, how do you create an organizational structure, to support young adult leadership? That's where we will really get into the things that have worked for us. And modifications that we have made over the years to try and be responsive when it seems things aren't working as we'd like. We will then talk about creating an intentionally young adult friendly culture, we believe very strongly in this, in putting time and resources into creating a culture that works for your young adults. And finally, how to think about ensuring that there are opportunities for young adult leadership in your organization as well as opportunities for growth.

So, step one, define young adult leadership involvement. And Amanda suggested the foundation of all the work we do here at our research center is something called participatory action research, so when we think about supporting and developing young adult leaders, it's really through a lens of participatory action research, that's really the basic tenet of all of our work here. And it's really probably the way that we most actualize young adult leadership, is through participatory action research. Participatory research is a very collaborative process that involves all stakeholders and for us, because we have a learning and working center that emphasizes and is focused on the experiences of young adults with mental health conditions, obviously then young adults are really highlighted as a stakeholder there. I would like to add though that for us when we think about participatory action research or PAR here, we really think about in two ways. One is specifically around research, and I'm going to advance the next slide so you can see this, this talks about the active involvement of young adult research staff in all phases of the research efforts. So I always like to say it is soup to

nuts engagement. So, for us as researchers, this means young adults are helping us think about what their research questions are, and help us work with us as partners to develop measures and surveys, it can be about recruiting participants, it can be about analyzing data, it can be about presenting and analyzing findings, it can be about applying for funding to be able to do that next research project. For each of you, and your own setting, you would need to think about what are the areas and places where young adult involvement can happen.

So, that's how we think about young adult leadership in terms of the actual research that we do. I would also like to add though that we like to think about young adult leadership as a way of how we do business. And this gets to the values piece, that as a research center, we really value having an inclusive approach that involves all the partners we have, to every part of our research center so in addition to the research knowledge translation, dissemination, technical assistance, you know that stuff, we also think about how do we include young adult leadership in all the other things that have to happen here, so around our operations, administration, the decision-making, and our leadership.

So, it's important to us to be able to really define what young adult leadership looks like, and to create some metrics to document and measure what we are doing. It also helps us to set some goals to both identify where we are right now, but also think about, aspirationally, where do we want to be, what can we be working towards. And Amanda and I think it's really important to recognize that young adult involvement in leadership is not a singular thing, there is not only one way to think about involving young adults, but really there are levels or steps of involvement that we can think about as we are thinking about how do we develop these opportunities.

So, for us, what we have found helpful is what's called the ladder of youth participation. I think there's a link at the bottom there where you can learn more about it. This was developed by Roger Heart in 1997, he's a sociologist for UNICEF, and the goal of this ladder on the left is to encourage young adults to think about how and why young adults participate in communities. You'll see at the bottom where it says nonparticipation, the tokenism, decoration, manipulation, those are places where we would say that that's not even youth involvement, that those are places where we are not interested in being, where we are interested in being is at the top five levels from assigned but informed, to youth-initiated, shared decision-making with adults. For each organization, you need to think about how your involvement can be different. For us, we use this ladder of participation as a framework to help us develop our own metrics, which is the triangle on the right, of how we measure and document and set goals around the youth leadership and all the activities that we can do.

So, step two in thinking about how you build leadership opportunities is to develop and adapt organizational capacities to support young adults in leadership roles. So, here is what I was suggesting before, that here are the learning and working center, we have been really actively engaged in developing and growing our young adult leadership opportunities for eight years, since the beginning of our NIDDR and SAMHSA grants. As hopefully

this slide suggests, we have been actively doing learning and adjusting with lots of trial and error over the years, and things really have changed a lot over the years, and so we would like to walk through some examples to show you both what are the domains that we think are important to focus on when thinking about developing leaders, as well as to show you, in a humbling way, that we have made changes along the way, because sometimes the goals are different and we need to be able to pivot and adjust.

So, I will show you some different domains of youth leadership and think about it both from where it says breaking new ground, so that's right when we got that initial grant eight years ago, when we were really getting our feet wet, the middle column, the green one, the steering toward success, this is really the middle years of our work, where we're sort of getting into our groove and learning about what works, and then talking about what are some of the interesting things that we are doing now in 2017, as we're a much larger center with more staff and more opportunities, which brings about a different set of challenges that we didn't have eight years ago.

So, the first domain to think about when building leadership opportunities, or that we thought about, is actually thinking about what are the positions that your organization has, so when we started we had five per diem part-time young adult positions, these were all positions that targeted young adults who self-identified as having serious mental health conditions. As you can imagine the part-time per diem positions are positions that don't really have any career growth, and there is no career ladder for them here in sort of a few years in we really shifted towards trying to get to a more traditional benefitted positions, so our staff moved into positions that were more traditional for our research center, and those were positions that had more of a focus and career trajectory. Now, as we look forward, we have been able to really increase the number of young adult staff that we have, and as Amanda said, our young adult staff now currently totals eight, which is about 25% of our larger research center. You also need to think about what the actual job descriptions are, when we first started we had a very generalized one size fits all job description, everybody has a job description with tasks that were project assistant. As we started to get bigger and learn more about our young adult staff, we realized that we as a center have different needs, and also the staff that we had had skill sets that were valuable and we need to think about how do we create job descriptions that match what those skill sets are. We have developed descriptions around being knowledge translation project coordinators, people have become research coordinators, people have become research project directors like Amanda, and now we also have young adult jobs that don't have having a mental health history as part of the preferred qualification. As we have created more variety of jobs, and have more staff and more experience, we also had to start exploring about what does it mean to be a young adult, and have a serious mental health condition as part of work, so, we are grappling with questions like how do we know, for young adults, when the contribution they are making at work is specific to being a young adult, or is specific to having a history of a mental health condition, and how do those contextual factors interact or not with roles as research staff, and we don't have a lot of places we

can look to for guidance about this, so I feel like we are a bit trying to figure it out as we go. So, I would say we don't have the answers yet, and that's part of the work that the participator action initiative that Amanda and I are co-leading, and we are really working in partnership with young adult staff to explore those ideas and strategize some solutions. We also, when we first started, when our young adults would meet separately by themselves separate from all other center activities, midway through we started to really try to integrate the young adults into organizations, so having memberships on committees, attending research center wide events, there was a bit of a culture shift happening there, and now we really integrated the young adults into our entire organization and we started to tackle what does that mean with regards to the culture and roles and expectations for our whole research center which addresses more than just the experiences and needs of young adults.

We've also had some shifts in our supervision structures. When we started all our young adults had one supervisor that they were going to think about issues around work, about being a young adult, and around their mental health. In our middle era, we introduced the notion of a job coach, which is something we still have here, this is an external consultant, and the idea here was to be able to separate out the support that adults may need around mental health, or around job career development issues, and to keep that separate from interactions with supervisors. Now we have really moved to what I would consider to a much more plain traditional supervision structure, now staff are attached, if you want to say that, to supervisors who are leading the projects they are working on, and it's a very traditional model that we would do with anybody, we talk about mentoring and career development and opportunities.

The next domain where we have seen some growth and change is around young adult voice, when we started our work was really only informed by those five part-time per diem staff, and the voice would only really be included on whatever particular project they were working on. As Amanda highlighted, we then developed a national youth advisory board, this is a set of young adults from around the country who meet monthly, we pay them for their time and they advise us on all projects that we have on going here in the center. And now in our moving forward, we as I already said really are thinking about how to engage young adult voice through the lens of doing participatory action research, and so Amanda is co-leading that initiative and, again, it's not just about the young adult center, but it's also about our larger research center, so young adult voice will be infused into everything that we do. That is our goal.

Finally, we also had to think about, and change, how we support our young adults as researchers. Originally when young adults were working on a project, the guidance and support they would get would be quite directive I would say, from supervisors they could say here's the task, do this and then come back when you're done. And young adults were learning more skills and getting more capacity and competency, and young adults started coming together naturally and sharing and learning from each other about what works and what doesn't, and working together to do tasks like developing research protocols and analyzing data. I would say now we have moved to almost a train the trainer type model, where the young adults

are leading for the entire research center, so faculty and staff, a variety of training activities, we had young adults here who have taught everybody at the research center about how to use certain qualitative analysis software or how to create and maintain an advisory board, or how to use participatory action research approaches in your research, or how to leverage social media. So, the young adults are clearly leading the way in training all of us, and we look to them to help us just as we would with any employee, about what the skills that they have and what are the experts in and how can we learn from them.

All right that was a lot there. The next step is to think about building an intentional and young adult friendly culture. So, we are going to do another popcorn chat. Let's get interactive. So, a screen is going to come up here, thank you, where it is split into two based on the first letter of your last name and if you could out in a word or short phrase that says what an intentional young adult culture look like in your services or programs. And we'll see: more casual, more energetic, oh person centered, friendly, couldn't agree more, peer centered, safe, safe is a really important one, quicker pace, more tech savvy than I am, flexible, authentic curiosity, that's a great way to say that, I like that a lot, diverse, trauma informed care, always evolving, that's so important, treat them as adults, yeah, flexible. I think some people have been reading my slides, but that's okay, that just shows how clever you are. Open, honest, colorful and fun. Open, honest, neutral, honest. A lot of stuff about honesty, well I am going to talk a little about honesty. We are all on the same page. Creative, willing to be challenged. A lot of emphasis on technology, it's really true. Okay, this is great, you can keep, I am not sure if you can keep typing, but we will move on to the next slide. But, the things you are saying are really the things that we will be talking about on the next slide.

So, the following slides are things that we have actually found from the literature about what young adults are looking for in the workplace, and what helps to promote emotional wellness, as well as job satisfaction and retention. Now, I would like to say as a research center we were clever enough to go to the research when thinking about how to support young adults, but I don't think we did. But I'm actually proud to say the things we found in the literature are actually things that we were already naturally doing and spending time promoting. I would also like to put in a plug that I think a lot of these characteristics that we will talk about are not really only true just for young adults. And as a long ago young adult, I think I look for and value a lot of the things that we hear young adults saying what they look for in a work environment. So, one is about finding the right fit of a job. And to have some intention and thinking about matching skills and dispositions to tasks. And for us, we really try to emphasize it's not only about the skills that you currently have, but also to think about the skills that you want to grow, a lot of people in the popcorn chat brought up about being honest, and here it is about having honest conversations when there isn't a good fit. That then means figuring out together about how we can enhance that particular skill set or move on to other work. We really take this to heart, I do think there is a real-world implication that needs to be considered which is that everybody in your shop needs to be on board with that idea, because what ends up happening is that you need to be then

shifting people and efforts around, so I think this is a doable and important thing but I think it is important that everybody is on board with this because it may require change that you might not be expecting. Socialization and orientation, you have to have a happy and healthy employee. We spent time here thinking about and ensuring that people are enjoying being at work. That's where you spend most of your time, at work, we spend more time with each other probably than with other people in our lives. And the work is hard, so it's important that we are comfortable and enjoy it. So, a lot of things that might be pretty familiar to you, we do group lunches, walks to get coffee, walks around lunches, we play games around the lawn, we have a special space we call the chillax room, and we also create lots of opportunities for learning, we do lunch and learn seminars, brown bags, many of which are led by our young adults as they are experts in many of the things that we are interested in. Soft skills is huge, the literature bears this out, and as somebody who has worked in a research center with young adults, and many other adults actually, for a long-time soft skills are huge. So, we really recognize the importance of soft skills and acknowledged that most young adults are coming to us right out of college, where there is limited to no emphasis on soft skills, we think this is changing on the college landscape but for the most part, people are not coming to us with a lot of those people and communication skills, so how do we help support soft skills? We really emphasize professional development, we spend a lot of time in mentoring relationships of young adults with senior staff and faculty, we do a lot of modeling, hopefully, of what we think appropriate and not appropriate soft skills are. And we ensure that people have opportunities to be trained outside of our center.

Finally, it's really important, what it says here is consider nontraditional supervision structures, the one word you need to remember here is about being flexible. There is not a one size fits all model. That means just making sure to think about individual strengths and weaknesses, we spend time talking as relevant and as appropriate about an individual's mental health and what if any accommodations we need. And we keep talking, it's not just a one-time conversation, I think that is a mistake a lot of people make, is they have the conversation and never return to it, we also emphasize individual preferences in the workplace and we really think about how to match our young adult staff with particular faculty and staff, both in terms of their personality, subject matter and work style. So, Amanda is going to bring us home in five minutes, I didn't leave you much time, did I?

Amanda Costa: No problem.

Kate Biebel: You can do it.

Amanda Costa: I can do it. All right, so, the final piece that we wanted to really go through was concrete examples of ways we have been able to foster young adult leaders in our work. So, we recognize that not all of you are researchers and you're coming from a variety of backgrounds, some of you on the line I saw were actually young adults themselves. Some of you are probably coming from various organizations. So we want to get a little bit more on the down and dirty of how do you actually involve

youth leaders, what are the different ways you can actually think about leadership in your organization.

So, because we are researchers, the first place I will start is conducting the research itself, and some of the ways we involved young adults in that work. One of our studies is a national evaluation, a SAMHSA funded study, which is evaluating 17 states across the US that were awarded grants to improve access to treatment and services for young adults ages 16-25 years. And when we created this national evaluation we were really mindful about ways we could actually include youth voice in the evaluation and include young adults in conducting the evaluation. So, for some of our methods, we are actually having what we call young adult liaisons who are partnering with our senior research staff to lead focus groups with young adults who are receiving services in one of the 17 states, and to oversee a youth multimedia project. So it is funny that when you were talking to Kate, you guys brought up a lot about the popcorn chat and having tech savvy young adults, and how things are fast paced and very tech involved, and for our research we really wanted to get creative with our young adult voice so our young adult seniors and young adult liaisons actually proposed a multimedia project where we have young adults logging in to an app and sharing their thoughts about the services they receive in a youth culturally friendly manner where they are submitting to a closed social media group and uploading pictures and text about their experiences and it was really a fun way to get our young adults involve about framing youth voice, but also our young adult participants in the study feel more engaged because we are tying the experiences that they have into a social media app that they were really comfortable and more interested in using.

Another way that we are thinking about youth leadership is through the leading of our organizational priorities, so both Kate and I talked about the participatory action research initiative, and how we want to lead the mental health research community in working in partnership with young adults with serious mental health conditions, and so Kate and I have been working on this and will continue to work on this the next couple of years, both within our center and on a national level to help other people who are interested in infusing youth voice in their work, providing resources and ideas and really just helping shape the work being done, so young adults are authentically involved and are able to take on leadership roles in their work.

We also mentioned a little bit in the past, a big way we like to involve youth leaders is through the advisory councils. So, we are lucky that in our state of Massachusetts we have a robust youth voice community within our department of mental health, so young adults in our center have co- led the statewide young adult counsel through the Massachusetts Department of Mental Health, have also been members of the youth development committee, and both of these groups are through our department of mental health, and their goal is to really understand what young adults feel about the services, and use youth voice to change the way services are delivered to make them more young adult friendly. It's a really important way that they are helping to frame the work through an advisory council that's 100% youth lead, and young adult run, so it's a really cool way to get young adult readership skills, but also to

feedback advice from youth on how to make services more young adults friendly.

We talked a little bit about our national youth advisory board here at our center, but that's our own concrete way to get young adult feedback on a national level in our research activities. We also have young adults leading the development of products. So, it's one thing to conduct research, but for us, it's super important to actually share the research with various communities, so we create tip sheets and products that young adults are actually writing to other adults on various topics that youth across the U.S. are important to them. Like disclosing their mental health condition in the workplace, how to budget their money, how to keep a job, how to find a job, all while living in recovery for a mental health condition. We also have our young adults here leading all of our social media sites. SO during our popcorn chat a lot of you said tech savviness, online, social media, and things like that, our Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, YouTube, which you can google, are all led by our young adults and some of our young adults even created their own YouTube show, called Comeback TV, which is for young adults by young adults. Feel free to look it up within YouTube. And it's a way for young adults to talk to each other about topics that are relevant to youth transition into adulthood.

So, to sum it up really quick, the three main takeaways that we want you guys to get from our conversation which you can also look up later and have access to our slides, is that leadership skills are critical to all young adults. They lead to engagement in services, increased life skills, increased self-efficacy and self-determination and you as a member, or a leader of an organization have a responsibility to help provide opportunities for youth leadership through intentional hiring strategies, creating a youth culture, like Kate talked about, and providing opportunity to flex skills and ensuring that there is ongoing training and support in your organization. Youth leadership is important, but you also have to make it happen.

If you want more information feel free to check out our website, join our mailing list. Get all of our interesting information, shoot us an email. The team here will be telling you about how you can get access to the slides and the recording of this if you want to reach out directly, you will have access to our email after this because you might not have enough time to jot it down right this second.

Here is a list of our references, which will also be available with the actual slides themselves. And with that, I am going to turn it over to Melody who is going to help moderate questions, because it looks like our participant chat is blowing up, so I hope we have a lot of great questions that Kate and I can attempt to answer.

Melody Riefer: Absolutely you guys, thank you so much for your information, for the real-world examples which is always great to hear, taking it out of the theoretical and taking it more into the practical application and examples, thank you thank you thank you. We do have some questions.

One of the things that we find, as a measure of a good webinar, is the activity that happens during the participant chat. And folks begin to do some networking and sharing ideas with each other, but through the participant chat and the topic questions, we have some specific areas, people would like to drill down into a little bit more. So, could you give a couple more examples of what soft skills are or how you define that?

Kate Biebel: Sure. So, I think in its most basic level, it's about how, I mean the way we talk about it in the general world is people skills, not to make it super simple but it's about how do you conduct yourself in the workplace, what are the skills that you need to have to be able to move forward in your career as a young adult. Now, I said before, it is not clear to me that is only something a young adult needs, I think anybody who has worked in a work setting probably has experience where some folks are better at this than others. So, I think for us, soft skills are about how do you communicate with each other about what you need somebody to do. How do you communicate that? Do you bark it as somebody, do you ask somebody politely if they can do this? Do you think about asking about how does this fit into your priorities? For the young adults, on the other end, it's about oh do I understand what the task is. If I do not understand how do I communicate that with the person I am working with. If I don't have time to do that right now, how do I communicate with that. I think, I mean that's an interesting example actually, because that is something we see at work. For folks who come in and don't have those skills or aren't thinking that way, one response to being asked to do something you don't have time to do or don't know how to do is just then either to not do it or not say, this is something that is hard for me or to ask for help basically. We really, I think the clearest way that we try to help people develop soft skills is two things. One is to be very open and talk about it, when somebody new comes to us and we don't know them, we don't know their skill sets, say here is what I would like you to do how do you think that fits into your skill set. Let's have an ongoing conversation about how this is going. And I have to say, even as somebody who has been doing this for a while, even I sometimes forget to do that and then have misses, and then had to pivot and think about all right this is not working, how are we going to help you learn how to better do this or to change onto another project, that is an advantage and a luxury that we have here is that we, I think you really do need everybody to be on the same mindset, so that you can then shift, we do a lot of shifting people around between projects to match interest, skill sets, expertise. So having conversation is really important and that authentic and honesty that a bunch of people talked about in the popcorn chat. I think the other thing we do is that the more senior folks here, or folks who have been here a long time, is we try to model that behavior so we talk to each other in the same way, we don't make assumptions about what people can do, what they're good at and what they need help with, we have all those same conversations that I would have with anybody in front of our young adults, who are part of everything we do and I don't know, Amanda do you have other thoughts on what you see or what makes a difference in terms of soft skills development?

Amanda Costa: No yeah, I think that's exactly right. A lot of modeling and kind of working with the individual's strengths and struggles and how we can implement that. And the modeling and mentoring. That's a huge piece that happens naturally here and has been instrumental in helping people move forward.

Kate Biebel: I think for use, when people look at our center from the outside, those are the kind of skills people don't talk about, I think there is an assumption that that just happens. That either we are just good at it or we are nice, or whatever it is, I mean of course we are nice, but what I think is not so apparent is that is very intentional and we have worked very hard to make, we have worked very very hard on the culture and a big piece of that is around what probably gets lumped into the category of soft skills. For any organization or person interested in how do you do that, I think the number one thing is to prioritize it, to talk about it, prioritize it and think about what that looks like, sometimes you may have to have conversations that are uncomfortable because you may find out that you are doing things that aren't helping people feel like they can develop those soft skills. Or you have senior people who you hoped could model those skills who don't do a good job at it. And so, it's an ongoing conversation.

Melody Riefer: So you guys, I wanted to see if I can segway this into a different question, or a bit more specific, part of what has popped up for me, and for a couple of other people who have commented in the chat was would these not be favorable conditions for any employer anywhere? You know, it seems like it's a good idea for young adults but also for anybody.

Kate Biebel: Right, I cannot agree more. I think that is true. What we reported there is actually totally mirrors our own experience. All of those data and those ideas actually come from the literature, the research literature, on what we know that young adults say that they need or what employers are saying that they need to do in order to attract and retain young adults, so you know I thought about that a lot, why don't we think about this as everybody needing this. I think there is an emphasis right now in the field on really asking young adults what they need, I, this is my own suspicion I don't have anything to back this up, but I suspect that in generations previous we just were not asking people those questions, I feel like the data is attached to this notion of gen Y and millennials and young adults but I cannot agree more, that the majority of our staff at our larger research center are not young adults and we all have also really invested in this intentional culture and benefited from it.

Melody Riefer: That makes sense. So, here's a question I think does get to kind of the honesty and truth saying, and we'll have to wrap up with this one, but how are the topics decided for the board in terms of what they'll discuss. Does leadership decide what the topics are, and I guess what is implied there is older people? Non-young adults. How driven, how autonomous is the board?

Amanda Costa: That is a great question. So for our internal national board that we host through the research and training center, the content is developed in partnership with the board itself, and with our research teams here, so all of the research projects are required to get youth voice and input, so they are each slated through the youth advisory board. So, our young adults have a chance to provide feedback on the development and implementation and dissemination of every project that is conducted through our center. And then the second half of every call is focused on content development that meets the interests of the young adults on the phone. So we are breaking our phone calls into half content that we need feedback on because youth voice is important for all of our projects, and half on developing tip sheets, or resources, that the young adults on our board decide they want to develop. So they pick a topic of interest that they think the young adults in the states would need, and develop that together. So, the next quarter I think they are developing a tip sheet on Social Security focused on adults. So, it's kind of a little bit of both. For the Statewide Young Adult Council, we have various speakers that get slated through and the young adults vote and agree whether or not to have a participant come in to get feedback on projects. The young adults are always very flexible and excited to give feedback. So, most organizations are always welcome to come in but there is an opportunity for young adults to say hey we're not really feeling this project, we don't think it is a good use of our time, we want to go in a different direction. It's definitely a collaborative process.

Melody Riefer: Great, great. I think that's always the tensions when you have something that somebody is providing you the funding to study one thing and then you're also trying to respect the experts, and their priorities. So, unfortunately, we are out of time for this webinar, and there are some thank yous I need to do. I want to thank SAMHSA for their guidance and leadership in the work that they do in terms of providing the 10 principles and four dimensions of recovery and behavioral health, which all of these apply for everyone across the board, we're all needing to make sure that our lives are respected. The Recovery to Practice project is really committed to the education and training and resources to ensure that people who are delivering services, whether you are a peer specialist or a therapist, or prescriber, that you stay a continuous learner and really work to integrate recovery principles so that all of what we're trying to achieve regardless of the specific intervention, is done based on recovery principles.

Now, we have some great stuff coming up that I want to be sure that ya'll know about. One way to find out about what is going on is to sign up to get the Recovery to Practice newsletter, and we are more than happy to send that to you. We have two great webinars that are coming up, on Wednesday, April 19, we are going to look at first, early episode psychosis and on May 3, the start of healthy transitions. And so, together these three webinars will be our focus on transition age youth. Registration is available, you can always go to the RTP website, which is on the SAMHSA website, to register for any of the webinars.

Now, in January, we had to cancel or postpone a webinar that has now been rescheduled. I am really happy to let you know that the webinar looking

at tribal membership and service gaps in the criminal justice system, has been rescheduled for March 15, so that is just a couple of weeks from now. And you can register for that webinar right now. It is the wrap up webinar for our criminal justice series, if you have missed the other webinars, I would encourage you to go to the website and check out the stock of webinars to review.

Recovery to Practice is really designed to look at all disciplines that work in mental health. And we need the participation of people from different disciplines, and we need advocates and family members and people with first person experience, so feel free to join us to make suggestions, we have some links for you on this page, that you can access, and a particular note I want to make sure you know that you can get continuing education hours from NAADAC, and even though it's from NAADAC, those continuing education hours will apply for a social workers, and different disciplines so check it out it is worth completing the very short quiz that you need to do to get your continuing education hours. Or you can download a certificate of participation and for some people that's enough proof of being here. Otherwise the benefit you get is the knowledge from listening to the presenters, and networking with your colleagues. I hope you found this to be insightful, interesting, and help build some knowledge that you can carry with you in the work that you do. We are here to serve you. Let us know how we can help. This concludes our time together. Have a great day.