



SHP Student Interns for Research and Scholarly Activities Application of Project Proposal Form

Instructions:

Please fill out the form and return via email to Michele Sisco (mcoral@shp.rutgers.edu) by **March 25, 2024**. Please fill each box to the right of each required field. If you are sending attachments, please ensure your contact information is added to all your forms.

Faculty Contact Information:

Date submitted:	March 25, 2024
Faculty Name:	Aaron Dallman, PhD, OTR/L
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Project Detail:

Project Title: (56 characters max)	The Nexus Club: Co-development of a micro-clubhouse model intervention to support transitions in autistic adults
Hypothesis:	We hypothesize that at the conclusion of this project, we will have refined the Nexus Micro-clubhouse intervention to be a feasible and effective community-preferred intervention.
Description: (Include design, methodology, data collection, techniques, data analysis to be employed, evaluation and interpretation methodology for research component)	<p>This project is the first part of a two-phased mixed methods, randomized multiple case study design study that aims to improve transitions-related skills for autistic individuals. Our approach is guided by the Adapting interventions to new contexts (ADAPT) guidelines. The first step (Assess the rationale for intervention and consider intervention-context fit) was completed in designing this research project. The second step (Plan and undertake adaptations) will be completed in this phase of this research study.</p> <p>My team has already developed and began piloting the Nexus Clubhouse model. In this early stage, we have recruited five autistic adults to participate in the Nexus Clubhouse, which leverages existing SHP spaces (e.g., kitchen, living room) to teach transition skills. Clubhouse models are unique in that both graduate students and</p>

Autistic adolescents/adults are considered members of the clubhouse and all members have a role as both learners/facilitators. In this egalitarian model of education/intervention, all members (i.e., autistic members and graduate students) benefit from the intervention process and can help direct the process of intervention. Thus, all members serve in the role of expert. Whereas autistic members have the expertise of the lived experience of being autistic, graduate students have the expertise of learning independence and job-related skills.

During this project, Nexus members will provide the preliminary information necessary to refine the manualized interventions (i.e., the Nexus Manual) that are modeled after the clubhouse approach and to suggest specific intervention principles for both autistic individuals with high support needs and those with low support needs. This work is important because individuals with high support needs are also least likely to be included in research due to differences in communication styles, co-occurring conditions (e.g., intellectual disabilities), and researcher bias²⁹. We contend that involving autistic individuals, particularly those with high support needs, is paramount for the development of effective interventions for the high support needs autistic community. However, researchers have not yet identified research methods that allow for adequate inclusion of this important group. In future work, we hope to address that gap. However, for this study, we propose that autistic individuals possess a unique ability to comprehend the nuanced experiences of those with high support needs and are therefore better equipped to create interventions that deliver substantial value, a perspective that non-autistic individuals lacking direct experience may struggle to achieve. While several community-based participatory research studies have provided general guidelines for autism research and intervention^{3,6,29-31}, ours is the first specifically targeted to improve high-value transitions-related interventions for autistic individuals who benefit from both high support and those who need less support. Members will provide feedback on the session number, sequence, length, frequency, and duration of each meeting. Nexus members will be adults (ages 18-75) who have received a rehabilitation/habilitation intervention (e.g., OT, PT, SLP), have access to a computer or smartphone (for virtual attendance in workshops), and can answer questions using a minimum of 5-word responses in English either verbally, through written communication, or using a communication device. The inclusion criteria were thoughtfully selected to maximize the diversity of participants included, while ensuring that all participants can effectively engage in the research procedures.

<p>Specific Student Responsibilities:</p>	<p>The first student activity of this project is active participation in the weekly Nexus Clubhouse. To do this, the student will participate in a one-hour training with the principal investigator (Dr. Dallman, PhD, OTR/L). Afterwards, the student will participate in the Nexus intervention as a member, actively learning alongside autistic adults. The PI (Dallman) will be onsite during all Nexus activities to provide support for the graduate student intern/member. Next, We will host a workshop to refine the clubhouse model. During the workshop, our team will present information to both autistic adults and their parents (two separate groups happening simultaneously) about our intervention. Members will have several semi-structured opportunities to provide feedback on the intervention.</p> <p>After completion of the workshop, comments from the workshop and relevant literature will be synthesized and presented to participants via RedCap. In accordance with the modified Delphi process, participants will score the statements according to their level of agreement or the relative importance of the statement. Items will be scored based on a 1 (of little importance or do not agree) to 5 (high importance or full agreement) Likert-type scale. Results from the survey will be synthesized and used to refine the list of statements which will then be sent to participants again in the next RedCap Survey (e.g., results from Survey 1 will be presented to participants during Survey 2).</p> <p>The same participants will then score the refined list of statements according to their level of agreement and the level of importance of the statement. If participants have reached a consensus, then this phase of the study will be completed. If there remains continued debate and discrepancy between participants, they will be invited to a third step during which they will rate a refined set of statements that were modified from the results of the second stage of this phase. We will repeat this process of refining statements and distributing surveys until we reach a consensus, which based on previous Delphi studies³³, we anticipate will be achieved after no more than 3 rounds.</p> <p>For this phase, results from each round within this Delphi study will be analyzed before subsequent rounds. Qualitative comments provided in open-ended responses will be analyzed using directed content thematic analysis³⁴. For the Likert-type scale ratings for each statement, we will consider them to have reached a consensus when 70% of the participants indicate they "Strongly Agreed" or "Somewhat Agreed". If a statement does not reach consensus in the first round, it will be modified based on the qualitative comments provided by participants who did not indicate "somewhat agreed" or "strongly agreed." Upon completion of this phase, it is expected that we will</p>
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	have developed a list of community-preferred intervention principles that will be used to develop the specific activities and guidelines for the micro-clubhouse model.
Start / end date of project:	May 8, 2024 – August 30 th , 2024

Educational:

WHAT OTHER EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES ARE AVAILABLE TO STUDENTS? (e.g., journal club, seminars, clinic, rounds)	The student will have the opportunity to participate in the Nexus Club throughout the intervention, which provides a naturalistic and egalitarian learning opportunity to learn alongside autistic adults.
WHERE DO YOU PLAN TO PRESENT OR PUBLISH THE FINDINGS WITH THE STUDENT? (e.g., national or state meetings, newsletter or journal, SHP poster day)	We intend to present these findings at the American Occupational Therapy Association Conference (next year to be held in Philadelphia, PA). We also plan to submit these findings to the Autism In Adulthood journal.

CHECK ALL APPROPRIATE BOXES BELOW AND PROVIDE REQUESTED INFORMATION.

This project is: clinical laboratory behavioral survey educational
 Other: please specify _____

This project involves the use of human subjects (including chart review, retrospective studies and questionnaires).

Pending Approved IRB Protocol Number Pro2023001867*
*NOTE: We will seek an IRB modification for this project.

IRB approval must be obtained by June 2024

 PT, DPT, PHD.

March 25, 2024

Signature of Department Chair

Date

OR-For internal use

Form: (1)

Reviewed date: _____

Date processed on website: _____