Original Paper

Living at the Friendship House: Findings from the *Transition Planning Inventory*

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Abstract

A residential initiative, named the Friendship House, was created through advocates focused on helping people with intellectual disabilities live independently in affordable and safe housing on a university campus. The Friendship House is a small residence hall where individuals with intellectual disabilities live side-by-side with similarly aged and same gendered university students. Qualitative finding as in resident reports and observational data provides support that the Friendship House experience has been successful. However, to better equip these residents with intellectual disabilities, it is important to assess the program in terms of post school transition acquisition skills. This study focuses on whether the residents with intellectual disabilities are mastering the skills necessary to live successful lives after high school. Hence, the purpose of this quantitative study is to determine the effect of living in the Friendship House on the acquired transition skills (as measured by the nine Transition Planning Inventory skill sets) on individuals with intellectual disabilities.

Keywords

special education, residential, transition skills, daily living, communication

1. Introduction

Research suggests that post-school outcomes for youth with intellectual disabilities are generally dismal (Doughman, Spinning & Walker, 2004). An analysis of the *National Longitudinal Transition Study-2* (NLSTS-2) data revealed that few transition-age youth with intellectual disabilities worked for pay, participated in organized community group activities, or interacted with friends regularly (Wagner, Cameto & Newman, 2003). While the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) ensures access to education for students with disabilities while also addressing post-school outcomes, several studies indicate that a great number of individuals with disabilities have not achieved post-school success in terms of gainful employment; taking responsibility for normal, daily tasks such as personal

hygiene or cleaning their room; participating in leisure or community activities; self-advocating, setting realistic goals; or communicating and dealing acceptably with disputes (O'Hara, Cooper, Zovistoski, & Buttrick, 2007; Woolf, Woolf & Oakland. 2010). In other words, those activities and skill sets that are required for achieving a measure of independence as an adult have been lacking with individuals with disabilities.

Nevertheless, individuals with disabilities, along with family, desire levels of independence in their lives. Research supports that gaining this level of independence are especially difficult for people with intellectual disabilities due to generally lower self-determination skills that can influence abilities in daily living skills (Taylor, 2000; Wagner, Newman, Cameto, Garza, & Levine, 2005). Other roadblocks to residential independence are the limited housing options available for individuals with intellectual disabilities (Karaim, 2012, Moses, 2005). For many years, the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities Housing Task Force (O'Hara et al., 2007) has documented a lack of affordable and also accessible housing for individuals with intellectual disabilities.

However, the situation is not hopeless. Mastering these IDEA transitions is a life-long process that involves providing experiences that help the individuals achieve independence (Karaim, 2012). With these housing barriers in mind, advocates focused on helping people with intellectual disabilities live independently in an affordable as well as safe housing on a university campus. Thus, a residential initiative, named the Friendship House, was created.

The Friendship House is a small residence hall located in on a Midwestern campus where individuals with intellectual disabilities live side-by-side with similarly aged university students. This type of housing is different from the group home model, where several individuals with intellectual disabilities live with one nondisabled live-in monitor. Rather, the Friendship House is a freestanding residence hall. The Friendship House consists of four rooming suites, each containing three rooms for nondisabled roommates and one room for an individual with an intellectual disability. The three nondisabled roommates share a bathroom whereas the individual with an intellectual disability has his/her own bathroom. Common areas such as kitchen, laundry facilities, deck, and TV room are shared among the entire group.

In order to live in this residence hall, the parents of the individuals with intellectual disabilities completed a questionnaire for their son/daughter by filling. After this questionnaire was completed, the individual with an intellectual disability was interviewed to determine the appropriateness of placement. The resident director and a small group of experts knowledgeable about people with intellectual disabilities conducted these interviews. Potential roommates without disabilities applied to live in this special residence hall and were also were interviewed by the same group of experts so that a "match" could occur. Parents of the individuals with disabilities did not live in this residence hall, but provided support for all roommates. All of this is deliberate in order to create a social contract in which multiple nondisabled roommates can provide necessary social support for the intellectually disabled individual. Drawing on Social Exchange Theory (SET), multiple nondisabled roommates would be better suited to

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provide the necessary social support needed to thrive than what is typically found in group homes (one nondisabled individual caring for multiple intellectually disabled individuals). SET posits that individuals compare the costs of efforts and resources (currencies) exchanged against rewards received for relationships (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959), and that individuals stay engaged in relationships in which rewards outweigh the costs and where other alternatives are not likely to provide such benefits. The currencies exchanged within relationships also can vary, of which social support undoubtedly is important. The types of effective social support often sought and provided are emotional (e.g., comfort), instrumental (e.g., physical assistance), informational (e.g., advice), networking (e.g., support group), and companionship (e.g., being present), all of which can be received from interpersonal relationships (Barbour, 2003). While intellectually disabled individuals provide quite a bit of benefit to those with whom they are in relationships, they are perhaps limited in the breadth and depth of currencies to exchange compared to nondisabled individuals, drawing more from those individuals than they can return. Thus, with multiple sources of such social support for one intellectually disabled individual, that individual would make larger gains in independent living skills via social support without the nondisabled roommates reaching a point in which the social exchange becomes too costly for one individual.

One of the goals of the Friendship House was to increase self-determination skills and promote independence in daily living of individuals with intellectual disabilities. Hence, by determining the impact and what transition skills promote success in these transition-aged individuals, the Friendship House roommates without disabilities can better serve them in the development of these skills. Thus this study seeks to evaluate and determine the strengths of these roommates with disabilities living at the Friendship House in regards to the areas of growth in relation to post-secondary transitions. Also, because this type of living situation is unique and is the first one established in the country, there is no current research or similar comparisons and the following research questions were posed: (1) How has the Friendship House impacted the resident individuals with disabilities mastery of the transition skills necessary for independence as outlined by the IDEA and measured by the standardized instrument? (2) Which transition skills most impact transition mastery?

To study this question thoroughly, the researchers determined to both quantitative and qualitative research should be completed. This paper focused on the quantitative research. Purposive sampling was used with an established standardized instrument that is used by school and agency personnel to evaluate critical transition planning areas that are mandated by IDEA2004 that included independent living skills.

2. Method

2.1 Participants

Purposive sampling occurred since the research assumes that the individuals who would have knowledge of the Friendship House were the roommates (both with and without disabilities) and

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parents of the individuals with disabilities (Fraenkel & Wallden, 1993). The study participants consisted of _all_ the Friendship House residents (disabled and non-disabled roommates) and a parent of the intellectually disabled individual (100%). Each of the roommates with intellectual disabilities has resided at the Friendship House for more than three years. In this way, we could determine more precisely the effect of having lived at the residence. The demographic breakdown is noted in Table 1.

Table 1. Population, n, Percentage Participating, Age Range and Sex of participants

Population	n	Percentage Participating	Age Range	Sex
Roommates				
Nondisabled	6	100%	21-26	4 males /
Disabled	6	100%	23-30	2 females
				4 males/
				2 females
Parent	6	100%	NA	1 male /
				5 females

2.2 Instrument

The researchers wanted to use a standardized instrument that assessed individuals' current knowledge and skill performance on a wide range of areas that are necessary when becoming an adult. The *Transition Planning Inventory* (TPI) is a standardized transition planning instrument commonly used in the special education and agency field to evaluate and determine the strengths of individuals and the areas of growth in relation to post-secondary transitions in accordance to the federal IDEA regulations. In addition, the TPI meets the evidence-based research recommendations of *No Child Left Behind* and the mandate of IDEA 2004 for appropriate transition assessments (Clark & Patton, 2006).

In depth, the TPI focuses on nine general fields of adult living. The number of items on each transition construct is in parentheses: Employment (5 items), Further Education or Training (5 items), Daily Living (6 items), Leisure Activities (3 items), Community Participation (6 items), Health (6 items), Self-determination (5 items), Communication (4 items), and Interpersonal Relationships (6 items). An overall TPI score is the individual's composite transition score (max. 230 points). A transition construct score is also provided for each of the nine constructs.

The TPI instrument contains three rater forms that are given to the individual with the disability, a parent, and one other observer (e.g. teacher, school personnel, roommate, etc.). The raters rank the individual with a disability in respect to transitional abilities on a Likert scale of 0 to 5, 0 indicating strongly disagree and 5 indicating strongly agree. The participants also have the option to respond with DK ("don't know") or NA ("not applicable"). The rater scores are averaged to determine the overall

TPI and nine construct scores.

Initially, the reliability and validity of the TPI with nine constructs were not internally consistent, i.e. reliable (Cronbach's alpha < .80). Factor analysis revealed two of the transition constructs were unstable: Furthering Education (too much missing and/or DK/NA data) and Interpersonal Relationships (Cronbach's alpha .46). These two constructs were completely dropped from the analysis, rendering the TPI reliability coefficient acceptable (Cronbach's alpha = .796). Each of the remaining constructs was greater than .80. Content validity was examined by relating the questions on the TPI to other transition assessments (examples: LCCE-KB, LSI/ESI, SPIB, TCB, TEL, LCCE-PB, QOLQ, QSLQ, E-STRS, and WAS).

2.3 Procedure and Data Analysis Methods

A packet consisting of a formal invitation to participate, a consent form, and a self-addressed, stamped return envelope was mailed to the six roommates without disabilities, roommates with disabilities (please note that roommates with disabilities were own guardians), and parents of the roommate with disabilities who were living in the Friendship House. After one week, the packet was mailed out again to the individuals who did not initially respond in order to garner as many participants as possible. These mailings resulted in six roommates, six roommates with a disability and six parents (100%) returning the consent form and agreeing to be contacted for the study.

Once the consent forms were received, another mailing occurred in which the participants were asked to complete the survey as thoroughly as possible and mail it back to the researchers in a self-addressed stamped envelope. All the individuals who signed the consent form participated (*n*=12). The researchers orally gave the *Transition Planning Inventory* to the roommates with disabilities (*n*=6). To protect anonymity, participants were asked not to place their names on the survey. Instead, an identifying number was placed on the surveys, eliminating any potential risk or repercussions for the participants.

Because the TPI Likert scale ranged from 0-5, the data was coded from 1-6. Transition construct scores below 2.99 suggest a low level of perceived competence, whereas scores averaging above 4 to 6 suggest average to high level perceived competence (Patton & Clark, 2014). A one-sample t-test was performed to test whether the overall TPI score was above the mean score of 105. Descriptive data was compiled and Multiple Regression bootstrap models run on the seven remaining constructs (Employment, Daily Living, Leisure Activities, Community Participation, Health**,** Self-determination, and Communication). Regression models were for multicollinearity (VIF > 5) and non-significant predictors. Necessary adaptations were made resulting in a "best-fit" final model of regression, including changes in predictor order. Final significant models are reported, with the predictor delta R^2 effect sizes (the percent that the model would be effected would this predictor be removed) and the overall model R^2 (the percent of variance accounted for by the predictors). All linear regression assumptions were met.

It is important to note that the researchers elected to analyze the data quantitatively in order to better

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understand the predictive components of the constructs. Hence, bootstrapping analysis was employed which allows reliable and valid preliminary conclusions to be drawn with small sample sizes.

3. Result / Discussion

3.1 Descriptive Results

The results of the TPI instrument allow us to determine the impact of the Friendship House on the cognitively impaired residents and their IDEA-based transition skills. Overall, after a minimum of three years at the Friendship House, the young adults with disabilities exhibited a significantly high score (p = .001) showing that they have developed competency in transition skills. They scored 138 out of 23 (66%). The central tendency of the students was to score between 117 (56%) and 157 (75%), the interquartile.

The residents' with intellectual disabilities mean scores for each of the transition skills were in the average to above average range. The rounded scores are listed in decreasing mean order. Rank one: Leisure and Self-determination (the skills in which these cognitively impaired residents were most competent with80% average mastery. The means of these scores were not significantly different. Rank two: Health and Employment were not as highly scored, but were slightly above average with 77% average mastery. These two transition constructs were not significantly different. The following transition constructs showed average competency: Daily Living (73%), Communication (72%) and Community Participation (60%). Boxplots of these transition constructs as well as their means and standard deviations are below. These individuals did best in Leisure activities (skewed right), which assessed the cognitively impaired roommates' choice of entertainment and involvement in indoor /outdoor activities and Self-determination, which assessed the individual's awareness and acceptance of his/her strengths and limitations, whether he/she can realistically set personal goals, and whether he/she could confidently and appropriately express his/her feelings to others. The individuals with intellectual disabilities exhibited the least proficiency in Community Participation. Community Participation assessed the individual's access to and knowledge of the legal activities allowed the cognitively impaired and community services (see Figure 1).
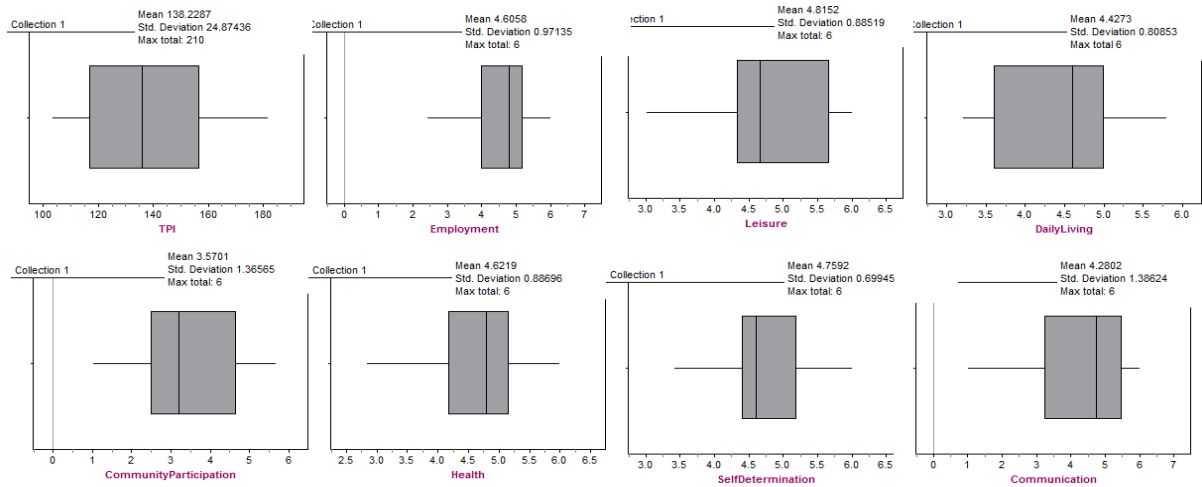
Figure 1. Boxplots of the Overall TPI and Transition Constructs Scores

These results show that the Friendship House has positively impacted its cognitively impaired residents. They are acquiring the skills necessary for independent living. Further, the strengths are in the two areas that research says have a high impact on other transition skills (McDougall, Evans, & Baldwin, 2010). These overall results speak well of the Friendship House's influence. However, to truly meet the needs of its residents, it's important to discover which transition constructs have more impact than the others (effect sizes) and which skills need to be targeted directly. The results of the regression analysis will help to determine the next steps.

3.2 Regression Analysis of the Seven Transition Constructs

Because the construct of Community Participation was removed from the original model due to multicolinearity (VIF >5), Model 2 was utilized in this analysis (See Table 2). All of the remaining constructs (Employment, Daily Living, Leisure, Health, Self-determination, and Communication) are significant contributors to and predictors of developing transitional abilities. This explains approximately 85% (Adj R^2) of the TPI score: TPI = -.198Employment + .375Daily Living + .242Leisure Activities + .253Health + .216Self-determination + .322Communication.

Table 2. Regression Analysis of TPI on the Transition Constructs

Model	VIF	Standardized Coefficients Beta	B	Bias	Std. Error	Sig. (2-tailed)	95% Confidence Interval Lower	Upper
TPI Model - F(6, 1003) = 979.551, p < .001 | Adj.R2 = .853								
					Bootstrap[a]			
(Constant)			-29.880	.064	1.865	.001	-33.344	-26.212
Employment	2.405	-.198	-5.076	.017	.418	.001	-5.895	-4.208
Daily Living	**3.318**	**.375**	**11.526**	**-.013**	**.519**	**.001**	**10.499**	**12.524**
Leisure Activities	**2.149**	**.343**	**9.641**	**.006**	**.418**	**.001**	**8.799**	**10.442**
Health	2.065	.253	7.085	-.010	.503	.001	6.009	7.989
Self-determination	1.661	.216	7.682	-.015	.470	.001	6.811	8.645
Communication	**1.432**	**.322**	**5.777**	**.003**	**.193**	**.001**	**5.410**	**6.176**

[a]*bootstrapping results are based on 1000 bootstrap samples.*

Daily Living (.38), Leisure (.34) and Communication (.32) have the largest effect sizes, and thus are the best predictors of the skills and tasks needed for independent living. Daily Living involves personal hygiene, household tasks, and living-arrangements capabilities. Leisure involves entertainment choices and involvement in indoor /outdoor activities; and finally, Communication involves speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills (see Table 2 above).

To better understand the requisite activities and skills needed to master these three top predictors, we ran additional regressions with these three constructs as outcomes with all other TPI constructs as predictors to see if some of the measured "soft skills" play contributing.

3.2.1 Daily Living: Highest Predictor of TPI

Because Leisure Activities was not a significant predictor in this model (p>.05), Model 2 was utilized (see Table 3). All of the remaining constructs (Employment, Community Participation, Daily Living, Health, Self-determination, and Communication) are significant contributors to and predictors of Daily Living. They explain approximately 76% (Adj R^2) of this construct: Daily Living = .411 Employment + .451 Community Participation + .441 Health - .157 Self-determination - .234 Communication.

Table 3. Regression Analysis of Daily Living Skills

Model	VIF	Standardized coefficient Beta	B	Bias	Std. Error	Sig. (2-tailed)	95% Confidence Interval Lower	Upper
F(5,1004) = 625.820, p < .005 | adj R2 = .756								
					Bootstrap[a]			
(Constant)		.	1.491	.004	.077	.001	1.347	1.645
Employment	1.639	.411	.342	.000	.015	.001	.313	.373
Community Participation	2.168	.451	.267	-.001	.012	.001	.243	.289
Health	1.583	.441	.402	.000	.013	.001	.375	.427
Self-determination	1.734	-.157	-.182	-.001	.019	.001	-.222	-.148
Communication	1.393	-.234	-.137	.001	.008	.001	-.150	-.120

[a]*bootstrap results are based on 100 bootstrap samples.*

Community Participation, knowing legal procedures to self-advocate (.45) and physical and mental Health (.44) have comparable effect sizes and are the best predictors of the skills and tasks involved in Daily Living. Employment has the next largest effect size (.44). Communication (-.23) and Self-determination (.15) were both negatively correlated with Daily Living, meaning the more everyday life skills an individual with cognitive disabilities possesses, the less able to communicate and be self-aware the individual is.

3.2.2 Leisure Activities: Second Highest Predictor of TPI

Because Daily Living and Self-Determination were not significant predictors of Leisure Activities ($p > .05$), Model 2 was utilized in this analysis (See Table 4). All of the remaining constructs (Employment, Community Participation, Health, and Communication) are significant contributors to and predictors of Leisure Activities, explaining approximately 72% (Adj R^2) of this construct: Leisure Activities = -.119Employment + .719Community Participation +.033Health + .105Communication

Table 4. Regression Analysis of Leisure Activities

Model	VIF	Standardized Coefficient Beta	B	Bootstrap[a]				
				Bias	Std. Error	Sig. (2-tailed)	95% Confidence Interval	
							Lower	Upper
(Constant)			2.215	.004	.066	.001	2.076	2.344
Employment	1.625	.119	.108	-.001	.017	.001	.073	.139
Community Participation	1.960	.719	.466	.001	.019	.001	.430	.504
Health	1.107	.033	.033	.000	.012	.007	.009	.057
Communication	1.392	.105	.067	.000	.010	.001	.046	.085

F(4, 105) = 645.264, p < .001 | adj R2 = .719

Note. bootstrap results are based on 1000 bootstrap samples.

Community Participation is by far the best predictor of Leisure Activities (.72). Health was almost a non-predictor (.03).

3.2.3 Communication: Third highest predictor of TPI

Because Employment and Self-determination were not significant predictors of Communication ($p > .05$), Model 2 was used (See Table 5). All of the remaining constructs (Daily Living, Leisure, Community Participation, and Health) are significant contributors to and predictors of Communication, explaining approximately 39% (Adj. R^2) of this construct.

Table 5. Regression Analysis of Communication

| Model | VIF | Standardized coefficients Beta | B | Bootstrap[a] | | | | |
| | | | | Bias | Std. Error | Sig. (2-tailed) | 95% Confidence Interval | |
							Lower	Upper
F(4,1005) = 161.55, p < .001 | Adj R2 = .389								
Daily Living	2.169	-.580	-.995	-.002	.072	.001	-1.147	-.861
Leisure Activities	3.409	.193	.302	.001	.062	.001	.179	.418
Community Participation	3.925	.606	.615	.001	.038	.001	.540	.693
Health	1.499	.225	.351	.001	.030	.001	.298	.414

[a]*bootstrap results are based on 1000 bootstrap samples.*

The two largest effect sizes competed with each other as one was positive (Community Participation .61) and one was negative (Daily Living, -.58).

4. Discussion

This study explored the impact of the residential Friendship House on persons with intellectual disabilities. Specifically, the researchers determined the effect of living in the Friendship House on the acquired transition skills (as measured by the nine Transition Planning Inventory skill sets) on individuals with intellectual disabilities.

These results show that the Friendship House has positively impacted its cognitively impaired residents. They are acquiring the skills necessary for independent living largely through group social support provided by nondisabled roommates. Further, the strengths are in the two areas that research says have a high impact on other transition skills (McDougall, Evans, & Baldwin, 2010). These overall results speak well of the Friendship House's influence; however to truly meet the needs of its residents, it's important to discover which transition constructs have more impact than the others (effect sizes) and which skills need to be targeted directly. These results were found through the regression analysis

Employment, while important, had the smallest effect size. More importantly it was negative, meaning they are negatively correlated (the larger the TPI index, the fewer employment skills the individual with disabilities displayed). This may be misleading in the context of our affluent population, where employment may be playing a minor role in determining independence than other factors. Health (physical and emotional health as well as problem solving skills) and self-determination (self-awareness of strengths and limitations and ability to set realistic goals) were on par with each other in term of predicting TPI success (effect sizes .25 and .22, respectively). Also, this small effect size could also be attributed to the already stable employment of the individuals with intellectual disabilities required in order to be able to live at this residence hall.

Communication (while not a strong predictor of Daily Living) and Leisure Activities (no predictor of Daily Living), played a major role in predicting overall independence (TPI) of the individuals who is intellectually impaired. IDEA has focused on leisure activities since individuals with intellectual

disabilities often do not participate in outside activities and often are alone in front of the television or computer. A higher qualitative of life (meaning more satisfaction in living life) and is shown when being with others and being able to effectively communicate with others with and without disabilities in the community (Hall, 2005).

Community Participation is by far the best predictor of Leisure Activities (.72). Those individuals with intellectual disabilities who understood their legal rights and could self-advocate also participated well in activities inside and outside of the dorm. Employment (.12) and Communication (.11), though significant were far less effective predictors. When one reflects, these results could show that Employment could be considered part of Community Participation since the goal is to get a higher quality of life for the individual with intellectual disabilities by getting these people out into the community.

Individuals with intellectual disabilities are apt to communicate effectively. However, many of the Daily Living activities did not require much Communication or the Communication required more skills than the individuals possessed. This negative/positive effect may help to explain the overall model low R^2. Additionally, there are simply other constructs not accounted for through the TPI instrument that can explain intellectually disabled individuals' communication skills. Health (.23) and Leisure Activities (.19) are also sound predictors for Communication. These individuals seem to improve communication by working verbally or in writing through conflicts and by voluntarily participating in indoor/outdoor activities, likely due to increased interaction with multiple nondisabled roommates.

In summation, through this study, we sought to understand the constructs (skill sets) that are most correlated to and best predictors of independent transition skills and behaviors. From the analysis we found that the three strongest predictors are Daily Living, Leisure Activities, and Communication. We also discovered participating in community activities is the single most important construct that correlates with Daily Living, Leisure Activities, and Communication. These, then, are the areas in which to intentionally provide opportunities in which residents with intellectual disabilities can participate. The Friendship House is a good model for transitioning the individuals with intellectual disabilities. These residents scored average to above on these seven transition constructs: Employment, Daily Living, Leisure Activities, Community Participation, Health, Self-determination, and Communication. They excelled in Leisure Activities and Self-determination, two constructs that Research says influences the mastery of others. By working to shore up the weakest skill (Community Participation) and being intentional in working on the three strongest predictors, the Friendship House personnel and families can better focus on the important transition skills that help the individuals with disabilities have a better quality of life.

Despite these results, limitations need to be addressed. Because the sample size for this case study was small, it has limited generalizability. Additionally, two transition skills were not able to be analyzed in the study: Furthering Education and Interpersonal Relationships. More data has to be gathered in order

to analyze these constructs. In addition, further studies need to be conducted to confirm the veracity of these findings.

Our future research includes the continued analysis of the residents with intellectual disabilities to determine long-term gains in transitional skills, as well as studying roommate characteristics and qualities that aid in transitional success and ultimately success in post-secondary life.

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