

Geriatric Career Development (GCD): Examining the Impact of a Healthcare Career Training Program for At Risk-High School Students in the Nursing Home Setting

COLLABORATIVE STUDY WITH GCD PROGRAM AT JEWISH HOME LIFECARE

Overview

The purpose of the present study is to evaluate the efficacy of the Youth Workforce Geriatric Career Development Program (GCD) which is a program designed for youths with specific interests in pursuing healthcare careers and provides them with experience in a geriatric healthcare setting. The program is being conducted at the Bronx and Manhattan JHL campuses.

The GCD is designed as a four-year program beginning in 10th grade and continuing through one year post high school. During the first three years of the program students spend approximately eight hours per week at JHL where they receive a structured work based learning curriculum, social service support, academic support, career and college counseling, wellness and training to obtain licensure in an allied health profession, such as certified nursing assistant, emergency medical technician, or pharmacy technician. Youth learn about geriatric issues and health career opportunities through a combination of lectures, mentoring, shadowing, and rotating departmental internship experiences. Additionally, each youth is assigned an elder resident mentor and together they complete a series of exercises over the course of the program to enhance student's knowledge of the aging process, promote heightened awareness and sensitivity to aging issues and provide an enjoyable and mutually beneficial experience for both. The last year of the program (one year post high school) includes tracking students' post high school academic and career experiences, goals, and achievements.

Method

Subjects: Typically each year approximately 30 10th grade students enter the 4 year program at each campus for a total of 60 new students. (Last year in the first year of the Manhattan program approximately 30 new students were accepted into 11th grade as well as 10th grade for a total of 93 new students at the two campuses.) Students stay in the program through high school and for one year post high school. The Bronx campus is in its 4th year of the program, with 107 participants, and the Manhattan campus is in its 2nd year with 87 participants.

Measures: When students first enter the program and then at the end of each academic year, students complete questionnaires about their academic and career goals, attitudes and knowledge about the elderly, self-esteem, perspective taking, empathy, resiliency and well-being. At the end of each year, students complete program evaluation surveys.

Student demographic information, report cards, NYS Regents Exam scores, and SAT and PSAT scores are also collected. Program measures collected include student daily logs, program attendance, and program retention. Additionally, high school graduation and post high school academic and career goals and achievements are tracked.

Status

Both the GCD program and the GCD study are in their fourth year. To date, seven data collection periods have been completed (Year 1, Year 2, and Year 3 baseline for incoming students and follow-up for all students and Year 4 baseline).

Results from Year 3 of the GCD Program and Year 4 to date

1. As part of the GCD program, we track student demographics. Eighty four percent of students are female. Eight nine percent are black or Hispanic. The majority (70%) of students' household income is \$30,000 or less. Ninety four percent of students have a mother figure in the home and 48% have a father figure at home.
2. An ongoing goal of the program is to develop more efficient and effective ways to help students maintain and even improve their academic performance. For the majority of students, no significant differences were found in students' fall and spring semester GPAs (for the 2008/2009 academic year). The Manhattan 10th graders, however, did show a significant decrease in GPA over the course of the year.
3. GCD students' number of mean absent days from school is less than the mean number of absent days for the general population of students from the partner schools that they attend (for academic year 2008/2009).
4. Performance on PSAT and SAT practice tests showed significant improvements from the fall to spring semesters.
5. Program retention for academic year 2008/2009 was 82%.
6. 2009/2010 is the first year that we have been able to track an alumni class (n=17). 39% of program graduates are attending 4 year college programs, 44% are attending 2 year college programs, one student could not attend college due to financial issues, one could not attend due to immigration status, and one student moved out of the country and can not be tracked. 27% of alumni are already embarking on health care careers and are employed by JHL part time.
7. Overall, student evaluations of the program have been consistently positive. The area that has typically been weakest, however, has been the development of relationships between staff on the communities and students. Additionally, while students indicate that they have had positive

experiences with the elderly at JHL and express the desire to pursue a health care career, they do not expect to pursue a career working with the elderly. These are both areas we plan to explore in more detail.

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Presentations

Abbott, N. & Burack, O. (2008). *Geriatric Career Development Program: An Intergenerational Mentorship Initiative*. Presented at the meeting of the State Society on Aging, Saratoga, NY.

Abbott, N. & Burack, O. (2008). *Geriatric Career Development Program: An Intergenerational Mentorship Initiative*. Presented at the 36th Annual Meeting of the State Society on Aging. Saratoga Springs, NY.

Dolan, S., Unowsky, C. (2007). *Geriatric Career Development Program: An Intergenerational Approach to Healthcare Career Development*. Presented at the Generations United Conference.

Torres, H, Burack, O, & Unowsky, C. (2009). *The Geriatric Career Development Program: Keeping Parents in the Loop*. Presented at the TASE conference, Syracuse, NY.

Unowsky, C. Dolan, S. (2007). *An Intergenerational Approach to Health Care Career Development*. Presented at the AAHSA National Conference.

Unowsky, C., Dolan, S., Abbott, N., Burack, O. (2007). *The Geriatric Career Development Program: An Intergenerational Initiative*. Presented at the State Society on Aging Conference, Albany, NY.

Unowsky C, Dolan S, Chen N, Burack O. (2007). The Geriatric Career Development Program: A Model Intergenerational Workforce Development Program. Presented at the Aging Concerns Unite Us Conference. Albany NY.

Unowsky, C. (2008). *Geriatric Career Development Program: An Intergenerational Initiative for Healthcare Career Development*. Presented at the meeting of the New York Southern Area Aging Network, New York, NY.

Unowsky, C. & Burack, O. (2009). *The Geriatric Career Development Program: Jewish Home Lifecare's Intergenerational Response to Nurturing and Training the Next Generation of Long Term Care Professionals*. Webinar presented to the Association of Jewish Aging Services.

Unowsky, C. & Burack, O. (2010). *The Geriatric Career Development (GCD) Program: Combining Research and Practice*. Presented at Research Rounds at Jewish Home Lifecare, New York, NY.

Unowsky, C, Wathen, A., Torres, H., Spiegel, R. (MMCC), Mertens, P. (HOSTOS), & Nieblas, J. (CVS). (2010). *Youth Career Development: Using Partnerships to Leverage Resources for Success*. Presented at the NYCETC Workforce Development Summit & Expo, New York, NY.

Unowsky, C, Felder, G, & Burack, O. (2010) *The Geriatric Career Development (GCD) Program: A Community Based After School Initiative for At-Risk High School Students Pursuing a Health Care Career*. To be presented at the 21st Century Community Learning Centers 2010 Summer Institute.

Paper

Costa, B.W.(2010). *Interest in the Field of Aging among At- Risk High School Students*. MA Thesis for Fordham University School of Social Work.

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