

Nursing and Allied Health Abstracts

Title: MENTORING PROJECTS FOR TEENS WITH SPINA BIFIDA RESULT IN IMPROVED SOCIALIZATION SKILLS, INDEPENDENCE AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

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Background: It is well documented that teens with spina bifida are often delayed in socialization skills, independence and community participation. This abstract describes the recruitment, goals and outcomes of two similar grant sponsored projects offered by the Spina Bifida Association of Wisconsin (SBAWI). GOAL (Go On And Learn) Independence was funded initially by the Ronald McDonald House Charities and later by Potawatomi Bingo. TEAM (Teens And Mentors) was funded by the Spina Bifida Association (SBA). The author directed these SBAWI projects. Over a six year time span 14 teens and 18 mentors were involved.

Method: Teens with spina bifida were recruited by SBAWI via its newsletter, website, special letters to known potential participants and word of mouth. Group goals as well as individual goals were established. Monthly group activities were offered. Mentee-mentor dyads interacted then and independently. Evaluation tools were constructed specific to project goals. Self-report evaluations by teens, mentors and parents were completed.

Results: Outcomes of the first project mirrored what was reported by teens, mentors and parents in the second project. General Group Goals were: move toward independence; improve socialization skills; develop friendships; do recreational activities away from family; learn and practice life skills with mentor; participate in service projects that give back to the community. Mean scores for Group Goals were reported as being met at 73% by teens, 74% by mentors, and 81% by parents. Mean scores for achieving Personal Goals (being on time; handling money correctly; getting on the honor roll, etc.) were reported as being met at 83% by teens, 73% by mentors, and 73% by parents.

Conclusion: Mentoring programs for teens with spina bifida can significantly contribute to their socializations skills, independence and community participation.