• PROGRAM/SERVICE OVERVIEW:
DSS Interpersonal Development Group – Phase Two
Interpersonal Development Group is a 12-week group therapy series offered once a semester by Disabled Student Services. This group was created based on the requests of DSS students diagnosed with Autism and Asperger’s to learn psychoeducational tools to increase their ability to build and maintain long lasting and meaningful relationships and learn self-advocacy skills. During the pre-screening, DSS staff developed a list of interpersonal objectives and themes that the participants self-reported having a desire to learn more about which were then utilized to develop the pre and post group assessments: Q1. Making first impressions, Q2. Engaging in small talk, Q3. Dating, Q4. Active listening skills, Q5. Communicating about the disability in personal and professional settings, Q6. Reaching out to develop long-lasting relationships, Q7. Conflict resolution, Q8. Developing self-esteem, Q9. Self-advocating, and Q10. Engaging other people to do extracurricular activities. Participants filled out a pre and post group questionnaire assessing their learning outcomes in the above-mentioned interpersonal development objectives on a 7-point scale (1=Strongly Disagree to 7=Strongly Agree).

LEARNING DOMAIN:
Self-Management

LEARNING OUTCOME:
Student Learning Outcome #1: Students will learn how to make first impressions and engage in small talk. This will be demonstrated by an increase in confidence levels.
Student Learning Outcome #2: Students will learn how to reach out to others and develop interpersonal techniques to build long-lasting relationships.
Student Learning Outcome #3: Students will learn how to resolve conflict in a way that builds good working relationships.
Student Learning Outcome #4: Students will better understand how to acknowledge their self-worth to build healthy levels of self-esteem.
Student Learning Outcome #5: Students will gain confidence by learning how to engage other people in doing extracurricular activities.

PROJECT SAMPLE:
7 students participated in this assessment.

DATA COLLECTION TIMEFRAME:
Fall 2012

DATA COLLECTION METHODS:
Qualitative survey

LIMITATIONS:
Small sample size

SUMMARY OF RESULTS:
At the end of 12-weeks of group therapy, participants indicated mixed feelings of confidence when trying to make first impressions with higher confidence levels regarding the ability to engage in small talk. Additionally, group averages showed that group members had learned communicative tools to assist them with conflict resolution and reaching out to others to develop long-lasting relationships. Additionally, feeling prepared to date also had mixed reviews indicating the importance of offering and Advanced Interpersonal Development Group focusing more on dating and romantic relationships.
KEY FINDINGS:

**Individual Participant Scores**

- 57% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that they felt confident when meeting someone for the first time. 43% neither agreed nor disagreed.
- 86% of participants strongly agreed, agreed, or slightly agreed to having the ability to engage in small talk. 14% of participants neither agreed nor disagreed.
- 100% of participants strongly agreed, agreed, or slightly agreed to understanding how to reach out to others and develop long-lasting relationships.
- 86% of participants strongly agreed, agreed, or slightly agreed to understanding how to resolve conflict in a way that builds good working relationships. 12% of participants neither agreed nor disagreed.
- 86% of participants agreed or slightly agreed to learning how to better acknowledge their self-worth in order to build healthy levels of self-esteem. 12% of participants neither agreed nor disagreed.
- 71% of participants agreed or slightly agreed in their belief in their ability to engage other people in doing extracurricular activities. 29% of participants neither agreed nor disagreed or slightly disagreed.

**2013-2014 STRATEGIC GOALS:**

Disabled Student Services has several strategic goals for the upcoming year based on this assessment which will improve the program and services provided:

1. DSS will continue to offer more psychoeducational therapy groups involving student learning related to their specific academic, career, or disability-related challenges.
2. DSS will offer an Advanced Interpersonal Development Group to participants who have completed the initial 12-week series to further their learning of interpersonal development.