The ACT Institute and Columbia School of Social Work Receive a New York Community Trust Grant to Investigate the Needs and Assets of ACT Participants who are Parents or are Pregnant

Over the next year, we will be exploring the unique experiences of participants who are also parents with the goal of producing a set of best practices and trainings for ACT providers who work with this population.

In collaboration with the Columbia School of Social Work and Dr. Ellen Lukens, Helle Thorning and the ACT Institute received a grant from New York Community Trust to research the needs, risks and assets of ACT participants who are pregnant or parents of children under 18.

An initial survey conducted by the ACT Institute showed that although a majority ACT teams address concerns related to childrearing with participants, almost half didn’t feel adequately trained or supported in regards to parental matters. This survey highlights a service gap, and demonstrates a clear need for these issues to be addressed through increased attention to assessment, training, implementation and monitoring. The current project aims to shed light on the risk and protective factors shared by parent participants in order to improve awareness among providers and policy makers. With attention paid to the unique needs and strengths of parent participants, providers can better integrate preventative supports into care plans that focus on reducing the need for crisis intervention and increasing the development of skills and resources that contribute to improved parental and overall functioning.

Over the course of the summer, we will be conducting a series of focus groups with ACT providers and interviews with ACT participants who are also parents or pregnant in order to better comprehend their unique perspectives. We aim to expand our understanding of the needs and assets of ACT participants who are parents and apply the information gathered to delineate a set of best practices and develop a blended
training curriculum for ACT team providers. Throughout the course of the project, we will collaborate with an advisory board of providers and participants in order to vet our ideas and ground our perspective through their experiences. After the completion of the focus groups and interviews, we will define a set of best practices for ACT providers regarding the needs of parent participants and their children, and prepare a training curriculum that will be accessible online through the Center for Practice Innovations (CPI).

We look forward to meeting with local providers and participants to hear about their experiences. Please feel free to reach out if you have any questions, would like to know more or would like to contribute your expertise to this project. If you know an ACT participant who is a parent and may be interested in participating in an interview, please click here to view the flyer. Stay tuned for updates and new training materials.

To learn more about this project, please contact Helle Thorning at Helle.Thorning@nyspi.columbia.edu