**NUTS AND BOLTS OF HEALTH CARE FOR DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONALS**

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**Objectives**: Adults with developmental disabilities have higher rates of chronic disease and mental illness than other adults (Lunsky et al., 2014). Despite this, they experience challenges accessing appropriate health care services. This project is a partnership between Vita Community Living Services (CLS), Health Care Access Research and Developmental Disabilities, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, and the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals to work directly with DSPs at Vita. At Vita CLS, direct support professionals (DSPs) work directly with adults with DD to support them in various ways, including supporting them in accessing and managing their health care. Vita has identified a need to build the capacity of DSPs to better support the health care needs of the individuals they serve. In addition, research indicates that DSPs report lacking education and training in health issues and practices (Dooren, Dean, Boyle, Taylor-Gomez, & Lennox, 2016; Ziviana, Lennox, Allison, Lyons, & Del Mar, 2004).

The first two objectives of this study will be presented here. These include: (1) identifying key gaps in the knowledge and skills of DSPs related to the health care needs of adults with DD, and helping DSPs to develop the capacity of the individuals they are supporting to advocate for their own health care needs; and (2) creating a toolkit comprised of resources that will increase the capacity of staff to prepare for healthcare visits and interact effectively with healthcare providers.

**Method**: An Implementation Science framework, comprised of Exploration, Installation, Initial Implementation, and Full Implementation phases, will be used. Data from the first two phases will be included in this presentation. The *Exploration phase* will first involve engaging DSPs and adults with DD in the project to increase awareness and involvement in the study. Interviews and focus groups will then be conducted with DSPs (n=50) and adults with DD (n=12) at Vita to gain their perspectives on the challenges they experience around accessing and managing health care. Data from interviews and focus groups will be transcribed and coded to identify key themes. As part of the *Installation phase*, resources for DSPs will be created based on the data obtained through the interviews and focus groups. Feedback from DSPs and individuals with DD will then be sought on these resources in order to improve and finalize the toolkit.

**Results**: Results regarding staff skills, knowledge, challenges, and needs with respect to health care issues and navigating the health care system from the perspectives of DSPs and members with DD will be presented, along with key themes that were identified.

**Discussions/Conclusions**: The identified gaps in health care knowledge and training will inform the development of the Nuts and Bolts of Health Care Toolkit*.* This toolkit will eventually be available to all developmental services agencies in Ontario. Importantly, being able to use these resources will build the capacity of DSPs to better support adults with DD to access, manage, and coordinate their health care.

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