**FOSTERING CONNECTIONS - ANALYSIS OF INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS FOR ADULTS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES**

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**Objective:** Adults with intellectual/developmental disabilities (IDD) living in community-based group homes have significantly lower opportunities in obtaining and maintaining interpersonal relationships (IR) compared to the neurotypical population. Despite efforts around policy put in place by organizations, there is a gap in the prioritization of interpersonal relationships of the clients. This research project aims to discover how support professionals in community-based group homes both preserve and describe the promotion and maintenance of IR, while identifying gaps and barriers that support professionals' experience when doing so.

**Method:** Five disability support professionals with varied experience from Community Living Oshawa Clarington will be recruited to conduct in-depth, semi-structured recorded interviews that will take place over Microsoft teams. Researchers will use thematic analysis to identify salient patterns and themes within and across the data that will be used to inform recommendations for improving systemic barriers.

**Results:** Once interviews commence, it is suspected that the support professionals will indicate systemic barriers around policies impeding on the promotion of IR. Based on prior research on IR we presume that the key factors contributing to this issue will be: limited access to opportunities within the community that promote IR’s, stigma surrounding the living space and individuals, supported professionals lack of education on teaching social skills and sexual health, infantilization of supported persons, and overall “wait and see” mentality of the support professionals.

**Discussion:** The findings can be used to further improve systemic issues and policies within community-based group homes in Ontario, by providing support professionals with the opportunity to express their concerns obtained through lived experience to close the gap between policy and practice. To our knowledge this is the first time systemic issues surrounding IR have been researched within a community-based group home in Ontario.

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