



Project NEXT: A Cognitive Support Technology Randomized Clinical Trial for Postsecondary Students with Traumatic Brain Injuries

Pursuing postsecondary education is a cognitively demanding activity, and the decided majority of postsecondary students with traumatic brain injuries (TBIs) report difficulties with the academic demands of their studies (Rumrill et al., 2019). A targeted approach like cognitive support technology (CST) is a logical framework for helping students with TBI overcome cognition-related difficulties in their academic and career-preparatory pursuits.

Key Findings

- Navigating the various college support services and resources can be challenging due to the lack of clear expectations and communication among various services (e.g., disability services, career services, vocational rehabilitation, etc.).
- Virtual learning has been particularly difficult to navigate for students with cognitive limitations.
- Relationship building with mentors/professors has been especially impacted.
- Preliminary data have shown improvements in GPA, retention, employment activity, and quality of life for those receiving targeted CST services.

Recommendations

Rehabilitation professionals can better support transition-age youth with TBI in postsecondary education through:

- Assisting the student in understanding and accessing the complex postsecondary supports available.
- Creating a customized accommodation plan that emphasizes technology that can be utilized in the classroom, at home, and in the workplace.

- Emphasizing mentoring and networking opportunities that can assist students in acquiring part-time work and internships in their desired fields of study.

More about the Research

In a five-year, randomized clinical trial at the intervention efficacy stage of research, the authors of this research brief are currently applying the CST framework as part of the Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Transition for Individuals with Disabilities. Funded by the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research, this initiative, known as Project NEXT, seeks to promote CST use and individualized, customized vocational case management supports.

Additional information on this topic can be found at transition.vcurrtec.org or contact us at rrtc@vcu.edu

Recommended Readings

Koch, L., Rumrill, P., Wu, J. R., Rumrill, S., Iwanaga, K., & Chan, F. (2020). Effective vocational rehabilitation services for improving the postsecondary educational and employment outcomes of young adults with traumatic brain injuries. *Brain Injury Professional*, 17(3), 15-20.

Rumrill, P., Hendricks, D.J., Elias, E., Jacobs, K., Leopold, A., Minton, D., Nardone, A., Sampson, E., Scherer, M., Stauffer, C., McMahon, B., Roessler, R., Rumrill, S., & Taylor, A. (2019). An organizational case study of a five-year development project to promote cognitive support technology use, academic success, and competitive employment among civilian and veteran college students with traumatic brain injuries. *Journal of Applied Rehabilitation Counseling*, 50(1), 57-72.

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