

Contents

1. PROJECT TITLE AND PURPOSE	2
2. PROJECT DESCRIPTION:	2
A. Methods:	2
B. Data collection Tools:.....	3
C. Findings (process and outcome):	4
D. Summary:	4
E. Lessons Learned:	5
3. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEXT STEPS TO SUPPORT FULL SUSTAINABLE	5
4. WHAT HAS BEEN DONE TO ENSURE SUSTAINABILITY:.....	5

1. Project Title and Purpose

Project Title: ABI and Justice, A Functional Support Initiative

Project Purpose (clearly indicate the Recommendation number and wording from the Clinical Practice Guideline):

The purpose of this project is to implement functional one-on-one legal support for ABI survivors (suspected or diagnosed) involved in the justice system. Allowing persons with ABI to be more successful when navigating the justice system, resulting in a reduction of missed appointments/court dates, an increase in supporting documentation, and a clearer understanding of the process. This program also increases education to Legal professionals on the challenges and barriers faced by this population. This project serves to provide functional support, increased advocacy, and awareness to provide individuals with ABI equitable and accessible support within the broader community and a criminal justice context.

Program Objectives:

- Interview and retain students to implement project
- Create Individualized Support Training Guide and subsequent Reference Materials
- Train support persons (social work students) on ABI and justice so they can use their knowledge to provide functional support to Legal Professionals and ABI survivors.
- Create Program Marketing materials and a seamless referral process
- Establish relationships with key contacts such as legal aid clinics, criminal lawyer offices, brain injury support services and community support services.
- Provide students with a list of established contacts and a script explaining the program and the support the program is offering.
- Provide holistic support to students to problem solve, debrief and support practical strategies. Weekly group meetings and one-to-one coaching.
- Support persons with ABI involved in the justice system with functional support to make the justice process more successful

2. Project Description:

A. Methods:

- Interviewing and providing placement opportunities from Students from: Mohawk College Brain Disorders Program, Ryerson BSW program, Dalhousie MSW program and Nipissing University BSW Program.
- All students were provided with training on ABI and the Justice System and all tools and resources provided through the abijustice.org website.



- Students then created a peer training manual and webinar to carry forth their work. The stakeholders involved in the project met weekly to review client support, modify material and problem solve challenges that arose.
- Social media and email campaigns launched advertising this new program, how to become involved, and the prevalence of brain injury in the criminal justice system.
- Researched additional resources to inform both rural and urban populations across the province.
- Provided students with training/access to technology to support service connection.
- Functional Support provided:
 - Call the Court Accessibility Coordinator to request accessible services
 - Get clients connected with the Vulnerable Persons Registry
 - Help them register for a medic alert bracelet
 - Provide them with an ABI identification card
 - Provide printable tools and resources
 - Provide resources that highlight the challenges and strategies when working with clients with brain injury
 - Provide check in reminders
 - Give prompts/instructions on how to enter data/reminders on phones (calendar, alarms)
 - Assist with collecting and scanning documents onto a drive
 - Help fax/mail medical notes, and other documents to doctors
 - Attend phone/virtual appointments with the member's lawyer, medical team, etc. to assist with provision and collection of information
 - Help make information seeking phone calls on the member's behalf
 - Help direct members to accessible food and clothing programs in the local area
 - Connect clients with a Community Worker in the association if available.
 - When possible, provide technology devices (phones, tablets, laptops, chargers) and solutions to persons who don't have the means to access virtual supports.
 - Provide a referral to the ABI Network (Toronto) for ongoing, long-term ABI support

Project focused on ABI clients who self-referred to the program.

B. Data collection Tools:

i. Tools to measure Clinical process

N/A

ii. Tools to measure Clinical outcome

N/A

iii. Tools to measure Implementation process

- Feasibility surveys being distributed to students, clients and stakeholders

iv. Tools to measure Implementation outcome

- Interaction with service recipients was tracked using the SUMAC database. This recorded number of calls, support provided, and demographics of the service users.
- Social media statistics being tracked

C. Findings (process and outcome):

4 clients provided with ABI Identification cards provided

6 clients assisted with referrals to Legal Aid

2 clients supported at court proceedings

2 clients assisted with transportation support

7 clients received organization, scheduling and reminders support.

D. Summary:

The Brain Injury Society of Toronto (BIST) in partnership with the Brain Injury Association of North Bay and Area (BIANBA) collaborated on a short-term catalyst grant to provide functional support to People with a brain injury who are involved within the Criminal Justice system. The partnership aims to address challenges within accessibility of systems in both urban and rural areas. This project engaged, trained, and supervised Bachelor of Social Work students to deliver virtual support across Ontario. It is well documented that individuals with brain injuries are overrepresented in the criminal justice population. This population experiences a myriad of challenges that put them at a significant disadvantage when trying to navigate the system independent of support. Over the course of the project students provided direct, individualized support to legal professionals and survivors of brain injury engaged in the legal system.

As part of the project, the students created a webinar training and manual for new students in both Toronto and North bay to provide support direction, tools, and strategies for persons with ABI in their respective communities. The webinar and manual are available for on-going training and provided to agencies who are interested in adopting any future programming. The students also utilized resources through the abijustice.org toolkit to provide resources, individualized support, problem-solving, advocacy, and any other support as required on a case-by-case basis. Referrals were taken from legal clinics, ABI support workers, family members/caregivers and those with lived experience. This project was well received in both communities and will continue to provide resources/support, and education with future student placements.

E. Lessons Learned:

- There is a gap in support for persons with ABI involved in the justice system.
- There is a lot of information to be learned about the legal system, time needs to be dedicated for students to research and reach out to organizations to fully understand the process
- Clients supported by this program have difficulty understanding the information provided to them, next steps, and how to request access - students need to have an understanding of cognitive barriers, processing issues, communication supports and how to problem solve emerging issues sometimes in the moment
- Virtual meetings have added in an additional barrier, as clients were unfamiliar with the technology which added in an extra layer of stress. Students working in this program now also require education and training on navigating virtual technology
- Clients lack access to needed technology and the internet which decreases service accessibility for users.
- Students require extended time to map out various communities and services available if it is outside of their direct area.

3. Recommendations for next steps to support full sustainable implementation (for your organization, for future implementation projects, for policy, for system organization):

- Continue to seek out additional funding opportunities to provide functional support with the criminal justice context.
- Advertise, recruit and educate additional social work students for future placement opportunities.
- Reach out to provincial, national and international agencies to inform new practises and potential program models for future development related to ABI and Criminal Justice.
- Create partnerships with stakeholders to advocate/educate for new program development.

4. What has been done to ensure Sustainability:

- Materials created from this project will live on the www.bist.ca website and bianba.ca
- Learnings will be shared with other ABI associations and abstracts will be submitted to present program materials and findings at upcoming conferences.
- BIST and BIANBA will continue to host Social Work students and continue implementing support for persons with ABI involved in the justice system.

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