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INVITATION

We invite you to participate in a research project entitled Bridges and Barriers to Professional Wellbeing. The purpose of the study is to explore and identify personal, job-related, organizational, and local factors that predict or influence well-being in specific helping professions (i.e., Developmental Services and Applied Behaviour Analysis; ABA) and related training programs. In other words, we are looking to explore the bridges and barriers to professional well-being.

We are recruiting Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) and their supervisors in group or individual community-based supported living programs for adults with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities to participate in this project. They must be working in Canada at least 20 hours per week in a community-based supported living program for adults with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities.

WHAT'S INVOLVED

The project begins with a detailed on-line survey which includes questions covering individual, work-related, organizational and regional factors that are related to workplace well-being for professionals. The survey will take between 60-90 minutes of your time. This survey will include questions about your background to help us to learn a bit more about you, your job or role, your workplace well-being, the organization in which you work, and your suggestions on how workplace well-being could be improved. You are not required to complete the survey in a single session. You can save your responses and return to the survey at a different time to complete it.

At the end of the survey, you will be given the option to be contacted to participate in a focus group (about 3 months later) and a brief follow-up survey (about a year later). If you agree to be contacted, we will email you an initial invitation and promise to send no more than 3 reminders to respond for each component.

We hope that at least 25% of survey participants agree to be invited to the focus groups. These 90 minutes virtual sessions (via zoom) are opportunities for participants to learn about and discuss the results of the study with the research team and other participants and provide input into the suggestions and recommendations being made. With your permission, focus groups will be recorded (audio only) and transcribed through Zoom. You will be asked to consent to participating at that time.

We hope that most survey participants agree to be contacted to participate in the brief follow-up survey (about 30-45 minutes). The follow-up survey will allow us to examine how different individual, job, and organizational factors change and influence workplace well-being over time, which is sorely lacking in the published research with Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) and their supervisors supporting adults with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities.

We are happy to answer any questions that you have about this project, to help you to make an informed decision about participating.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS AND RISKS

There may be indirect and direct benefits to completing this study. Your participation will benefit the project by helping us to better understand the factors that influence professional well-being and the strategies that help to bolster professional well-being in the presence of workplace stressors for Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) and their supervisors working in group or individual community-based supported living programs for adults with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities.

Some survey participants benefit from reflecting on the different aspects of themselves, their jobs, their workplaces, and their professional well-being as they answer these types of survey questions. There is a risk that some participants may find some topics or questions unpleasant, upsetting, or uncomfortable. With very few exceptions (e.g. consent and qualifying questions), you can choose to skip questions if they make you upset or uncomfortable. If you find the topics very upsetting, you may wish to speak with a trusted person or professional after the interview.

Given the professional nature of your employment, you likely have information on where to get help when needed. If not, there are many free help-lines and internet resources available. We have created a list of local, national, and international resources, which is available on the study website.

With any online survey, there is a very small risk that someone might unlawfully access your data. As described in the next section, we take very serious measures to safeguard your personal information. In Canada, we are legally obliged to inform you of any breaches to your privacy in the unlikely event of data theft.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All information you provide is kept safe to preserve the confidentiality of your private information. Parts of the survey asking for your name or contact information are delivered in separate surveys, though they might look like a continuation of the same survey. We do this to protect your anonymity and privacy. Your name will not be included or, in any other way, associated with the data collected, analyzed, or reported in the study.

The findings from the study will be summarized across participants and presented in ways that do not identify individuals. Even direct quotes that may be shared as an example of a particular theme that has emerged from the study will be disguised to ensure privacy.

The database containing the survey responses will be removed from the survey system and saved on the Principal Investigator's secure cloud-based storage at the university and backed up on an encrypted drive in the research lab/office of the principal investigator.

Original Audio-recordings, notes, and transcriptions be stored the same way. Once the written transcriptions are verified, recordings will be deleted. Any identifying information in the transcriptions, (e.g., names of people or specific workplaces) will be replaced with a generic term (e.g. Brock University replaced with my university).

A copy of the data set with personal identifiers removed will be housed on secure Brock University servers for analyses by the research team. Data will be stored for a minimum of 7 years after research publication per publication standards. Access to this data will be restricted to the research team involved in the study and any other persons they employ.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you want to stop participating, you can do so at any time, for any reason. If you want to answer some questions, but not others, you can do that, too. It is entirely your decision. If you withdraw from the study, you can request that the information that you have provided be included in the study or destroyed. However, it is important to note that we may be unable to find and remove your data from the study if you change your mind after submitting the survey. Your withdrawal from the study will not affect you in any way. You will still be eligible for draws and webinars per the descriptions below, as long as you exit the survey using the exit button, rather than just closing the browser.

COMPENSATION

While there is not guaranteed individual compensation for participating in this study, we offer small incentives to those who participate as tokens of our appreciation.

Participants will have the opportunity to "opt in" to receive invitations to free 60-90 minute professional development webinars for study participants based on the results of the study. For Board Certified

Behavior Analysts, Board Certified assistant Behavior Analysts, and Registered Behavior Technicians an option to receive free CEUs (PDUs) will be offered based on BACB ACE provider requirements. Participants will have the opportunity to “opt in” to the “chance to win” as compensation for their time for each study component.

Participants in the main survey are eligible to win one of at least five \$50 CAD Amazon gift cards. We will increase the number of gift cards proportionally if draw participation exceeds expectations.

Participants in the focus groups are eligible to win one \$25 CAD Amazon gift cards for every 20 draw participants.

Participants in the brief follow-up survey are eligible to win one of at least five \$25 CAD Amazon gift cards. We will increase the number of gift cards proportionally if draw participation exceeds expectations.

RESEARCH INTEGRITY

Unfortunately, the technology that allows us to make research more accessible to qualified participants also opens the potential for people to take part in research by fraudulently claiming to meet the study criteria and increases the risk of introducing false data into the research results. Out of respect for the legitimate participants who meet the study criteria and in the interest of preserving the integrity of the study results, we have put safeguards in place to verify the authenticity of our virtual participants to the best of our ability:

Survey links will not be posted publicly. Links to the survey will be customized and sent to each participant. This safeguard has the added benefit of allowing participants to save and continue at a later time.

Interested participants are asked to email the researchers for access to the survey. from their institutional email (workplace/university domain) to request access to the study link. Participants do not have to use their institutional email to complete the survey. Once verified, they will be given the opportunity to provide a preferred email address to be used for their personalized survey link(s). Those who do not have an institutional email address, may be asked for secondary information (e.g. Certification number, professional website, LinkedIn profile, employment information) to assist with verification.

We will be collecting IP addresses through our survey software. Participants with suspicious IP addresses will not be permitted to participate. Those using Virtual Private Networks (VPNs) will typically not be permitted to participate without an institutional email address or other secondary information described above.

Finally, we will limit participation to one survey per IP address unless provided with evidence to demonstrate that there are two or more unique participants (e.g., different institutional email addresses). We hope that these measures will minimize fraudulent participation and preserve the integrity of the research results.

SHARING OF RESULTS

As Researchers, we are ethically obliged to meaningfully share the results of our research and engage in activities to promote the application of our findings to practice. Our goal is to share the results of these studies widely with relevant parties. This can include written summaries (e.g. brief reports, infographics), publications (e.g. newsletters, research journals), presentations (e.g. webinars, public lectures, conference presentations), media (podcasts, interviews). An executive summary of each study component will be available to participants on the project website once the data has been analyzed and distributed. Participants can choose to check the website for updates or opt-in to receiving a notification when results are posted.

CONTACT INFORMATION AND ETHICS CLEARANCE

If you have never participated in research before or if you are unsure about participating, please speak to a trusted person (e.g., friend, family member, advisor, etc.) to help you decide. If you would like to participate in the survey and interview, have questions about being a research participant, or would like more information about the study, please email wellbeing@brocku.ca to speak to a member of the research team.

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Research Ethics Board at Brock University (25-290-CONDILLAC). If you have any comments or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Research Ethics Office at (905) 688-5550 Ext. 3035, reb@brocku.ca.

CONSENT FORM & ACCESS TO THE STUDY

A copy of the consent form is attached to this letter for your review. If you would like to participate, please email wellbeing@brocku.ca (ideally using your work email) to request your survey link. The survey begins with this letter of invitation followed by the consent form and qualifying questions.

Thank you,

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