

Poster

PLANEA Program: online life skills training for young people in care

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Background

Both research and practice have widely acknowledged that one of the key steps to promote a successful transition to adulthood from care is the importance of ensuring adequate preparation for leaving care. While in family placements there are usually more opportunities to develop independent living skills in a gradual, natural way, young people in residential care may struggle to practice and train their skills in the real world, as the protective environment of children's homes leaves sometimes little room for autonomy development. To address this need, training programs like the European Umbrella Program (2000) have been developed.

This was used in several countries in Europe, including the Spanish version that our research team adapted and translated in 2005 and was designed as a book of paper-and-pencil activities that care workers could propose to teenagers in children's homes to help them develop their autonomy and life skills, including budgeting, employment skills or housekeeping. However, as both learning methods and young people's needs have changed in the last two decades, it seemed necessary to also update this tool. As a result, we developed a new program – Program PLANEA- that followed the principles of Umbrella Program and used an online platform to contain its activities.

The program

PLANEA Program can be used in residential child care with young people from 14 years old to develop skills for independent life organized in 9 areas of content, including health and wellbeing, education, family and social relationships, housing, budgeting, housekeeping, etc. Care workers can invite young people to enter a learning platform (www.proyectoplanea.com) on a computer, tablet or smartphone where they can complete a tailored array of activities, selected together with their care workers to fit their needs, age and development. This tool has already been piloted and implemented with satisfactory results in a region of Spain, being currently used by more than 45 children's homes and independent living services. Additionally, a 36-item independent living skills measurement tool was developed along with the program to help establish a baseline and follow up of young people's perceived improvements in life skills. This tool, which showed very satisfactory psychometric properties, will be published soon in a Spanish journal.

Future prospects

After conducting a rigorous evaluation, we expect to disseminate the tool to other regions of the country, which have already shown interest in including it as part of their services for young people in a leaving residential child care.