Brief report: An online support intervention: Perceptions of adolescents with physical disabilities

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Abstract: Adolescents with cerebral palsy and spina bifida report restricted interactions with peers and gaps in social support. A pilot online support intervention offered interactions with peers. Five mentors with cerebral palsy or spina bifida and 22 adolescents with the same disabilities met weekly online for 25 group sessions over six months. Participants completed quantitative measures of loneliness, sense of community, self-perceptions, coping, and social support prior to intervention, post-intervention, and delayed post-intervention. Semi-structured qualitative interviews elicited perceptions of the intervention's impacts. Participants reported more contact with teens with disabilities, decreased loneliness, and increased social acceptance and confidence. A significant increase in sense of community was reported from post-intervention to delayed post-intervention. Encouraging qualitative findings were supported by trends in the quantitative measures. This pilot study can guide a future community-based intervention trial. © 2010 The Foundation for Professionals in Services for Adolescents.

Author Keywords: Adolescents; Motor disabilities; Online intervention; Peer mentors; Social support

Year: 2011
Source title: Journal of Adolescence
Volume: 34
Issue: 4
Page: 795-800
Cited by: 1
Link: Scopus Link
Document Type: Article
Source: Scopus
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