Healthy Start: An Australian model of dissemination, translation and exchange for supporting parents with learning difficulties

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Three decades of research into parenting education for parents with intellectual disabilities means that we now know a lot about what works well to support parents with learning difficulties and their children. As leaders in the delivery of programs and practices aimed at achieving positive outcomes for parents with learning difficulties and their children, services engaged in family support need to be implementing practices which are supported by evidence. Accessing and using the evidence-base is not always easy for busy practitioners and agencies, but Healthy Start is helping Australian practitioners to do this.

Overview:

Healthy Start is an Australian Government-funded strategy which aims to increase service system capacity to provide evidence-based programs and best practice support to parents with learning difficulties. *Healthy Start* employs a range of strategies to educate the sector on evidence-based practice, including strategies aimed at the effective dissemination and translation of evidence-informed practices and the exchange of knowledge across the sector.

This presentation will provide a brief history of the development of Healthy Start, and a description of the model of dissemination, translation and exchange adopted by Healthy Start, including examples of some of the innovative aspects of Healthy Start. The discussion will include a description of how practitioners beyond Australia can use Healthy Start to enhance their own practice, and to connect and collaborate with researchers, practitioners, policy makers and service managers worldwide.

Presenter Bio (Olivia Clayton):

As Program Manager of Healthy Start Olivia coordinates the day-to-day operations of the program, including facilitation of the online practice network, professional development events and the development of new resources to support those working with parents who have learning difficulties. She has been working with Healthy Start since its inception in 2005, up to the current time, where the focus is largely on organisational capacity building to better meet the support needs of families. Olivia is a psychologist who has worked in a range of clinical and research roles in child-focused services, adult mental health, professional training and parenting programs. Her professional publications reflect her interest in practitioners who work with parents with a learning difficulty. Her

postgraduate research, Honours and Masters, focused on practitioner stress and coping strategies and online intervention for parenting of adolescents.

Suggested discussion questions (please feel free to change/adapt):

How do you think the gap between research and practice for parents with learning difficulties can be addressed? Do you have any examples of how your practice in supporting parents with ID that has been influenced by research? How do you access evidence from research? Do you see it as important to the way you work? Why/why not? What do you see are some of the limitations of current research about parenting by people with intellectual disabilities? Suggestions for how we can impove upon research in this area?

How relevant do you think Healthy Start is to the US? Which aspects of Healthy Start that Olivia described might you find useful in your own work, how might you become involved, which information might you share with others in your networks, what would you find useful for us to develop as a part of Healthy Start – what resources do you feel you need more of to support your own practice or the practice of others?

How might some of the approaches described by Olivia in her description of the Online Practice Network be relevant to or useful for us here in the U.S.? What do you see are some of the barriers to developing a practice network in the US, and how might these be overcome?