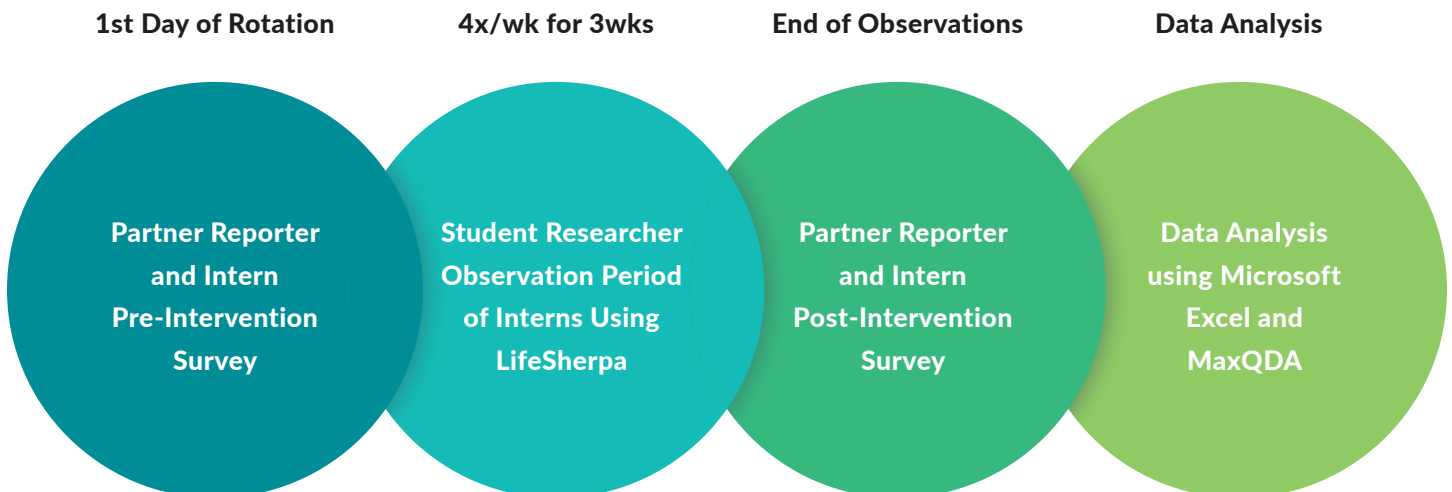


Transition from School to Employment: Supporting Students with IDD Using a Digital Coaching App

Nicole Roberts, OTD, MOT, OTR/L and Brittany Holmes, DrOT

The purpose of this study was to determine if using a digital coaching app, LifeSherpa, changes job performance in students with IDD (intellectual or developmental disabilities), and if it supports job coaches in training the students with IDD. This mixed methods study focused on students with IDD aged 18 to 21, who are enrolled in a Pennsylvania-based hospital work program, in partnership with a large service organization.

Methods



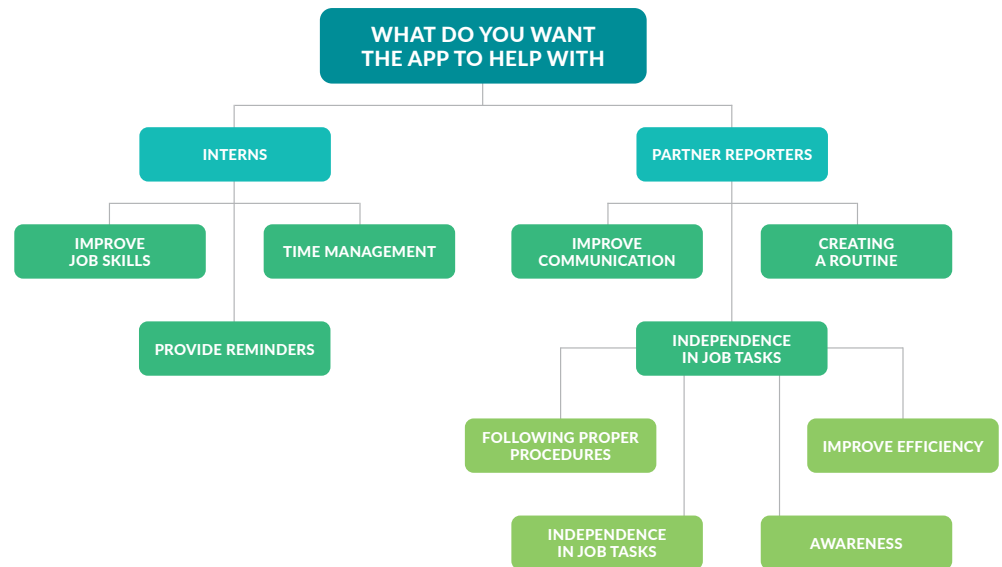
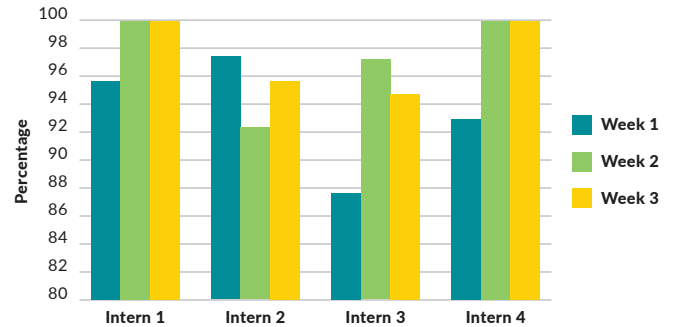
An activity analysis of the job tasks was completed and an activity was created within the LifeSherpa app for each of the four participants before they began their job rotations. Pre- and post-intervention surveys were issued to the interns and partner reporters and the student researcher completed observations four times a week for three weeks for each intern.

Results

It was found that three out of the four interns improved their job performance. The intern who did not show improvement stopped using the LifeSherpa app after Week 1. **All four interns reported that the LifeSherpa app helped them with their job tasks** and that they would like to use the app again to support them with future job tasks.

Based on the qualitative data collected, LifeSherpa proved to help with time management, provided reminders to complete job tasks, and helped improve job skills. In the post-survey, the partner reporters indicated in four out of four surveys that they would offer the LifeSherpa app to support future interns that enroll in the workplace study program and the app is a viable option to support individuals with IDD as they enter employment. Also, based on partner reporter surveys, it was confirmed that LifeSherpa assisted with **improving intern communication, creating routines, and increasing independence in job tasks.**

Observations that Met Expectations



Discussion

The results indicate that the use of the LifeSherpa app did positively change the interns' job performance. The quantitative data showed **improvement in job performance in the three interns who continued to use the app for the duration of the study.** In looking at the interns' perceptions of their job performance, the surveys showed that their perceptions of their job performance remained unchanged. However, their perceptions of job difficulty changed after using LifeSherpa. This could be attributed to the support from the app while completing job tasks, which made it easier for them to complete each task. In respect to the job coaches, all four partner reporter surveys stated that they would use LifeSherpa again to support future interns and that using the app supported the job coaches in training students.

About LifeSherpa

LifeSherpa is a remote software that empowers support professionals to enhance capacity, visibility, and client outcomes. Through digital remote support and personalization, individuals can work closely with support professionals to improve in various areas of life including work, home, and personal health.