

# Personal Growth in Youth with Disabilities: The Role of Residential Immersive Life Skills (RILS) Programs

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## Background

- Young people with disabilities often have limited opportunities to develop life skills and peer relationships.
- Residential Immersive Life Skills (RILS) programs can provide youth with disabilities with opportunities for personal growth and support their transition to adulthood.
- Since 2011, we have investigated the active ingredients and outcomes of RILS programs to understand what works. For a complete list of publications, visit:



[hollandbloorview.ca/research-education/bloorview-research-institute/research-centres-labs/oipr-team/publications](https://hollandbloorview.ca/research-education/bloorview-research-institute/research-centres-labs/oipr-team/publications)

## Objective and Methods

- To integrate the findings from 9 articles that captured the perspectives of youth, their parents, and program staff.
- These studies included
  - Interviews and thematic analyses
  - Quantitative outcome measures
  - Mixed-methods research

**Collaborators:** Thanks to the OIPR Research Team, and to collaborating research sites across Ontario.



**Residential immersive life skills (RILS) programs provide opportunities for meaningful, challenging, and supportive experiences that can propel youth on a new trajectory as they transition to adulthood**

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## Key Findings

- RILS programs prepared youth for their futures by providing opportunities to:
  - Acquire essential life skills
  - Develop supportive peer relationships
  - Establish new mindsets that improve self-awareness and increase motivation
  - Increase self-confidence and self-efficacy
  - Fulfil basic needs for relatedness, competency, and autonomy
- RILS establish new mindsets that reflect:
  - Enhanced self-awareness
  - Personal growth, increased self-determination and self-efficacy, and enhanced preparation for adult life
  - Increased motivation, initiative, and responsibility
  - Greater community involvement
- Longer-term outcomes for youth post-program varied depending on each person's needs and goals

*I would say out of the whole experience, she came back a different kid. She came back confident... Like almost like a take charge kinda personality... I didn't think anybody could change in [X] days like that, but they can.*

## Conclusions

- Positive changes in one area have the potential to facilitate other adaptive changes
- For some youth with disabilities, residential immersive life skills programs can act as a life-altering turning point

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Reference	Type of Study	Research Objectives	Participants	Components Examined			Assess- ment Tools <sup>a</sup>
				Oppor- tunities	Exper- iences	Outco- mes	
King, McPherson et al.	Observation and interview	Observed program opportunities and service providers' perceptions of opportunities	7 service providers	✓		✓	MEQAS
King, Hartman et al.	Interview	Meaning of after-hours social experiences	5 youth		✓	✓	
Duff, McPherson et al.	Interview	The method and practice of teaching in programs	9 youth		✓		
Duff, McPherson, & King	Interview	Youth's thinking of their own emotions and other's emotions	9 youth			✓	
King, McPherson et al.	Observation and quantitative outcome	Opportunity-experience link and experience-outcome link	29 youth	✓	✓	✓	MEQAS SEAS ARC GSE
King, Kingsnorth, et al.	Interview	Parents' views of the benefits of programs	10 parents			✓	
King, Kingsnorth, & Tajik-Parvinchi	Interview and quantitative outcome	Changes in aspects of self-determination over time	27 youth			✓	ARC
Tajik-Parvinchi, Kingsnorth & King	Quantitative outcome	Youth changes in self-determination and self-efficacy due to program participation	38 youth (27 RILS and 11 non-RILS youth)			✓	ARC GSE
McPherson, King et al.	Interview	Parents' expectations and aspirations regarding program participation over time	12 parents		✓		

Main finding in  
plain language,  
**emphasize**  
important words



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