

Motivational Interviewing Simulator: An Experimental Online Training Tool

Study Overview

Between 2011 and 2012, the Center for Social Innovation (C4), developed and evaluated a prototype of the *Motivational Interviewing Simulator: An Experiential Online Training Tool*. The interactive, case-based, multiplayer web-based game allows service practitioners to deepen their skills in Motivational Interviewing (MI), a widely recognized evidence-based practice that supports people to make positive behavior changes related to health, wellness, mental illness, and addiction. Phase I study findings supported the product's feasibility and the need for a large-scale randomized trial to determine the tool's effectiveness.

In Phase II of this research study,¹ our team is further developing the MI Simulator and studying its impact on practitioner behavior and client outcomes. We aim to recruit 180 practitioners from multiple community programs serving individuals who live in supportive housing, many of whom have histories of mental illness, addiction, homelessness, and medical problems. After receiving a standardized two-day onsite MI training, participating programs will be randomized into one of three conditions: 1) MI Training Only; 2) MI Training + an eBook training "booster" (an online comparison with comparable information to the Simulator without the interactive elements); or 3) MI Training + use of the MI Simulator. This longitudinal, mixed method study will assess practitioners' acquisition and retention of MI knowledge and skills through surveys and coding of standardized client interviews; barriers and facilitators of MI implementation via focus groups; organizational-level data via key informant interviews and site visits; and client outcomes for 3,600 clients through surveys, administrative, data, and semi-structured interviews.

**We are seeking programs willing to participate in this research study.
Multiple programs within an agency are encouraged to apply.**

Benefits to participation

- Participating programs will receive a free, two-day, in-person MI workshop conducted by a trainer from the Motivational Interviewing Network of Trainers (MINT), valued at \$4,000.
- All participating programs will have time-limited access to the Sim and eBook at the conclusion of the research study (valued at \$250 per person).
- Programs will likely see improved client outcomes when implementing MI over time.

Eligible programs will

- Support MI implementation within their program.
- Be willing to be randomly assigned to one of the three study groups (MI face-to-face training only, MI face-to-face training plus the MI eBook, or MI face-to-face training plus the MI Sim).
- Designate a site liaison to assist with coordinating research activities, who will complete a required IRB human subjects training (~2 hours).
- Share de-identified administrative client data on client demographics, treatment, and outcomes.
- Ensure that practitioners in the study have access to computers, webcams (if selected to the Sim group), and the Internet during the intervention period.
- Be willing to participate in a brief site visit by the research team (only a small subset of programs will be selected).
- Recruit practitioners and clients to participate in the study.
- Receive a stipend to be used for clients who have participated in surveys.

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Participating service practitioners will

- Attend a two-day, in-person MI training (16 hours over two days) in their community.
- If assigned to the eBook or Sim group, complete booster training (approximately 20 hours over six months).
- Put MI into practice in their work with clients.
- Complete four 30-40 minute surveys.
- Participate in a site visit, which may include a focus group (only a small subset of programs will be selected).
- Administer five-minute surveys to their clients during four two-week periods.
- Complete two 20-minute assessment interviews by phone.

Each practitioner will receive a \$25 gift card for the completion of each survey or focus group (up to \$125).

Participating clients will

- Engage in community mental health services with a practitioner who is participating in the study.
- Complete up to four anonymous five-minute surveys over six months.
- Be invited to participate in a semi-structured interview if their program is selected for a site visit.

Each client will receive a \$25 gift card for participation in a semi-structured interview.

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