



**Alexander Gantman, Psy.D.** Graduated from Stanford-PGSP doctoral program in Clinical Psychology, he was fortunate to secure a Training Fellowship Grant T32 from the National Institute of Health through UCLA Semel Institute for Neuroscience and Human Behavior. This funding was provided

to support adaptation, testing and further development of an evidence-based caregiver-assisted social skills training intervention for transitional youth with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). The negative impact of social deficits among individuals with ASD can not be understated. These deficits often lead to peer rejection, social isolation, withdrawal, and psychological distress. Social difficulties often extend into interpersonal relationship domains for individuals transitioning from adolescence into young adulthood. This period encompasses school transition, finding employment, building a social network, increasing contributions to household responsibilities, greater involvement in the community, and the development of romantic relationships, all of which require a certain degree of mastery of social skills. Current intervention known as PEERS already focuses on many important social needs of this population such as: communication skills, choosing appropriate relationships, dealing with social rejection, etc. Current project will involve adaptation of certain aspects of PEERS treatment in addition to development of new modules (i.e., resitting peer pressures, introductory dating etiquette, and social skills related to vocational setting). This study provides the opportunity for effective treatment delivery to an underserved population: transitional youth with developmental disabilities. Arguably, this population is also currently understudied; as such, this area of inquiry would fill a tremendous void in the autism developmental spectrum treatment research. Finally, this project is going to take place under auspice of The Help Group - UCLA Autism Research Alliance, thus allowing for direct transition of efficacious intervention (PEERS) into translation research in the community setting.