

SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

Individual Placement and Support Model

Why Focus on Employment?

- Viewed by many as an essential part of recovery
- Most consumers want to work
- A typical role for adults in our society
- Cost-effective alternative to day treatment

Positive Outcomes from Competitive Work

- Higher self-esteem
- Better control of psychiatric symptoms
- More satisfaction with finances and with leisure

(Bond et al., 2001)

Is Work Too Stressful?

- As compared to what?
- Joe Marrone, an employment trainer:
“If you think work is stressful, try unemployment.”
- Stresses of work do not translate into higher rates of hospitalization

Negative Effects of Unemployment in General Population

- Increased substance abuse
 - Increased physical problems
 - Increased psychiatric disorders
 - Reduced self-esteem
 - Loss of social contacts
 - Alienation and apathy
- (Warr, 1987)

Competitive Employment for People with Severe Mental Illness

- **Say they want to work: 70%**
- **Are currently working: <15%**

Quotes from Consumers

- “I feel so much better about myself now that I have a job.”
- “Holding down my job is not always easy but it has helped my self esteem.”
- “When I go to work I don’t hear the voices.”
- “Now that I am working again I can buy my daughter presents.”

Quotes from Family Members

- “I worried that if my son got a job he would get stressed. But just the opposite happened. He is doing so much better than before.”
- “I feel better that she tries working when she has the support of mental health.”
- “I was really glad that my son’s employment counselor asked me about work ideas. He landed a job that I suggested.”

Quotes from Employers

- “Andre is as good as any worker that I have.”
Automotive parts store manager.
- “I count on Juanita. If she is feeling stressed, she sits in the back room for awhile. That’s OK; she gets the job done.” Bakery supervisor.
- “The employment counselor helped me understand why Tony paces. It’s okay in the security business.” Security business owner.

Definition of Supported Employment

- Mainstream job in community
- Pays at least minimum wage
- Work setting includes people who are not disabled
- Service agency provides ongoing support
- Intended for people with most severe disabilities

Evidence-Based Principles

- **Eligibility is based on consumer choice**
- **Supported employment is integrated with treatment**
- **Competitive employment is the goal**
- **Job search starts soon after a consumer expresses interest in working**
- **Follow-along supports are continuous**
- **Consumer preferences are important**
- **Benefits planning is critical to success**

Eligibility Is Based on Consumer Choice

- Consumers are not excluded because they are not “ready” or because of prior work history, hospitalization history, substance use, symptoms, or other characteristics.
- No one is excluded who wants to participate.

Supported Employment Is Integrated with Mental Health Treatment

- **The agency needs to devote sufficient resources to supported employment to permit full access to all consumers who seek competitive employment**

Competitive Employment Is the Goal

- **The agency needs to devote sufficient resources to supported employment to permit full access to all consumers who seek competitive employment**
- **Consumers interested in employment are not steered into day treatment or sheltered work.**

Job Search Starts Soon After A Consumer Expresses Interest In Working

- **Pre-employment assessment, training, and counseling are kept to a minimum.**

Follow-Along Supports Are Continuous

- **Supported employment staff continue to stay in regular contact with consumer and (when appropriate) the employer without arbitrary time limits.**

Consumer Preferences Are Important

- **Job finding is based on consumers' preferences, strengths, and work experiences, not on a pool of jobs that are available.**

Benefits Planning is critical to success

- Each individual circumstance is different, therefore each individual before they start a new job should have individualized and comprehensive benefits planning in order to understand how working will affect:
 - SSA Benefits
 - Federal/State Housing Subsidies
 - Food Stamps
 - VA Benefits and other benefits

Summary

- People with severe mental illness can work in competitive employment
- Programs following evidence-based principles of supported employment have better outcomes
- Programs must address financial and organizational barriers to be successful