Employment Works!

Winter 2009

Employment Supports for People with Mental Illness

Sponsored by the Johnson & Johnson – Dartmouth Community Mental Health Program

This Issue Focuses on Employment Outcomes

Johnson & Johnson: Focus on Outcomes

Johnson & Johnson understands that employment is often a major step in the recovery process, as people with mental illness move from being disabled to having a meaningful and productive role in society. Johnson & Johnson includes over 200 health-related companies that believe in supporting good works in communities where they have businesses – this is part of the company's credo written by former chief executive, Robert Wood Johnson. Driven by the company's credo and interest in understanding mental illness, Johnson & Johnson advocates [Martinez, Rick (JJCUS)] that people with serious mental illness should be able to participate in their own self-care and develop their independence through meaningful employment through the Johnson & Johnson-Dartmouth Community Mental Health Program. The mission of the program is to disseminate evidence-based supported employment across a growing number of states to increase access to effective employment supports.

Research shows that people with serious mental illness in supported employment (also known as IPS – Individual Placement and Support) report many positive outcomes, including fewer symptoms and increased self- esteem. Supported employment results in more positive outcomes than other vocational approaches regardless of age, gender, disability status, ethnicity or geographic location. The employment rate for those participating in the Johnson & Johnson – Dartmouth Program is 50 percent, far above the national average among people with mental illness, which remains at about 10 percent. Workplace success of program recipients helps reduce the stigma associated with their conditions, encouraging more employers to hire people enrolled in supported employment. Demonstrating client outcomes has always been important to Johnson & Johnson. In a challenging economy, outcomes become even more crucial for programs to continue to prosper and multiply.

Rick A. Martinez, MD
Director
Medical Affairs and Corporate Contributions
Johnson & Johnson

Tips for Supported Employment Programs on Collecting and Reporting Outcomes

Management experts tell us that successful organizations set goals and measure their success in achieving outcomes tied to those goals. Such is true for supported employment programs: Those that track their performance typically are more focused, take corrective action when there are barriers, celebrate their success, and provide upper management with pertinent data. Moreover, unlike many types of other mental health programs, supported employment teams are fortunate to have an obvious set of indicators on which to judge outcomes, namely, competitive employment outcomes. Nevertheless, many teams have difficulty tracking competitive employment data accurately and even more fail to share outcomes on a regular basis. The following are suggestions for enhancing the utility, accuracy, and timeliness of outcome data collection and reporting. This subject has been broken down into five parts: What you collect, when you collect it, who collects it, how you collect it, and what do you do with it.

Gary Bond, PhD

What do you collect?

1. ***Have clear definitions.*** Users of any outcome reporting system must have a common understanding of the measures used, starting with the definition of competitive employment and the reporting time frame. So, for example, do you count casual work, such as occasional babysitting? What about set-aside jobs at the mental health center?" (Note: IPS programs do not count casual work or set aside jobs as competitive employment.) Regarding the time frame, does it count if the person worked for one day in the last month, or is the measure referring to the last day of the month? Definitions for key variables should be clear and readily accessible to users.
2. ***Keep it simple.*** It is better to use a simple set of outcome indicators and collect these data carefully than to develop an elaborate system but have little faith in the data. A very simple approach of counting the number of consumers on each employment specialist's caseload, plus the number of consumers in each stage of the employment process (competitively employed, looking for work, unemployed and not looking for work, no contact) will go a long way

toward providing important outcome data.

3. ***Collect outcomes consistent with external reporting requirements.*** For the purposes of identifying successful VR closures, teams will need to track job start dates and job endings. VR may also have other requirements.
4. ***Collect outcomes that promote quality improvement.*** Teams should pay attention to things they want to improve. Two examples of outcomes that should be tracked for this purpose are job terminations and dropouts.

When do you collect?

Update outcomes at brief, regularly-scheduled time intervals. For most outcomes, we recommend monthly updates, for three reasons. First, monthly updates usually require very little (if any) recording of new data. Thus, the paperwork requirements (and time) are minimal. Second, data reporting for short time intervals is more accurate than for longer ones, because it becomes harder to reconstruct events over longer time intervals. Third, if there is a regular schedule, and that schedule becomes an expectation, then updating becomes routinized. Finally, while a regular schedule is crucial, some data, such as start and end dates, are best recorded as soon as they occur.

Who collects it?

1. ***Employment specialists are responsible for maintaining the database for their own caseloads.*** No single source is more familiar with the outcomes for a group of consumers than the employment specialist working with them, thus employment specialists are usually the best primary source for maintaining an outcome database. Of course, sometimes consumers get jobs unbeknownst to their employment specialist, and when this is discovered, the database should be changed accordingly.
2. ***Have a single point of responsibility for data quality.*** This point is fairly obvious: If you are to have a successful data collection system, you need one go-to person to pay attention to the entire team's outcomes. In some places, this may be the team leader; in others it may be an administrative assistant. The team size will affect the decision for how best to manage the data collection; in a large organization there may be a data manager responsible for several teams. This data manager is responsible for ensuring timeliness of reporting and checking for obvious errors. Employment specialists should have deadlines for transmitting outcome data, e.g., the 1st day of the month.

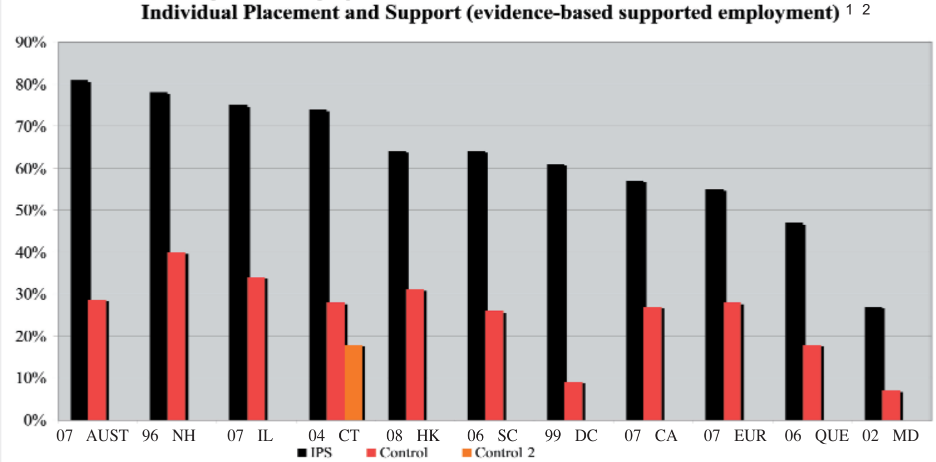
How is it collected?

1. ***Record information in a standardized format.*** For example, if dates are recorded as MM/DD/YYYY, record them all that way.
2. ***Use electronic spreadsheets when feasible.*** In a utopian world, each employment specialist would be versatile in Excel and would maintain a roster of consumers on their caseload with pertinent outcome information along with other consumer-specific information not part of the outcome system (e.g., employer contacts with names and appointment dates). Such a spreadsheet could provide an instant update of that employment specialist's outcomes that could be inputted into a team-level database. Absent computer spreadsheets, employment specialist can track information manually.
3. ***Capitalize on electronic databases.*** In this same utopian world, outcomes would be routinely entered into an electronic database maintained by the agency. One word of caution: When electronic databases become too elaborate, data quality can suffer. One particularly thorny issue concerns merging different databases. Consequently, we recommend a quality control check of examining team-level outcomes for inaccuracies during team meetings. In the absence of electronic reporting systems, an alternative low-tech approach is a reporting system in which the information is compiled from reports (either in electronic or hard copy form) submitted by individual employment specialists to the data manager.

What do you do with it?

1. ***Set standards and compare performance to standards.*** Supervisors should establish performance goals for the team and for employment specialists.
2. ***Report the data you collect. If data are collected but never used, their accuracy is often suspect.*** Making sure that reporting outcomes is part of meeting agendas for both the supported employment team and agency management is an important strategy for increasing accuracy. Supervision time should be devoted to comparing the standard to actual performance. What gets measured gets done.
3. ***Share outcomes in a timely fashion.*** The kiss of death of any data collection system is if the outcomes are reported much later than the data are collected or (worse) never reported at all. Report all the data you collect or what's the point of collecting it? Report it promptly, or its utility is lost. Like cheese, data become moldy if it is not consumed.
4. ***Summarize data at the right level.*** The data should be aggregated at the most meaningful for the recipient. For example, a team leader needs data aggregated at the team level and broken down by employment specialist. Agency leadership might focus on team-level summaries.
5. ***Use pictures.*** Well-designed graphs are more apt to "leap off the page" than are tables with many numbers.

Competitive Employment Rates in 11 Randomized Controlled Trials of Individual Placement and Support (evidence-based supported employment) [1 2]



1. Bond, G.R., Drake, R.E., & Becker, D.R. (2008). An update on randomized controlled trials of evidence-based supported employment. *Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal, 31*, 280-290.
2. The control groups in these studies were either treatment as usual or alternate vocational models.

The Power of Data


Linda Carlson

One of the supervisor's most valuable tools is measuring and using client outcomes. It gives us the information to assess whether our programs are ultimately making a difference in clients' lives. We should never be satisfied with mediocrity, but instead, always actively be making adjustments to our practice in order to strive for better client outcomes using the most effective practice we have at our disposal.

Using client outcomes to improve program performance, supervisors should:

1. Review client outcomes, as well as process measures (such as fidelity) at least quarterly with their staff.
2. Set individual and team goals for increasing client outcomes based on the review.
3. Identify the barriers to achieving higher outcomes with staff.
4. Identify strategies that overcome the barriers to achieving higher outcomes.

For example, if a supervisor observed that more clients than ever were losing jobs within the first 30 days of employment, she might discuss that with the team, and also with individual practitioners. The team would hypothesize reasons for low job retention and strategies to improve retention. The team might decide to try to hone in on helping clients find better job matches or might offer more intensive job supports during the first month of employment. The team (as well as individual practitioners) would then set goals for job retention and would discuss outcomes again in another calendar quarter.

Linda Carlson, LMSW
Supported Employment Trainer/Consultant
University of Kansas

Program Improvement Through Outcomes

I collect quarterly outcome measures and I also create monthly performance reports based on training from Linda Carlson (University of Kansas). She stressed using client outcomes to help staff improve their performance. We provide employment specialists with individual outcomes, as well as team outcomes.

Supervisors talk to staff about their individual outcomes during supervision. Another way we ensure that outcomes are meaningful to staff is by working with individuals to develop performance goals related to the outcomes. Finally, we've been asking staff which outcomes they would like us to track—what would be helpful to them.

Last year our local VR office suggested that we spend time on job development to ensure more job placements. I agreed that this was a good idea and started by going through everyone's job development logs for several months to learn how much time employment specialists spent on job development and which strategies they were using. I also looked at whether or not clients were getting interviews. I discovered that employment specialists were providing most of their job development in the office and not in the community. I talked with staff and found that they were not getting into the community enough because they weren't sure how to approach employers. As a result, we brought in job development trainers and I also went into the community with staff to help them learn how to talk to employers. The result was an increase in job development hours spent in the community and more direct employer contacts made by employment specialists.

Kim Reeder, M.Ed., CRC
Vocational Program Coordinator
Mosaic Community Services, Timonium, MD

Outcomes and Funding

Program outcome measures are increasingly important in state and federally funded programs. Funders and managers use these outcomes to make critical budget and programmatic decisions. The Rehabilitation Service Administration (RSA) looks at a number of performance measures in conducting program monitoring. They utilize those to identify program strengths and performance issues. Oregon has created a number of key performance measures for state programs. For the public vocational rehabilitation program it is the rehabilitation rate. During the biannual budget presentation, state programs must report performance on these measures.

Stephaine Parrish Taylor
Administrator/Oregon Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Services
Department of Human Services

Sharing Outcomes with Consumers

I think consumers have a right to see program outcomes. Many people would be interested in knowing how many people in the program are getting jobs, what types of jobs they are getting and which companies have hired. One program I visited had some of the outcomes on a bulletin board in a way that was visually appealing. People have a right to know if the program will provide results.

Mary Rottmann
NAMI National Connection Trainer/SE Consultant/Consumer

Update on Family Advocacy for Employment

On October 14 and 15, family advocates from Connecticut, Illinois and Vermont met at Dartmouth Psychiatric Research Center to strategize ways to promote supported employment in their states.

New Supported Employment Materials Available

Please checkout our new website: http://dms.dartmouth.edu/dsec/

We are working to make the **Supported Employment Website** at the Dartmouth Psychiatric Research Center a rich source of information and tools to facilitate the implementation of evidence-based supported employment. You may now download a variety of materials including the 2008 fidelity scale, posters, videos, pamphlets and newsletters. In addition you can subscribe to our newsletter, **Employment Works!**, and order additional books and materials. We welcome your ideas and suggestions for continued site development. An order form for all resource materials is found on the website.

Supported Employment: A Practical Guide for Supervisors and Practitioners is now available. This book is intended not only for employment specialists, but also for VR counselors, SE supervisors and mental health practitioners.

The **Supported Employment Fidelity Kit** is a resource for both fidelity reviewers and supported employment programs that wish to learn more about the fidelity scale. The kit includes a DVD demonstration of fidelity interviews, a manual that explains how to rate each of the 25 items on the scale, tools for conducting a review, sample fidelity reports and sample program action plans for better fidelity.

Spanish and English subtitled Videos are available for two supported employment DVDs (“3 Faces, 3 Lives” and “It's My Business”). We believe this will be a useful resource in reaching people who speak Spanish and people with hearing impairments.

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