

Employment Works!

Employment Supports for People with Mental Illness

Summer 2008



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

This issue of *Employment Works* focuses on the value of including family members and family advocacy groups in supported employment efforts.

Including Families in Supported Employment: Practice Tips

Michael Cohen, MA, CAGS, has experience, not only in supported employment research projects, but also as the Executive Director of the National Alliance on Mental Illness – New Hampshire. Below, he shares some practical tips for practitioners about how to include families in supported employment, also known as the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model.

- When meeting with a consumer who is new to supported employment, ask her about a family member whom she would like to have involved in her employment plan. Remember that a family member could be a parent, spouse, sibling, partner, adult child, or even a good friend.
- With the consumer's permission, call the family to set up a meeting. Many families will be appreciative if you make the effort to reach out to them. Ask the consumer to be present at the meeting—the idea is for the family and consumer to work as allies.
- Provide the family with information about supported employment. Family members



Michael Cohen, Executive Director of NAMI – New Hampshire

may have concerns about job-related stress or loss of social security benefits. Bring written information about employment and supported employment, for example, the

NAMI fact sheet about supported employment (www.NAMI.org). Also provide information about benefits counseling.

- Be clear about the family member's role. For example, family members can serve as motivators by pointing out the person's accomplishments. However, it is not a good idea for families to feel as though they must nag their loved one to attend appointments or apply for jobs. The employment plan should not become a source of conflict.
- Ask the family for information that can be helpful for the vocational profile. "Can you tell me something about your family member's strengths related to his work history?" "What is the best time of day for your family member?"
- Review the employment plan with the family and consumer and continue to stay in touch with families throughout the employment process. Remember that families may have important information about the person's job. "Has your family member told you anything about his job that he likes or dislikes?" "Have you noticed any changes in your family member since she started working?"

Focus on Research*

In a recently published article, the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model of supported employment for clients with severe mental illness has been described as a standardization of evidence-based supported employment. Although several reviews in the literature on its effectiveness have been conducted, the completion of several new studies suggests an updated review is warranted.

The authors conducted a comprehensive literature search for randomized controlled trials of IPS, limiting the review to programs with high-fidelity IPS programs, locating 11 studies.

Across the 11 studies, the competitive employment rate was 62% for IPS compared to 25% for controls. About two-thirds of those who obtained competitive employment worked 20 hours or more per week. The time to first competitive job for IPS participants was 10 weeks less than for controls. Among IPS participants who obtained work, duration of employment after the start of the first job averaged 25.0 weeks per year, or 48% of the 52-week year.

This current review is consistent with earlier reviews, although the evidence for high-fidelity IPS appears to be somewhat stronger than reviews of more heterogeneous models of supported employment. The number, consistency, and effect sizes of studies of evidence-based supported employment establish that it is one of the most robust interventions available for persons with severe mental illness.

* 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.

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Angela Kimball, NAMI, Presents at Annual Meeting

Angela Kimball, Director of State Policy for NAMI, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, discussed the potential for NAMI to help promote supported employment. State and local NAMI groups have a strong desire to reduce stigma related to mental illness and build opportunities for recovery. Further, NAMI is proud of its history of successfully engaging public officials in transforming mental health care.

"I believe supported employment is often thought of as an 'extra,' rather than a key component of a recovery-oriented plan of care," Ms. Kimball remarked. "However, my



Angela Kimball, Director of State Policy, NAMI National

son's experiences have convinced me of the vital role of work in recovery. Alex, who struggled for years to manage his bipolar disorder, wanted a job as he neared graduation from high school. A vocational counselor with special education interviewed Alex and said she'd get back to him with opportunities. A couple of weeks later, my son came home fighting back tears. The vocational counselor had let him know she'd found a job for him—folding napkins in a workshop. My heart nearly broke as he said, 'Is this what people think I'm capable of?' Undaunted, my son fought

humiliation and discouragement and followed his dream. Today, he is a successful artist. His work is his passion and integral to his recovery."

In order to encourage adoption of supported employment, advocates were advised to engage NAMI organizations in learning about supported employment, including providing key information about outcomes and opportunities for advocacy on budgets and other issues. Angela added, "Once you hear the data and understand how supported employment works, it is easy to get enthused and see that it is a vital part of an effective community-based mental health system that facilitates inclusion and recovery."

Annual Supported Employment Meeting: A Success

The Johnson & Johnson-Dartmouth Community Mental Health Program held its annual meeting in Portland, Oregon on May 7-8, 2008. Debbie Becker announced that Missouri will join the project this summer and she also noted two new projects regarding supported employment for people who have criminal histories or recent homelessness. Speakers included Dan O'Brien (Social Security Administration), James Smith (Vermont VR), Stephaine Taylor-Parrish (Oregon VR), Bob Drake (Dartmouth PRC), the Oregon Supported Employment Center for Excellence, Rollin Shelton (Mental Health America of Oregon), Gary Bond (IUPUI) and Angela Kimball (NAMI).

A highlight of the meeting was the inaugural presentation of the Johnson & Johnson-Dartmouth Achievement Awards. The awards reflect significant improvement in the number of people receiving high fidelity supported employment services or the number of people who have obtained work through these services. Hand-blown glass bowls were given to the mental

health agency's supported employment program and local Vocational Rehabilitation office. \$10,000 was given to each supported employment program.



Johnson & Johnson – Dartmouth Achievement Award

Accepting the awards were:

Joyce Brown from Charleston Dorchester Mental Health Center, Charleston, SC, and **Jakki Deas**, Charleston Office of South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Department; **Kristin Farley**, Valeo Behavioral Health Care, Topeka, KS, and **Betty Williams**, Topeka Area Office, Kansas Vocational Rehabilitation Services.



State of Connecticut
 District of Columbia
 State of Illinois
 State of Kansas
 State of Maryland
 State of Minnesota
 State of Missouri
 State of Ohio
 State of Oregon
 State of South Carolina
 State of Vermont
 Mental Health Services for Homeless Persons, Inc., Cleveland, OH
 Thresholds Justice Program, Chicago, IL

Glenda's Story

Glenda is working at a paid job for the first time in years but reports that work is only the beginning for her. "I feel better about myself. My goal is to buy my own place to live and that's an important goal for me. I am thinking about how I spend my money so that I can save to buy a place of my own."



Glenda

helped her feel like she is doing something. I can really tell a difference in her—that it helps for her to get out of her apartment. I'm very proud of my sister for working. I encourage her to keep working and to stick it out

even on the days she doesn't feel like going to work. I don't believe that work is too stressful for people with mental illness. In fact, people can feel stressed about being unemployed."

Glenda's brother, Jack, is also enthusiastic about Glenda's job. In fact, Jack was an early supporter who spoke with

Glenda's social worker about her desire to work. "I talked to her about Glenda really

"I know that I have a disability, but I can't lean on that or I will never get ahead. I like the paycheck and I like being around other people!"

wanting to work and she referred Glenda to supported employment. Without working, Glenda gets bored and depressed and it makes her mental state worse. Work has

run. "I know that I have a disability, but I can't lean on that or I will never get ahead. I like the paycheck and I like being around other people!"

Glenda reports that there are times when it is hard to keep going with a job, but that it is worth it in the long

new scale is longer and includes more organizational items, some states have reported that they are no longer using the General Organizational Index (GOI) with the revised scale.

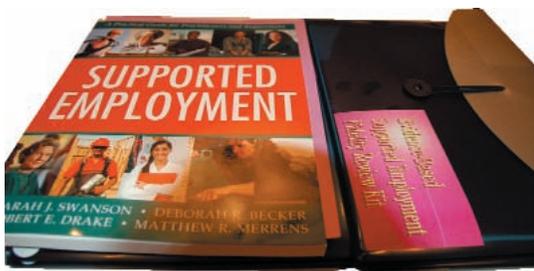
Individuals who wish to learn more about the new fidelity scale can order the Supported Employment fidelity kit or can download the new scale from our webpage: <http://dms.dartmouth.edu/prc/employment/>.

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 and manual. 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. Order from: <http://dms.dartmouth.edu/prc/employment/>.

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. This will allow you to 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. Visit our website at <http://dms.dartmouth.edu/prc/employment/>.

The spring, 2008 issue of the **Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal**, edited by Robert E. Drake and Gary R. Bond, focuses exclusively on evidence-based supported employment. This issue reviews advances and research on supported employment during the past 10 years. Individuals who would like to order the spring issue can call 617-353-3549.

New Supported Employment Materials Available



A new manual, **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. Order from: <http://dms.dartmouth.edu/prc/employment/>.

Revised Supported Employment Fidelity Scale

As research helps us learn more about how to help people with jobs, the supported employment fidelity scale must be revised from time to time to reflect what we have learned.

Programs and states that want to provide services based upon the most current evidence are adopting the most recent revision of the scale dated January 7, 2008.

Changes in the new scale include an increase in organizational items that can help agencies create a climate that values employment for all people who want to work as well as providing administrative support for the SE program. Because the

Supported Employment Uses A Team Approach

The **case manager or counselor** shares a hopeful message about employment, provides information for the employment plan, and helps out with personal issues that can impact the job.

The **vocational rehabilitation (VR) counselor** works with the client and other members of the team to develop an employment plan. The VR counselor may also help provide job leads or assistance with material goods such as interview clothing or tools for a job. In some cases, VR counselors can help with career development or may provide direct services (such as job development).

The **client** shares information about his previous jobs and helps the team think about lessons learned from past job experiences. He also shares his preferences for type of job, job location, work shift etc. The person uses his strengths and resources to help with job finding and job retention.

The **employment specialist** provides as much assistance as needed to help individuals find a good job match. She also provides job supports to the working people on her caseload. The employment specialist meets weekly with the mental health practitioners to talk about strategies to support people who are in the program, and also meets monthly with the VR counselor. With permission, she reaches out to include family members, as well.

The **psychiatrist or nurse practitioner** talks to people about their employment goals and jobs. She adjusts medications as necessary in order to help with employment.

A **family member** identified by the client may also be part of the team. Family members can provide helpful information, encouragement or practical assistance.

“Working with our son’s VR worker and employment specialist was a very positive experience. We were able to provide information about who he is and his concerns. It (supported employment) made a big difference in his life.”

— Family Member

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