

Employment Works!

Employment Supports for People with Mental Illness



Fall 2005

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

Johnson and Johnson's Role in Supported Employment

The Johnson & Johnson-Dartmouth Community Mental Health Program is a private-public-academic initiative to encourage collaboration between state departments of mental health and vocational rehabilitation in implementing evidence-based supported employment services for people with serious mental illness. For more than three years, six states (Connecticut, Kansas, Maryland, Oregon, South Carolina, Vermont) and Washington, D.C. have been participating in the Johnson and Johnson program. Each state and the District started with at least three local sites and all have continued to



expand the number of sites that are implementing evidence-based supported employment.

In the most recent quarter, almost three thousand consumers received assistance through this program.

The program consistently averages an employment rate of 40-46%. Three new states (Delaware, Illinois, and Ohio) were selected to participate in the program and started in July, 2005. In April, 2005 the program sponsored a meeting of mental health and vocational rehabilitation trainers of all nine states and Washington, D.C. at the worldwide headquarters of Johnson and Johnson to share knowledge about training and effective employment services. The overall coordination of this initiative is facilitated through partnership with the Dartmouth Psychiatric Research Center that provides training and technical assistance.



Attendees at the Spring 2005 meeting of the Johnson & Johnson – Dartmouth Community Mental Health Program Advisory Board

Seated from left to right: **Carl Suter** – Executive Director, Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation; **Mary Harper** – Geropsychiatric Research Consultant; **Stephaine Taylor** – Administrator, Oregon Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Standing: **Paul Gorman** – Director, West Central Behavioral Services; **Tony Campinell** – Associate Chief, Office of Psychosocial Rehabilitation, Department of Veterans Affairs; **Rick Martinez** – Director, Medical Affairs and Corporate Contributions, Johnson & Johnson; **Joanne Fillweber** – Manager, Medical Affairs and Corporate Contributions, Johnson & Johnson; **Oscar Morgan** – Chief Operating Officer, National Mental Health Association; **Deborah Becker** – Dartmouth Psychiatric Research Center; **Robert Drake** – Director, Dartmouth Psychiatric Research Center

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This issue features several stories from Oregon.

Future newsletters will highlight the accomplishments of other states.

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Evidence-Based Mental Health Practice

An evidence-based practice (EBP) is a method to address a condition, which meets scientific and stakeholder criteria for safety, effectiveness, and cost-effectiveness. EBPs translate research findings into practice. EBPs combine scientific evidence, recovery values and individualized, client-centered approaches. The deployment of EBPs is widely regarded as central to improving health care quality. Supported employment is an evidence-based practice.

Supported Employment

Individuals with serious mental illnesses have an estimated unemployment rate of 80-90 percent. Most individuals want to work, and with support a majority of them can succeed in the work place. Supported

Employment (SE) assists individuals in securing regular jobs in the community. SE does not screen individuals for readiness to work or use prevocational settings or sheltered workshops. Employment specialists work with individuals in finding community jobs and offer ongoing supports to individuals. SE has demonstrated effectiveness in promoting integration into the community as well as securing meaningful work for individuals.

However, in spite of the strong evidence for SE, fewer than five percent of people with a serious mental illness have access to these services. The gap between what we know works and what is available in the public mental health system needs to be addressed.

Supported Employment Practice Principles

- Zero exclusion – Every individual who wants employment is eligible
- Supported employment services are integrated with treatment
- Competitive employment is the goal
- Personalized benefits counseling is provided
- Rapid job search – Job search starts soon after a person expresses interest in working
- Follow-along supports are continuous
- Individual preferences are important

Michael's Story

People with mental illness who receive supported employment services decide whether the employment specialist has direct contact with employers on their behalf. Some people choose not to disclose their disability to their employer. They receive indi-

vidualized staff assistance and

"You know you have to survive, I have always been a survivor."

support outside of the job setting. In the next article Michael, who receives supported employment services and has disclosed his disability to his employer, tells his story.

I work at McDonalds in Roseburg, Oregon. I wash tables. I mop floors. I wait on people. Whatever they want me to do. I don't cook, but I do everything else.

(Before this job) I stayed in my apartment and smoked cigars for more than 20 years. I got bored and wanted something to do. I started to look but had trouble finding a job. I went to a vocational program that tested me and said I wasn't able to

work. I met Jon (an employment specialist at the mental health center) who thought I could work. He and I tried some other stuff and it didn't work, so he got on the horn with a woman at Vocational Rehabilitation to help. She was someone who knew what

she was doing! In a couple of weeks I had this job. If it wasn't for her, I would still be "walking around Disneyland." They got information about me and talked to the people at McDonalds and said I was highly qualified for the job. A lot of people didn't think I would last for 2 days, but I am still here after almost a year.

The VR person and Jon (employment specialist) helped me get started at work. One of them came to work with me for the first few days to help me learn the job. VR paid for non-slip shoes because I was having trouble walking in the kitchen. They (employer) change the (work) hours every so often, and I have to be real careful because I need this job, because I have

to keep the wolf away from the door. I'm working between 25 and 28 hours a week. I am part-time and that's what I want. I wash tables all day on my feet, empty the garbage, do the restrooms, and stuff. That is how busy I am. You know you have to work to survive. I have always been a survivor.

My advice to people who want to work is to be on time, keep your mouth shut, and do the work, and let the work speak for itself. That is the nitty-gritty of it. Jon has helped me with my job. He also drives me to the bank on payday.

(When asked if he plans to keep this job for awhile, Michael says), Yes, ma'am. I have to keep the wolf away from the door. I am not going to get rich with minimum wage, but I have enough to pay my rent and everything else, and after I have paid everything, I have a few bucks left over for things I want. You know, money isn't everything. My body is shot to hell, but my mind is all right. Thank you very much.

Employer to Employer

Delores Spencer runs *D's Magnolia*, a restaurant in Roseburg, Oregon. Delores was approached by an employment specialist from Douglas County Mental Health Center about hiring someone who was interested in working in a restaurant and had the skills for the job. She hired the referred candidate who became an excellent employee.



Delores Spencer, Owner, *D's Magnolia*.

The experience was so successful that Delores now often calls the employment specialist when she has open positions because she knows that he is a good source for interested and qualified employees. "Jon does a great job of matching people and their skills and interests with jobs. I interview the applicant and review the job duties. Jon is always up front with me about any problems a person might have in the workplace. He has helped me to understand some of the things people are going through. Occasionally, people will have some difficulties. Sometimes, people may need an adjustment in medication."

Delores continues, "I had an employee who seemed very tired at work. I called Jon and he met with the employee outside of work and was able to help the person address sleep problems. Jon always follows up." Jon is an employment specialist

who is part of a team at the mental health center that assists people not only with medication but also with other aspects of their lives. Delores says, "I handle training and disciplinary problems on my own as I do with any of my employees. If someone is working slowly, I will help them increase their work speed."

Delores likes the assistance of an

employment specialist and has found it has been very helpful to her as an employer. "When I call Jon, he always calls me right back. If you have someone like Jon, it is a win-win situation for everyone. He is a really good support system for the employee and for me."

"I have had fantastic employees."

Delores says, "I strongly recommend that other employers develop relationships with people like Jon (who are with supported employment programs) to find interested and qualified candidates. He provides the support to the employee so that the employer ends up with a much better worker. I have found very loyal employees this way. One employee was with us for over six years and was a wonderful worker. It has been a great working relationship for me."

Focus on Research

Effective interventions shortly after onset of schizophrenia are critical for preventing chronic patterns of disability, particularly if they aid successful return to work or school. In a randomized, controlled trial with 51 people with recent-onset schizophrenia, the combination of evidence-based Supported Employment (SE) and Workplace Fundamentals Module (WFM) was compared to traditional vocational rehabilitation. Workplace Fundamentals is a group social skills approach that teaches workplace skills through a variety of media once a person has obtained employment. The proportion of people with recent-onset schizophrenia who returned to paid work or regular school was significantly increased by the Supported Employment and Workplace Fundamentals intervention. This intervention led to 93% of the people returning to work or school within the initial 6 months, compared to 50% in the comparison group. In the period of less intensive treatment (months 7-18), the proportion of SE-WFM people in paid work or school continued to be very high (93%) and significantly higher than in the comparison group (55%). The intervention also led to people staying in treatment. Only 15% of SE-WFM people dropped out of treatment in 18 months, compared to 41% of people provided traditional vocational rehabilitation.

Nuechterlein, K.H., Subotnik, K.L., Ventura, J., Gitlin, M.J., Green, M.F., Wallace, C.J., Becker, D.R., Liberman, R.P., Drake, R.E., & Mintz, J. (2005). Advances in improving and predicting work outcome in recent-onset schizophrenia. *Schizophrenia Bulletin*, 31, 530.



Berkeley Vocational Partnership Honored

Six vocational rehabilitation and community mental health center partnerships were honored at a South Carolina award ceremony. Pictured from the Berkeley site are: (left to right)

Demetrius Henderson, *MH Director of Healthcare Reform*

Permon Mitchell, *VR Area Manager*

Debra Calcote, *Berkeley Center Director*

Shannon Lindsay, *VR Client Services Consultant*

Deborah Becker, *Dartmouth Psychiatric Research Center*

Supported Employment in the News

Bob Nikkel, administrator of the Office of Mental Health and Addiction Services in Oregon, observed, "people with severe mental illness typically have a jobless rate of up to 90 percent." In the evidence-based supported employment program 45 percent of people found work at competitive jobs in the community. Nikkel praised employers in Oregon for participating in the Johnson & Johnson- Dartmouth Community Mental Health Program saying they included department stores, gasoline stations, motels, grocery stores and fast-food restaurants. Nikkel noted "this goes to show that employers can benefit and that people who haven't had jobs before can earn an income, improve their self-esteem and pay taxes."

Source: *Medford News*, September 1, 2005

Supported Employment Resources

Coming, Winter, 2006

Supported Employment Basics: A Guide for the Frontline Practitioner

Becker, Drake and Merrens, 2006

This is a concise, inexpensive "how-to-do-it" handbook for frontline workers.

Please order directly by contacting:

Psychiatric.Research.Center@Dartmouth.edu

Books on SE

A Working Life for People with Severe Mental Illness

Becker & Drake, 2003, Oxford University Press.

www.oup.com

Evidence-Based Mental Health Practice: A Textbook

Drake, Merrens & Lynde, 2005, W. W. Norton & Co.

www.wwnorton.com

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