

Employment Works!

Employment Supports for People with Mental Illness



Spring 2007

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

Next Steps in Supported Employment

Cognitive rehabilitation and implementation of evidence-based supported employment (SE) were topics presented by plenary speakers at the 3rd annual meeting of the Johnson & Johnson - Dartmouth Community Mental Health Program, which took place in Charleston, South Carolina in April. John Magill, Director of South Carolina Department of Mental Health, and Larry Bryant, Commissioner of South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Department, welcomed mental health and Vocational Rehabilitation trainers from the ten states and the District of Columbia that are in the program.

Susan McGurk, Dartmouth Medical School, presented coping strategies to overcome cognitive impairments that interfere with acquiring, learning and performing jobs. Also, she described approaches for helping clients mitigate the effects of cognitive impairments by strategic job matching and job support planning. (To learn more about recent research in the area, see McGurk, S.R., & Mueser, K.T. Strategies for coping with cognitive impairments of clients in supported employment. *Psychiatric Services*, 57, 1421-1429, 2006.)

Gary Bond, Indiana University - Purdue University Indianapolis, discussed the National Implementing

Evidence-based Practices project, including findings about the high success rate of supported employment program implementation. He described 7 keys to high fidelity: 1) abandon old ways of doing things, 2) use the fidelity scale as a guide, 3) provide strong agency leadership—philosophy and actions, 4) get the right people to staff the program, 5) model practitioner behaviors, 6) ensure close collaboration between treatment teams, 7) count the things that you want to change (for example, monitor the amount of time employment specialists spend in the community).



Howard Goldman, Mental Health Policy Studies, University of Maryland, Plenary speaker for the Annual J&J – Dartmouth Supported Employment Meeting, Charleston, SC, April, 2007

Howard Goldman, University of Maryland, talked about the Mental Health Treatment Study, which is funded by the Social Security Administration to determine whether providing evidence-based employment support and other high quality mental health treatment, and eliminating programmatic work disincentives will lead to better employment outcomes and other benefits among Social Security Disability Insurance beneficiaries with a primary impairment of schizophrenia or affective disorder.

Other speakers included: Robert Drake (Dartmouth Medical School), James Smith (Vermont Division of Vocational Rehabilitation), Connie Giles (Minnesota Rehabilitation Services),

and Stephen Fear (Social Security Administration).

Robert Drake, Dartmouth Medical School, stated, "The next transformation in mental health services will be to use modern information technology that includes computer-assisted decision aids. This will improve consumers' and clinicians' access to good information and will promote shared decision-making as part of routine practice."



Supported Employment Practice Principles

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

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SE Programs are a Resource to Employers

Jim Gardner, Human Resource Manager, Lowe's , Topeka, Kansas

As an elected official here in Topeka, Kansas, I was somewhat aware of the services the Supported Employment program provided in the county. I believe the first time they actually approached us about being involved with their program was when they came out and gave a presentation to the store manager and myself and explained what they were trying to accomplish.



I think the difference with this program is the continued support of the employment specialist. In the past, we have been working with different

organizations and job placements. They find a job for someone and the services basically end. It has been my experience with this program that

once they get a person placed there is then follow-up by the employment specialist. I meet biweekly with the employment specialist to discuss how things are going, what areas if any need improvement, or what they can do to support us, the employer. That is the big difference. That is why I think we have success with some of the folks we have been able to place. The employment specialist is another resource as far as the mental health service side, and can suggest how to improve performance. That and the follow-up, I think, have been the key.

Lowe's prides itself on supporting the communities where they do business. I think this is one way the company can

reach out to the community and provide employment opportunities, which we are willing to do with anyone. My experience with the program has been that they have a pool of capable applicants, and it is another resource for me as an HR manager in trying to meet the staffing needs of our store. I can't say enough good things about the employment specialists that I have worked with here. It has really worked out well for us.

A Real Success Story

A person working for me now has been a real success story. He started here as a cashier working part-time and with the support of the employment specialist, we would meet twice a month and talk about how things are going. He has excelled very well with that position. He is now looking at being promoted into a sales position. I think it is due to the continued support of the program versus a job placement service. We are ready for him to go full-time and move to the

sales floor. This individual has gotten very comfortable in his position and does an excellent job.

Ultimately, the

goal for him is to be full-time with us and no longer require the services.

Advice for Supported Employment Programs – Be a Resource!

When an employment specialist is approaching businesses, a retail business like ours, he should present himself as a resource to that business. That is how I view the specialists I have worked with. They make my life easier by becoming familiar with our business and knowing what we are looking for.

Last year, the supported employment program had an annual employer recognition event. I think it helps to get the word out

by inviting local employers to come in. I spoke at their banquet last year and it is good for other employers to hear that you are having success with this program. Employers like hearing from other employers—especially competitors!

Supported Employment Resources

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

Principles and Practice of Psychiatric Rehabilitation: An Empirical Approach
Corrigan, Mueser, Bond, Drake, & Solomon, 2007, Guilford Press
www.guilford.com

SE Publications

<http://dms.dartmouth.edu/prc/employment>

- SE Educational Materials
- SE DVDs
- Previous Employment Works! newsletters
- J & J – Dartmouth Community Mental Health Program
- Supported Employment Posters

J&J Supported Employment Training

September 18-20, 2007
Concord, New Hampshire
E-mail david.lynde@dartmouth.edu for training information

Consultation & Training in SE

<http://dms.dartmouth.edu/prc/evidence/>

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Commitment to a Job: Molly's Story

For the past year, I've been working in an assisted living facility in Wichita, Kansas as a nursing assistant (CNA) helping people who can no longer take care of themselves or stay in their home. I work on the special care unit with people with Parkinson's disease, dementia, and other types of illnesses. I give them showers, feed them, and communicate with them. Some of these people don't have very much contact with their relatives. I try to do my job and go out of my way to make someone smile today and someone feel safe today--things like that.

I go there to do my job. I try to go in with a good attitude and good respect. I try to avoid co-workers who complain about this and that because baggage doesn't take you very far. It is best to hang around people with a positive outlook.

Things weren't always easy

I remember working as an aide at a school three hours a day. It was hard. I worked four years hoping they were going to give me some type of way to become full-time, but they never did. I was looking for other jobs, anything I could do full-time, but nothing was clicking. I would start out with my interview clothes and then I would go into the bathroom and change into my work clothes and go to work. It was very hard. I remember I became homeless once. That's when I discovered I had a mental illness, in 1988. I couldn't believe that this was happening to me. But I had to recognize that I had an illness. I needed help. I have to stay on my medication, I have to keep my doctor's appointments, and I have to work closely with my caseworker to be able to keep going in the right direction.



When I made up my mind to that, everything began to smooth off.

Relationships can help

I think one thing that helped was my relationship with God and being around people who had gone places. I enjoy the MHA (Mental Health

Association) where I get my mental health service. I also talk with Martha Lou at the university. She was my educational counselor there. She encourages me to not give up. The company I work for now helps people go to school and things like that to help us pursue our

goals. I also got help from

Vocational Rehabilitation.

They paid my way

to get my CNA. That's a good organization, Voc Rehab. They paid for my class because I didn't have the funds up front.

Looking to the Future

I'm working towards my LPN right now. I'm hoping to some day go to a technical college for an RN. I would be given more responsibility like handling catheters and distributing medicine. I just try to do the best I can with that (juggling work and school). I want to get my LPN in 2008. That's my goal and that's my aim.

Advice for Others

Don't stay in the blues, you know, because every day is a challenge. It is how we face it. Don't try to take all these bites out of the apple but take small bites and you get your way there. Put your faith in God and you know where you are going because you have a plan here in your head. Go for it.



Focus on Research*

Supported Employment (SE) has consistently demonstrated high rates of competitive employment. However, there have been few studies of the long-term trajectories of people who participate in supported employment services. In this study, the investigators examined 8- to 12-year employment trajectories among adults with psychiatric disabilities who received supported employment services. Thirty-eight people with severe mental illness were re-interviewed 8 to 12 years after participating in supported employment studies.

The data were analyzed using a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods. The results indicate that all 38 participants worked during the follow-up period, with the great majority (82%) being employed in competitive jobs. In addition, 71% of the participants worked for more than half of the follow-up years. Participants reported numerous benefits related to employment, including enhancements to self-esteem, social activity, and illness management. The major barrier to work was psychiatric illness. Part-time employment and long-term supports were the major facilitators to working. Having medications adjusted, utilizing coping skills, knowing more about disability benefits, and having someone to assist finding jobs were also highly rated factors. The authors conclude that long-term trajectories of supported employment, both vocational and non-vocational, appear to be very positive.

*Becker, D.R., Whitley, R., Bailey, E.L. & Drake, R.E. Long-term employment trajectories among supported employment participants with severe mental illness. *Psychiatric Services*, in press

Job Development Tips

Linda Carlson & Galen Smith, University of Kansas

- Develop goals for number of employer contacts: The supervisor and/or employment specialists set goals for the number of job development contacts to be made per week. These contacts are tracked and monitored on a weekly basis.
- Target employers based on the employment interests of consumers currently on your caseload. It is more effective to visit employers that you think match the needs and desires of consumers currently wanting to work rather than going to employers that you do not have some-one in mind for working at that business.
- Job develop in pairs to build skills and confidence: Many employment specialists who are new feel more comfortable in the beginning by contacting employers in pairs. This takes the pressure off and you can play off your partner. This is often an effective strategy when you are having difficulty getting into a company.
- Focus on engaging the employer and getting information rather than giving information during the first couple of contacts: It is important to ask questions and listen more than talk during the engagement phase with employers. Finding out what is important to them, what their business needs are, and how they experience their hiring process is critical to engagement. Once you know the employer and their needs and experiences, you can better identify the information to give.
- Use supervisor support to build job development skills: It is imperative that the supervisor has or obtains the skills and ability to do effective job development. The supervisor who has good skills in job development should spend time in the community with employment specialists to help them learn how to build effective relationships with employers. Building skills

entails going out with workers to model the skills, observing the employment specialist trying out the skills, and providing performance feedback.

New Training DVD

Supported Employment: Strategies That Work

This training video demonstrates the skills for conducting job searches, developing the vocational profile, and working with clients with co-occurring disorders of mental illness and substance abuse.

It is available for \$15 including shipping by contacting:
karen.dunn@Dartmouth.edu

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