

Helping Individuals Consider Employment

Tips for Mental Health Practitioners

Attached is a worksheet designed to help you and your clients with discussions about employment. Before you begin, please consider these strategies that other mental health practitioners have found to be helpful:

- Try not to encourage the person in one direction or another. In other words, do not cheerlead the person to get a job or advise the person to slow down.
- Be curious. Learn all you can about the person's feelings and thoughts about work. For example, if someone says she wants to work so that she can spend more time with others, ask "What else?"
- If someone says that they know how their benefits would be affected by a return to work, ask where they got their information. Make sure that they are not relying on misinformation. Offer a meeting with a benefits planner.
- When working on the rating scales for confidence about working and importance of working, ask the person about the number that he chose. For example, "Why did you select a 5?" or "Why a 3 and not a 1?"
- Suggest a next step. Examples of ways that people could learn more about working are below.
 - ⇒ Schedule a meeting with an employment specialist to learn about how s/he helps people with jobs.
 - ⇒ Schedule a meeting with a benefits planner.
 - ⇒ Plan to have more discussions about work.
 - ⇒ Set up a meeting with another person who has gone back to work. Ask that person to share how she overcame barriers to work and why working is important to her.
 - ⇒ Make a referral to supported employment (IPS)
 - ⇒ Help with identified barriers to work, for example, help find options for childcare

Tips for talking about work on an ongoing basis:

- Ask about job preferences. What is your dream job? What type of job would you like next?
- Ask about the person's work history. What was your favorite job? Why? Least favorite? Who was your favorite boss? Why?

- Ask if the person knows others who are working? What do they do?
- Ask the person to describe their life 5 years from now. Where will he be living? What relationships would he like to have in his life? How will he be spending his days?
- Repeat the attached worksheet from time to time (for instance, in a few months). With your client, compare the old worksheet to the new one. Did the answers change? Why?

Considering a Job

It may help to talk to someone about your decision to work, or not work. You can use this worksheet with your case manager or counselor as a way to discuss your job goals and think about the best ways to get started with employment.

What are your hopes regarding a job? How will employment benefit your life?

What are your concerns about working?

Do you know how your benefits would be affected by a part or full-time job?

What type of assistance would be most helpful to you?

- help contacting employers
- help finding job leads
- practice answering job interview questions
- help explaining a legal history to employers
- information about different types of jobs
- other:
- help managing benefits while working
- help building a career
- someone to talk to about my job

On a scale of 1—10, how important is a job to you?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all important Important Extremely Important

Comments:

On a scale of 1—10, how confident are you that you can be successfully employed?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all confident

Confident

Extremely Confident

Comments:

How soon would you like to begin looking for a job?

Within a week

Next month

In a few months

In six months

I am not sure—I would like to keep talking about this

The plan for right now is to:

Client Signature _____ Date _____

Practitioner Signature _____ Date _____