

SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PRACTICE POINTS for People with Co-occurring Disorders*

Find Jobs that Support Recovery

- Avoid workplaces that serve alcohol, even for those people who have been successful in recovery from substance abuse.
- Help clients consider the possible benefits and risks of occupations that have a high incidence of substance use on the job, for instance, construction.
- Talk to each client and the treatment team about the person's pattern of use when developing an employment plan. For instance, if someone is not interested in reducing substance use and tends to use in the evening, an employment specialist might help the person think about afternoon jobs. On the other hand, someone who is actively trying to avoid substances might prefer a job during the time of day that he or she typically uses in order to have a replacement activity.
- Support client choice in regard to applying for jobs that test for substances. Use failed tests as an opportunity to develop discrepancy.
- Refrain from disclosure of information about substance abuse to prospective employers. Instead, use techniques described in this fact sheet to try to ensure that substance abuse will not affect the job.



Assist with Money Management

- Offer to assist clients with plans to manage paychecks, for example, shopping on payday, use of a payee, auto deposit of the paycheck, or use of the income to support other goals. Some clients might be interested in better apartments, buying extra things for their children or other financial goals that would reduce the availability of cash for substances.
- Consider each person's stage of recovery from substance abuse when developing the money management plan. People in later stages of recovery may feel ready to assume more responsibility for work income.

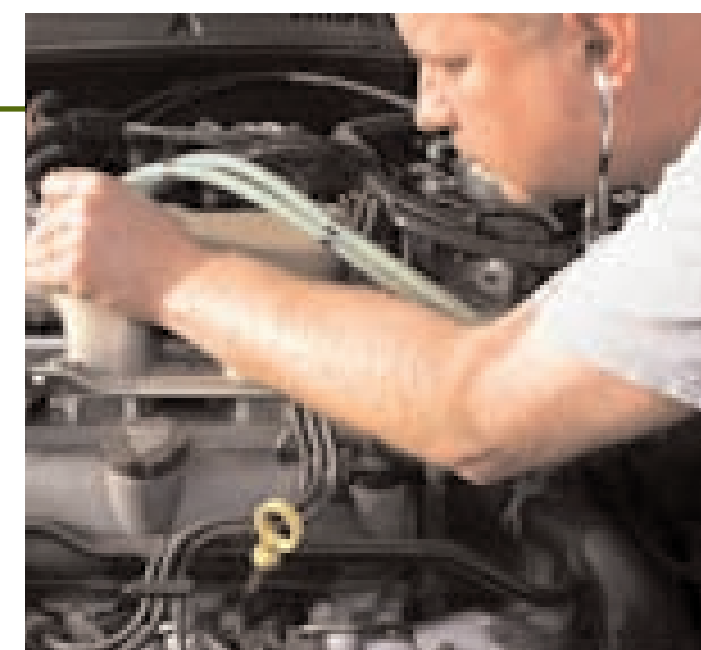


Use a Multi-disciplinary Team Approach

- Use an integrated team approach to problem-solve and celebrate success. The team may include employment specialists, VR counselors, psychiatrists, case managers, counselors, nurses and others.
- Ask team members to share information from discussions with clients who will make the final decision about services.
- Assist clients in preparing for possible triggers for use in the workplace. For example, use treatment groups to practice responses to co-workers going out for a beer.
- View job problems related to substance abuse as opportunities to develop discrepancy. Discuss best approaches as a team.

Foster Hope and Self-Efficacy

- Point out the person's accomplishments along the way.
- View setbacks as learning experiences and offer ongoing assistance with employment goals.
- Talk to clients about long-term goals including career development plans.
- Offer help with employment to all clients who have co-occurring mental illness and substance abuse.



More information on Supported Employment can be found at: dms.dartmouth.edu/prc/employment
Deborah R. Becker and Robert E. Drake, *A Working Life for People with Severe Mental Illness*.
New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2003.
SAMHSA Supported Employment Toolkit
<http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/cmhs/communitysupport/toolkits/employment/default.asp>

* Becker, D.R., Drake, R.E., & Naughton, W.J., (2005). Supported employment for people with co-occurring disorders. *Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal*, 28(4), 332-338.