



Information on Evidence-based Supported Employment for Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors

Evidence-based supported employment (SE) is a well-researched and field-tested approach to helping people who are recovering from mental illness. Supported employment works well in urban and rural communities. Regardless of the economy, people with mental illness are more likely to find jobs if helped by a supported employment program than any other type of vocational service.



Better Outcomes:
Research has demonstrated that on average 58% of people with severe mental illness become employed if they have access to evidence-based supported employment. Only 24% on average find work if they receive services from other types of vocational programs.

Motivation is an important predictor of success for individuals with severe mental illness.

In many SE programs, Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services are provided for the large majority of clients. VR counselors working with high fidelity SE programs report that the extra assistance provided by SE programs has been especially helpful to some people, for example, people who have psychotic symptoms or substance abuse problems. In this way, VR has been able to work with people that they may not have served in the past.

Mental health and vocational services are integrated.

It is important for all of the people working with an individual client to share information and provide a consistent message to the person. Therefore, the "treatment team" meets weekly and may include a case manager, counselor, psychiatrist, employment specialist, or others. When VR counselors attend these meetings, they share their expertise, keep up-to-date on clients and become an integral part of the treatment team. VR counselors are encouraged to regularly attend meetings.

Benefits planning is comprehensive and ongoing.

A person with comprehensive training provides clients with accurate information about work incentives and the impact of earned income upon all sources of income. Clients are offered ongoing help with benefits and asset development as their goals and jobs change over time.

Client preferences are important.

Client preferences may be related to the type of work, job location, hours of work, disclosure

of disability, or other issues. Many people with severe mental illness choose to start with a part-time job and increase their work hours over time.

Competitive employment is the goal.

Supported employment focuses on regular jobs in the community, not jobs created for people with disabilities. All jobs pay at least minimum wage.

The job search is rapid.

Clients are not asked to participate in vocational evaluation, work adjustment programs or pre-vocational activities. Instead, the SE program helps clients begin a job search within a few weeks of the first appointment. VR counselors and SE programs work together to develop strategies that will help VR determine eligibility as quickly as possible.

Follow-along supports are continual.

The SE program meets with clients frequently to help them succeed in their jobs and move ahead in the world of work. Although VR may close cases after 90 days, the SE program continues to provide ongoing follow-along services with help from case managers and counselors as long as the client desires.

Clients are supported with job changes.

SE programs and VR counselors honor client choice with regard to leaving jobs, even if the person has a poor job history or other barriers to employment. If job loss occurs, the SE team works to help the person find another job. Whenever possible, VR assists the SE team with more than one job.

Evidence-based supported employment is currently based on 15 randomized controlled studies and a specific fidelity scale to ensure program standards. This form of supported employment differs from the federal definition of supported employment that was originally created for people with developmental disabilities. Please see the resources noted at the bottom of this poster for more information.



For more information:

Dartmouth Psychiatric Research Center
<http://dms.dartmouth.edu/prc/>

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>