

Promoting Employment for Individuals with Mental Illnesses

2017 Employment Support Symposium

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City Line Avenue / Philadelphia



Temple University
Collaborative

On Community Inclusion of Individuals with Psychiatric Disabilities

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For Individuals with Mental Illnesses

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The Temple Collaborative

- A research and training center funded by the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research
- At The Temple Collaborative we focus on community inclusion to determine how best to help people participate in everyday life
- Our research indicates that those with serious mental illnesses are often isolated – housing, friendships, education, friends, and more
- Employment is consistently reported to be the domain of life in which people with mental illnesses are most unengaged



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The Importance of Competitive Employment: Issues to Consider

- Defining Employment
 - full-time or part-time
 - ongoing or intermittent
 - entry-level or skilled positions
 - protected employment or competitive jobs
- The Current Level of Unemployment
 - a staggering 85% of individuals with serious mental illnesses are unemployed at any single point of time, most relying on SSA



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Why Such High Rates of Unemployment?

- Fear of the permanent loss of SSA (SSI/SSDI) and medical supports
- Resistance from parents, clinicians, and rehabilitation personnel
- Concern about negative attitudes among employers at work
- Lack of Motivation?
 - poor prior experiences?
 - unavailability of 'meaningful' jobs?
 - unavailability of employment supports?
 - the impact of the 'subculture of psychiatric disability'?



What Does the Research Say

- Should individuals with mental illnesses work?
 - decreases in symptoms, increases in self-regard
- Would individuals with mental illnesses work?
 - persistent expression of interest in competitive work
- Could individuals with mental illnesses work?
 - supports make it possible for people to work independently



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Supported Employment: Key Elements

- Rapid placement in competitive employment
- No 'readiness' determinations or step-by-step advancement
- Provision of on-the-job or off-the-job supports as individually needed
- Long-term supports available to save or switch from jobs
- No fall-backs available to more sheltered roles



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The Good News / The Bad News

- Superior rates of job placement, job retention, and wage levels
- Job placement rates hover in the 50% range
- Placements remain clustered in the part-time & low-skill sector
- Little impact on the ‘myth’ of disability payments quickly vanishing
- Little progress in providing long-term long-term supports: costs, nature, or funding frameworks



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Who Has Responsibility for Employment

- The Service Recipient
- Family Members
- Clinical Staff
- Casemanagement / Outpatient / CIRC-Psychosocial Professionals
- Peer Specialists / Training Programs



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Roles

- Encouragement – Intake, Program Planning, Evaluation
- Resources – OVR, Mainstream Training/Placement / PSR & CIRC
- Placement – Finding Jobs / Interviewing Skills / Initial Supports
- Responding to Issues and Crises at Work – Client & Employer
- Assisting in Changing Jobs – Every Job Loss is Not a MH Issue
- Celebrating Success – Recognizing Progress



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Stories: Mine and Yours

- Mine
 - New Hampshire
 - Chicago
 - New York
 - Pennsylvania

. Yours



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Final Comment

- If individuals with mental illnesses '*should, would, and could*' work in the competitive labor market, we are in danger of losing another generation of individuals to a life of idleness, poverty, and isolation by limiting our focus on employment programming and outcomes.
- Let's not let this happen again.



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