



## Acknowledgments

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## Chapter

# 1

## Introduction to Supported Employment

*Most people who live with a severe mental illness want to work*

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### CHAPTER OVERVIEW

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### WHY SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT?

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### SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT HAS A REAL IMPACT ON PEOPLE'S LIVES

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This chapter provides a brief introduction to supported employment.

The goal of supported employment is to help people with severe mental illnesses find and keep competitive jobs. Supported employment facilitates the recovery of work-interested consumers by supporting them in their efforts to get on with life beyond illness.

### Getting on with life beyond illness

Gabriel had his first manic episode during college where he was studying music and playing in a band. When he wasn't in the hospital with acute symptoms, he spent much of the next several years drinking and smoking marijuana with people he met while receiving services at the local community mental health center. One day, Gabriel spelled out for his clinical case manager how terrible he felt about his life and berated himself for being "a mental patient" and not working like his old high school and college friends. After assuring himself that Gabriel was not acutely suicidal, Gabriel's case manager followed up on this expression of interest in work by introducing him to the team's employment specialist.

While out for coffee the next day, the employment specialist asked Gabriel what his work life will look like after he has recovered from the demoralizing impact of his mental illness. Gabriel was surprised by the questions but able to say that he had always dreamed of recording his own music. The employment specialist wondered aloud what steps might be available now that could lead to such a career. He also mentioned that he had just that morning seen an ad for a part-time job in the music section of a local bookstore.

Two years later, Gabriel is now working as the manager of the bookstore music section and playing guitar on weekends with a few musicians who are steady customers at the store. He stopped drinking completely and smokes little marijuana because it interferes with work. Feeling better about himself, he has taken more initiative in managing his symptoms and has not been in the hospital since he took the job. He meets monthly with his employment specialist to sort out next steps in his career

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PUPOSE OF THIS  
W O O K B O O K

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This workbook is designed to introduce you to the principles and strategies you will need to be an effective employment specialist. As an employment specialist you will have an opportunity to make a meaningful positive impact on the lives of others such as that illustrated in this example.

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S O W H A T I S  
S U P P O R T E D  
E M P L O Y M E N T ?

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*Supported employment* is an approach to vocational rehabilitation for individuals with disabilities that emphasizes helping people obtain competitive work in the community, and providing the supports necessary to ensure success at the workplace. The emphasis in supported employment programs is on helping individuals find jobs paying competitive wages in integrated settings (i.e., with others who don't necessarily have a disability) in the community. In contrast to other approaches to vocational rehabilitation, supported employment de-emphasizes prevocational assessment and training, and puts a premium on rapid job search and attainment.

Individuals with disabilities differ from one another in terms of the types of work they prefer, the nature of the support they want, and the decision whether or not to disclose their disability to the employer or co-workers. Supported employment programs respect these individual preferences, and tailor their vocational services accordingly. In addition to appreciating the importance of consumer preferences, supported employment programs recognize that most individuals with disabilities benefit from long-term support after successful job attainment. Therefore, supported employment programs avoid imposing unrealistic time limitations on services, while focusing on helping consumers become as independent and self-reliant as possible.

The overriding philosophy of supported employment is the belief that every person with a disability is capable of working competitively in the community if the right kind of job and work environment can be found. Rather than trying to sculpt the consumer into becoming the “perfect worker” through extensive prevocational assessment and training, individuals are offered help finding and keeping jobs that capitalize on their personal strengths and motivation. Thus the primary goal of supported employment is not to change the consumer, but to find a natural “fit” between the consumer’s strengths and experiences and a job in the community. As consumers succeed in working in the community, their self-perceptions often change and they view themselves as workers and contributors to society. Furthermore, as people in the community see individuals with disabilities working, consumers are less stigmatized for their mental illness and they become more socially accepted. Supported employment is a successful approach that has been used in various settings by culturally diverse consumers, employment specialists, and practitioners.

Many consumers are experiencing recovery from mental illness by acquiring employment. Supported employment programs offer consumers assistance in their work efforts. Evidence-based supported employment incorporates the following points:

- Supported employment is a well-defined approach to helping people with mental illness find and keep competitive employment. “Competitive employment” means work in the community that anyone can apply for and pays at least minimum wage. The wage should not be less than the normal wage (and level of benefits) paid for the same work performed by individuals who do not have a mental illness. Supported employment is a successful approach that has been used in various settings by culturally diverse consumers, employment specialists, and practitioners.
- Supported employment programs are staffed by employment specialists who have frequent meetings with the treatment team (i.e., practitioners who provide services, such as case manager, therapist, psychiatrist) to integrate supported employment with mental health treatment.
- Supported employment programs help anyone who expresses the desire to work. People are not excluded because they are not “ready” or because of prior work history, substance use, or symptoms.
- Employment specialists help people look for jobs soon after entering the program, instead of requiring extensive pre-employment assessment and training, or intermediate work experiences (like prevocational work units, transitional employment, or sheltered workshops).
- Support from the employment specialist continues as long as consumers want the assistance. The help is often outside of the work place and it can include help from other practitioners, family members, coworkers, and supervisors.
- Jobs are seen as transitions. People commonly try several jobs before finding a job they want to keep. Employment specialists help consumers find further jobs when they leave jobs.
- Finally, evidence-based supported employment follows the philosophy that all choices and decisions about work and support are individualized, based on the person’s preferences, strengths, and experiences.

## Evidence On Supported Employment

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**CHAPTER  
OVERVIEW**

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**REFERENCES**

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**SUPPORTED  
EMPLOYMENT  
GETS RESULTS**

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**NO EVIDENCE OF  
NEGATIVE  
EFFECTS**

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This chapter reviews the research showing that supported employment works.

Please see the Psychiatric Services article (Bond, et. al., 2001<sup>1</sup>) in this resource kit for specific research references.

Supported employment has been the most extensively studied model of vocational rehabilitation for persons with psychiatric disabilities, and ample evidence supports its effectiveness. At last count, 9 different research studies involving random assignment of consumers to either supported employment or a comparison program, have been conducted to evaluate the effects of supported employment programs. In each study, the supported employment program has been found to produce better vocational outcomes than the comparison program or programs. In these studies, consumers in supported employment programs are more successful in obtaining competitive work, they work more hours, and they earn more wages from competitive employment than consumers receiving other vocational services.

Practitioners, consumers, and family members are sometimes concerned that competitive work will be a stressful experience that may increase the chances of relapses and rehospitalizations. However, the research on supported employment has consistently found that there are no negative effects related to participating in a supported em-

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G.R. Bond, D.R. Becker, R.E. Drake, C.A. Rapp, Meisler, N., Lehman, A.F., and M.D. Bell, "Implementing Supported Employment as an Evidence-based Practice," *Psychiatric Services*, 52, (2001), 313-322.



ployment program. Specifically, consumers who participate in supported employment programs do not experience more severe symptoms, or higher levels of distress, nor do they require more intensive psychiatric treatment, such as emergency room visits or psychiatric hospitalizations.

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NON VOCATIONAL  
OUTCOMES

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Research on supported employment programs indicates that participation usually does not result in significant improvements in non-vocational outcomes, such as symptoms or quality of life, compared to other vocational rehabilitation programs. However, some research shows that when consumers succeed in finding competitive work, improvements may occur in symptoms, self-esteem, and satisfaction with finances (Bond et. al., 2001<sup>2</sup>). Most consumers who obtain work in supported employment programs work part-time and are able to keep their benefits. This work often becomes a meaningful part of their lives.

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COST ISSUES

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Only a limited amount of research has examined the cost of providing supported employment services. This research indicates that when a supported employment program is added to an existing psychiatric rehabilitation program, overall costs of services (that is, the combined treatment and employment program costs) increase. However, when a supported employment program replaces another rehabilitation program, such as a day treatment program, the overall treatment costs remain the same. Some programs have found the cost ranges from two to four thousand dollars per client per year (Clark, 1998<sup>3</sup>).

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CHAPTER  
SUMMARY

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In summary, extensive research on supported employment shows that it improves vocational outcomes more than other programs while not causing any negative effects. Modest benefits in areas of non-vocational functioning may occur when people obtain competitive work, such as in the areas of symptom severity and self-esteem. Supported employment programs may either increase overall treatment costs or not affect treatment costs, depending on whether the services added or substitutes another service in a rehabilitation program.

## **Principles Of Supported Employment**

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CHAPTER  
OVERVIEW

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Supported employment programs are based on a core set of principles. These principles form the foundation of the program, and they are critical to ensuring that services are available to all consumers, that program staff are respectful of consumer choices, and the program is effective in achieving and sustaining the goal of competitive work in the community. These principles are listed below, and are subsequently elaborated upon.

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LIST OF SIX  
CORE PRIN-  
CIPLES

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| <b>Core Principles of Supported Employment</b> |   |
|--|---|
| 1.   | Eligibility is based on consumer choice                               |
| 2.   | Supported employment is integrated with treatment                     |
| 3.   | Competitive employment is the goal                                    |
| 4.   | Job search starts soon after a consumer expresses interest in working |
| 5.   | Follow-along supports are continuous                                  |
| 6.   | Consumer preferences are important                                    |



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SUPERVISOR'S  
NOTE

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These principles are so important that it is helpful to ask employment specialists to memorize them. You can begin supervision sessions by having each employment specialist write down the principles from memory until they can all do it easily and understand the ideas.

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PRINCIPLE ONE:  
ZERO EXCLUSION

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**No one is excluded**

Consumers who are interested in work are not prevented from participating in supported employment, regardless of their psychiatric diagnosis, symptoms, work history, or other problems, including substance abuse and cognitive impairment. The core philosophy of supported employment is that all persons with a disability can work at competitive jobs in the community without prior training, and that no one should be excluded from this opportunity. Supported employment does not attempt to bring consumers to some preconceived standard of “work readiness” before seeking employment. Consumers are “work ready” when they say they want to work. Research on which consumers are most likely to succeed in supported employment programs indicates that symptoms, substance abuse, and other consumer factors are not strong and consistent predictors of work. Therefore, there is no justification for excluding consumers who are interested in work from supported employment programs.

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PRINCIPLE TWO:  
INTEGRATION  
OF VOCATIONAL  
REHABILITATION  
AND MENTAL  
HEALTH

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**Vocational and mental health services are integrated**

Vocational rehabilitation and mental health treatment are integrated at the team level by the different providers of these services. It is best when employment specialists function as members of consumers’ treatment teams and participate regularly in team meetings. Close coordination of supported employment with other rehabilitation and treatment services ensures that consumers’ vocational goals are given a high priority by everyone involved in providing services, and not just the employment specialist. Participation of employment specialists in team meetings provides a vehicle for discussing clinical and rehabilitation issues relevant to work, such as medication side effects, persistent symptoms (e.g., hallucinations), cognitive difficulties, or other rehabilitation needs (e.g., skills training to improve ability to socialize with co-workers or self-assertion skills). Regular meetings between employment specialists and other team members also give other practitioners the opportunity to help and have input into assisting the consumer achieve his or her vocational goals.

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PRINCIPLE  
THREE:  
COMPETITIVE  
EMPLOYMENT

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### **Competitive employment is the goal**

Supported employment emphasizes helping consumers obtain competitive jobs, paying competitive wages. “Competitive jobs” are jobs that exist in the open labor market, that anyone could have regardless of their disability status, rather than jobs that are set aside for persons with a disabilities, and pay at least minimum wage. The wage should not be less than the normal wage (and level of benefits) paid for the same work performed by individuals who do not have a mental illness.

Competitive work is valued for several reasons. First, consumers express a strong preference for competitive work over sheltered work, and a desire to work in community settings. Second, competitive work promotes the integration of persons with psychiatric disabilities into the community through their involvement in normal activities, which will reduce the stigma of mental illness experienced by these individuals. Third, consumers’ self-esteem often improves as they see they are able to work competitively, that their work is valued, and that they can contribute to society. Last, historically, many vocational rehabilitation programs have placed consumers with disabilities into non-competitive jobs, often paying sub-minimum wages, with only rare progression onto competitive employment. Experience shows that consumers can successfully work at competitive jobs without prior participation in training programs or non-competitive jobs.

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PRINCIPLE  
FOUR: RAPID JOB  
SEARCH

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### **The job search starts soon after expressing interest in working**

The process of looking for work begins soon after a consumer begins working with an employment specialist, and is not postponed by requirements for completing extensive pre-employment assessment and training, or intermediate work experiences (like prevocational work units, transitional employment, or sheltered workshop experiences). Rapid job search is crucial for several reasons. As consumers begin the process of identifying and exploring specific job possibilities, they (and their employment specialists) learn more about the type of work and work setting they desire. Beginning the search process early demonstrates to consumers that their desire to work is taken seriously, and conveys optimism that there are multiple opportunities available in the community for the consumer to achieve their

vocational goals. Looking for jobs soon after a consumer has been referred to a supported employment program may also be important for consumers who are ambivalent about work, and whose motivation may be tenuous. Fears and misconceptions about work can often be best confronted by helping consumers actually explore possible jobs. Seeking work immediately takes advantage of the consumer's current motivation. Studies show that fewer people obtain employment when the job search is delayed by prevocational preparations and requirements. Finally, rapid job search is critical because many jobs may need to be explored before the right one is selected, and beginning this process early increases the chances of eventual success. Similar to how most people become steady workers, consumers commonly try several jobs before finding one that they keep.

To help direct the job search the employment specialist draws up a vocational profile that includes a review of the consumers' work, preferences for type of work, and other background information. Information is collected from the consumer, service providers, and with permission from the consumer from family members and previous employers. This profile can be completed within a few days of the consumer joining the vocational program. However, rather than assessment being static and occurring only before obtaining a job, assessment is ongoing, without a defined beginning and end. Employment specialists, in collaboration with consumers, are constantly in the process of updating and revising their evaluation of consumers' strengths, challenges, and areas of support, and critical environmental factors that influence work and adjustment at the workplace based on their competitive, community-based job experiences.

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PRINCIPLE FIVE:  
TIME-UNLIMITED  
SUPPORT

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**Support is provided over time, as long as consumers want it**

The assistance provided to consumers receiving supported employment services needs to be given on a time unlimited basis. Some consumers struggle with psychiatric disabilities that persist over time so their optimal treatment and rehabilitation requires a long-term commitment. Thus, consumers receiving supported employment services are never terminated from these services, despite the extent of their vocational success, unless they directly request it. While support is provided on a time unlimited basis, for many consumers the extent

of support gradually decreases over time as employment specialists teach and facilitate the ability of consumers to meet their own needs for success at the workplace (e.g., arranging own transportation to work, ability to perform the job without coaching, socialization skills at work, skills for responding to criticism from a supervisor). Thus, the goal of the employment specialist is to help the consumer become as independent as possible in his or her vocational role, while always remaining available to provide support and assistance.

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PRINCIPLE SIX:  
ATTENTION  
TO CONSUMER  
PREFERENCES

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**Job choice follows consumer preference**

Consumer preferences play a key role in determining the type of job that is sought, the nature of support provided by the employment specialist, and the decision about whether to disclose the person’s psychiatric disability to the employer. Consumers who obtain work in their area of interest tend to have higher levels of satisfaction with their jobs, and have longer job tenures. Thus, attending to consumer job preferences can often make the work of the employment specialist easier because consumers are more likely to remain on the job. Consumers differ in how they want to be supported by their employment specialists, and these preferences are given close attention. Some consumers are willing to disclose their disability to prospective employers, and want their employment specialist involved in all aspects of work, including help in identifying and obtaining jobs, maintaining ongoing contact with the employer, and providing on-site and off-site job support. Other consumers prefer to keep their psychiatric disability confidential, and look to their employment specialist to provide “behind the scenes” support, but not to have direct contact with employers. These preferences are honored as it is crucial to listen to how consumers want to be supported in their pursuit of vocational goals.

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CHAPTER  
SUMMARY

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In summary, supported employment is guided by six clear core principles. These principles, corroborated by research, describe supported employment and differentiate it from other practices.

## Referrals

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CHAPTER  
OVERVIEW

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This chapter describes how consumers who may benefit from supported employment are identified and referred to these services.

Making consumers and practitioners aware of the goals and practices of supported employment, and implementing a simple referral process, is crucial to linking people to the supported employment program. To make services accessible to as many consumers as possible, minimal criteria must be used. Informing different stakeholders about the availability of supported employment, and the process for receiving these services, increases the potential number of consumers who may be engaged in supported employment.

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USING THIS  
CHAPTER

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In the sections that follow, case examples illustrate the principles of an effective referral process for supported employment services, including:

1. Eligibility criteria
2. Making the referral process simple
3. Getting the word out about supported employment

After reading the vignettes, please challenge yourself by listing possible strategies for solving the problems described before reading on.

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SUPERVISOR'S  
NOTE

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**Remember:**

An effective process for referring consumers to supported employment:

- imposes minimal exclusion criteria
- is simple
- involves multiple stakeholders

This chapter lends itself to group teaching and discussion.

You can use one section each week to stimulate a discussion of the issues.

## Eligibility Criteria

This section describes issues related to determining who may benefit from supported employment, as illustrated with Caleb's experience.

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ELIGIBILITY  
CRITERIA: CASE  
HISTORY

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**Eligibility criteria: Caleb's Story**

Caleb is a 28-year-old man with dual disorders of schizophrenia and substance use disorder. During a weekly team meeting, Caleb's case manager reported that Caleb has expressed an interest in getting a job. The case manager described his concern about Caleb increasing his alcohol and marijuana use if he earns money. The past two urine screens have indicated that he continues to use substances.

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TACKLING THE  
ISSUES

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**If you were the employment specialist, what would you do?**

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REASONABLE  
RESPONSES

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**Some Possible Responses:** There is no single *correct* answer as to how to handle this situation, but here are a few ideas.

In supported employment, consumers who express interest in working are referred directly to the supported employment program. They are not screened for abstinence, work readiness, cognitive impairment, etc. As the employment specialist, you support this process by encouraging referrals of potentially interested consumers in team meetings. You educate the team about how work can motivate someone to manage their substance abuse. You could suggest that a plan be developed with Caleb around managing his work earnings. Jobs that may promote abstinence should be considered.

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RECOMMENDED  
CRITERIA FOR  
ENTRANCE INTO  
SUPPORTED  
EMPLOYMENT

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The criteria for receiving supported employment services should be kept to a minimum, and are best limited to the following:

1. The consumer is unemployed (or working non-competitively) and wants competitive work, or
2. The consumer is working but not receiving employment supports, and he/she wants such support.

## Making a Referral

This section describes how to establish a simple referral process, and the steps needed to engage consumers after a referral has been made.

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MAKING A  
REFERRAL: CASE  
HISTORY

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### Making a referral: Sandra's Story

Sandra has not worked in four years, and her case manager has begun to discuss with her the possible benefits of working. Sandra has a daughter who lives with her mother, but with whom she has regular contact. At first, Sandra expressed concerns about her ability to deal with what she perceived to be the stress of working. In exploring this issue with her case manager, Sandra also began to see that work would provide extra money that she could use when spending time with her daughter, and that she would provide a good role model for her daughter. Although

Sandra was concerned about meeting the demands of a competitive job, she also thought work would make her feel better about herself. Sandra told her case manager that her mother is concerned that she will lose her benefits if she begins working again. The case manager mentions Sandra's interest in work at a treatment team meeting.

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TACKLING THE  
ISSUES

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**If you were the employment specialist, what would you do?**

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REASONABLE  
RESPONSES

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**Some Possible Responses:** There is no single *correct* answer as to how to handle this situation, but here are a few ideas.

The process for referring consumers to supported employment services should be as simple as possible, standardized, and widely known by all, including practitioners and consumers. Within the treatment team, referral should be sent to you, as the employment specialist, and to the team leader, so that he or she can track activity. Referrals can be made either verbally or in writing, with the critical information recorded on a simple form (see Appendix A for Sample Referral Form). Any person on the treatment team can make the referral, as well as the consumer himself or herself. Sandra's case manager could refer her to the supported employment program by contacting you, as the employment specialist on her team, either during a team meeting or outside of the meeting.

Treatment teams and vocational teams are organized differently from one agency to the next. In terms of the referral process, the key point is to make sure the consumer is paired with an employment specialist as soon as the consumer expresses interest. It should be clear to everyone who receives the referral, e.g., treatment team leader, employment coordinator, or employment specialist.

Once a referral has been made for Sandra, it is important for you to meet with her as soon as possible, preferably within one week of the referral. The purpose of this meeting soon after the referral is to confirm Sarah's interest in work (or in obtaining support if the consumer is working), and to begin the process of identifying work interests, background experience, etc. This meeting can occur with just you and the consumer, or may involve another practitioner (e.g., the case manager) or significant other of the consumer's choosing (e.g., family member). Because of Sarah's ambivalence about working, it may be helpful to include the case manager in this meeting. Consumers who have difficulty establishing new relationships with practitioners may also benefit from their case manager participating in initial meetings with you.

After an individual meeting has been held between you and Sarah, and an agreement to work together has been established, the treatment team should be notified and periodically updated regarding her progress. At this time, with Sarah's permission, it would also be important to contact Sarah's mother and arrange a meeting to explain the nature and purposes of the supported employment program, to ally her concerns about the effects of work on Sarah's disability entitlement, and to develop a collaborative working relationship that is supportive of Sarah's goal. The initial meeting with Sarah's family could also provide possible job leads.

## Getting the Word Out

This section describes how to maximize referrals to the supported employment program by informing multiple stakeholders of the availability of the program.

### **No one wants to work: One agency's story**

A new supported employment program had been recently developed at River Valley Mental Health Center. At a team meeting, a supervisor commented that she had read research literature indicating 70% of people with severe mental illness have a goal of working. She said that only 7% of the consumers at their center are working. Several case managers said that consumers are not expressing an interest in going to work and few consumers have been referred to the supported employment program.

**What are possible reasons for the low rate of referrals and how could River Valley stimulate consumers' interest in work and referrals into their supported employment program?**

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**Some Possible Responses:** There is no single *correct* answer as to how to handle this situation, but here are a few ideas.

There are many strategies the supported employment program at River Valley could use to encourage referrals of consumers to the program. As an employment specialist, you should educate team members about your supported employment program, and actively seek referrals by exploring with team members potentially appropriate consumers during team meetings. Mental health practitioners often are not aware of the high value placed on work by consumers, and may be unfamiliar with the principles of supported employment. Practitioners may also inaccurately perceive that work may be unduly stressful, or that certain consumers may be unable to work because of cognitive impairments, symptoms, or medication side effects. Arranging a session in which working consumers describe their experiences or inviting a supported employment speaker to address practitioners' concerns are helpful ways to educate practitioners. Communicating the values of work, the fact that many consumers can work despite persistent symptoms or cognitive impairments, and the fact that most consumers do not find that work increases stress (and some report that it decreases it) would help to stimulate referrals at River Valley. Conducting an inservice on supported employment, making brochures available (see EBP website for information sheets for different stakeholders), and mounting posters at the Center are additional strategies for informing staff about the program. The goal is to create a culture of work. All practitioners provide hope and encouragement for consumers to consider working and realizing their dreams.

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INCREASING  
REFERRALS:  
SOME  
STRATEGIES

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**Strategies for increasing referrals**

- Educate the other team members about supported employment.
- Talk to consumers who may be interested in work to let them know about the new program.
- Speak at the local consumer peer support center, if there is one, to educate consumers about work and supported employment.
- Speak at a National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI) meeting to let families know about the offering.

Another way of encouraging referrals is to offer to meet individually with consumers who are interested in learning more about supported employment, but have not yet expressed a clear desire for competitive work. Rather than making contact with you contingent upon the consumer expressing a clear desire for these services, you can meet with interested consumers to educate them about supported employment, and to help them explore whether they might like to try it. Making it clear to the other team members that you are willing to meet with consumers who have not yet decided to participate in the program can increase the chances that consumers will become interested and choose to pursue supported employment.

Motivation for referral can come directly from consumers and their families as well as from other practitioners. Consumers can be educated directly about supported employment services, either by their case managers, through consumer-related activities (such as a peer support program or resource center), or through “information groups” conducted periodically (e.g., weekly or biweekly) at River Valley. Highlighting the supported employment program during the agency’s intake process informs consumers who are new to the agency. In some cases, the supported employment program may be what interests people in receiving agency services at all. Similarly, family members can be informed about the availability of supported employment services through practitioners who have regular contact with them or by means of local support groups, such as local chapters of the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill.

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CHAPTER  
SUMMARY

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Getting the referrals coming can take some work at first. This chapter suggests writing simple eligibility requirements for referrals, making it easy to refer, and educating all relevant practitioners, consumers, and family members about the availability of supported employment services.

## Engagement

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**CHAPTER  
OVERVIEW**

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This chapter describes strategies for engaging consumers in supported employment programs.

Engagement is the first step towards developing a working alliance with the consumer. It is through this working relationship that all supported employment services are provided, ranging from gathering vocational profile information to job finding to support. In addition to developing a working alliance with the consumer, successful engagement also involves enlisting the support and involvement of people in the consumer's support system (such as family members), keeping other practitioners informed, and soliciting their feedback in pursuing the consumer's vocational goals. Thus, engagement is the critical step towards developing a collaborative relationship including the consumer, members of the consumer's support system, and other practitioners.

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**USING THIS  
CHAPTER**

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In the sections that follow, case examples are used to demonstrate how to engage consumers and significant others in a supported employment program:

1. Initial engagement of the consumer
2. Meeting with family
3. Keeping the treatment team involved

After reading the vignette, please challenge yourself by listing possible strategies for engaging consumers, family members, and treatment teams.

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SUPERVISOR'S  
NOTE

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**Remember:**

Engagement strategies:

- focus on developing a working alliance with the consumer
- take place in the community
- involve connecting with the family and other supports
- are culturally sensitive

This chapter lends itself to group teaching and discussion.

Use the vignette, or others from your experience, to stimulate creative problem-solving discussions.

Make an effort to help employment specialists to develop a broad repertoire of interventions that can be used to facilitate work.

## Initial Engagement of the Consumer

This section describes José, who has been referred for supported employment and who has not yet met his employment specialist.

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INITIAL  
ENGAGEMENT:  
CASE HISTORY

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### Initial Engagement of the Consumer: José's Story

José is 34 years old and has schizophrenia. The last job he held was seven years ago, when he worked for three weeks as a dishwasher before being fired for unexcused absences. José's case manager told him about the supported employment program and he expressed some interest in it. José hears voices most of the time, and he and his case manager thought that work might distract him from these voices.

After talking about the supported employment program with his case manager several times, José said that he thinks he is willing to give it a try. Some of the concerns he expressed are that he will lose his disability entitlement if he works, and that he will not be able to handle the stress of competitive employment. José's parents, with whom he has regular contact but does not live, think José needs something to do with his time, but are concerned



about stress of working. In addition to having something to do with his time, José is interested in work in order to have money to buy nice clothes, which he enjoys wearing. Having interested José in the supported employment program, his case manager contacts the employment specialist to begin the engagement process.

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TACKLING THE  
ISSUES

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**If you were the employment specialist, what would you do?**

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REASONABLE  
RESPONSES

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**Some Possible Responses:** There is no single *correct* answer as to how to handle this situation, but here are a few ideas.

As the employment specialist, you could arrange to meet with José to begin to get to know him, to learn about his work history, and to start exploring his vocational interests. Some of these meetings may be arranged in the community, such as meeting with José over a cup of coffee at a local coffee shop. Because the case manager has a good working relationship with José, and it took a long time for him to warm up to the idea of supported employment, some of the early meetings with José should include the case manager.

In addition to engaging José, you may also find it helpful to meet with José's relatives. José's parents are concerned that the stress of working may cause him to have a relapse, and you could explain how appropriate job selection and support could minimize the stress to which José is exposed, and could even reduce his stress level by giving him something meaningful and valued to do with his time. The meetings with José's relatives may be most effective if they take place in their home, and if they include José, in order to reinforce that work is an important goal for him. Of course, you will need a release of information from José to speak to his parents.

Finally, you should keep the treatment team members informed each

step of the engagement process, including the initial meeting, contacts with family members, and possible job interests. If you encounter difficulties engaging José or addressing the concerns of his relatives, you can solicit feedback and advice from other team members. This teamwork ensures that everyone is supportive of José's goals, and has input into pursuing them.

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C H A P T E R  
S U M M A R Y

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Establishing a relationship with the consumer creates a foundation for the rest of your work. This chapter stresses the importance of connecting with the consumer you are serving as well as his or her professional and community supports. Creating a coordinated team around supporting the work interests of the consumer will pay off over time.

## Assessment

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CHAPTER  
OVERVIEW

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An accurate assessment of the consumer's interests and work experience is critical to finding a good job match between the consumer and the employer. In this chapter we review the basics of putting together a vocational profile and developing a plan for finding work.

While assessment plays an important role in supported employment, extended periods of assessment are avoided. Instead, the employment specialist gathers as much information as quickly as possible to begin the job search process at a pace set by the consumer. The gathering of information should not slow down the process if the consumer wants to begin the job search quickly. The profile information helps to guide the planning process. Rather than assessment all occurring at the beginning of the program, assessment is ongoing. The employment specialist updates the profile with relevant information as the consumer looks for and works in jobs. Traditional vocational assessment using sheltered job experiences, work adjustment activities, and testing are avoided.

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USING THIS  
CHAPTER

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In the sections that follow, case examples are used to demonstrate the components of completing a vocational profile and developing an employment plan:

1. Gathering comprehensive information from a variety of sources
2. Developing an employment plan
3. Revising and updating the assessment and employment plan based on consumers' experiences

After reading the vignettes, please challenge yourself by writing out a vocational profile before reading on.

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SUPERVISOR'S  
NOTE

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**Remember:**

Assessment and employment planning strategies:

- find out about the consumer's job interests and work experience
- explore how important people in the consumer's life see work
- explore job possibilities with the consumer by walking around the community together and visiting possible workplaces
- develop a plan with the consumer for finding a job

This chapter lends itself to group teaching and discussion.

Use these vignettes, or others from your experience, to help employment specialists broaden their understanding of assessment.

## Gathering Assessment Information

This section describes Darryl, who has met with his employment specialist to learn about supported employment, and is now ready to begin talking about possible jobs.

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GATHERING  
ASSESSMENT  
INFORMATION:  
CASE HISTORY

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### Gathering Assessment Information: Darryl's Story

Darryl is a 29-year-old man with a diagnosis of bipolar disorder. He takes lithium for mood swings which he says has helped him to stay out of the hospital. He lives with his girlfriend who works full time as a paralegal in a large law firm. Darryl came to the U.S. from Mexico at the age of 12 with his two brothers to live with his grandparents.

Darryl's brothers are very successful vocationally. One owns a clothing store and the other is an accountant. They have both tried to help Darryl in the past, but have become overwhelmed by his symptoms and his drinking.

Over the past year Darryl has experienced increased periods of depression, has isolated himself in his apartment, and has begun to drink more. He has not worked in several years. Darryl completed three years of college but dropped out when he began

experiencing symptoms when he was 20 years old. Darryl said his dream was to be an architect. Darryl reported that over the past several years he has secured two jobs (as a dishwasher and at a fast food restaurant), but both times he did not show up for the first day of work.

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TACKLING THE  
ISSUES

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**If you were the employment specialist, what would you do?**

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REASONABLE  
RESPONSES

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**Some Possible Responses:** There is no single *correct* answer as to how to handle this situation, but here are a few ideas.

You could explore with Darryl further about the kinds of work he is interested in, his skills, and what he would like to do. You could include questions about how the important people in his life see work, what types of jobs they have, and what their expectations for him are. Darryl has expressed an interest in architecture. What kinds of things about architecture interest Darryl most? Would he like to work in the construction business? Is he interested in design? Is he interested in the materials used in building? Has Darryl ever done any work related to architecture? In addition to talking with Darryl at greater length about his interest in architecture and related fields, you should inquire as to any specific skills Darryl might have that would help him land a job in his area of interest. Did Darryl take drafting courses when he was in school, learn about computer-assisted design or learn other practical information that he could apply on a job? Of course, it is possible that Darryl's interests have changed, and this would lead you to explore other, newer interests. Talking with other team members, such as the case manager, therapist, or psychiatrist may reveal other interests and talents of Darryl that he hadn't mentioned to the employment specialist. Involving Darryl's girlfriend, brothers,

or grandparents may facilitate identifying possible job leads, and addressing some of the possible problems raised below.

Talking with Darryl about his job aspirations may result in him expressing pessimism about his ability to fulfill his dreams, and increase his sense of self-defeat, possibly fueling his depression and drinking. The reasons for Darryl failing to show up for his two past jobs should be explored. Were they not interesting for Darryl? Was the money not important for him? If Darryl is still interested in architecture, you may need to encourage Darryl by helping him develop a plan in which he can take small but meaningful steps towards getting work in this area, and helping him see that it is possible for him to find a job that interests him. Depending on how serious Darryl is about pursuing architecture, you might also discuss the long-term possibility with him of returning to school to complete his B.A. degree, or to obtain some specialty skills that could be applied in his field of interest (e.g., taking a programming class).

Last, Darryl's depression and drinking have both worsened in the past year. These problems need to be taken into account when considering possible jobs. You will need to discuss with Darryl what kinds of work he feels he could perform well despite the problems he has had in these areas. It may also be important to talk with Darryl about whether his drinking may interfere with fulfilling his job responsibilities (such as showing up on time for work, being able to focus on work), and to arrive at some tentative solutions for how to minimize the effects of his drinking. Also, talking with the treatment team about how others are addressing his drinking promotes consistent and coordinated planning.

## **Learning From Past Experiences**

This section describes Janice, who has recently ended a job and is now ready to begin meeting with her employment specialist to discuss looking for a new job.

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LEARNING FROM  
PAST  
EXPERIENCE:  
CASE HISTORY

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**Learning from past experiences: Janice's Story**

Janice is a 44-year-old woman with obsessive-compulsive disorder. Janice has been working as a cashier at a local department store for the past five months, and recently decided to quit her job. Janice was a good and valued employee; she was reliable, accurate, and had no problems with the customers. However, Janice said she did not enjoy handling the money, and over time found the work boring. Janice told her employment specialist that she thought being a cashier would be fun, but that once she had the routine down, there was no challenge left.

Janice is interested in working in sales, and she has always enjoyed textiles and clothing. She is an avid knitter, and once worked as an assistant to a tailor. Janice likes working with other people, but she wants to be involved in some aspect of sales before the customer's decision has been made. Janice got along well with her employer, who was sorry to see her leave.

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TACKLING THE  
ISSUES

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**If you were the employment specialist, what would you do?**

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REASONABLE  
RESPONSES

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**Some Possible Responses:** There is no single *correct* answer as to how to handle this situation, but here are a few ideas.

As her employment specialist, you can help Janice view her last job as a valuable learning experience. Although her last job was in sales, Janice found out that she did not enjoy doing a job that simply involved handling the final part of the sale. Janice would like to work in sales, possibly in clothing or textiles, but would prefer more meaningful interactions with customers. Some jobs in this area would involve being a sales clerk, working in a specific department, or developing more expertise about a specific line of products.

Janice’s interest in textiles, including knitting, might be a clue to other possible jobs. Janice might enjoy working in the clothing department of a store (perhaps in the same department store she had her previous job), or a clothing store. Or Janice might want to pursue work in a store that sells textiles, handcraft work, or supplies for that industry.

You and Janice could obtain job leads from many possible sources, including the treatment team members, other employment specialists, and her family and friends. Does Janice belong to a knitting club, or other group who share an interest in textiles? Her boss at the last job liked Janice’s work, and might have ideas of other positions in the store, or other stores. Based on Janice’s experience in her last job, you and she know that the best job for Janice is one that involves doing sales in an area of interest (clothing or textiles), and not simply operating the cash register.

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SEE APPENDIX

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See Appendix B for a sample vocational profile and Appendix C for a sample individual employment plan.

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CHAPTER  
SUMMARY

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This chapter reviewed some assessment and employment planning strategies. Establishing a profile of a consumer’s strengths and interests will help you to match the person with a job that they are more likely to enjoy. Explore job opportunities that flow from a consumer’s interests and skills.



## Job Finding

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**CHAPTER  
OVERVIEW**

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This chapter explores the issues involved in searching for a job.

The job search is where the “rubber hits the road” in supported employment. Guided by the profile of consumers’ work experience, job interests and preferences, personal strengths, unique challenges, and input from treatment team members and family, an energetic job search is crucial to finding the right job for the consumer. In order to maintain high levels of consumer motivation to work, job finding should begin as soon as possible after the initial assessment has been completed, usually within one month of beginning the supported employment program. Successful job searches involve extensive networking to identify potential job leads (e.g., talking to family members, friends, other practitioners on the team, previous employers, community groups such as churches, Chamber of Commerce, and Rotary Club) and active exploration of businesses in the community. While the employment specialist takes the lead in guiding the consumer through the process of finding a job, the decisions themselves, ranging from the type of job to the job setting to determining whether to disclose one’s mental illness, are made by the consumer.

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**USING THIS  
CHAPTER**

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In the sections that follow, case examples are used to demonstrate the components of job finding:

1. Beginning the job search soon after entering the supported employment program
2. Individualizing job finding based on consumers’ strengths, preferences, and experiences

3. Networking to identify job leads
4. Involving the treatment team and family to maintain support

Please challenge yourself by listing possible strategies for searching for jobs for the consumer described in the vignette before reading on.

**Remember:**

Successful job finding:

- begins soon after entering the program
- is based on consumer preferences
- involves networking
- requires the ongoing support of the treatment team and family

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SUPERVISOR'S  
NOTE

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This chapter lends itself to group teaching and discussion.

Use these vignettes, or others from your experience, to stimulate creative problem-solving discussions. You can begin each group supervision by discussing the issues presented by one of the vignettes. When possible, generalize the lessons to current issues before the group.

Making contact with employers is often a difficult task for employment specialists who are new to this kind of work. Encourage the employment specialists to share with each other what strategies they have found effective in negotiating jobs with employers. Set up role playing situations in which the employment specialists practice what to say when contacting employers.

Supervisors reinforce these skills by accompanying employment specialists when they are making contact with employers. Supervisors provide suggestions on how the employment specialists can improve their presentations.

## Beginning the job search

This section describes Steven, who was referred to the supported employment program three weeks ago. The employment specialist has met with Steven four times to discuss the program and collect information about Steve's job history and preferences, and with Steve's family to describe the program. The employment specialist and Steve are ready to commence looking for a job for Steve.

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BEGINNING THE  
JOB SEARCH:  
CASE HISTORY

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### Beginning a job search: Steven's Story

Steve is a 47-year-old man with schizophrenia who lives alone and has weekly contact with his family, including his mother, brother, sister, and their spouses. Steve's social skills are quite impaired; he tends to have poor eye contact and does not speak very clearly. He also has some delusions and hallucinations, but they have minimal impact on his behavior. When he is alone, family members say that he talks to himself and laughs sometimes, but he does not do this when he is around or interacting with others. Although Steve forgets to do things (such as taking medication), his cognitive functioning is otherwise good, and he is above average intelligence.

The vocational profile revealed that Steve became ill shortly after completing college, and he has never worked a regular job, either competitive or other. Steve is a musician who has received professional training as a drummer, and he has taught himself piano and guitar. He has been in the local musicians' union since his early 20s, and occasionally (about once a year) gets paid work as a drummer. Steve spends most of his time alone, but he goes to the local psychosocial clubhouse once a week to jam with several other musicians. For many years Steve rejected his case manager's suggestion that he enroll in a vocational program because he views himself as a musician and is not interested in clerical or service work. However, with a new supported employment program at the agency, Steve's case manager began to discuss work again with Steve, this time focusing more on Steve finding work in his area of interest. He agreed to meet with the employment specialist who reinforced the idea that Steve could find work in

the area of his interest. Subsequent meeting with the employment specialist confirmed Steve's interest in music, and his preference for work in the music business. Steve can read music and has an excellent fund of knowledge about music, especially jazz, blues, and rock. Although Steve's social skills are not great, he likes interacting with other people, especially around the topic of music. Steve said he would most like to play more music professionally, but that he would consider other possible jobs involving music.

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TACKLING THE  
ISSUES

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**If you were the employment specialist, how would you try to find a job for Steve? How might you network with others to identify possible jobs in Steve's area of interest?**

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REASONABLE  
RESPONSES

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**Some Possible Responses:** There is no single *correct* answer as to how to handle this situation, but here are a few ideas.

Steve has a strong interest in music, an identity of himself as a musician, and knowledge and skills related to music. Considering Steve's interest and preference for a job in the music business, it is critical that you focus with Steve on finding a job that matches this interest. Indeed, past efforts to motivate Steve to work were unsuccessful because they did not attend to his interest in work as a musician.

There are many possible jobs related to music that might be considered by Steve and his employment specialist. Steve's primary interest in working as a musician could be pursued by helping him explore job leads such as looking at public postings for bands that need a drummer, checking the want ads of local papers for the arts or the internet, striking up conversations with band members playing at local venues, talking with other consumers at the clubhouse about bands that need a drummer, or meeting with a representative from

the local musicians' union. Contacts with these individuals could lead directly to jobs. These contacts could also result in new, unpaid opportunities for playing with other musicians that could, over time, lead to paid work through networking.

While finding work as a musician is Steve's primary vocational goal, such jobs can be very difficult to obtain, and may take a long time to develop. Thus, it may be desirable to broaden Steve's job search to include looking for jobs that involve music, but not work as a musician. There are many such possible jobs, and Steve's knowledge about music may be a strength in securing such a job. Examples of jobs involving music include working in a music store (selling CDs, tapes, etc.), an usher at a concert hall or theater, an assistant to a music instrument maker, at a radio station, for a publication in the music business, or working at a music school.

Steve views himself as a musician, and he may be reluctant to pursue work that does not directly involve this type of employment. You could explore with him the potential benefits of other kinds of work related to music. For example, by obtaining work in an area related to music, Steve might make valuable contacts that could eventually lead to work as a musician. Furthermore, in addition to increasing his income, Steve might find that work involving music is interesting, helps to structure his time, provides opportunities for interacting with others, and boosts his self-esteem.

Identifying possible job leads for Steve may require extensive networking. Valuable contacts may include Steve's family and friends, the treatment team, and the consumers with whom Steve plays at the clubhouse. As Steve begins to explore different job possibilities, additional networking may take place as he visits different businesses, talks with other musicians, and learns more about music related activities in his community.

## Job Finding with Consumers Who Choose to Disclose

This section describes Anita who has decided to disclose her psychiatric disability in her search for a seamstress position. She wants her employment specialist to help her find a part-time job.

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DISCLOSURE OF  
DISABILITY  
STATUS DURING  
JOB FINDING:  
CASE HISTORY

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### Job Finding and Choosing to Disclose: Anita's Story

Anita is a 30-year-old woman who lives with paranoid schizophrenia and an anxiety disorder. She has been meeting with an employment specialist for about six months. She had wanted to find her own job and not have her employment specialist involved directly with her employer. Anita wants to be treated as a regular worker and believes that she would be treated differently if her employer knows that she had a disability and an employment specialist assists her. She is sure that if she were to make mistakes on the job, they would be attributed to her mental illness.

Recently, Anita has changed her mind about disclosing her psychiatric status because she was unsuccessful obtaining employment. Anita and the employment specialist have discussed how the employment specialist would approach employers on Anita's behalf.

The employment specialist contacted the owner of a small sewing and alterations business that she had used for her own clothing in the past. She introduced herself by saying, "My name is Janice Parker. I am a job developer for Orange County Health Services. My work involves finding good job matches for people seeking jobs and for employers and businesses who need good workers. I am assisting a woman now who has work experience as a seamstress. She wants to return to this line of work in a part-time capacity. I came to your business because I bring my clothes here for altering and always find the service to be of high quality. In addition, Anita is looking to find employment in a small business."

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TACKLING THE  
ISSUES

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**If you were the employment specialist, how would you introduce yourself to the employer and how would you present Anita?**

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REASONABLE  
RESPONSES

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**Some Possible Responses:** There is no single *correct* answer as to how to handle this situation, but here are a few ideas.

Anita initially did not want to disclose that she has a disability to employers. But, like many people who have a severe mental illness, she changed her mind when she had difficulty securing employment. The advantage of being willing to disclose the psychiatric status is that you, as an employment specialist, can then talk directly with potential employers.

You must be very clear with consumers about what is meant by disclosure. In many instances you do not need to reveal any details of the consumer's psychiatric disability to employers because it is not pertinent to the person's employability. Restrict the disclosed information to that which is needed to make the job go well. You can provide information when it is likely to be helpful (sometimes it helps for the employer to get to know the consumer as a person before talking about their need for accommodation). Disclosing diagnostic labels is usually not helpful, and is sometimes harmful, since most employers don't know enough about psychiatric illnesses to make constructive use of the information. In Anita's situation, for example, you might want to let the employer know at some point that she probably will work best at a private work station and not alongside a lot of people because she sometimes feels fearful around others.

As an employment specialist, you will provide potential employers with your business card and a description of what you do when you meet them. Doing so may automatically reveal that the employment seeker you are supporting is receiving rehabilitation-related services. In general, most employers are mostly interested in employees who

will get the job done and are less interested in personal background. Employers are also interested in potential employees who have been screened by an employment specialist for a good fit with the job and work environment. They appreciate it when you offer them back-up and support in the form of follow-up services, in case the employee has difficulties on the job.

You will be more successful in negotiating jobs if you present professionally and confidently. Over time you will become skillful in determining how much information to give prospective employers. You will find that some employers are very interested in offering opportunities to qualified people who have a disability and that it is not uncommon for employers to have family members or friends who have a psychiatric disability.

Another advantage to disclosure of psychiatric disability is that consumers are able to secure reasonable accommodations at the work site. By notifying the employer that the person has a disability, the employer is required to provide reasonable accommodations so that the person can carry out the job tasks. For example, someone who has paranoid thoughts may feel more comfortable if her desk is placed so that people are not always walking behind her.

An important key to job development is being prepared. Know how you are going to introduce yourself to employers. Rehearse your script many times before you use it with employers. Employers will quickly detect if you are unsure and hesitant in your job. If you engage employers confidently because you truly believe in an individualized job match that benefits both the consumer and the employer, you will have many successes.

## **Job Finding and Non-Disclosure**

Some consumers are willing to disclose their mental illness to prospective employers, and with these individuals the employment specialist can play a pivotal role in identifying and pursuing job leads. Others prefer not to disclose psychiatric disorder, and with these people the role of the employment specialist is to support the consumer in the process of finding jobs, while remaining “behind the



scenes.” The vignette below describes the story of Cassandra, who chooses not to reveal her mental illness in the process of finding a job. Read Cassandra’s vignette, and then consider the questions that follow in planning how her employment specialist could support her efforts to find work.

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FINDING A JOB  
AND  
NONDISCLOSURE:  
CASE HISTORY

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**Job Finding and Non-Disclosure: Cassandra’s Story**

Cassandra is a 23-year-old woman with bipolar disorder. Cassandra lives with her boyfriend and has regular contact with her parents and brother, who live in the same neighborhood. Cassandra became ill two years ago, after graduating from college with a degree in accounting. Cassandra has been hospitalized twice for the treatment of manic episodes. Between these episodes, Cassandra often experiences mild to moderate symptoms of depression. This is associated with a lower energy level, which sometimes leads to a strain in her relationship with her boyfriend.

Cassandra worked at several part-time jobs in high school and college doing childcare and at fast food restaurants, but has not worked since the onset of her disorder. She is interested in working in the business field, possibly as an accountant or business manager. Cassandra has not applied for a job for three years, and she is apprehensive about talking with employers and going on a job interview.

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TACKLING THE  
ISSUES

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**How could the employment specialist help Cassandra identify possible job leads in her area of interest? What could the employment specialist do to help Cassandra prepare to go on “informational interviews” and job interviews?**

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REASONABLE  
RESPONSE

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**Some Possible Responses:** There is no single *correct* answer as to how to handle this situation, but here are a few ideas.

Some consumers choose to conduct their job search independently. They may want some guidance and support from the employment specialist but do not want the employment specialist to have contact with potential employers. As the employment specialist, you can review with Cassandra where to look for job leads. You may encourage her to return to the college where she earned her accounting degree to gather leads from the job placement office or someone from the accounting department to find out about job leads. People learn about job openings from many sources, including family, friends, previous teachers and employers, newspaper, job fairs, churches, and community organizations. Employment specialists also assist people who are interested in self-employment.

You will also want to review with Cassandra how to contact employers, how to develop a resume if she does not have one, and how to prepare for an interview. Role play with Cassandra a job interview situation. Have Cassandra role play the part of the job seeker and then the role of the employer. Experiencing the perspective of the employer can enlighten the job seeker about ways to present during an interview. People vary by how much assistance that want. Sometimes people want to do the job search their own way but later ask for help if they are dissatisfied with their progress. In the appendix you will find a checklist that consumers can use as a guide through the job search.

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CHAPTER  
SUMMARY

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This chapter focused on job finding, an active and creative aspect of supported employment. When a consumer chooses to disclose that they have a disability, you can work with the employer to minimize the negative impact of the difficulty in the work setting. When a consumer chooses not to disclose, there are many ways to help behind the scenes. See Appendix D for a copy of Conducting Job Searches: Consumer Checklist that you can give to consumers to guide their job search.

## **Job Supports**

### **Job Supports Facilitate Successful Competitive Employment**

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CHAPTER  
OVERVIEW

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This chapter describes and demonstrates ways in which employment specialists can support consumers on the job.

Job supports help facilitate the vocational lives of people with severe mental illnesses. The task of an employment specialist is to provide appropriate supports for the specific job challenge facing a consumer. These challenges tend to differ depending on whether the employment specialist is supporting someone who is 1) starting a new job, 2) doing a job, 3) having a crisis on a job, or 4) ending a job.

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REHABILITATION  
THEORY

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Job support is psychiatric rehabilitation. The goal of all rehabilitation is to help people do their best in regular adult roles. Rehabilitation interventions can focus on the individual or on the individual's social network, or physical environment. In a general medical example, the rehabilitation of a person who is paralyzed from the waist down can include interventions aimed at the individual, such as building arm strength and teaching the person how to transfer from a wheelchair to a chair, or interventions aimed at the environment, such as building a ramp into a building or teaching a spouse how to assist the person in dressing. Likewise, psychiatric rehabilitation interventions can be focused on the individual, such as using role-playing to teach a person the skill required to relate effectively to a boss and co-work-

ers, or they can focus on the person's support system, such as enlisting family members to help wake a person up on time for work in the morning, or advocating for a work environment that is not too noisy or chaotic.

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USING THIS  
CHAPTER:

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In the sections that follow, case examples illustrate consumers who can benefit from job supports:

1. Starting a new job
2. Doing a job over time
3. Having a crisis on the job
4. Ending a job

After reading each case example, please challenge yourself by listing possible strategies for solving the consumers' dilemmas before reading on.

**Remember:**

Job support interventions can be aimed at

- The consumer
- The consumer's support network, including friends, family, and practitioners
- The workplace social and physical environment

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SUPERVISOR'S  
NOTE

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This chapter lends itself to group teaching and discussion.

Use these vignettes, or others from your experience, to stimulate creative problem-solving discussions.

Make an effort to help employment specialists to develop a broad repertoire of interventions that can be used to facilitate work. Ask them to list out supports to the environment as well as supports to the consumer.

## Starting a Job

This section describes Mary's issues when starting a new job.

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### STARTING A JOB: CASE HISTORY

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#### Starting a Job: Mary's Story

Mary worked as a secretary before becoming ill with recurrent depression five years ago. She misses working and, with the help of her employment specialist, had recently arranged to work part-time again as a secretary. Knowing Mary was anxious, the employment specialist made an appointment to check in with her after her first day of work.

Mary arrives late, with teary eyes and a disheveled appearance, saying, "I can't work. It is all too much for me. I got lost on my way, so I was late for my first day! And my boss made comments about how I look. She doesn't like me." Mary reports that her mother, her case manager, and her psychiatrist have all cautioned her about working, saying it would be too stressful for her.

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### TACKLING THE ISSUES

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**If you were the employment specialist, what would you do?**

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### REASONABLE RESPONSES

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**Some Possible Responses:** There is no single *correct* answer as to how to handle this situation. Here are several approaches the employment specialist might take.

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### STRENGTHENING THE INDIVIDUAL'S SKILLS AND ABILITIES

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#### Rehabilitation supports aimed at the individual

The first few days on a new job are often stressful. As the employment specialist, you want to gather information about the difficulties the consumer is experiencing, since an assessment of the problem will guide the intervention.

First, you can help Mary to become calm by getting her a Kleenex and a glass of water. Help to normalize the situation by saying that lots of people find the first day at a new job difficult but that initial prob-

blems are often solved. Then ask Mary to describe what happened. You may learn that Mary's boss had asked if Mary could begin working an hour earlier than had been originally arranged. Wanting to please her new boss, Mary had said she could begin at the earlier time; however, on the first morning, Mary found it difficult to get her children off to school in time to run for the bus. She then got on the wrong bus and arrived late to work. During the bus ride, she became more and more worried about what her boss would think and began to seriously doubt her ability to do the job.

After understanding the situation you want to respond in a way that is consistent with Mary's coping strategies. For example, you may know from previous sessions and from team meetings, which include her case manager and psychiatrist, that Mary can become overwhelmed with worry, but responds well to direct, practical support. If Mary still wants to work, she may realize it will not be possible for her to start work at the earlier hour. You and Mary need to work out a plan that provides her with the confidence to continue in the job.

The plan could include how Mary could talk to her new boss about her work hours. You and Mary could role-play how the phone call could go. To provide support, you offer to stay nearby while Mary makes the call.

When starting a new job, consumers can benefit from employment specialists reviewing with them the transportation plan for getting to work. You and Mary may want to ride Mary's bus route to work together, timing how long the trip takes and writing out the bus changes on a card that Mary can carry in her purse as a reference.

And finally, you could congratulate Mary for staying at work through a hard first day. She reached out to you for support and assistance in problem solving in just the right way.

### **Rehabilitation supports aimed at the consumer's support network**

The consumer's support network plays an important role in providing effective job supports. Are team members giving Mary consistent messages about work? As the employment specialist, you want to update team members on what is happening and ask their views on the situation. Is everyone on the team supporting the current work

effort? If the psychiatrist, for example, expresses concern about work causing stress, you might describe how others have achieved greater levels of independence by learning ways to deal with stress in work situations.

Addressing family members' concerns and enlisting their support helps consumers in their work efforts. With Mary's permission, you could call Mary's mother. What are her worries? You may learn that she believes you are pushing work on Mary when she believes Mary is not ready. Setting up a meeting between you, Mary, and her mother can provide a way for Mary to clearly communicate to her mother that she wants to work. Families can be very supportive particularly if someone on the team addresses their concerns and provides them with information about the advantages of supported employment.

### **Rehabilitation supports aimed at the consumer's work environment**

The third area of support is the social and physical environment at the workplace. With the consumer's permission, the employment specialist can speak directly with the work supervisor to problem solve. Mary may want you to tell the boss about her struggles with anxiety and depression, but also to communicate her desire to succeed at the job.

What is the employer's assessment of the consumer/employee's work performance? You may learn that Mary's boss had noticed that Mary had been late the first day but had thought that, generally, the day had gone very well and found she caught onto the routine quickly. Through direct contact with an employer you can learn what concerns the employer has. You may learn that the boss's only real concern is that Mary had not brushed her hair and did not look quite tidy enough for her position, which involves greeting the public.

Employment specialists provide guidance and support to employers and suggest ways to help consumers/workers improve their work performance. When you meet with the employer you might explain that Mary is anxious about returning to work, after being away from work for five years. You could encourage the employer to give Mary positive feedback about her ability to learn quickly and to regularly tell her when work is going well to try to overcome Mary's initial

anxiety. Let the employer know that you believe Mary’s confidence will build in time. Employers oftentimes find it helpful to talk with employment specialists to better understand how to supervise and support employees.

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DISCUSSION OF  
JOB STARTS

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Starting a new job can be stressful for anyone. The process can be even more challenging for someone who is managing a mental illness and may not have worked for a while. As an employment specialist, your job is to anticipate and try to head off job start problems. You can make sure a consumer has practical plans to address common concerns, such as waking up on time, wearing the right clothes, and traveling to work. You can coach the consumer to practice the work-day routine ahead of time. You can also work with a consumer’s family, friends, and treatment team to be sure she has the support she needs to get to and through the critical early days on the job.

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COMMON  
CONCERNS

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**Starting a Job checklist**

In the appendix, you will find a checklist that you can use with a consumer to help him plan for a job start. You will also find an expanded list of questions that you can use to anticipate the possible challenges of starting a job.

## Doing a Job

Doing a job over time can bring other challenges, from reactions to a change in routine to a gradual outgrowing of the job. Patrick’s story focuses on this phase of competitive employment.

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DOING A JOB  
OVER TIME

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**Doing a Job Over Time: Patrick’s Story**

Patrick is a 32-year-old single male with schizoaffective disorder who has been receiving mental health services for 8 years. Today, Patrick shows up at the office saying he is hearing more voices and is having trouble sleeping. He says that he has recently been changed to the evening shift at the convenience store where he works.



Patrick's employment specialist asks a few more questions about Patrick's situation and finds out that the evening shift is busy. Often, there are long lines of customers, who at times, become irritated.

On breaks, Patrick has been drinking lots of coffee, and after work, he has been going out with coworkers to drink beer. He says that he does not want to go to the state hospital again.

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TACKLING THE  
ISSUES

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**If you were the employment specialist, what would you do? How would you address supports related to Patrick, his network, and his workplace?**

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REASONABLE  
RESPONSES

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**Some Possible Responses:** There is no single *correct* answer as to how to handle this situation. Here are several approaches you might take.

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STRENGTHENING  
THE  
INDIVIDUAL'S  
SKILLS AND  
ABILITIES

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**Rehabilitation supports aimed at the individual**

Changes in work schedule and work responsibilities can be stressful. Employment specialists need to understand how people respond differently to these changes. What is stressful for Patrick? What would Patrick find most helpful? Patrick may ask for help in figuring out what to say when his coworkers ask him to go out for beer. He is glad for the friendships but remembers that he has had problems from drinking in the past.

Many consumers, like Patrick, are motivated to change because they want to work. Reviewing with Patrick ways to say no to invitations to drink provides him with a response in these stressful situations. Trading off role-playing coworkers who want Patrick to join them allows Patrick to practice the skill.

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STRENGTHENING  
NETWORK AND  
TEAM SUPPORTS

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Employment specialists need to consult with the psychiatrist or nurse about increased symptoms and troubles sleeping. They may recommend an adjustment in Patrick's medications to effectively manage his sleep and voices.

**Rehabilitation supports aimed at the consumer's support network**

Employment specialists are in constant communication with case managers and other team members about how consumers are functioning in their jobs. In this example, you would communicate with Patrick's case manager who may provide more information that is helpful for problem solving. For example, the case manager would know that Patrick's last hospitalization began with a similar period of drinking and sleeping problems. He also would know that Patrick had actively participated in a dual-diagnosis group at the center in the past and had had a year without drinking. When the case manager sees Patrick, he needs to remind him of this achievement and ask him if he would like to rejoin the group. Group members are often glad to see each other and provide useful suggestions.

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ARRANGING  
WORKPLACE  
ACCOMMODATION  
AND PROVIDING  
SUPPORT

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**Rehabilitation supports aimed at the consumer's work environment**

Evaluating how a consumer functions in the workplace can provide clues to what supports and accommodations would be helpful. You and Patrick might discuss what could be done differently at his work site. Is he able to manage the pace and tension of the evening shift? Helping Patrick identify the pros and cons of staying on the evening shift or requesting a return to the day shift is a way to bring clarity to the problem. At this point consumers who have not disclosed their disability status to their employer may reconsider. Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) people with disabilities who are otherwise qualified for the job can request an accommodation.

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DISCUSSION OF  
DOING A JOB

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After a job gets underway, a consumer will be confronted by different challenges. Work may have an impact on many areas of a consumer's life including his daily schedule, relationships with friends and family, financial benefits, substance use, and medication needs. Work will also bring him into new, and sometimes complex, social situations. Coping with these may require your support and assis-

tance. Establishing and keeping contact with him and, when appropriate, his employer, will keep you informed and available to both of them as he continues to do the job.

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COMMON  
CONCERNS

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**Doing a job over time checklist**

In the appendix, you will find a checklist that you can use with a consumer to help her address some common work-related concerns. You will also find an expanded list of questions that you can use to anticipate some of the possible challenges of work.

## Crisis on the Job

In the next section, you will read about Bonita’s Crisis on the Job.

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CRISIS ON THE  
JOB

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**Crisis on the Job: Bonita’s Story**

Bonita has been working as a mail distributor at a large company. She has a diagnosis of schizophrenia, but has not had a relapse since starting this job several years ago. Yesterday she did not show up at work. Today, she is slapping the mail down on people’s desks and muttering under her breath. The employer calls her employment specialist saying he is getting calls from all over the building. He sounds frightened on the phone and wants to fire Bonita.

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TACKLING THE  
ISSUES

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**If you were the employment specialist, what would you do? How would you address supports related to the consumer, her network, and workplace?**

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REASONABLE  
RESPONSES

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**Some Possible Responses:** There is no single *correct* answer as to how to handle this situation. Here are several reasonable approaches that you could take.

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STRENGTHENING  
THE  
INDIVIDUAL'S  
SKILLS AND  
ABILITIES

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**Rehabilitation supports aimed at the individual**

With a release of information, employment specialists can talk with employers when problems occur on the job. In this example, you could thank the boss for calling and provide some reassuring information. You could tell the employer that Bonita has lived with her illness for many years and has no history of aggression. You could then offer to go over to the workplace to try to figure out what is going on, saying, "It would be a shame if she lost her job after years of service, without looking into it first." The offer of an onsite, immediate visit often helps calm the boss in a crisis situation.

Visiting the work site allows you to assess Bonita and the work situation. Is Bonita having increased symptoms such as talking to herself and pacing in the cafeteria. How are other employees responding to her? You need to assess whether Bonita needs to be seen by another team member for evaluation. If Bonita is unable to return to work right away, you would need to arrange a sick leave with her employer.

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STRENGTHENING  
NETWORK AND  
TEAM SUPPORTS

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**Rehabilitation supports aimed at the consumer's support network**

People in a consumer's network may function positively or negatively in providing support. How are people in Bonita's support network affecting the crisis situation? As the employment specialist, you want to find out what stressors are causing the escalation in Bonita's symptoms. When Bonita feels ready to talk about the situation, you ask her about stressors. She may reveal that over the last month, her ex-husband has been encouraging her to have more contact with her children, who live with him. He has also been asking her to contribute money to help meet the children's needs. Although she has welcomed the additional contact and even, to some degree, the responsibility, the increased demands have disrupted her routine. Knowing that Bonita's case manager has had contact with Bonita's ex-husband periodically, you ask her case manager about setting up

a meeting with Bonita and her ex-husband. With the support of you and her case manager, Bonita can work out an arrangement with her ex-husband that is less stressful to her.

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ARRANGING  
WORKPLACE  
ACCOMMODATION  
AND PROVIDING  
SUPPORT

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### **Rehabilitation supports aimed at the consumer's work environment**

Employment specialists need to find out what causes stress for people at the workplace. What does Bonita find stressful at her job? She might say that delivering mail on a new floor is a stressor. Since changing her route she has to walk in front of a man who looks just like her uncle, who sexually abused her as a child. She was able to manage for a few days, but then began to think that the man actually was her uncle and started to hear his voice in her head at work. Even though she is no longer hearing voices, she is afraid to go back to work. She is also embarrassed that she got so sick at the workplace. She worries that now her boss will treat her differently.

One way employment specialists provide support is facilitating communication between the consumer/worker and the boss. You suggest arranging a meeting with Bonita and her boss to talk over what happened and to see if he is willing to put her back on her old mail route. At the meeting, which you attend, Bonita says that she is ashamed about what happened and asks if she can go back to her old route, saying that she found the new route "too stressful." The boss sees that she is back to her old self and welcomes her back to her old job.

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DISCUSSION OF  
CRISIS ON A JOB

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Symptom recurrence or substance abuse relapse may interfere with how well a consumer is able to perform at work. Changes at work or in a consumer's personal life can also create problems at work. While avoiding all crises may be impossible, you can reduce the risk by learning what has triggered difficulty in the past, helping a consumer avoid situations that are high-risk, and monitoring for early signs of a problem. If difficulties do occur, you can often keep a small problem from becoming a large crisis by responding quickly with problem solving and support.

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COMMON  
CONCERNS

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**Crisis on a Job checklist**

In the appendix, you will find a checklist that you can use with a consumer to help him avoid a crisis at work. You will also find an expanded list of questions that you can use to help a consumer through the difficult time at work.

## Ending a Job

In the next section, you will read about Jack’s Ending a Job.

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ENDING A JOB

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**Jack’s Story: Ending a Job**

Jack is a 44-year-old divorced man with bipolar disorder who has been working at the same janitorial job for five years. He is a good worker and has become a team leader, orienting and supervising others. He has been grumbling about being sick of cleaning toilets but has taken no action to look for other employment. Suddenly, he disappeared for three days, missing work and clinical appointments. When his employment specialist finally gets him on the phone, Jack tells her angrily that he does not want to work and hangs up on her.

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TACKLING THE  
ISSUES

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**If you were the employment specialist, what would you do? How would you address supports related to Jack, his support network, and workplace?**

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REASONABLE  
RESPONSES

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**Some Possible Responses:** There is no single *correct* answer as to how to handle this situation. Here are several approaches that you might take.

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STRENGTHENING  
NETWORKING  
AND TEAM  
SUPPORT

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**Rehabilitation supports aimed at the consumer's support network**

Employment specialists are sometimes puzzled by someone's behavior. You might know Jack as a very quiet person but you have always seemed to get along well. You might want to talk with someone else on the team who knows him well and could offer some answers. Case managers, who work closely with consumers over time, can offer a different perspective. Jack's case manager might suggest that the difficulty is not with the global issue of work, but rather, with the specific job he has now.

Consumers may not always want to tell their employment specialist what they are thinking in terms of a job. Does Jack have a strong relationship with the case manager with whom he may feel more comfortable to discuss the situation? Jack may open up to his case manager that the boring nature of his job makes him feel that he is going nowhere in life. He is angry with you for encouraging him to stick with this job, not seeing how bad it now makes him feel. In the conversation, Jack says, for the first time, that he wants to go back to school to study Human Services. The case manager tells Jack he is confident that you will support Jack's goals. He then brings you into the room so the three of you can work out a plan that is consistent with Jack's preferences and goals.

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STRENGTHENING  
THE  
INDIVIDUAL'S  
SKILLS AND  
ABILITIES

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**Rehabilitation supports aimed at the individual**

Gathering information from the consumer's support network, which includes other practitioners and family and friends, helps employment specialists understand more clearly a consumer's goals. Now that you know more about what Jack wants, you can assure Jack that you support his vocational development and that you will be honored to be able to help in the process. You might tell Jack about various programs you are aware of and show him how to research jobs on the Internet.

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ARRANGING  
WORKPLACE  
ACCOMMODATION  
AND PROVIDING  
SUPPORT

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**Rehabilitation supports aimed at the consumer's work environment**

Employment specialists assist consumers in ending jobs in a good way. If at all possible, you want to help the consumer end a job on good terms with the employer in order to obtain a good job reference. Jack might feel he just cannot face his employer after three days of unexcused absence. You could then offer to explain the situation to Jack's employer. You might find out that Jack's employer has been

worried about Jack and is relieved to hear he is safe. He indicates that if Jack really has to leave, he would like Jack to work for two more weeks, which will give him a chance to try to hire a replacement.

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DISCUSSION OF  
ENDING A JOB

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Leaving a job may be a healthy decision for a consumer. Exploring her reasons for wanting to leave, and investigating if there are any other options is useful before any final decision is reached. Of course, the ultimate decision to leave is up to the individual. If she decides to leave, the role of the employment specialist is to be a resource for her so that she may leave the job in an informed and successful manner.

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COMMON  
CONCERNS

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**Ending a Job checklist**

In the appendix, you will find a checklist that you can use with a consumer to help her address the challenge of ending a job. You will also find an expanded list of questions that you can use to think through how to help a consumer end a job effectively.

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SUPERVISOR'S  
NOTE

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We suggest that you use these four vignettes as starting points for discussing the issues that come up at the different phases of the work experience. You may want to ask the employment specialists to write up their own responses before discussing them with the group. Feel free to change these vignettes to illustrate different points. Please add situations from your own experience that are relevant to your town or city.

This discussion may be done in a unit meeting or during group supervision.

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CHAPTER  
SUMMARY

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Supporting the work effort of people with severe mental illness is a creative process. Some problems can be anticipated. Others must be addressed as they arise. Often, there are numerous possible solutions to each challenge. As an employment specialist, you assess each situation, then support the consumer and her environment so that the job works out.



## **Skills: Working effectively with consumers**

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CHAPTER  
OVERVIEW

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There are some specific interpersonal skills that will help you to support the work life of the consumers you are serving. This chapter reviews some approaches that will help you to connect with and support consumers over time.

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WHY THESE  
SKILLS?

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**Our aim is to facilitate recovery which involves**

- Promoting hope
- Helping consumers in their effort to take personal responsibility for health and life choices
- Supporting consumers in getting on with life beyond illness

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SUPERVISOR'S  
NOTE

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Adults learn best when they are actively involved in solving a real life situation that is right before them. In supervision, ask the employment specialists to describe some of their challenges and role-play responses using the skills reviewed in this chapter.

## Promoting hope

Hopefulness can be enhanced by:

1. Voicing positive statements
2. Expressing empathy

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VOICING  
POSITIVE  
STATEMENTS

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### Voicing positive statements

Having gone through a lot, consumers sometimes lose track of their strengths. As part of developing a working relationship with a consumer, you can build rapport by making *positive statements*. Positive comments about the consumer can address the individual's appearance, motivation for work, past efforts to find work, prior job experiences, social skills, or any other attribute worthy of praise. Expressing heart-felt positive statements to a consumer may remind the consumer of their strengths. The positive tone set by these comments early in the relationship can contribute to a sense of optimism and good will that helps the process of job search and maintenance.

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POSITIVE  
STATEMENTS ARE  
IMPORTANT OVER  
TIME

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There is a natural tendency among many people to focus more on their negative qualities than their positive qualities. This tendency can be even greater in individuals with psychiatric disabilities, due to personal setbacks they may have experienced, and negative emotions such as anxiety and depression. For example, when describing one's work history, a consumer may tend to focus more on his job failures and difficulties holding down a job than personal successes. For another example, when describing how things are going at a current job, a consumer may focus more on problems she is experiencing than areas in which she is being successful.

Focusing only on the negatives, and ignoring the positives, can result in consumers being discouraged and pre-occupied by their sense of "failure." By pointing out positive examples of personal strengths and job success to consumers, you can counter the natural tendency to focus only on the negative. Pointing out positives can be beneficial to consumers by creating a more balanced picture of the consumer, which can neutralize, or even make positive, the consumer's overall impression of the situation. Pointing out positives can also help consumers become more aware of their personal strengths, which can be capitalized upon in order to maximize job performance and functioning at work.

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EXAMPLES OF  
POSITIVE  
STATEMENTS

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- “You’ve showed some real determination by going out and getting a new job each time you lost an old one.”
- “I understand that you had to leave work early because you found the noise too loud to bear. I really think you were very responsible in talking to your supervisor about your difficulties before going home.”

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ELICITING  
POSITIVE  
STATEMENTS

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In addition to pointing out positives, employment specialists can elicit from consumers in their own words positive statements about themselves.

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EXAMPLES OF  
ELICITING  
POSITIVE  
STATEMENTS

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**Examples of eliciting positive statements**

- “Can you tell me about some of the things that you think you did really well in the last job that you worked?”
- “You’ve mentioned a few things that you are unhappy about in terms of your recent job performance. What are your strengths, and what do you do best at this job?”

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EXPRESSING  
EMPATHY

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## Expressing empathy

Many consumers report that the faith and caring of their employment specialist was critical to their vocational success. One way to communicate that you care about the consumer you are serving is through expressing empathy. *Empathy* involves the process of conveying to another person that a person understands, and feels what another person’s experience is like. Empathy demonstrates an *emotional* understanding of another person and not just a *factual* understanding.

Expressing empathy is an important skill for enhancing the working relationship between the employment specialist and the consumer. Typically, many consumers have experienced a range of setbacks in the process of pursuing their personal goals, and the memories of these “failures” may interfere with pursuing their vocational goals. In addition, consumers often experience a variety of obstacles to success in the workplace including the stigma of mental illness, socializing with co-workers, responding to criticism, dealing with unclear assignments, arranging for reasonable accommodations due to their psychiatric disability, and concern about the adequacy of their job

performance. Empathizing with the difficult emotions consumers have experienced either in the past or currently, is a powerful way for you to show the consumer you care, and to facilitate that human connection that is critical to the process of supported employment. Sometimes expressing empathy may lead to problem solving, but not other times. Regardless of whether concrete steps are identified to deal with the feelings, showing empathic understanding facilitates the working relationship.

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EXAMPLES  
OF EMPATHIC  
STATEMENTS

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**Examples of empathic statements**

- “How difficult!” or “How painful!” or “How irritating” or “How wonderful!”
- “What a disappointment to lose that job after working so hard to get it.”
- “What a mess! How confusing to expect to do one job and to come in and be assigned a different task!”
- “Lord knows you’ve put up with a lot!”

*Helping consumers in their effort to take personal responsibility for life choices*

You can help consumers in their effort to take personal responsibility for life choices by:

1. Eliciting consumer preferences through the use of open-ended questions
2. Respecting expressed preferences
3. Avoiding giving excessive advice

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OPEN-ENDED  
QUESTIONS

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**Using open-ended questions**

*Open-ended questions* refer to questions that cannot be answered with a “yes” or a “no.” When interviewing consumers, asking open-ended questions often yields much more useful information than asking closed-ended questions that can be answered yes/no. Open-ended questions are very useful for learning more about consumers, including their job preferences, work history, perceived difficulties on the job, and desire for support.

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EXAMPLES OF  
OPEN-ENDED  
QUESTIONS

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- “I’d like to hear about the kinds of jobs you’ve worked in the past.”
- “What sort of things do you enjoy doing?”
- “When you think of the kinds of work you’d like to do, what types of work do you find most interesting and would most prefer?”
- “What types of problems have you been encountering on your job?”

Open-ended questions are superior to close-ended questions because they require the consumer to elaborate in responding to the question, thereby giving you more information about what the consumer wants or is thinking. In addition, by asking open-ended questions, you can have a greater assurance that the consumer has understood the question, since the response must make sense given the question asked. Closed-ended questions can be easily answered yes/no even without truly understanding the question, resulting in an incorrect understanding of consumer preference.

In addition to open-ended questions being useful for obtaining basic information and preferences from a consumer, these types of questions are also helpful in checking the understandings you have with a consumer. With some consumers, it is important to periodically establish that you have a mutual understanding of the conversation by pausing and asking open-ended review questions. For example, asking the open-ended question, “Let’s go over what we’re going to do together when we meet with the manager of this restaurant about a possible job. What is our plan going to be?” is more useful in checking a consumer’s understanding than asking the closed-ended question, “Do you understand our plan for what we are going to do when we meet with the manager of the restaurant about a possible job for you?”

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RESPECTING  
EXPRESSED  
PREFERENCES

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## Respecting consumer preferences

Respecting consumer preferences is a core principle of supported employment. Conflict can occur when consumer preferences are not well understood or are not fully respected.

Conflict occurs when tension arises between the consumer and employment specialist, usually with respect to some aspect of the consumer's vocational plan or problem experienced at work. Conflict should be distinguished from disagreement. The consumer and employment specialist may have different perspectives on a problem, and may disagree about it, without this disagreement leading to tension. It is best to avoid conflict with the consumer at all times, since the emotional tension inherent in conflict may jeopardize their working relationship and undermine the employment specialist's ability to provide support. Honest disagreements, on the other hand, need not be avoided, as they pose no threat to the working relationship, provided they are conveyed in a manner demonstrating mutual respect.

When conflict exists, it is usually because the employment specialist strongly believes the consumer "should" do something (or not do something) whereas the consumer disagrees, and the employment specialist is actively trying to push the consumer in that direction. Trying to make a consumer do something he or she does not want to do is contrary to the emphasis on consumer preferences in supported employment, since it implies that the employment specialist knows better than the consumer does what is best for that person. Rather than trying to force consumers to do things that they do not want to do, creating conflict, it is better to try and understand the consumer's perspective, and to identify and deal with the obstacles perceived by the consumer. If the consumer refuses to do something that seems logical and straightforward to the employment specialist, it usually means that the consumer has a concern that has not yet been addressed, and an effort needs to be directed towards understanding and addressing the concern. Involving someone else in resolving a disagreement, such as a case manager or family member, can be helpful.

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AVOID GIVING  
EXCESSIVE  
ADVICE

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## Risks of giving advice

Giving excessive advice is contrary to the aim of supporting consumer efforts to take personal responsibility for life but it is easy to fall into the habit. Giving advice often sets up a dynamic in which the person giving the advice expects the other person to follow it, and the person receiving the advice often perceives it as expectation. This dynamic often complicates your working relationship with the

consumer by creating a possible tension when unrequested advice is not followed. In addition, when advice is followed, the advice-giving can lead the consumer to rely too much on you or to blame you if the advice does not lead to an effective solution.

It is best to avoid giving advice whenever possible, and to seek to work collaboratively with the consumer to identify solutions to problems and goals. By asking frequent questions, you can help consumers consider possible steps to achieving goals without directly giving advice. Furthermore, helping consumers identify and choose their own solutions to problems and goals creates more ownership for those solutions by the consumer, and a greater sense of self-efficacy.

Occasionally, consumers will directly ask you for advice, in which case you must make a decision as to whether providing the advice will be in the best interest of the consumer. Sometimes consumers will request advice and then reject it when it is given. Sometimes consumers request advice because they lack confidence in their own ability to identify and evaluate solutions. Sometimes advice is requested because the consumer has already considered many possibilities, and is eager to entertain as many others as possible. In determining whether to give advice, you need to weigh the likelihood that the advice will be beneficial to the consumer both in the short-term and in the long-term. More often than not, directly providing advice to consumers does not serve their long-term interest.

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EXAMPLES OF  
WAYS TO KEEP  
FOCUSED ON  
CLIENT  
PREFERENCES  
WHEN ASKED TO  
GIVE ADVICE

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- “I agree that that is a tough decision you are facing. I am not sure what I would do if I were you. What are you considering?”
- “Sounds like a very difficult situation. I’d hate to make it worse by offering you advice that might not be consistent with what you really want. Let’s put our heads together and try to sort it out.”
- “How confusing! Let’s list out the pros and cons of this decision to get a clearer idea of what you want to do.”

## Supporting consumers in getting on with life beyond illness

Supported employment can directly help a consumer get on with life beyond illness by helping him or her with the healthy adult role of worker. Being a worker involves devoting time to a non-illness related activity and often improves how a consumer sees him or herself. As there is always a lot going on in people's lives, supporting employment takes real focus.

You can support consumers in getting on with life beyond illness by:

1. Focusing interactions so that they succeed in developing the work life of each consumer
2. Staying clear about the goal of the work
3. Avoiding self-disclosure that shifts the topic of discussion to you

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FOCUSING  
INTERACTIONS  
ON CONSUMER  
WORK GOALS

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### Focusing interactions on the work goals of consumers

To be effective, interactions with consumers need to be focused on what the consumer is interested in and what you, as the employment specialist, need to know to help him or her pursue work-related goals. You will be more likely to *keep the interview focused*, if you have at least one or two objectives in mind when you meet with a consumer. Consumers may shift the focus of the interaction to another relevant topic, in which case you may either proceed to a change in topic or steer the consumer back to the original topic. Professional encounters may naturally meander off the topic, but it is your role to keep bringing the consumer back to the topic at hand in order to accomplish the work that needs to be done.

The most important reason for keeping the interaction focused is to ensure that it promotes the work goals of the consumer. Conversations that meander a great deal off of the topic may be difficult for some consumers to follow, and may mean that you do not get needed information. While maintaining the focus of the interview, it is also important for the conversation to be comfortable, relaxed, and to allow some deviations from the topic. Such deviations may provide you with useful information that you might not otherwise get.



### **Remain friendly and professional**

As an employment specialist you are a professional. In other words, you are paid to support the work life of the consumers you are serving. Meeting this goal involves being friendly to consumers while remembering that you are not being paid to be a friend.

As an employment specialist it is very important for you to keep your paid role firmly in mind because some consumers may lose track of it or not understand it, particularly when you are meeting in community settings such as consumers' homes, restaurants, and other public places. While your role continues to be that of a professional, other activities may take place ordinarily associated with friendship, such as having a cup of coffee or taking a walk. Consumers may interpret these activities as signifying that the relationship is a friendship, and could change the interaction away from a focus on the consumer's worklife. You need to be aware of these possible interpretations, and work to maintain the distinction between professionalism and friendship, while striving to create a comfortable and effective working relationship. Discussion of how to do this optimally is a great topic for regular supervision.

### **Avoid self-disclosure that turns the attention to you and away from the direct focus on the work life of the consumer**

Sometimes a consumer's dilemma, such as experiences with depression, anxiety, or conflicts on the job, reminds you of something that you have struggled with yourself. In general, it is not helpful for you to use personal disclosure when working with consumers. While careful strategic self-disclosure may occasionally be helpful, in many cases such disclosure shifts the focus away from the consumer to the employment specialist, and detracts from addressing the problem at hand.

Supported employment can play an important role in facilitating the recovery of a consumer. This chapter introduced some interpersonal skills that can be used to promote hope, help consumer in their effort to take personal responsibility for life choices, and support consumers get on with life beyond illness. The interpersonal skills required to be a more effective employment specialist (such as communicating empathy and staying focused on the goal of helping the consumer obtain and maintain competitive employment) can be learned and practiced.

# Chapter 10

## Skills: Harnessing the help of other critical stakeholders

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CHAPTER  
OVERVIEW

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Teamwork among all possible stakeholders and good communication are keys to successful supported employment. This chapter introduces some specific strategies for working with employers, other practitioners, and family members to meet the consumer’s work goals.

Employment specialists need to involve as many stakeholders as possible in the process of exploring job possibilities, searching for work, and providing support after work is obtained. Stakeholders may include anyone with an important role in the consumer’s life, or who is interested in playing a bigger role, including family members and close friends, other members of the treatment team, other potential support persons in the community (e.g., a member of the clergy), and (for working consumers) employers.

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OTHER  
STAKEHOLDERS

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| Potential allies in supporting a consumer’s worklife   |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Family members</li><li>• Close friends</li><li>• Other members of the treatment team</li><li>• Community members such as clergy or teachers</li><li>• Community business leaders</li><li>• Employers</li></ul> |

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SUPERVISOR'S  
NOTE

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When meeting with the employment specialists, brainstorm a list of potential supportive stakeholders in your area. Keep this list in the room where you do the group supervision and add to it over time

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COMMUNICATION

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Maintaining good communication among all stakeholders, and getting everyone's input, ensures that all people involved are working together towards the same shared goal. Keeping everyone involved also increases the chances of identifying creative solutions to problems that interfere with achieving goals, as there are more people and more resources available to participate in the problem-solving. Finally, teamwork minimizes the possibility that some excluded stakeholders will undermine the consumer's work goals because they are perceived to be inconsistent with their own goals.

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CONSUMERS  
WHO DO NOT  
DISCLOSE THEIR  
ILLNESS TO  
EMPLOYERS

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*Specific strategies for talking with employers*

The strategies for communicating with employers depend foremost on whether the consumer has elected to disclose his or her psychiatric disability to a prospective employer. If the consumer has chosen not to reveal his or her disability, your contacts with employers are naturally quite limited, and often there is no contact at all. For consumers to choose not to disclose, you may have contacts with prospective employers in the process of conducting generic job development. The focus of these contacts is on exploring with employers the nature of an expectation for different jobs, characteristics of ideal employees, and other information that may be helpful to a job applicant. Job leads based on generic job development can then be passed on to consumers who wish not to disclose their disability, who can pursue these jobs with the extra help of the information gathered by the employment specialist. Thus, in the case of consumers who choose not to disclose, your contacts with employers are usually limited to the job development phase. Of course, such consumers may choose to disclose their psychiatric disability at some point after they have obtained the job, and there may be other opportunities for you to have contacts with employers to facilitate job support.

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CONSUMERS WHO  
DO DISCLOSE  
THEIR ILLNESS  
TO EMPLOYERS

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For consumers who choose to disclose, your contacts with employers are crucial to the success of helping consumers find and keep jobs. There are three features of effective communication with prospective employers. First, you must strive to demonstrate good social skills yourself, as it will make you a more effective communicator on behalf of the consumers and will create a favorable impression with the employer.

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DISPLAY SOCIAL  
SKILLS

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**Examples of good employment specialist social skills**

- Good eye contact
- A firm voice tone
- Responsiveness to questions and concerns raised by the employer
- A firm handshake
- Dress professionally to match standards of employer where the job is being sought

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SHOW RESPECT  
FOR EMPLOYER'S  
TIME

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Second, employment specialists need to be focused in their interactions with employers, recognizing in the business world that "time is money" and keeping their interactions as brief and to the point as necessary in order to get the job done. This does not mean that conversations are devoid of some socially pleasant exchange, but rather that the employment specialist is always mindful of not wasting the employer's time and of achieving a specific goal during the interaction.

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FOLLOW UP ON  
CONTACTS

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Third, employment specialists need to follow through on their contacts with employers, including checking in to determine whether the employer is satisfied with the consumer's work and being available to provide ongoing support. Many employers appreciate the help and support of an employment specialist when hiring a consumer and value the partnership with the specialist. Even when the consumer is doing well on the job, occasional contacts are often appreciated.

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PARTICIPATE  
ACTIVELY ON  
THE TEAM

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*Specific strategies for talking with other practitioners on the team*

Being a member of the consumer's treatment team, and maintaining communication with other team members, are crucial for supported employment services. True integration of vocational and clinical services occurs when you and the other practitioners have regular and free exchange about vocational and clinical issues on an ongoing basis. During team meetings, you should be an active participant rather than a passive listener. Just as with employers, your relationship with other members of the treatment team reflects true partnership.

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YOU WON'T  
ALWAYS AGREE

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Sometimes, you will have a different perspective than other team members on consumers' vocational or clinical functioning. In such cases, it is useful to listen carefully to the perspectives of other team members, and to reflect back your understanding to ensure your perception is accurate. Then, efforts can be made to close the gap in perspectives by offering alternative vantage points. During such discussions, it is always crucial to keep the consumer's goals at the forefront of the discussion in order to avoid losing the focus on helping that person achieve his or her goals.

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GOOD PERSONAL  
RELATIONSHIPS  
HELP  
PROFESSIONAL  
INTERACTIONS

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In addition to being an active team member, it is helpful if the employment specialist also enjoys a good relationship with each individual member of the team, and has at least some individual contact on a regular basis with the other members, including manager, doctor, nurse, residential worker, and so on. While striving to maintain the team approach, consumers should be kept aware of the nature of team efforts and the on-going collaboration.

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FAMILIES CAN  
HELP A LOT

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*Specific strategies for working with family members*

The first step to involving family members is to obtain the consumer's permission to contact relatives. Involving family members can be useful in supporting consumers in pursuing jobs, providing possible job leads, providing support once a consumer has obtained work, and problem-solving around obstacles to work or difficulties encountered on the job. If the consumer has certain responsibilities at home, such as childcare, involving family members may also be

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ADDRESSING  
CONCERNS  
ABOUT  
INVOLVING  
FAMILIES

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useful in negotiating how and when these responsibilities will be fulfilled, and addressing concerns about whether work will interfere with these responsibilities.

Many consumers readily agree to involve their family members in supported employment. However, some express concerns. The most common concerns are that involving relatives will either result in increased stress on the consumer or will be a burden to the family members. Concern about increased stress on the consumer can be addressed by assuring the consumer that you will strive to make meetings with family members positive, upbeat, and helpful, and that such meetings may actually reduce stress rather than increase it. Concern about being a burden to families can be addressed by explaining that one of the purposes of involving relatives is to reduce possible stress or burden on them by taking their perspectives into account and ensuring that supported employment services are consistent with their own needs and values.

Similar to collaboration with employers and other team members, collaboration with family members is a partnership that requires ongoing communication and mutual respect for different perspectives. Family members need to be informed about the nature of the job search so they can support consumers and network to provide possible job leads. Concerns that family members have about the consumer's search for work, such as the effects of work on entitlements need to be addressed. If other members of the treatment team already have a good working relationship with family members, these team members can be used to facilitate the employment specialist's relationship with those members.

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ONGOING  
CONNECTION IS  
HELPFUL

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Once a job has been obtained, maintaining communication with family members can be helpful for several reasons. You can explore with relatives ways they can continue to encourage and support the consumer in his or her work. Family members can be very helpful in detecting problems at work, based on their close relationships with the consumer. When problems are identified, they can use problem-solving with the consumer to address the difficulties or alert you. By identifying and responding to problems early, unnecessary job terminations may be averted. Maintaining contact with family members can also be useful in tracking the satisfaction consumers derive

from work. Often, early after obtaining a job, consumers experience a range of positive feelings, including increased self-esteem and quality of life. However, these benefits sometime evaporate over time as the drudgery of work sets in, and consumers become less satisfied with their job. Ongoing communication with family members can help detect these shifts in mood and apparent benefits of work, and can cue you to begin addressing these with the consumer (e.g., exploring the possibility of job advancement or other jobs, pursuing education in order to obtain more satisfying work). Because all stakeholders need to work together, communication with family members need to be shared with consumers (if the consumer was not present) and the treatment team.

### *Specific strategies for working with other agencies such as Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)*

Some practitioners on the team may work for other agencies. For example, the VR counselor from the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (also known in some states as Office of Rehabilitation Services or Bureau of Rehabilitation Services) is sometimes a member of the team. The VR counselor brings added resources and services. For example, training, job-related equipment and supplies, school tuition, planning assistance, and support are available for people with a psychiatric disability and have a work goal.

For people who have physical health problems, a nurse from the Visiting Nurses Association may be a member of the team. Any practitioner from another agency who provides services to a consumer is included on the treatment team.

Practitioners from other agencies are invited to be part of the treatment team and attend team meetings. While schedules usually do not permit these practitioners to attend all meetings, frequent communication through telephone calls, voicemail messages, and email are helpful. Be sure to keep in mind that different agencies have different policies and procedures for service delivery. The goal is to work out the barriers as much as possible so that the consumer receives seamless services and is not caught between agencies and systems.

Establishing and maintaining allies among stakeholders is extremely important in supporting the work lives of consumers. This chapter

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VOCATIONAL  
REHABILITATION  
COUNSELORS  
ENHANCE THE  
EMPLOYMENT  
PROCESS

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REGULAR  
COMMUNICATION  
AMONG ALL  
PRACTITIONERS  
IS ESSENTIAL

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CHAPTER  
SUMMARY

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reviewed some specific skills that will help you work effectively with employers, other clinical team members, and families such as seeking their perspectives early and often in the process and communicating regularly.



# Appendix A: Sample Referral Form

## Sample Employment Program Referral

\*\*\*\*\*

Date referral received: \_\_\_\_\_  
Assigned to: \_\_\_\_\_  
First meeting with employment specialist: yes \_\_\_ (date \_\_\_\_\_)  
Employment Plan completed: yes \_\_\_ (date \_\_\_\_\_)

\*\*\*\*\*

Client's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Referral \_\_\_\_\_

Referral Source \_\_\_\_\_

Client ID # \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Medications and side affects, if any, that might interfere with work such as shaking, memory impairment, drowsiness, etc. \_\_\_\_\_

Substance Use: (substances, current use) \_\_\_\_\_

Job suggestions and recommendations for work environments: \_\_\_\_\_

Criminal history(if any): \_\_\_\_\_

Please include any information you feel would be helpful in assisting this individual in reaching his/her employment goals: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B: Sample Vocational Profile

This form is to be completed by the employment specialist within the first few weeks from the time of referral. Sources of information include the consumer, the treatment team, the clinical record, family members and previous employers (with the consumer's permission). In parentheses are suggested probes when interviewing the consumer for some of the information. Add information to the form as it becomes available over time.

### Work Goal

- consumer's work goal and life dream for work (What would you say is your dream job? What kind of work have you always wanted to do?)
- consumer's short term work goal (What job would you like to have now?)

### Work Background

- education (What school did you attend last? What was the highest grade you completed?)
  - work history
  - most recent job (What job did you do most recently [job title]? What were the job duties? About when did you start and end the job? How many hours a week did you work?)
  - reason for leaving job (Why did the job end?)
  - positive experiences (What did you like best about the job?)
  - problems on job (What did you not like about the job?)
  - next most recent job (What job did you do before the most recent job? What were the job duties? About when did you start and end the job? How many hours a week did you work?)
  - reason for leaving job (Why did the job end?)
  - positive experiences (What did you like best about the job?)
  - problems on job (What did you not like about the job?)
- **Use Back of Sheet for Additional Jobs** •

## Current Adjustment

- diagnosis
- prodromal symptoms (What are the first signs that you may be experiencing a symptom flare-up? At times when you are not feeling well or having a bad day, how would I be able to tell?)
- symptomatology and coping strategies (How can you tell that you are not feeling well and what do you do to make you feel better?)
- medication management (What medication do you take and when do you take it?)
- physical health (How would you rate your physical health? Poor ( ) Fair ( ) Good ( ) Excellent ( ) Do you have any physical limitations that might influence your work needs? What are they?)
- endurance (What are the most number of days you could work per week? What are the most hours you can work in a day?)
- grooming (Do you have a place to bathe or shower? Do you have the clothes you will need for work?)
- interpersonal skills (How well do you get along with people?)
- support network (Who do you spend time with? How often do you see or talk to them?)

## Work Skills

- job-seeking skills (How have you looked for work in the past?)
- specific vocational skills (What skills have you learned either on the job or in school?)
- aptitude (what kind of work are you particularly good at?)
- interests - vocational and nonvocational (What have you always been good at? What kinds of things do you like to do?)
- motivation (Why do you want to work? What about work appeals to you? What about work do you not like? Are there things that you worry about regarding going back to work?)
- work habits relating to attendance, dependability, stress tolerance (How was your attendance in previous jobs? What kinds of situations and tasks cause you to feel stress?)

## Other Work-Related Factors

- transportation (How would you get to work?)
- family and friend relationships and type of support (Do you have family and/or close friends that you relate to? Do these people support you? If so, how do they support you? What do they think about work? What are their expectations for you?)

- current living situation - type and with whom (Where do you live and with whom do you live?)
- substance use (Have you ever used street drugs or alcohol? Have other people in your life been concerned about your substance use?)
- criminal record (Have you ever been arrested?)
- disclosure of mental illness (Will you be willing to tell possible employers about your illness?)
- expectations regarding personal, financial, and social benefits of working (What do you think work will do for you personally, financially, and socially?)
- money management skills (Do you manage your own money?)
- income and benefits - social security, medical insurance, housing assistance (Where does your money come from? What medical benefits do you get? Do you know how these sources of income will be changed by working?)
- daily activities and routines (Describe what a typical day is for you from the time you wake up until the time you go to bed?)
- regular contacts (Who do you spend time with?)

## Networking Contacts for Job Search

- family
- friends
- previous employers
- previous teachers

Completed by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Appendix C: Sample individual employment plan

**Overall Vocational Goal:** To work in a part-time competitive job (about 10 hours a week) in the computer field using my typing skills and interest in computers.

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**Date:** 1/4/05

\*\*\*\*\*

**Objective 1:** Seek a job that will use my clerical skills and will have opportunities for computer work.

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**Intervention:** Meet with J. Conway at least weekly to identify job leads. Update resumé. Attend job interviews as scheduled.

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**People Responsible:** Jill Conway, employment specialist

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**Target Date:** 4/4/05

**Date Objective Achieved:** 3/1/05 *Employed at Miller and Associates for data entry. 10 hrs./wk. at \$8.50/hr.*

\*\*\*\*\*

**Objective 2:** Monitor medication side effects to be sure that they don't interfere with my ability to do the job

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Intervention: Attend medication group (led by T. Williams) and work group (led by J. Conway) at least 2x/mo. each to discuss how medication affects my ability to work. Meet with case manager and psychiatrist at least 1x/mo and discuss changes in medication schedule that may be needed for the job.

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People Responsible: Helen Howard, psychiatrist; Tom Williams, case manager; Jill Conway, employment specialist

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Target Date: 7/4/05

Date Objective Achieved: \_\_\_\_\_

# Appendix D: Conducting Job Searches: Consumer Checklist

## Identify Job Leads

- Contact family and friends
- Contact previous employers
- Contact previous teachers
- Visit community resource organizations
  - Department of Employment Security (also called Department of Employment and Training)
  - Libraries, universities
- Use the Yellow pages telephone book
- Attend job fairs
- Locate openings on career-related web sites on the Internet
- Read newspaper want ads and other sections of papers that advertise job openings
- Contact employers for informational interviews
- Use connections to talk to someone employed in the same field

## Contact Employers

- Ask to speak to the person who is responsible for hiring
- Introduce yourself, state your interest in obtaining employment, and explain the reason why you have contacted this specific employment setting
- Ask about steps for obtaining more information and advancing in the hiring process, e.g., fill out job application, set up a job interview
- If there are no openings, inquire about other people and businesses to contact
- Thank person for taking the time to talk with you about job opportunities
- Keep a record of whom you have contacted, the date, and the outcome

## Prepare for Job Interviews

- Review common employer questions
- Prepare responses to common employer questions
- Develop questions to ask employer (e.g., What qualities are you looking for in the person you want to hire?)
- Prepare statement about what you can offer in the position
- Rehearse and role play job interviews
- Contact previous employers for references
- Secure two forms of identification (e.g., birth certificate, Social Security card, State ID card)
- Fill out mock job application to have information ready
- Pick out clothes to wear to the interview
- Know the location of the interview
- Plan transportation to the interview and time required to get there promptly, allowing time for unexpected delays
- Prepare a list of questions that you want answered related to:
  - Job responsibilities
  - Work schedule
  - Supervision
  - Wages
- Ask employer when a hiring decision will be made
- Remember to thank employer at the end of the interview
- Send brief thank you letter after the interview
- Call employer to inquire about whether hiring decision has been made
- If the position was filled, ask about other people and employers to contact

## Appendix E: Job Support Checklists

This section contains two checklists each for the Starting a Job, Doing a Job, Having a Crisis on the Job, and Ending a Job chapter sections. The first checklists are designed to be handed out for use by consumers. The second, expanded, checklists are intended to be used by employment specialists. Neither checklist contains every potential question and not all the questions will be relevant to every consumer.

The checklists are tools you can use to help consumers anticipate potential difficulties and make plans to avoid them. In some situations, consumers may find it helpful to have both a plan and a back-up plan. For example, if a consumer anticipates anxiety on his first day of work and feels it would help to be able to call from work, he might benefit from having another team member's name who can serve as a back-up if you are busy. Practicing a plan ahead of time can often head off problems. For example, you might suggest to a consumer that she actually ride the public transportation system to the work site before the first day of work. The practice would give her the opportunity to experience the task, develop some comfort with it, and identify potential problem areas.



## Planning for success:

### *Starting the job CONSUMER checklist*

#### **First Day Worries**

- What is my plan for managing the natural worries that come in the days before starting a new job?
- Do I want extra support to get through my first day successfully?

#### **Friends and Family**

- Have I explained my work plans to my friends and family?
- Do they support my plans?  
Do they have any questions or concerns that I can answer?

#### **Work Day Schedule**

- What time do I need to go sleep the night before work?
- What time do I need to get up to be ready for work?
- How will I wake up during workdays?
- What is my plan for taking medications on workdays?  
What is my plan for food/drink during work breaks or lunch?

#### **Transportation**

- How will I get to and return from work?
- Who should I call if transportation problems occur?

#### **Dressing for Work**

- How neat do I have to be for the job?
- What do I have to do to get cleaned up for work?
- What will I wear to work? Do I have the right clothes for the job?

#### **Arriving at Work**

- Where do I go when I arrive at work on the first day?
- Who do I report to?
- How will I introduce myself to others on the job?
- What do I do for breaks and lunch for the first day?
- If I smoke, what are the work site regulations regarding smoking?
- Who do I go to if I have questions at work?

## Planning for success:

### *Doing a Job Over Time Consumer Checklist*

#### **Wages and Benefits (Income, Insurance, Housing)**

- Do I understand what will happen to my benefits?
- What is my plan regarding reporting income changes to agencies such as Social Security, Medicaid, and others?
- Have I shared this plan with everyone who needs to know?
- How will I be paid?

#### **Disclosure of Mental Illness**

- Is it a good idea to tell my boss about my mental illness?
- If so, how will I do it?
- Will my employment specialist help with this?

#### **Accommodations and Support**

- Are there parts of my job that I may need to have modified for me?
- How do I ask for this?
- How do I get in touch with my employment specialist?

#### **Work Tasks**

- What are the tasks I do at work?
- How do I ask for help with these, if needed?
- How will I know if I am doing a good job?

#### **People at Work**

- How well am I getting along with my boss?
- How well do I get along with my coworkers?
- What can I do to get along better with my coworkers and boss?

#### **Family and Friends Support**

- Who can I call after work?
- What do my family and friends think about my working?

#### **Money Management**

- What is my plan for the money I earn at work?
- Do I have a bank account?

# Planning For Success:

## *Avoiding a Crisis Consumer Checklist*

### **Knowing Yourself**

- What are the warning signs that indicate you may be having increased symptoms?
- How might these warning signs show up at work?
- What is your plan if these signs show up at work?
- If you use alcohol or drugs, how do they affect your ability to do your job?
- Who can you contact if you feel you are experiencing a crisis and need immediate assistance?

### **Your Work Environment**

- What has happened at work that has been stressful?
- What did you do to manage the situation?
- Is there anything you would do differently in the future?
- Are there small problems at work now that could turn into big problems?
- Is there something that your employment specialist can do to help you?

### **Your Personal Environment**

- What things in your personal life cause, or might cause, increased stress (change in living arrangements, family disagreements, alcohol or drug use)?
- How will you know if these are affecting your work?
- What is your plan for managing these?
- How can your employment specialist and your team be of help?

## Planning For Success:

### *Leaving the Job Consumer Checklist*

#### **Leaving**

- What are your reasons for thinking about leaving this job?
- What are the pros and cons about leaving this job?
- Have you discussed your reasons for leaving with your employer?
- Have you discussed your reasons for leaving with your employment specialist?
- Is there anything that can be changed so that you will stay at this job?
- If possible, would some time off change the situation for you?
- How much notice does your employer feel is appropriate before leaving?
- What is your plan for leaving?
- Are your family and friends aware of your plan to leave this job?

#### **Working Again**

- Do you want to use this employer as a reference in the future?
- What have you learned about yourself and work from this job?
- What is your plan for working again after you leave?
- Have you discussed your future work plans with your employment specialist?
- Are your family/friends aware of your future work plans?

# Planning For Success:

## *Starting the Job, Employment Specialist Checklist*

### **First Day Worries**

- Does she know it is natural to have worries about the first day of a new job?
- Does she have a plan for managing any worries that come up the night before?
- What will she do if she cannot sleep the night before?
- Would she benefit from you meeting her for breakfast on the morning before work starts?
- Would a phone call before work be helpful?
- Are her family or friends informed about her starting work?
- Would it be useful to check with her family if they have questions about her first day?
- Does she know how to contact you on the first day if she needs to?
- Is there another team member available to her on the first day if you are not?
- Does she know whom she can ask questions of at work?
- Is there anyone she can call after her first day of work?

### **Family and friends**

- Are his friends and family aware of his job plans?
- Have you discussed the value of positive support with his support system?
- Do his family and friends know how to contact you if necessary?
- Have you discussed releases of information with the consumer to speak with family and friends?
- Are his family and friends aware of your role and the ways you may be of assistance as the employment specialist?
- What is his or her plan for childcare during working hours?

### **Workday Schedule**

- What is her schedule for going to bed before workdays?
- Does this allow for adequate sleep?
- How will she awaken on time for work?
- What are the tasks she needs to do before going to work?
- Has she planned for eating before going to work?
- Has she allowed enough time to get these things done?
- Has she practiced this plan to see how well it works?
- What will she do if she gets behind schedule getting to work?
- Does she have the means to contact you or her employer from home?
- What is her plan for taking medications on workdays?
- Has the psychiatrist or nurse reviewed this plan?
- How will she take medications at work if she needs to?
- What is her plan for food or drinks for breaks or lunchtime?

### **Public Transportation**

- Is she aware of the public transportation routes?
- Does she know where to get on and off the public transportation?
- Does she have a copy of the schedule and stops?
- Has she practiced using this transportation?
- Does she need you to accompany her?
- What is her plan for transportation fares?
- Does she need a transportation pass?
- What is her plan for getting back home?
- What will happen if she is late getting out of work?
- Does she know whom to call if she has transportation problems?

### **Private Transportation**

- Who will be providing private transportation?
- Does he know where he will be picked up?
- Does he know what time he will be picked up?
- Will he be driving? If so, has he driven the route?
- Does he know where to park if driving?
- What will he do if his ride is not there on time?
- Does he know whom to call if he has transportation problems?
- Does he know where he will be picked up after work?
- Does he know what time he will be picked up after work?
- What will he do if his ride home from work is not there?

### **Getting Ready for Work**

- What are her grooming habits?
- Are they appropriate for the job?
- Does she have what she needs for grooming (toiletries, facilities, etc.)?
- Has she allowed enough time for hygiene and grooming?
- What will she wear the first day at work?
- Is this clothing appropriate for the job?
- What is her plan for having clean clothes for workdays?
- What is the quality of her nutritional habits?
- Will she eat enough of the right foods to last for her workday?

### **Arriving at Work**

- Is he aware what time he should arrive at work?
- Where will he enter the work site?
- Whom does he report to on the first day?
- Does he need you to meet him at work when he starts?
- Is there anyone at work who will be showing him around?
- How will he introduce himself to his coworkers?
- Would it be helpful for you to role-play with him regarding introductions?
- What is he expecting for the first day?
- Does he understand what his work duties will be?
- What is his understanding of breaks at work?
- How long do they last and when can he take them?
- When and how will he eat lunch at work?
- What is the workplace policy on smoking?
- Can he manage his smoking to fit with their policy?
- Whom will he ask if he has questions upon arriving?

# Planning For Success:

## *Doing a Job Over Time, Employment Specialist Checklist*

### **Wages and Benefits**

#### **(Income, Insurance, Housing)**

- Have you reviewed all the benefits (income, insurance, and housing) she is currently receiving?
- Has she participated in developing a benefits plan?
- Does she understand how her work income will effect her benefits?
- Have all the work incentive plans been explored?
- Who will report her earnings to the appropriate programs or agencies?
- Has she signed a release of information for these if needed?
- Have her family and friends been informed of the benefits counseling and plan?
- Have the rest of the treatment team been informed of this plan?
- Do her family and friends know how to contact you with benefits questions?
- Would it be helpful for you to call her family regarding the benefits plan?
- Does she understand when she will be paid?
- What is her plan for when she receives her first check?
- Does she have a bank account or place to cash her check?
- Does she need you to help her when she receives her first check?

### **Disclosure of Mental Illness**

- Have you reviewed the idea of disclosure of a mental illness with him?
- Is he aware of the pros and cons of disclosing a mental illness?
- Have you discussed the best ways and reasons for disclosure?
- If he wants to disclose his mental illness, how will you help?
- What is the plan for when and how to disclose?
- Are you and he aware of the ADA and how it relates to disclosure and accommodation?
- Is he aware of the pros and cons of telling coworkers about his mental illness?
- Has he signed a release of information for you to discuss his mental illness with his employer if he needs you to?
- Are his family and friends aware of the disclosure plan?

### **Accommodations and Support**

- Are there parts of the job that need modification in order for her to be successful?
- Have you and she discussed how to ask for these modifications or accommodations?
- What is the plan for requesting modifications or accommodations?
- Does she need you to be present when she does this?
- Would it be helpful to role-play this in advance?
- Is she aware of the supports available to her by you and the rest of the team?
- What is the plan for meeting with her and her employer?
- Does she understand she can ask for your assistance in such a meeting?
- What is her understanding of how to contact you during workdays?
- Does the employer know how to contact you?
- Is the employer aware of the ways you can be supportive to him and the consumer?

**Work Tasks**

- What is his understanding of his duties at work?
- Is this consistent with your understanding of the job?
- Are there any job duties he is unsure about?
- How will he go about asking for help with these?
- Does he need your assistance in asking for help?
- How will he receive feedback about how he is doing at work?
- How does he usually respond to criticism or praise?
- Does he need your assistance in discussing how he is doing at work?
- If he has a strong response to criticism, have you discussed this with his employer?
- Would it be helpful to role-play how to discuss his job performance with his boss?

**Social Skills**

- What is the quality of her social skills?
- How comfortably and effectively is she communicating with her boss?
- How can you be helpful in this area?
- Is she content with her relationships with her coworkers?
- Does she participate in conversations at breaks or lunch?
- Are there people at her work site that intimidate or worry her?
- Has she spoken with anyone about this?
- Would it be helpful to discuss any coworker concerns with her boss?
- How can you be of support to her regarding working relationships?
- Are there specific skills teaching available through her treatment team?
- How will she deal with friends who visit her at work? Is there a workplace policy?

**Family Support**

- How involved is his family in supporting his work efforts?
- Does he feel he is receiving positive support from his family?
- Has he shared his work experiences with his family?
- Are there any family members he calls to share good things about work?
- How can you be of assistance in helping him to explain the value of this to his family?
- Are they aware of how you can be of assistance to them and the consumer?

**Money Management**

- What is the quality of his money management skills?
- How well has he done with meeting his needs with money in the past?
- What is his plan for managing his paychecks?
- Does he have a budget?
- Does he need assistance in adjusting or developing a budget for his wages?
- If she abuses substances, how will having new money effect this issue?
- Does the client have a plan to address the urges that can come with money?



# Planning For Success:

## *Avoiding A Crisis, Employment Specialist Checklist*

### **The Person**

- What types of mental illness does he experience?
- What does the treatment team notice about warning signs of increased symptoms?
- How might this show up at work?
- What does the treatment describe as his history of alcohol or substance use?
- What work-related problems might occur with alcohol or substance use?
- Does he sometimes stop or change his medications without the knowledge of the treatment team?
- How will the treatment team keep you informed of any medication changes?
- When he experiences increased symptoms, does he tell people or isolate?
- Is there anyone on the treatment team with whom he works best when in crisis?
- What has been helpful in managing crises recently according to his treatment team?
- What other crisis causes, strategies, or ideas does the treatment team have regarding the consumer?
- How does he usually react to increased stress?
- How does he usually react to changes in his routine?
- Does he have strong reactions to certain people (e.g., women, older men, etc.)?

### **The Work Environment**

- Are there situations at work that have become bothersome to her that may grow into a crisis?
- Are there coworker relationships that are bothering her?
- How can you be of assistance in helping her address either of these?
- Is it useful for her employer to notify you in advance of any upcoming work changes?
- Has she, or will she, experience changes in
  - Routine
  - Coworkers
  - Boss
  - Job duties
  - Job location
  - Job schedule
- What have been successful ways for her to manage change in the past?
- How will she contact you if she feels a crisis coming at work?
- Can her employer contact you if she is having a crisis at work?
- Who is the back-up person if you are not available for a work crisis?
- Has she signed a release of information for you to communicate with her employer in case of a work crisis?
- What is the plan for working with the treatment team in evaluating and helping to manage a crisis?
- What types of emergency services are available in case of a work crisis?

### **The Personal Environment**

- Has she, or will she, experience stress or changes in
  - Using alcohol or drugs
  - Interpersonal conflicts
  - Medications
  - Her living situation
  - Seasons or difficult times of the year
  - Family members, friends or pets
  - Members of her treatment team

- How does she handle increased personal stress?
- Does she use her support network or her treatment team?
- Does she know she can contact you if it will impact her work performance?
- Does she know how to contact emergency services in her area?
- What is the plan for working with the treatment team regarding personal stress or changes?
- Do you have a signed release of information to communicate with her family?
- Does her family know how and when they can contact you?

# Planning For Success:

## *Leaving the Job, Employment Specialist Checklist*

### **Leaving**

- What are his reasons for wanting to leave his job?
- How long has he been thinking about leaving?
- Has he attempted to discuss these reasons with his employer?
- How can you be of assistance if he wants to discuss his reasons with his employer?
- Are there modifications or changes at work that would change his mind about leaving?
- If possible, would a break from work help with his reasons for leaving?
- Have you discussed the pros and cons of leaving his job?
- Is he making an informed decision about leaving or staying?
- Is he aware that leaving is his decision to make, not yours?
- What length of notice does the employer expect before he leaves?
- Does he understand the benefits of giving an appropriate notice?
- Will he want to use this employer as a reference in the future?
- If he leaves, does his current position fit the desires of another consumer?
- Does he have another job to go to, as it is often easier to find a job if you are already employed?
- Have his family and friends been informed of his decision to leave?
- Has the treatment team been informed of his decision to leave?
- What is the plan for notifying benefits programs or agencies?
- How can you be helpful to him so that he may leave his job successfully?

### **Working Again**

- Does he know how to get a reference from his employer?
- What has he learned about working from the job he is leaving?
- What, if anything, would he do differently in his next job?
- What is his plan for working again in the future?
- Is this a realistic plan?
- Have you done a reassessment of his job skills and preferences based on the job he is leaving?
- What are the pros and cons of his future work plan?
- Have his family and friends been informed of the new work plan?
- Has the treatment team been informed of the new work plan?
- How can you be of assistance in developing and sharing his new work plan?