TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROCESS GUIDE

Enhancing Workplace Inclusion

for Employees with Psychiatric Disabilities

BOSTON UNIVERSITY

Boston University Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation

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Introduction

Despite an apparent increased desire among employers to retain people with general long-term disabling conditions (Tesoriero, 2001), surveys have consistently reported that the majority of people with long-term psychiatric conditions have been unemployed (Anthony & Blanch, 1989; Mulkern & Manderscheid, 1989; Yelin & Cisternas, 1997). The ratio of successful vocational outcomes for people with physical disabilities to those with psychiatric outcomes has been quoted as 2:1 (Marshak, Bostick, & Turton, 1990). Irrespective of the low rates of actual employment, the majority of this population does want to have competitive employment (Rogers, Walsh, Danley, & Smith, 1991). The field has known for over twenty years that discrimination and prejudice significantly impacts individuals with psychiatric disabilities by blocking access to jobs (e.g., Link, 1982; Link et al., 1987; Bordieri & Drehmer, 1986; Farina & Felner, 1973). Research also has demonstrated that psychiatric discrimination and prejudice has a negative impact on self esteem, employment, and community integration among other variables (e.g., Dickerson et al., 2002; Link et al., 2001; Perlick et al., 2001, Struening et al., 2001) and as such, has presented a major barrier to recovery (Graham et al., 2003; New Freedom Commission on Mental Health, 2003; Sartorius, 2003).

Based on factors that have proven to be effective in developing workplace climates that are intolerant of sexual harassment (Offerman & Malamut, 2002), the following technical assistance process is designed to create a workplace climate that prevents discriminatory behavior rather than reacting to the behavior. The intent is to develop employer organizational buy-in to create anti-discrimination policies, operationalize benchmarks for progress towards the policy, and to develop of a constituency-based problem-solving workgroup that has a lead role in developing and implementing a program to create an inclusive workplace environment.

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Orientation to the Technical Assistance Process Guide

Who is the guide intended for?

Anyone providing consultation to employers whose goal is to proactively eliminate prejudice and discrimination against employees with psychiatric disabilities. (Employers also could use the guide as a self-development aid.)

What are the key components of the guide?

- Description of six guiding principles for the provision of technical assistance.
- Narrative overview of the seven major steps of the technical assistance process.
- Discrete sections for each step including the intended outcomes for the step, guidelines for conducting the step, and a case study example of the step. (The same case study is used to illustrate each step so that a complete example of the technical assistance process is provided.)

What is the benefit of using the guide?

Increased understanding about how to effectively involve employers in the development, implementation, and improvement of strategies designed to eliminate prejudicial and discriminatory behaviors toward people with psychiatric disabilities in the workplace.

How do I effectively use the guide?

Before beginning the technical assistance process:

- Thoroughly review the guide before beginning the project.
- Prepare a personalized method for utilizing the guide while interacting with the employer, e.g., make margin notes, highlight content, develop an outline, etc.
- If needed, develop a more comprehensive understanding of the issue of workplace prejudice and discrimination directed toward people with psychiatric disabilities, e.g., reading journal articles, interviewing people with psychiatric disabilities, etc.

During the provision of technical assistance:

- Review the section(s) of the guide that you are planning to utilize before each technical assistance visit with the employer. (If needed, add or revise notes, outlines, etc.)
- If useful, copy content from the guide or develop auxiliary material derived from the guide, e.g., handouts or slides, for distribution and reference during each technical assistance visit.

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- Keep a log of the technical assistance step, what was most and least effective about that step, and what you would do differently to make application of the step more effective in the future.

After the provision of technical assistance:

- Review the log of your experience during the provision of technical assistance, and, if necessary, revise examples, add more detail to steps, list additional guidelines for the provision of each step, etc.
- Gather feedback from the employer on what he or she believes was most and least effective and recommendations for increasing effectiveness.

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