



THE TEMPLE UNIVERSITY COLLABORATIVE ON  
**COMMUNITY INCLUSION**  
of Individuals with Psychiatric Disabilities

# **Facilitator's Manual: A Practical Guide for People with Mental Health Conditions Who Want to Work**

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A guide from the Temple University Collaborative on  
Community Inclusion of Individuals with Psychiatric  
Disabilities

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# Introduction

Most people with mental health conditions are unemployed and/or underemployed even though many say that they want to work. It is the purpose of the Practical Guide on Employment to provide information and encouragement about competitive employment, to demystify the process of going to work, and to help people know what questions to ask and what issues to consider so they can make good work-related decisions for themselves.

The Practical Guide was designed primarily to be a self-help tool. By this, we mean that a person (or group of people) with a mental health condition would not necessarily need the assistance or involvement of service professionals in order to read and use the Guide. However, that doesn't mean that people have to read or use the Guide alone. As with any other major undertaking, it can be helpful to have company along the way. It can be easier to take in new information or consider hard questions if there is someone to talk it over with, or who is on the same journey.

***We offer this Facilitator's Manual to help people – in community mental health centers, consumer self-help programs, or psychiatric rehabilitation services, for instance - who want to develop structured and semi-structured ways to use the Guide with groups of people with a mental health condition who are considering work.***

Please note that the Manual itself is intended only to be an introduction and supporting resource for people who want to return to work, and is not a substitute for quality individualized vocational rehabilitation services and counseling. It is our hope that this accompanying *Facilitator's Manual* can help people use the Guide as an aide to thinking about, pursuing, and obtaining / maintaining competitive employment who want to do so within a group setting. In this Facilitator's Manual we offer some suggestions, discussion questions and additional sources of information which we hope will be helpful. The suggestions offered here are ideas, not formulas. You will have to pick and choose, and make some decisions about what will best serve your group. In most sections there are many suggestions for discussion topics and activities, and you probably won't need to use all of them. Test out these ideas and strategies and also use your own experience and judgment. As you gain experience facilitating/leading groups, you will get better at knowing what will work, and you will get better at working without this Manual.

This Manual is based upon an earlier work compiled and produced by Karen Escovitz and edited by Karen Escovitz and Richard Baron at Matrix Research Institute, with support from the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research. The current edition was edited and updated by Arlene Solomon, Horizon House, Inc., with thoughtful editorial contributions made by Susan Rogers, Director of the National Mental Health Consumers' Self-Help Clearinghouse, in Philadelphia. Formatting and editing were provided by Jared S. Pryor, Temple University Collaborative; and graphics design were provided by Maria del Mar Cabiya, Philadelphia Department of Behavioral Health & Intellectual Disability Services. Copies of the Facilitator's Manual can be downloaded from the Collaborative's website at [tucollaborative.org](http://tucollaborative.org).

# Some Defining Features of Groups

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Drop-in Groups vs. Set Membership - With drop-in groups, people can drop in as they feel like it, or as they need to, and you will have different participants at each meeting. With set membership groups, you have people sign up for the group, and have the same participants each time. It can be hard to build on past information or group experience with drop-in groups, and hard to build relationships and create continuity. On the other hand, it also means that you may have fresh new perspectives each week, and it creates an open atmosphere that can feel welcoming to some participants. For others who may want to develop a sense of safety and trust by meeting with the same group of people, a set membership group might be more comfortable. It is possible to set up a kind of compromise between these, in which there is set membership for a few weeks in which a particular topic is covered, and then the group opens up again for new participants.

## Leadership Structure

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There should be clarity about what sort of leadership structure your group will have. Peer-led groups are groups in which the leader or organizer is like the other group members in an important way (e.g. the leader is also a person in recovery). Participants often find it easier to open up and trust someone who shares their struggles. A group might also be organized or led by a person from a provider agency such as an employment specialist who may bring specific expertise or resources to the group. It is also possible to have a group where there is no leader per se, and the group members set the agenda together and monitor how things are going.

Your group might have one kind of structure for the entire life of the group, or you might vary it meeting by meeting, depending on the topic. For instance, you may want to bring in an outside expert for one session to teach about Social Security benefits, but then have another session in which there is open discussion (with no leader) about job search frustrations. It is important, however, that the participants in the group understand whichever leadership structure is being used so they know what to expect.

## Different Leadership Functions

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There are different functions that can be important to the life and success of the group. A leader might use these depending on the purpose and needs of the group. It is possible for one person to be responsible for more than one function, or you might consider splitting up these jobs among different people -- e.g. bring in a teacher from outside who has special expertise, have one person take care of coordinating tasks, and another attend to facilitating the group attending to group process.

*Coordination:* This means taking care of logistics like making sure there's a space to meet, making sure that participants know when and where the group meets, refreshments, materials, etc. The person responsible for coordination must be able to attend to details, and be reliable and consistent.

*Facilitation:* Facilitation is about helping the group stay on topic, making sure everyone gets a chance to participate, making sure that ground rules are followed and that things are running smoothly. The

person who is facilitating must attend to group process, fairness, safety and confidentiality. Being a good facilitator requires the ability to pay close attention to what is happening, to participants' feelings, and to whether the group's ground rules are being followed.

*Teaching/Educating:* The person who is responsible for this function helps the group to understand the material and learn what they need to know. Being a good teacher / educator requires thorough knowledge of the information or skills being taught, the ability to explain and clarify things well, and the ability to be patient with people's different learning styles and rates. Teachers / educators often need to be able to role model or demonstrate the principles or skills that they are teaching.

It is important, when deciding who will be providing these different leadership functions, to make sure that each job is done by someone who has the necessary skills or strengths. For instance, someone who is not good at dealing with details would not be the best choice to handle the coordination responsibilities.

## The Life of the Group

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As you are getting started, give some thought to the life of the group across sessions. It is important to have a plan for how your group will go. You will probably make adjustments to the plan as you go along, but you should start out with an idea that you think will be effective and helpful for the group participants.

*The Purpose:* make sure you define what your purpose is for gathering the group. Some possible purposes might be: to educate participants about the value and possibility of work, to share information and strategies, to actually help people get jobs, to share support while people are considering or pursuing jobs, to encourage participants to think about a productive future for themselves, etc. You may have more than one purpose. For that matter, your purpose may change over time. Whatever you decide, you will need to be able to tell people what to expect from the group. It is likely that the people who attend most consistently will be those individuals who are most closely aligned with the purpose of the group. Defining your purpose will help you determine other characteristics such as how often to meet, who you want to invite into the group, what leadership is needed, etc.

*The Mechanics:* it's not difficult to set up a group. You need a space to meet, a schedule (regular meeting times work best), a plan for how many times you will meet, and a way to let people know about it. When promoting the group, you should be clear about who is invited to participate, what the purpose of the group is, and what the time commitment will be so that people know what they're signing up for. Think about what time of day will work best for the people you expect to participate in the group. Also, try to find a location that is easy for people to get to.

*The First Session:* when your group first starts to meet, you will need to review the purpose and ground rules of the group and give people a chance to make a choice about whether they want to stay or leave. Put ground rules in place along with a plan for what will happen if someone breaks the rules. This might range from being reminded

about the rule, to being given a warning, to being asked to leave the group. It can be important to spend a little time getting to know each other. Have members of the group introduce themselves and talk a little bit about why they want to be in the group, or why they are interested in working.

*Session by Session:* it is important to pay attention to pacing. You will want to move through the material quickly enough that participants don't get bored, and slowly enough that most people are keeping up with the group. After the first few meetings, you will get a sense of how much your group can do in one meeting. If your group tends to go off-topic, or if things are moving too slowly for you to accomplish your planned agenda, you may have to decide whether to change the agenda, or whether to take a more focused approach to the material. If one issue keeps coming up, it may be an indication that participants want or need to talk about that issue. Decide whether it makes sense to let that issue have a session of its own, or whether it's important to stick to your original plan.

*Winding Down:* Make sure to end the group when you said you would, unless you have made an agreement with the group to continue. Prepare participants a few weeks ahead of time and then countdown to the end of the group. Make sure to leave some time to summarize what the group has done/discussed and leave time to plan next steps both for the group and for individuals. If you didn't cover all the material you planned to or if the participants want to continue, it is better to start up another group than to extend the first one beyond the stated time frame.

# Ground Rules

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It is important that expectations for behavior during the group are clear to all participants at the beginning of the group. You should plan to review them in detail during the first group session. You may also need to remind participants periodically about your ground rules. The rules you put in place in your group should be the minimum necessary to ensure safety, privacy, and respect for all group members (including the facilitator!). Below are some ideas for ground rules. You may not need all of these, or there may be other rules that are important to your group.

## Housekeeping

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Define your group's purpose clearly, and agree to stick to that purpose during group sessions. Remind participants that it is disrespectful of other group members to impose outside agendas or issues into the group's time. Example: "This group is convened for the purpose of helping all group members explore their interest in working." Or "This is a job club in which all participants are actively seeking employment and are helping / supporting each other in doing so."

Have a clear attendance policy. Example: "Group members are expected to attend every week for the next 10 weeks. If someone misses 3 meetings, they will be asked to leave this group and wait for a chance to participate in the next one." Or "This is a drop-in group. Therefore, it is open to anyone from the community who has a mental health diagnosis and is considering work. Participants may attend one

session or as many as they see fit." Decide what attendance policy makes sense for your group.

Be clear about location, starting time and ending time, and stick to it. It is disrespectful of those who make sure to arrive on time if the start time is delayed significantly for latecomers.

## Values and Behaviors

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Clarify the values that the group will share, and it will lead you to identify expectations for the way that participants will behave and treat each other. Below are some examples of values that the group may choose to share, and some ways that this can translate into ground rules for participation.

- **Personal Responsibility.** Make sure everyone understands what your responsibility is, and is not, as group leader or facilitator. Be prepared to meet that responsibility consistently. Articulate the responsibilities of participants also. Example: "My job in the group is to keep us on topic, help make sure everyone gets a chance to participate, and to make sure the room is open on time, and locked at the end of group." and "Each participant is responsible for his or her own level of participation, attendance, for being on time and for completing 'homework' assignments."
- **Mutual Respect.** Respect for peers is important. There are many behavioral ground rules that may relate to conveying respect. For instance, decide what the group's standards are regarding harsh language. Let people know that while disagreements are inevitable, personal attacks will not be tolerated. Interrupting can be a common problem in groups, and you might also consider making a

rule about not interrupting other participants when they are speaking. Depending on the group, there may be other types of ground rules that will help to maintain an atmosphere of respect such as how participants dress, how they address each other, etc.

- **Right to Privacy.** Create clear expectations regarding privacy. If your group is operating within an agency or organization, there may already be rules about confidentiality that the group needs to follow. However, even if the group is completely independent, participants need to know that their privacy will be respected. Example: “What and who is seen and heard in this group stays here, within the group, and is not to be discussed outside of this group.” Or “It is ok to talk with others about the general issues that we discuss here, but do not ever share anyone else’s story without their permission.” Also, sometimes people ask for a phone list of all group members. Decide as a group whether this is ok or not.
- **Equal Opportunity to Participate.** Everyone deserves opportunities to speak. Sharing group time or “air time” should be expected of all members. Some may choose not to speak much, but that doesn’t mean they are not benefiting from the group. It is important that individuals do not dominate the group’s time with their own personal issues. TIP: If one person is dominating the group, explore the possibility that this person may need additional attention outside of the group so that his/her issues will not dominate group life. This can also be related to the issue of treating each other with respect.
- **Diversity is OK.** Acknowledge diversity within the group-- whether visible or not. People will bring various life experiences to the group, and will be at different levels educationally, occupationally, and in terms of their challenges. Avoid value judgments about people in the group and their unique characteristics. Articulate that all experiences and questions are valid and valuable material for the group, and that each participant

is entitled to her/his own opinion. TIP: It can be helpful to invite people to use “I” statements (telling about their own experiences and/or opinions), rather than judging other people’s experiences or opinions.

## Structuring Sessions

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Here are some tips for running group sessions

- Start and end on time.
- Have a plan ahead of time for what you want to accomplish in your session. Then structure the time in a way that will help you do this.
- One common group technique is to have a “check-in” at the beginning or at the end of the session. This can help people transition into the session and helps participants know each other better. A typical check-in might be to respond to a question like: “How are you feeling today?” or “How was your week?”, “What have you been thinking about employment issues this week?” Or “What progress have you made in your job search this week?”
- An alternative is to have a check-in at the end of the session. Leave enough time for each person to be able to speak briefly about they felt about that day’s group.
- Open-ended discussions have a way of eating up a lot of time. This is fine, and sometimes is exactly what the group needs. However, if you are trying to teach information, it can help to save the discussion for after you’ve covered the desired material.
- Try to pace the group slowly enough that most participants can keep up, but quickly enough that things don’t get boring. If you have someone who seems to want to move much faster or much

slower than the rest of the group, it may be helpful to spend time with that person outside of group, either giving them extra things to do or to help them catch up. If you let that one person's needs determine the pace of the group, you run the risk that other participants may be annoyed or come to resent that person.

- Pay attention to who is active and who tends to be quiet in your group. Try to make room for the shy types by asking them questions and offering opportunities for them to speak, but do not force them or embarrass them.
- One way to cover the Guidebook material is to have participants read an assigned section (or part of one) prior to the start of the session. Then each person can read at her or his own pace and you can start your group activities based on the assumption that you share certain information.
- Participants might also be asked to prepare for a session ahead of time by doing "homework" assignments (e.g. keeping a journal, cutting out want ads, drafting a cover letter, etc.) This can help participants to stay engaged with the material in between sessions, and can provide a springboard for group activities and discussion in the next session. If you do choose to give such assignments, make sure the expectations are clear and understood by all participants.

Please Note: Written material in the Guide may be difficult for some people to read or understand. Some sections may be harder than others. If participants are having difficulty it can help to read parts out loud in the group, and then discuss it together until everyone seems to understand the content. As facilitator, you should be prepared to help explain the material in the Guide to any participants who need it.

# There are Different Options for Using the Guidebook

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You may go through the materials section by section as a group one section per week, or one at a time at whatever pace works for the group

You might want to use some, or all of the Guidebook as supplemental materials in a pre-existing group; to provide or add to information in a pre-designed curriculum or as a special topic in a back-to-work group. For instance, if you have a peer support group already running and people have questions about job accommodations, you could provide the group with copies of Section 11 for discussion.

You might use clusters from the Guide together for a period of a few weeks at a time. Here's one possible way to cluster the sections:

- Section 1, 2, 3 to explore values, hopes and fears about work;
- Section 4, 5 to address empowerment issues and assess interests/goals;
- Section 6, 7, 8 for information and strategies for job hunting or for use with people who are actively job hunting;
- Section 9, 10 to provide information about and discuss benefits issues;

- Section 11, 12 to talk about workplace rights;
- Section 13, 14, 15 with people starting jobs or already working to help maintain attachment to the workforce.

In summary, you have a lot of choices to make and some planning to do if you choose to use the Guidebook as a way to encourage individuals to return to competitive employment. Think carefully about your plans, discuss them with your colleagues and supervisors, ensure that the people who will be participating in the group have a range of choices about how the group will operate, and then enjoy the discussions!



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*Facilitator's Guide for Section 1:*

# **An Introduction to Mental Health Challenges and Work**

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## Purpose of this Section

Section 1 gives an overview of the Guide and various issues one might address in considering work. Some readers might find this overwhelming, but others will appreciate knowing the topics and having a sense of where things are going.



## Suggested Activities

- Review the topics together and discuss how they fit into your group's schedule. How many times will you meet, and what will be covered each time?
- Identify together any topics that group members are particularly interested in or worried about. This will help you plan future sessions.
- Define the terms you will use as a group. In particular, figure out what term(s) to use for people living with mental health diagnoses (e.g., "consumer," "person in recovery.") Also, define together what your group will mean by "work." (Part time or full time? Volunteer or paid? Temporary or

## Group Objectives



- Introduce topics/issues.
- Define terms.
- Get to know each other.

permanent?)



## Suggested Discussion Questions

- Why have you chosen to participate in this group at this time?
- What kind of work (if any) have you done in your life?
- What role (if any) do you want work to have in your life?
- What would you like to get out of this group experience?
- Have you ever had a job you liked? What did you like about it?
- Have you ever had a job you hated? What did you hate about it?
- What changes do you hope working will make in your life?
- What changes are you afraid working might make in your life?
- What work-related goals (if any) do you have?



## Tips

- Start with the descriptive and/or positive. There will be plenty of time in upcoming groups to discuss barriers and difficulties.
- If this section corresponds with the

beginning of your group, address any “housekeeping” issues, such as the time and place your group will meet, the number of sessions, attendance expectations and ground rules.

- It may be difficult to keep participants from jumping ahead and seeking extended discussion of particular topics. If this happens, reassure participants that these issues will be addressed as the group progresses.



## Outcomes

By the time you have finished covering Section 1, group members should:

- a) understand the range of issues that will be covered by the Guide and/or by the group over time, and know what to expect.
- b) have a shared set of terms that they can use in future meetings.
- c) have begun to share with each other some of their thoughts and /or feelings about work in their own lives.



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## Facilitator's Guide for Section 2: **The Importance of Work**

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## Purpose of this Section

Section 2 introduces some of the potential advantages of working, and reviews some of the evidence that work is a realistic possibility for the majority of persons with mental health diagnoses. It provides encouragement and tips for starting to make decisions about work.



## Suggested Activities

- Review the advantages of working listed in this section. Brainstorm about other potential benefits of working.
- Present some information about people with mental health diagnoses who have succeeded at working. Include information about both famous and ordinary people and various types of jobs.
- Invite a few employed individuals to talk to your group about why and how they decided to begin to work or return to work, what they get out of it, how they knew it was possible, and what helped them keep their jobs.
- Review the “How to Get Started” strategies in this section. Point out that participants already have an advantage because of having the group as a source of

## Group Objectives



- Explore the advantages of working.
- Develop a sense of the possibility of working.
- Identify sources of support.
- Take some first steps together.

support/information. Ask group members to do one thing from the list of “how to get started” suggestions between this meeting and the next one. Suggest some websites for people to visit and report back about.

- Provide information about local employment resources. Invite participants to share any information, programs, agencies and counselors that have helped them with employment.
- Help each participant identify specific people with whom they could discuss their ideas and aspirations about work. These could be family members, peers, counselors, clergy, etc., and should be chosen for their willingness to support the participant in making his/her own choices about work. In addition, group members might discuss how they could rely on one another for such support.



## Suggested Discussion Questions

- What advantages of working are most important to you? Why?
- Do you think it's possible for you to work? Why/why not? What would make it possible? Talk about any job experiences that were successful and why they were successful.
- Do you know anyone with a mental health diagnosis who works? What kind of work do they do? What are their hours? Did they get the job themselves or did an

agency/program help? Does the employer provide any accommodations for the person based on his/her disability? (The point is to communicate both the possibility of working and the diversity of jobs, arrangements, etc.)

- Do you feel discouraged or hopeful about working? Why? Where/from whom do you get messages about whether or not you could or should work?



## Tips

- It is important for the facilitator to help find a balance between two popular but opposing beliefs: first, that work is difficult or overwhelming; and, second, that work will be wonderful and solve all of a person's problems. Discuss work in terms that are both realistic and encouraging.
- Participants will probably bring up their specific concerns. Some group members may have tried to work and lost or left a job. Some may have been told that they couldn't or shouldn't try. Some might feel discouraged and hopeless. Participants may be afraid that if they try, they will fail. These fears are normal and should be acknowledged and not dismissed.
- For the person who has tried and "failed," point out that most people (regardless of disability) go through several different jobs before they find something that is right for

them. Losing or leaving a job is not a “failure” but an opportunity to learn something that will help them do it differently the next time. Also, the group leader can point out that they now have the opportunity to gain information and support that they probably didn’t have the last time around.

- For those who fear (or have been told) that work stress will negatively affect their mental health, point out that for some people working results in fewer psychiatric symptoms and fewer crises. It is different for each person. It helps to have a good sense of what you can and cannot do so that you can look for a job that matches your abilities. However, sometimes you just don’t know until you try something. It’s okay to try something and then stop if it isn’t working out.
- Encourage those who are generally discouraged to stay in the group. Maybe they will learn something from another participant that will make them feel more hopeful about working.
- For some socially isolated individuals, the facilitator may need to volunteer to help connect participants with peers or other supports.
- It is important to emphasize at the beginning and throughout the meetings that participants need to learn effective ways to manage their mental health challenges and how to keep themselves healthy, including eating a healthy diet and exercising. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) website

on its Wellness Initiative has many suggestions. Visit <http://store.samhsa.gov/product/SAMHSA-s-Wellness-Initiative-Information-For-Consumers/SMA12-4567>. You may want to explore ways to reduce stress and start each group with a relaxation exercise. Many resources can be found on the Internet as well as in bookstores.



## Outcomes

By the time you have finished covering Section 2, participants should:

- a) be aware of several possible advantages of working.
- b) be aware that working is possible for the vast majority of people with a mental health diagnosis (whether or not they believe that it is possible for them personally).
- c) have identified at least one person whom they feel comfortable talking to about working.
- d) have identified a first step they can take to begin exploring employment options.



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# Facilitator's Guide for Section 3: **Overcoming Barriers to Employment**

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## Purpose of this Section

Section 3 reviews some barriers that may confront people with mental health conditions, and offers strategies and resources for overcoming them. The reader is encouraged to use this information to consider what their own barriers might be and to anticipate strategies to help them overcome these barriers.



## Suggested Activities

- Review the barriers listed in the Section. Invite participants to share experiences they have with those barriers, and if anything ever helped them. Look at the strategies identified in the Section for each barrier. See if anyone in the group has ever used those strategies successfully.
- Have a participant describe a problem they have had at a job that is related to one of the barriers listed. Ask how they handled it, and what the results were. Were they satisfied with the outcome? Invite the group to generate other possible ways of understanding the problem and other possible strategies for handling the situation.
- Provide information about local vocational

## Group Objectives



- Identify one's own barriers to employment.
- Identify strategies for managing challenges/overcoming barriers related to employment.
- Identify local resources (programs, agencies) for helping people with mental health diagnoses to work.

rehabilitation programs. Invite participants to share any experiences they have had with local programs. Using the descriptions of different program models in this Section, identify what types of programs are available locally and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each.



## Suggested Discussion Questions

- What barriers to getting or keeping a job have you experienced related to your mental health challenges? What kinds of difficulties resulted? What strategies helped?
- What strategies have you already used to cope with your mental health challenges (e.g., in non-employment situations)? How might these strategies be useful in an employment situation?
- Have you ever participated in a vocational rehabilitation program? What was it like? Did it have any of the “key program features” listed in this Section?
- What program features would help you the most in getting or keeping a job?
- For the facilitator: If possible, schedule visits to some programs. If it is not possible for group members to go out, invite speakers from different agencies, including a state vocational rehabilitation agency, to talk to the group. After the visits, discuss the pros and cons of each program.



## Tips

- Some people may need to read the Section before they understand what is meant by barriers and strategies.
- Discussing barriers can be discouraging. Your challenge as the facilitator is to keep the tone of the group optimistic without dismissing the very real difficulties group participants may face. One approach is to keep the focus on overcoming barriers rather than on the barriers themselves. Continue to have successful individuals talk to the group or share success stories at each meeting.
- The point is to start people thinking from a problem-solving perspective.
- Remind people that they don't have to do it all themselves: they can and should ask for help.
- Do *your* homework: investigate whether any vocational rehabilitation programs are in your area. Generate a list of programs with contact phone numbers to distribute to the group. Collect more information based on what participants share in the group.

## Outcomes



By the time you have finished covering Section 3, participants should:

- a) be aware of at least some of the barriers to employment that they experience as a direct or indirect result of their mental health challenges.
- b) be aware that strategies can be used to address these barriers.
- c) begin to generate strategies for specific barriers they may be experiencing.
- d) be informed about local vocational rehabilitation services.



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# Facilitator's Guide for Section 4:

## **Empowerment:**

## **You are in Charge**

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## Purpose of this Section

Section 4 conveys to the reader that they have both the right and the responsibility to make their own decisions about work, and helps the reader gain control over their rehabilitation process.



## Suggested Activities

- Discuss how taking charge of your own life is harder, and how it is easier, than relinquishing control. Using a blackboard or flip chart, make a list together of the pros and cons of making your own life decisions. What are the costs and rewards?
- Have individuals share a story (past, present or hypothetical) about a situation where choice/control was taken by someone else on their behalf. The individual can practice what he or she might like to say or do to change the situation. A variation is to let the group offer suggestions for ways to change the situation, and then let the individual consider and /or practice those strategies. If the group is cohesive enough, you might role-play the interaction.
- Invite a local consumer activist to speak to your group about consumer empowerment or rights.

## Group Objectives



- Build an understanding and develop a value for consumer empowerment and choice as it relates to employment.
- Begin to practice being assertive about making choices.

- You can contact the nearest Mental Health Association or check out the Temple University Collaborative on Community Inclusion website for relevant tools and resources. Visit <http://www.tucollaborative.org>. The Bazelon website <http://www.bazelon.org> also has information on the topic of self-determination. Share with group members and have them report back to you, or distribute copies of articles from the website for discussion.
- Role-play a situation in which a well-intentioned service provider is making too many decisions for a person with a mental health diagnosis. Ask participants to practice asserting their leadership of their own vocational plans.
- Role-play a situation in which the participant needs to assert control of their own vocational plan with a family member or friend.



## Suggested Discussion Questions

- What are some ways you have taken charge of your own life decisions, treatment, rehabilitation, etc.?
- What are some aspects of your life over which you would like to have more control? Who is currently making the decisions? What might you do to change the situation?
- Think about how you are currently making

decisions about work. Who is helping you? Are they helping you make choices, or are they making choices for you? How do you feel about the situation?

- Have you ever been involved in any consumer advocacy organizations or consumer-run programs or clubhouses? What was it like? Did it help you to feel more empowered? How?



## Tips

- Make sure that participants know that it's okay to ask for help, and it doesn't make you less "empowered." Taking responsibility for asking for what you need (support, information, etc.) is *part* of being in charge! You don't have to do it alone, but you also don't have to hand over all your power to someone else.
- You can expect that participants will volunteer examples of situations where "support people" took control and/or responsibility away from them (whether they meant to or not). When this happens, ask the participant how that felt, what the results were, and whether they were satisfied with the results. Ask them to consider what they did in the situation and whether they might handle the situation/person differently knowing what they know now.



## Outcomes

By the time you have finished covering Section 4, participants should:

- a) be able to identify ways in which they have been/have not been in control of their decisions about employment.
- b) be able to identify strategies to gain more control of their rehabilitation process.
- c) be able to consider whether a “support person” is promoting or interfering with their ability to make their own choices.
- d) identify people/agencies that can help members learn how to gain control and how to handle people/agencies that don't let participants take charge.



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# Facilitator's Guide for Section 5: **Self-Assessment and Planning**

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## Purpose of this Section

Section 5 helps readers systematically assess their vocational capabilities and preferences. This information will guide further employment-related discussions, activities and decisions.



## Suggested Activities

You may want to spend more than one session on this Section because it contains a lot of useful exercises that may take time to do and/or discuss. Any of these exercises could be done either by individuals or as a group. Another option is to read the questions together, leaving participants time to write responses. Participants could then share their answers. You could also assign an exercise as homework so that participants have more time and privacy to complete the task.

- Have each participant create a Personal Inventory.
- Have each participant assess his/her strengths and limitations using the categories and questions in this Section.
- Have participants identify work preferences as described in this Section. This exercise is particularly well-suited for group discussion,

## Group Objectives



- Support and assist participants in compiling relevant information about their background, abilities, qualifications, and preferences related to employment.
- Begin a process of vocational exploration.
- Start thinking about and planning for a future that includes work.

as it has somewhat less personal information. Also, in discussing the various preference categories, participants may hear new perspectives from each other. Encourage participants to identify and examine the reasons behind their preferences.

- After completing the assessment exercises, assign one of the vocational exploration exercises as homework. Discuss the exercise in the next session.
- Share information and ideas about how to learn about different kinds of jobs. Share contacts and resources.
- If participants have access to a computer, the website <http://www.onetonline.org> is a great resource for information about all kinds of jobs. It also has an Interest Inventory. If possible, have group members look at the website together as a demonstration, and then make homework assignments.
- Those who have never worked or haven't worked for a long time might find it helpful to visit a job site that they are interested in. Or the facilitator might be able to arrange for a job shadowing at a work site. Suggest that the group think about people they know – friends, relatives, church members, etc. – who have jobs in an area they are interested in. Encourage members to ask them questions, perhaps as homework. Prepare a list of questions. Perhaps they could visit the person at work.
- Ask group members to walk around their neighborhoods and identify places of work that interest them.



## Suggested Discussion Questions

- What did you learn about yourself as you did these assessment exercises? Did any questions make you think about yourself differently? What was it like to go through this self-assessment process?
- Do you know what kind of work you'd like to do? Has anyone else in the group done that kind of work before? What is it like?
- Does your self-assessment suggest any particular job or workplaces that would be good matches for you or bad matches for you?
- What kinds of work have you done before? What were the responsibilities and tasks? What was the work setting like?
- What would your dream job be? What would it be like? What about it would make it your dream job? (This does not have to be realistic.)
- Has anyone in the group gone from not working to working? What was it like to make that change? How did it affect other areas of your life?
- Now that you've done some self-assessment, what would you need to find out about a job to know it might be a good match for you?



## Tips

- Provide a notebook for each participant or have each participant purchase a notebook to use as an employment journal. Encourage participants to write down any/all of the information generated by these activities, as well as other thoughts about employment that occur to them between group sessions.
- Encourage participants to take credit for all of the work, paid and unpaid, that they have done in the past.
- Participants who have worked before can find it helpful to explore what they learned from their work experiences about what they like and don't like about a job situation.
- Encourage participants to be as honest as possible in assessing the reasons they lost or left jobs in the past. This is important information for them to carry into their next effort at employment.



## Outcomes

By the time you are finished going over Section 5, participants should:

- a) have compiled enough personal inventory information to be able to start working on a

résumé.

- b) have done enough thinking about their work capacities and preferences to begin exploring vocational options.
- c) have started thinking about what kinds of jobs would be good matches for them, given the above information.
- d) have a sense of what they would need to know about a job to evaluate if it is a good match for them.



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# Facilitator's Guide for Section 6: **Applying for Jobs**

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## Purpose of this Section

Section 6 prepares the reader for job hunting by providing information about the various tasks and other factors involved in finding and applying for jobs.



## Suggested Activities

If your group is convened to help participants actively pursue employment, the following exercises will help. However, if your participants are not actively pursuing employment, you may wish to frame these activities as “practicing,” or conduct a more discussion-oriented session.

It is extremely important in this economy for job seekers to know how to search for jobs online. Many employers expect to receive résumés online; applications often have to be submitted online as well. Help group members identify nearby computer classes if needed, perhaps at a library or YMCA. Many vocational rehabilitation agencies provide computers, and some offer classes in how to do job searches. Also, one-stop career centers offer computer access and may have computer classes. You may want to think well ahead of time about:

## Group Objectives



- Gain information about the tasks and guidelines of job hunting, from start to finish.
- Become familiar with sources of job listings.
- Prepare for the rewards and frustrations of looking for work.

- If you have Internet access, provide time for participants to learn to seek jobs on the Internet.
- Provide copies of the newspaper and time for group members to read the want ads and discuss what's available. Also, look at several want ads from a job site such as <http://www.craigslist.com> or <http://jobs.careerbuilder.com/>. Some people might need help to decipher classified ad abbreviations.
- Review job hunting tips in this section, as well as the Section's discussion of tips for thinking positively. Allow time for questions and discussion.
- Have group members prepare a 30-second marketing presentation about themselves that they can use at job fairs.
- Encourage participants to register with their local one-stop career center and use it often. They can access job listings online after they have registered.
- Practice networking. Participants may feel awkward asking people they know about jobs, and it can help to model and/or role play how to talk to contacts about one's job search. Participants should practice asking people to let them know about any job opportunities they are aware of, and answering the question "What kind of job are you looking for?"
- Help members generate a list of everyone they know, whom these people might know, and how they could help in making contacts for jobs.
- Help members get free business cards, available online from

<http://www.vistaprint.com>. Help them choose what should go on the card, including phone number, cell number, and email address. When people ask, "How do I contact you?" they can give them a business card.

- Brainstorm with the group about good job matches for individual participants. Allow each participant to spell out his/her skills, experiences, abilities, preferences, and any job-matching ideas to the group. Then allow other participants to offer suggestions. Assign homework to find one to three job titles they would qualify for or tell what they like about a particular job. If the group is meeting regularly, encourage participants to bring job listings from the Internet, newspaper, one-stop career centers, to share.



## Suggested Discussion Questions

- Have you ever job-hunted before? How did you find out about the jobs you applied for? If you got a job, how did you find out about it? What was the application process like?
- What strategies or coping skills kept you going if you became frustrated or disappointed?
- What kinds of jobs are available in our area? What do we know about the local economy, large employers, types of jobs that seem plentiful or scarce, etc.?

- Where do you look for job listings?
- What skills do you have that might be transferable to different kinds of work?



## Tips

- Routinely applaud participants for their accomplishments, including getting or going on job interviews or finding good contacts through networking.
- Talk about job hunting could deteriorate quickly into tales of frustration and rejection. Acknowledge the frustration and rejection, but bring the conversation back to focusing on successes.
- What job did you get? What helped? How did you cope? What do you know now that will help you to be more effective/less frustrated?
- When faced with the prospect of networking, people may respond with “but I don’t know anybody!” Point out that the group itself is the start of a network, and brainstorm about the contacts that individuals might have.
- If people are actively engaged in job searching, it can be helpful to designate “homework,” planning next steps and time frames. Recognize that there is a time when each person needs to move from talking about job hunting to actually doing it. At this point, particularly if a person is overwhelmed or anxious, it can help to

break things down into small, discrete, manageable tasks, with clear plans for when those tasks will be started and/or completed.



## Outcomes

By the time you have finished Section 6, participants should:

- a) be familiar with all the steps involved in job hunting.
- b) be familiar with several sources of job listings and leads.
- c) have identified at least one or two people who can help the participant network.
- d) have some ideas about what to do if/when job hunting becomes frustrating or disappointing.



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# Facilitator's Guide for Section 7: **Résumés, Cover Letters and Job Application Forms**

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## Purpose of this Section

Section 7 helps the reader compose effective résumés and cover letters, and prepare to complete job application forms accurately and adequately.



## Suggested Activities

If the participants are actively pursuing employment, the following exercises will help. Otherwise, you can frame these activities as “practicing,” or you can conduct a more discussion-oriented session.

- Give participants three sample résumés. Ask them to put themselves in the employer’s position. Which one catches their interest and why? Invite them to say what they find appealing or unappealing about each résumé.
- If the group is small, each person might present a draft of her/his résumé to the group. If you do this, focus on how to make it better, not on criticizing the previous version. Participants may use résumés they already have. Some participants may prefer to start from scratch.
- Have each person do more than one version tailored to different jobs. Also, do a

## Group Objectives



- Learn how to compose an effective résumé.
- Learn how to compose good cover letters.
- Prepare to complete job application forms properly.

chronological résumé and a functional résumé, if applicable.

- Practice writing cover letters using real examples from participants' job searches, when possible.
- Practice reading want ads and job postings. What does each ad tell the reader about what the employer is looking for? Practice writing cover letters geared to particular ads.

Invite an employer or someone from your agency's human resources (HR) department (if you have one) to talk to the group about what they look for in a résumé and cover letter. Let participants know that many employers do not want cover letters from applicants who are applying for a job online.



## Suggested Discussion Questions

- Are you worried about how gaps in your work history will look on your résumé? What strategies from this section might be useful for you?
- Do you have any non-job experiences or skills that could be used to address a work history gap? Allow the group to help each participant brainstorm ways of listing such experiences and skills.
- What job application questions are uncomfortable for you? How might you deal with such questions?
- What are some legal and illegal questions

that are sometimes included on job application forms? What strategies might help you deal with such questions? Discuss the strategies around work history gaps that are in this section and ask which 'approach' each person finds most attractive.



## Tips

- Participants should bring to these group meetings any of the lists and writings they may have done for the self-assessment process. If your group has not covered self-assessment, you may need to do so before writing résumés.
- As facilitator, you should come prepared with information about where people can go to access computers.
- Have a few sample résumés and cover letters on hand. You might want to have examples both of good and not-so-good résumés and cover letters for comparison. Direct the group to the templates for résumés and cover letters available on Microsoft Word.
- If the group is too big to work on each person's résumé, participants could work in pairs, or you could select one participant's résumé to review as a group and then allow time for each person to work on his/her own résumé individually.
- If possible, purchase several books with sample résumés or borrow books from the

library. There are many good books available.



## Outcomes

When you are finished covering Section 7, participants should:

- a) be able to compose a résumé.
- b) be able to generate a cover letter.
- c) be able to complete a job application.
- d) be aware of strategies for handling uncomfortable or illegal questions on job applications.



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# Facilitator's Guide for Section 8: **Job Interviews**

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## Purpose of this Section

This section helps the reader prepare for job interviews.



## Suggested Activities

- Review the importance of appropriate dress and give examples. Be prepared to provide information about local resources for obtaining appropriate interview clothing at low cost, such as a “working wardrobe” program, local thrift stores or discount department stores.
- Show examples of appropriate clothes from magazines. Have the group identify which clothing is appropriate or not appropriate, and why.
- Invite participants to come to a group meeting dressed and groomed as they would be for a job interview. Provide lots of positive reinforcement. Discourage teasing (which can happen), and provide supportive feedback for individuals who are dressed inappropriately. Try to determine whether the person is not dressed well because of poor judgment or because of insufficient resources or access to proper attire, and

## Group Objectives



- Gain information about what job interviews are like and what is expected of applicants.
- Prepare to go on job interviews by practicing answering and asking interview questions.
- Learn to anticipate tricky questions and to have a plan for responding to them.
- Practice self-evaluation of one’s interview experience.

respond accordingly. (Some participants may have problems accessing or paying for the use of a washer and dryer.)

- Role play job interviews. Clearly define what sort of job is being applied for, what the employer is like, and who the interviewer is (e.g., the boss, a supervisor, a human resources representative, etc.). This may be done in peer dyads where one person plays the employer and the other plays the applicant. Leave time for mutual feedback. Another way to do this is to provide a role-playing example in front of the group, allowing the group to provide feedback to both players at the end.
- Based upon each person's résumé, anticipate questions. You can add to the exercise by creating scenarios with sample job openings/descriptions. Group members should practice their responses.
- Practice answering tricky, uncomfortable questions. Even if people know what they plan to say, it makes a difference to actually practice *saying* it. Review the information about 'common questions' in this Section together.
- If a participant is preparing for a real interview, give them the opportunity to practice for it a week or so beforehand. Discuss the person's concerns before the role-play, and allow the person to summarize what he/she wants to convey and what he/she wants to ask during the interview. Encourage group members to rehearse their answers using index cue cards. Then conduct the role-play. Afterwards, invite each person to evaluate

his/her own performance. Did the participants give/get the information they wanted? You may also invite others to provide feedback.



## Suggested Discussion Questions

- Have you had any positive interview experiences? (These don't have to be experiences that led to jobs.) What was positive about it? (People may want to bring up negative interview experiences. If this happens, focus on what can be learned from those experiences.)
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of disclosing one's disability during the job interview? What positive and negative experiences have you had? What are situations in which you would disclose? Wouldn't disclose?
- Have you been on a job interview recently? What was it like? What strategies did you use?
- What do you want to ask in a job interview? What do you want to find out about the employer or job?



## Tips

- Job interviews can be the most important part of the application process, and can also be extremely anxiety provoking. Emphasize the value of practicing for job interviews, and provide opportunities for doing so. Maintain a focus on learning skills and strategies, and remind people that, with increased mastery and experience, their confidence will improve and interviews will seem less intimidating.
- If you have access to audio or videotape technology, *use it!* While being taped makes some people uncomfortable, it provides the applicant the best feedback possible and an accurate record of the interaction. People learn a lot from hearing and seeing themselves, especially if they are anxious. Give participants an opportunity to identify what they thought went well about the interview, and also what they would change if they had a second chance. Depending on the situation, you might also invite others to provide feedback.



## Outcomes

By the time you are finished covering Section 8, participants should:

- a) know what to expect during a job interview.
- b) know what kinds of interview questions to expect and a plan for responding.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>c) know what they would like to ask in a job interview.</li><li>d) have had the opportunity to practice interviewing, and to evaluate their</li><li>e) interview performance.</li></ul> |  |
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## Sections 9 & 10

### SSI and SSDI Issues

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#### **Social Security Work Incentives**

As facilitator, you should understand how difficult it can be to get accurate information about Social Security Work Incentives. Even local Social Security offices and claims representatives are often ill equipped to provide accurate information about Work Incentives. Your participants may be operating on the basis of conflicting or incorrect information. In addition, Social Security (like any system) sometimes makes mistakes. It is extremely important that participants understand their benefits and the rules that govern them so that they can understand the notices they receive and spot any errors that Social Security might make with their benefits.

The two sections on SSI and SSDI (Sections 9 and 10) have been reviewed for their accuracy by a benefits specialist trained by Social Security as of early 2013, but because the Social Security Administration frequently is in the process of changing some of their regulations/procedures, we strongly advise group members to contact Social Security, either at their local SSA office or at the toll-free number, to clarify or verify their information. It is strongly suggested that group members be encouraged to apply for a Benefits Planning

Query (BPQY) from Social Security to verify their benefits. In addition, medical benefits will soon be affected by the 2010 Affordable Care Act, when health care will be available to everyone regardless of income.

When you are planning group sessions around these sections, it can help to know whether there are any recipients of Social Security benefits in your group, and which benefits they receive. It can also help to know how much information they have, how much they need, and what Social Security representatives have told them.

These two sections are full of technical details, math, and rules. These rules can be difficult to understand. Before bringing this material to a group, make sure that, as a facilitator, you understand it thoroughly yourself and are prepared to explain and teach this material. The Social Security *Red Book* is a helpful tool for you; you can obtain it through the local Social Security Office or order it online at <http://www.socialsecurity.gov>.



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# Facilitator's Guide for Section 9: **SSI Work Incentives and the Ticket to Work**

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## Purpose of this Section

Section 9 provides accurate information about the Work Incentives available under the rules of Supplemental Security Income (SSI). With this information, SSI recipients can better understand how working will affect their benefits, and can make informed employment decisions.



## Suggested Activities

- Go through the entire Section, heading by heading, teaching the material and reviewing as much as is necessary. This is very complicated information and you should expect participants to have difficulty understanding parts of it.
- Review the distinction between *unearned income* and *earned income*, and compare and contrast the rules about each. Practice using the formulas to calculate how income will affect individuals' checks. Then practice calculating for a situation involving both *earned* and *unearned income*.
- Discuss the *breakeven point* and what it means for one's earnings and other benefits. Make sure people understand Extended Medicaid and when they may be entitled to reinstatement of cash benefits.

## Group Objectives



- Become aware of the SSI Work Incentives.
- Make sure that each participant who receives (or may receive) SSI can figure out what will happen to her/his benefits if she/he becomes employed.

- Discuss the Medicaid Buy-in Program if it applies to your state.
- Discuss the Ticket-to-Work Program.



## Suggested Discussion Questions

- Discuss the myths surround SSI. Ask the group if they have heard or thought about these things before? Have any group members had experiences that demonstrate that these myths are not true?
- Has any group member successfully written and received approval for a PASS (Plan for Achieving Self Support) plan? Use this to launch a discussion of other possible PASS plans. *Note:* Because it can take a long time to have a PASS plan approved and many are rejected, it is wise to take other steps at the same time to achieve occupational/earnings goals.
- Has anyone appealed any SSI decision? What happened? What was it like?
- Has anyone worked while receiving SSI? How did that affect your benefits? How did you handle it?
- Has anyone had experience with the Ticket-to-Work Program?



## Tips

- With all of these topics, it is good to invite people to share their own experiences with Social Security Work Incentives.
- Be sensitive to the process people went through to obtain SSI. It often a difficult process that takes a very long time. This is part of why people are so reluctant to work once their benefits are in place: they are afraid of jeopardizing the benefits they worked so hard to get.



## Outcomes

By the time you have finished covering Section 9, participants should:

- a) be able to figure out how receiving a paycheck would affect SSI benefits.
- b) understand the basic rules pertaining to SSI Work Incentives.

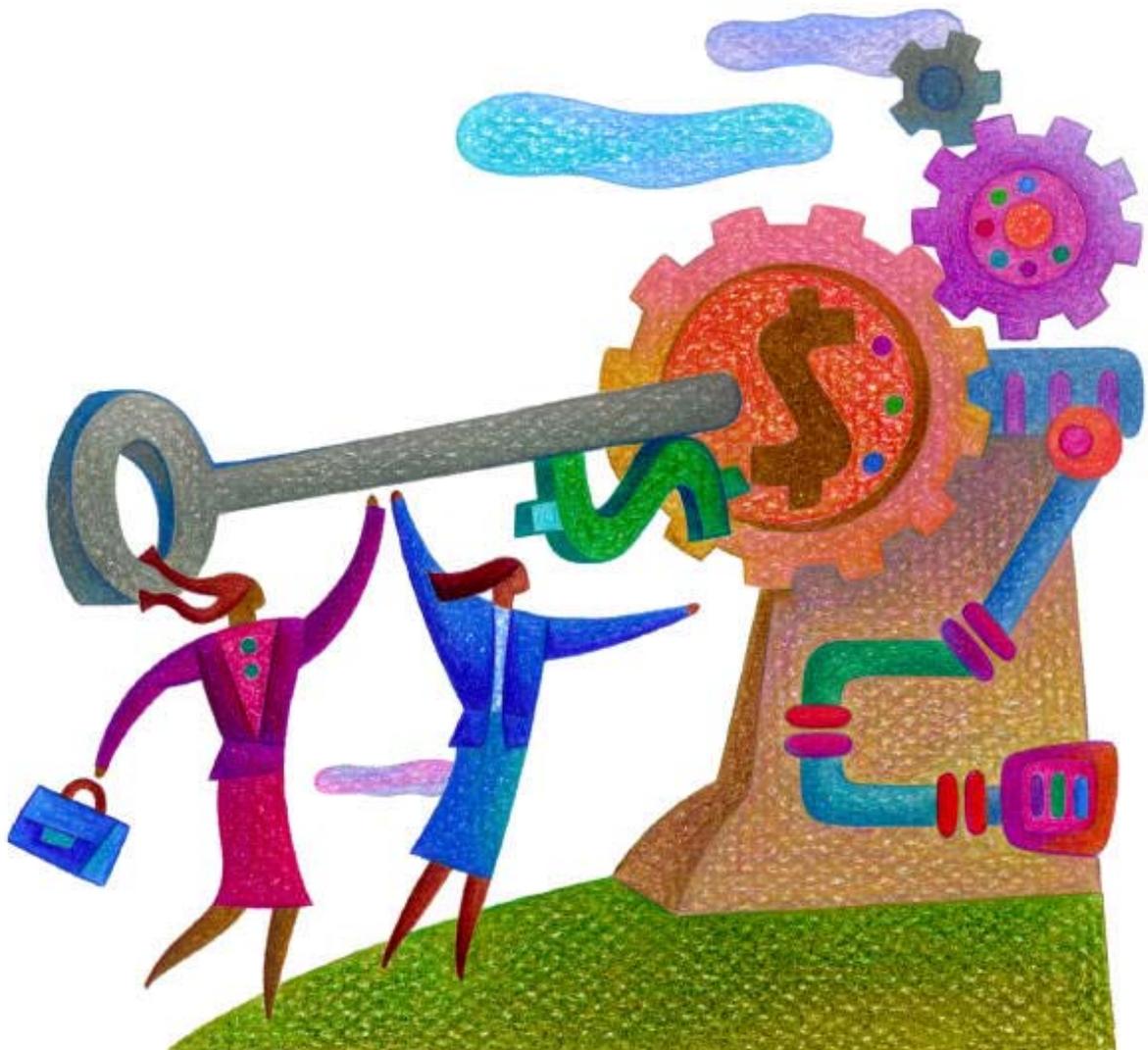


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# Facilitator's Guide for Section 10: **SSDI Work Incentives**

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## Purpose of this Section

Section 10 provides accurate information about the Work Incentives available under the rules of Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI). With this information, SSDI recipients can better understand how working will affect their benefits, and can make informed employment decisions.



## Suggested Activities

- Go through the entire section, heading by heading, teaching the material and reviewing as much as is necessary. This is very complicated information and you should expect participants to have difficulty understanding parts of it.
- Make sure everyone understands how the Trial Work Period works. The concept of a “rolling five-year period” is especially confusing, so it is especially important to explain it clearly.
- Review the term *substantial gainful activity* (SGA).
- Review the Extended Period of Eligibility (EPE) and what happens when it ends. If participants feel comfortable sharing personal information or want assistance figuring out their own benefits situation, use

## Group Objectives



- Become aware of the SSDI Work Incentives.
- Make sure that each participant who receives (or may receive) SSDI can figure out what will happen to her/his benefits if she/he becomes employed.

examples from people’s personal situations to illustrate the policies described in the Guide.

- Review the idea of “countable income” and how IRWE (Impairment Related Work Expenses) and PASS plans can figure into it.
- Discuss how a recipient can receive SSDI and also be eligible for SSI.



## Suggested Discussion Questions

- Discuss the myths surrounding SSDI. Have you heard or thought these things before? Have any group members had experiences that demonstrate that these myths are not true?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of receiving Social Security benefits?
- Does anyone receive both SSDI and SSI?



## Tips

- Another approach to working with Sections 9 and 10 is to invite a local expert on SSI/SSDI Work Incentives to present to your group and review the concepts in the sections. Use the Guide as supportive, take-home materials.
- In a support-oriented group, you might also

discuss fears about losing benefits, and provide the information in the Guide as a tool to combat those fears.



## Outcomes

By the time you have finished covering Section 10, participants should:

- a) be able to figure out how receiving a paycheck would affect SSDI benefits.
- b) understand the basic rules pertaining to SSDI Work Incentives.
- c) understand how a person qualifies for both SSDI and SSI.



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# Facilitator's Guide for Section 11: **Your Rights in the Workplace** **Job Accommodations and the** **ADA**

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## Purpose of this Section

Section 11 describes how employment rights are protected by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). It is also intended to help readers understand what job accommodations might be helpful, when they might be necessary and how to ask for them.



## Suggested Activities

- Review how to assess whether or not you need accommodations. If people are comfortable sharing some examples from their own experience, discuss these examples as a group.
- Practice asking for accommodations. It is important to identify how, when and with whom to discuss the need for accommodations.
- Spend time addressing individuals' particular challenges and situations, and brainstorming as a group what sort of job accommodations might be needed and/or helpful to those individuals.

## Suggested

## Group Objectives



- Gain an understanding of employee rights and employer responsibilities as outlined by the ADA.
- Learn how to identify a need for job accommodations.
- Become familiar with some common job accommodations.
- Learn how to request and/or negotiate for job accommodations when necessary.



## Discussion Questions

- How does the ADA help protect people with disabilities who are seeking work or are employed? What ADA information was new to you when you read the Section?
- What is required of the employer when asking for accommodations? What is required of the employee?
- Have you ever needed job accommodations? What was that situation like? Were you able to arrange appropriate accommodations? Whether you did or not, what strategies did you use? How did the situation turn out?
- What accommodations do you think would be most helpful to you in a work situation? Why?
- How do you know when the need for accommodations is important enough to disclose your disability to your employer?



## Tips

- Our experience in vocational services for persons in recovery from mental health conditions has shown us that a significant number of people (consumers, providers and employers alike) are unaware that the

ADA provides legal protection for people with mental health diagnoses.

- It is important to explicitly acknowledge that the burden of ADA compliance is on the employee, which means you have to know your rights and be prepared to stick up for yourself. Most employers want to be fair and comply with the ADA, but it is also true that employers can find ways to get around it and that you sometimes have to decide whether it's worth the trouble of pursuing legal action. It is important to know that even if you file a claim with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), it can take a long time for the case to be resolved.



## Outcomes

By the time you have finished covering Section 11, participants should:

- a) know what their rights are under the ADA.
- b) know what a job accommodation is and when and how to request it.
- c) be familiar with some common job accommodation strategies.



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# Facilitator's Guide for Section 12: **Dealing with Disclosure, Discrimination and Harassment on the Job**

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## Purpose of this Section

Section 12 helps the reader make thoughtful decisions about disclosing one's disability on the job. It also helps people recognize and form strategies for dealing with discrimination and harassment.



## Suggested Activities

- If a group member is dealing with issues of disclosure on the job, invite him/her to tell the group about it and invite the group to help the person consider his/her options and/or come up with a strategy.
- Practice different situations and conversations that might happen on the job, including dealing with intrusive questions or comments, teasing, callous or cruel remarks, and disclosure to a co-worker or supervisor. Role-play these situations in peer dyads and/or with one dyad at a time observed by the group. Allow time for mutual feedback between the players.

## Group Objectives



- Examine the benefits and risks of disclosing one's disability in employment situations.
- Learn some ways of dealing with discrimination and harassment on the job, should they occur.



## Suggested Discussion Questions

- Have you ever disclosed your disability in an employment situation? What was it like? What happened after that?
- What are the benefits and risks of disclosing at work? What do other people say you “should” do? Do you think that’s right? Why or why not?
- Have you ever experienced discrimination or harassment related to your mental health challenges? Were you able to use any strategies to stick up for yourself? If not, invite the group to consider what might have been a successful defense in that situation.
- How do you know whether to trust someone with information about your mental health challenges?
- Has anyone ever filed a complaint with the EEOC? What was that like? Was it helpful? Worthwhile?



## Tips

- Many people choose to keep information about their mental health challenges to themselves and are afraid of what might

happen if people find out. These fears may be based in real experiences of discrimination, harassment or even violence, and should not be dismissed as overreactions or paranoia.

- It is important to offer participants information and tools to help them make good choices about disclosure, and to have ways to cope with people's prejudices without pressuring people to disclose anything they are not ready to. In discussing disclosure, it can be especially important to acknowledge that all of the experiences people have had (positive and negative) are real, even if they seem very different from other participants' experiences, and that each person will have to make his/her own choices based on his/her own situation, comfort level, skills and beliefs.



## Outcomes

By the time you have finished covering Section 12, participants should:

- a) have considered the advantages and disadvantages of disclosing at work.
- b) be able to recognize incidents of discrimination and harassment.
- c) have a plan for dealing with discrimination and/or harassment at work.



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# Facilitator's Guide for Section 13: **Starting to Work – What to Expect & How to Prepare**

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## Purpose of this Section

Section 13 helps the reader prepare for the start of a new job by providing information about what to expect.



## Suggested Activities

If there are group members who are starting jobs, help them develop plans for what to do if they are having trouble. Who would they call for help in talking through a situation? Which co-workers or supervisors seem to be helpful? Which friends or family members?



## Suggested Discussion Questions

- Have you ever been nervous on the first day of something new, whether it was the first day of a job or the first day of school, the first day in a new treatment program or in a new house? What was it like? When did things start to feel “normal”? What helped?
- Have you ever been excited or nervous on

## Group Objectives



- Explore what starting a new job is like.
- Anticipate potential stresses associated with the start of a new job.

the first day of a new job? What happened? What didn't happen that should have? What did happen that shouldn't have? What would you do differently?

- Have you ever felt overwhelmed at the start of something new? What coping strategies have you used? What helps?



## Tips

- Starting a new job can be very exciting and very intimidating. There are many things to learn, usually quickly; new people to meet; and many changes to adjust to. Most people have experienced first-day jitters or feeling overwhelmed.



## Outcomes

By the time you have finished covering Section 13, participants should:

- a) know what to expect when they start a new job.
- b) have some understanding that starting a new job will impact other areas of their life.
- c) have a plan for what to do if they are

nervous and/or overwhelmed about starting a new job.

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# Facilitator's Guide for Section 14: **Long-Term Employment Supports**

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## Purpose of this Section

Section 14 helps people anticipate what some of their ongoing employment support needs might be, and to plan accordingly.



## Suggested Activities

- Create an opportunity for participants to practice talking to their psychiatrists about their medication needs, if any, in relation to workplace issues. Start by letting participants practice saying what they want to say, then move to a role-play where they practice saying it to someone who is portraying their doctor. Have them write it down so they can practice.
- Provide information about supports that are available to people in recovery from mental health conditions in your area. Are there consumer-run organizations or support groups? Are there vocational counseling services? Share information about which mental health agencies and/or which therapists are particularly supportive of consumers as employees.
- Encourage participants to engage in recreational activities individually and as a group. Introduce group members to some

## Group Objectives



- Think about work as a long-term part of people's lives.
- Explore potential supports that may be needed to maintain employment.
- Identify which of these supports are already in place.
- Identify additional supports that could be mobilized

local recreational resources they may not be aware of.

- If there are participants who are employed or who expect to become employed soon, help them start a support group to help with ongoing support needs.
- Use the TU Collaborative *Social Enhancement Workbook*  
<http://www.tucollaborative.org/resources/resources.html#recreation> to help members who do not participate in social/recreational activities. Go to and print a copy for the group to use as a resource in planning activities. If appropriate, you could devote several group sessions to using the *Workbook*.



## Suggested Discussion Questions

- Has any group member worked for a year or more at a time? What was it like? What are the challenges of working on an ongoing basis? What helped you stay at your job as long as you did? Were any supports or strategies helpful? (Reminder: supports are not just services, but people who are helpful, activities that help them with stress, etc.).
- Has anyone here taken medications that made it easier to work, or harder to work? Has anyone had to adjust their medication regimen in order to keep a job?
- Research shows that interpersonal difficulties are among the most common reasons for

people with mental health diagnoses leaving or losing jobs. Has anyone had that sort of experience? What happened? If you were faced with the same situation now, how would you want to handle it?

- An important part of any person's long-term plan for coping with work is rest, relaxation and recreation! What kinds of things do group members do for fun? What's available around here that is fun and not too expensive? (Investigate community organizations, the arts, parks, museums, schools and community learning centers, movies, sports leagues, cultural events, spiritual/religious organizations, etc., for opportunities to have fun, make friends, and reduce stress.)
- What do you think you will need on an ongoing basis to help you stay at a job? Where or from whom is that available?



## Tips

- Allow time/room for discussion of fears and difficulties that people have had. Keep the conversation positive by bringing the focus back to strategies for success.
- People may be afraid of recurrence of their symptoms. Remind participants that many people with mental health conditions experience recurrence of their symptoms, and the important thing is to plan for what to do if that happens. Anybody who lives with

long-term mental health challenges will need help at times. It is important to stress the importance of having a plan for maintaining wellness as well as a plan for times of need. There are many different templates available, including a Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP -

<http://copelandcenter.com/wellness-recovery-action-plan-wrap>), that can be customized for work, available at Pathways to Recovery, at <http://www.socwel.ku.edu/mentalhealth/projects/value/pathways/workbook.shtml>; and the *Advance Self-Advocacy Plan (ASAP)*, at the Temple University Collaborative website at:

[http://www.tucollaborative.org/pdfs/Toolkits\\_Monographs\\_Guidebooks/self\\_determination\\_psychiatric\\_advanced\\_directives\\_self\\_directed\\_care/ASAP%20Planning%20Doc%20-%20Temple%20final.pdf](http://www.tucollaborative.org/pdfs/Toolkits_Monographs_Guidebooks/self_determination_psychiatric_advanced_directives_self_directed_care/ASAP%20Planning%20Doc%20-%20Temple%20final.pdf)

- Remind people that everybody faces job loss. Losing or leaving a job does not mean that you have failed. There are lots of reasons that people lose or leave jobs, and some of them are good reasons. The key is to learn what you can from the experience and move on to the next job.
- Help participants identify “natural supports” – such as family members, co-workers, friends, etc. – who can help them with long-term support needs. Remind participants that “time-off” benefits – such as sick days, personal days and vacation, as well as medical leave policies – are built into many employment situations. Include a brief discussion about the Family Medical Leave

Act (FMLA), which could help them keep a job in the case of a long-term leave. Include a discussion about unemployment benefits, which vary from state to state.



## Outcomes

By the time you have finished covering Section 14, participants should:

- a) be familiar with some of the challenges of maintaining employment.
- b) be familiar with some of the supports and strategies that help with these challenges.
- c) have identified sources of support that they already have.



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# Facilitator's Guide for Section 15: **Prioritizing work for Your Future**

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## Purpose of this Section

Section 15 helps readers think about a future that includes work on a long-term basis.



## Suggested Activities

- People often leave jobs on an impulse, in the heat of a difficult situation, and regret it later. Discuss what plans can be put in place to slow down the process and develop other strategies to try *before* quitting. Who could they talk it over with? Have each participant identify something to do before quitting.
- Invite participants to discuss their preferences for their long-term work life, and to explain their reasons. Would their preferences change over time?
- Provide the group with information about local educational and job training opportunities, as well as financial strategies and/or resources for pursuing additional education or job training.
- Introduce *A Practical Guide for People with Disabilities Who Want to Go to College*, created by the Temple University Collaborative and available at:

## Group Objectives



- Encourage participants to think of their long-term career interests.
- Help participants think about their career in the context of other aspects of their lives.

[http://www.tucollaborative.org/pdfs/education/College\\_Guide.pdf](http://www.tucollaborative.org/pdfs/education/College_Guide.pdf). This Guide covers all the issues one must deal with when planning to go to college or any post-secondary school program.



## Suggested Discussion Questions

- What are some things you have done or could do to make it easier to keep working?
- What are some things in your life that you have to balance with work? How do you/would you manage that?
- How do you know when it is time to leave a job? How do you know when you should stay and try to work it out? (What is “workable” for one person may be untenable to another. Remind participants that different things may be true and valid for different participants.)
- Have you ever lost or left a job? What was it like? What did you learn from that experience?
- If you could do any kind of work at all, what would it be and why? (In this exercise, do not require people to be realistic at first. If people want to be rocket scientists, super-models, or President of the United States, that’s fine. The interesting part is finding out why that appeals to them.)
- What are your career aspirations? What are your goals? What would it take to reach those goals? What might make that feasible?



## Tips

- Participants may not have ever had the opportunity to think of themselves as people with careers, or to plan careers for themselves. If this is so, encourage activity, even if the ideas raised are not very realistic. There's plenty of time for participants to figure out what is possible; the first step is imagining a future.



## Outcomes

By the time you have finished covering Section 15, participants should:

- a) have had a chance to think about their long-term employment goals.
- b) have thought about how to balance employment with other aspects of their lives over time.
- c) have considered the possibility of developing long-term career goals and strategies for pursuing those goals.

It is important to take some time at the end of the last group to provide some 'closure' to the group experience. You may want to remind those in the group of the wide range of topics under discussion, give them a chance to talk about what topics were of greatest interest or of greatest help, and explore what suggestions they may have about how the group experience could be improved for others after them. Give group members a chance to see their participation in this activity as a remarkable 'first step' in their developing careers, and examine whether there can be opportunities for members of the group to stay in touch with one another – to learn of one another's successes, to offer support when it is needed, and to celebrate notable accomplishments.

Good luck!