

# BEYOND THE MYTHS ABOUT JOB RETENTION

## *RESEARCH EVIDENCE AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE*

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# MYTHS ABOUT THE VOCATIONAL FUNCTIONING OF PEOPLE WITH PSYCHIATRIC DISABILITIES

- Capacity to sustain employment
- Capacity for professional level employment
- Capacity for financial self-sufficiency

# VOCATIONAL RECOVERY: DEFINITION

- Vocational recovery is defined as preserving, regaining, or acquiring competitive employment after being affected by a serious mental illness.
- Vocational recovery designates a level of vocational functioning above a specific threshold of vocational achievement.

# DIMENSIONS OF VOCATIONAL RECOVERY: STABILITY OF WORKFORCE PARTICIPATION

- Stability of workforce participation reflects a person's capacity to sustain competitive employment over time and is operationalized by the number of months of competitive employment per year.
- We established a recovery threshold for stability of workforce participation at 6 months of competitive employment per year.

# DIMENSIONS OF VOCATIONAL RECOVERY: SCOPE OF WORKFORCE PARTICIPATION

- Scope of workforce participation reflects the amount of time a person spends working and is operationalized by the number of work hours per week.
- We established a recovery threshold for scope of workforce participation at ten hours per week.

# DIMENSIONS OF VOCATIONAL RECOVERY: SCOPE OF WORKFORCE PARTICIPATION

- Although working only ten hours per week might appear low for a recovery threshold, we believe that when the criterion for stability is also met, this scope of workforce participation does constitute an initial stage of vocational recovery.

# MEASURES OF VOCATIONAL SUCCESS

- One measure of vocational success is the person's level of employment, ranging from unskilled labor to professional and managerial positions. For the purposes of our studies we have operationalized level of employment using Hollingshead's nine levels of occupational status.
- A second measure of vocational success is the person's level of earnings. We have operationalized level of earnings by the person's salary per hour.

# CAPACITY FOR SUSTAINED EMPLOYMENT

- A five-year longitudinal study of sustained employment conducted with a national sample (N=687)
- Middle aged respondents with 42% between the age of 40 and 49; 73% female; 92% white; 29% single, never married; 77% with college or graduate degree.
- 49% reported a diagnosis of bipolar disorder, 30% - depressive disorder; 16% - schizophrenia spectrum disorder, and 4% - other disorders.



# CAPACITY TO SUSTAIN EMPLOYMENT

- 80% worked continuously during the 24 months prior to entering the study
- 70% worked 35 hours or more per week at the time of entering the study, 17% worked between 20 and 34 hours, and 13% worked between 10 and 19 hours.

# CAPACITY TO SUSTAIN EMPLOYMENT

- 8% had jobs in the self-help/advocacy field, 23% - in the mental health field, 18% - in the health field excluding mental health, and 51% - in the non-helping professions.
- 59% had a professional level employment, 21% - semi-professional employment, 9% - clerical/sales jobs, 5% - skilled manual jobs, 3% - semi-skilled jobs, and 3% - unskilled and menial jobs.

# CAPACITY TO SUSTAIN EMPLOYMENT

- 80% have been hospitalized in the past for psychiatric reasons.
- 28% of the participants have been hospitalized in the past two years.
- 15% of participants received disability income at the time of entering the study

# CAPACITY TO SUSTAIN EMPLOYMENT

- 94% of all participants were taking psychotropic medications at the time of entering the study.
- 73% were involved in individual psychotherapy and 14% with group psychotherapy.
- 33% were involved with a self-help group.

# CAPACITY TO SUSTAIN EMPLOYMENT

- 31% of all study participants who completed each yearly assessment survey (n = 213) did not experience any work interruptions over the course of four years and worked continuously for 48 months.
- 4% of all study participants who completed each yearly assessment survey (n = 29) worked on average less than 6 months per year over the course of four years.

# CAPACITY TO SUSTAIN EMPLOYMENT

- Reasons for experienced interruptions in employment:
  - exacerbation of psychiatric condition (24%)
  - laid off (12%)
  - job ended/left job (11%)
  - medical condition (8%)
  - family/personal situation (5%)
  - attending school (3%)
  - maternity leave (1.5%)
  - retirement (0.6%)

# CAPACITY TO SUSTAIN EMPLOYMENT

- Increased capacity to sustain employment over the course of four years was associated with:
  - higher level of education
  - experiencing less mood fluctuations and addiction problems
  - having a job requiring creativity
  - having a job involving doing a variety of things

# CAPACITY TO SUSTAIN EMPLOYMENT

- Decreased capacity to sustain employment over the course of four years was associated with:
  - experiencing a serious medical condition after entering the study
  - feeling stigmatized at work
  - seeing friends at least once a day



# STIGMA TAXONOMY STRUCTURE

## ■ Main Branches

- Direct stigma: A person with mental illness is the recipient of stigmatizing attitudes and behaviors.
- Indirect stigma: A person with mental illness observes psychiatric stigma directed toward another co-worker or toward people with mental illnesses in general.

# STIGMA TAXONOMY STRUCTURE (cont.)

- Perceived stigma: A person with mental illness construes or anticipates stigmatizing attitudes and behaviors without observable evidence.

# STIGMA TAXONOMY STRUCTURE

- Secondary branches within each main branch
  - Stigmatizing experiences related to the person's work performance.
  - Stigmatizing experiences related to broader collegial interactions at the workplace.
- Tertiary branches vary within each secondary branch of the taxonomy.

# CAPACITY FOR PROFESSIONAL LEVEL EMPLOYMENT

- National survey of professionals and managers with psychiatric conditions (N=495).
- Middle aged respondents with 46% between the age of 40 and 49; 63% female; 91% white; 30% single, never married; 83% with college or graduate degree.

# CAPACITY FOR PROFESSIONAL LEVEL EMPLOYMENT

- 43% reported a diagnosis of bipolar disorder, 28% - depressive disorder; 13% - schizophrenia spectrum disorder, 12 % - PTSD/DID, and 4% - other disorders.

# CAPACITY FOR PROFESSIONAL LEVEL EMPLOYMENT

- Given the study's selection criteria, 90% of all 495 participants were employed at the time of filling out the survey; 12% of them were earning money from more than one job at a time.
- 75% of all participants were employed full-time; 6% of all participants were self-employed.

# CAPACITY FOR PROFESSIONAL LEVEL EMPLOYMENT

- 62% of all participants have held their current position for more than two years; 28% of all participants kept the same job for more than five years.
- During their professional employment, the yearly income of most participants (79%) was above \$20,000. The income of 36% of respondents was above \$40,000, and 21% made more than \$50,000 per years.

# CAPACITY FOR PROFESSIONAL LEVEL EMPLOYMENT

- 70% of all participants were first diagnosed with a severe mental illness before the age of 30; 30% were diagnosed before the age of 20.
- 78% have been hospitalized in the past for psychiatric reasons; of them 64% have been hospitalized three or more times.



# CAPACITY FOR PROFESSIONAL LEVEL EMPLOYMENT

- 25% of the participants have been hospitalized in the past three years.
- 33% of participants received social security benefits for their disability at some time in their lives.

# CAPACITY FOR PROFESSIONAL LEVEL EMPLOYMENT

- 88% of all participants are currently taking psychotropic medications; of them 80% take them continually, and 8% take them intermittently.
- 67% of all participants have been taking psychotropic medications for more than 5 years.
- 73% of all participants are currently in some form of psychotherapy, most of them being involved in individual therapy.

# CAPACITY FOR PROFESSIONAL LEVEL EMPLOYMENT

■ Professional Specialties	48%
■ Executives, Program Directors	46%
■ Clerical and Sales	3%
■ Technical	2%
■ Marketing and Sales	1%

# CAPACITY FOR PROFESSIONAL LEVEL EMPLOYMENT

- 21% were employed in self-help/advocacy jobs
- 30% were employed in the mental health field
- 16% were employed in the health field excluding mental health
- 33% were employed in non-helping professions

# CAPACITY FOR PROFESSIONAL LEVEL EMPLOYMENT

- Supports contributing to keeping a higher level job
  - consistent use of psychotropic medication (49%)
  - support of a spouse/partner (34%)
  - support of psychiatrist/therapist (33%)
  - support of boss/supervisor (27%)
  - support of co-workers (26%)

# CAPACITY FOR PROFESSIONAL LEVEL EMPLOYMENT

- Supports contributing to keeping a higher level job (cont.)
  - support of friends (26%)
  - spiritual involvement (21%)
  - support of parents/family members (17%)
  - support of other consumers (17%)
  - support through a vocational program (2%)
  - employee assistance program (1%)

# CAPACITY FOR PROFESSIONAL LEVEL EMPLOYMENT

- Reasons for keeping a higher level job
  - my interest in and satisfaction with what I do (73%)
  - the opportunities for professional development (43%)
  - the control I have over my work (30%)
  - the money I make (27%)
  - the flexibility I have at work (25%)
  - the relationships I have developed at work (23%)

# CAPACITY FOR PROFESSIONAL LEVEL EMPLOYMENT

- Reasons for keeping a higher level job (cont.)
  - the recognition I get for the work I do (18%)
  - the benefits I get (16%)
  - the organizational culture and values (15%)
  - the understanding I get at work about my psychiatric condition (7%)
  - the convenient location of my job (6%)
  - the accommodations I got due to my psychiatric condition (3%)



# CAPACITY FOR PROFESSIONAL LEVEL EMPLOYMENT

- Predictors for higher level of employment
  - older age
  - being male
  - being married
  - higher level of education
  - not having received disability benefits

# CAPACITY FOR PROFESSIONAL LEVEL EMPLOYMENT

- Predictors for higher level of employment (cont.)
  - being in psychotherapy
  - not compromising one's own mental stability because of work
  - having a job in the non-helping field versus having a job in the mental health field
  - having the support of a psychiatrist/therapist

# CAPACITY FOR FINANCIAL SELF-SUFFICIENCY

- A study conducted with 167 participants in the longitudinal sustained employment study who have received disability benefits due to their psychiatric condition
- 69 study participants were off Social Security benefits, 54 were still receiving Social Security benefits, 14 were off and later back on Social Security benefits, 20 were off other disability income, 9 were still receiving other disability income, and one respondent was off and back on disability income.

# CAPACITY FOR FINANCIAL SELF-SUFFICIENCY

- Respondents were middle aged; 77% were female; 95% were white.
- 46% reported a diagnosis of bipolar disorder, 21% - depressive disorder; 27% - schizophrenia spectrum disorder, and 6% - other disorders.
- Among respondents who achieved financial self-sufficiency 23% were previously on SSI, 51% - on SSDI, and 26% - reported prior receipt of both SSI and SSDI.

# CAPACITY FOR FINANCIAL SELF-SUFFICIENCY

- Among respondents who achieved financial self-sufficiency, 16% were employed in the self-help/advocacy field, 22% - in the mental health field, 20% - in the health field excluding mental health, and 35% - in the non-helping professions at the time of the study.
- 57% of the respondents who achieved financial self-sufficiency have used vocational rehabilitation services in the past.

# CAPACITY FOR FINANCIAL SELF-SUFFICIENCY

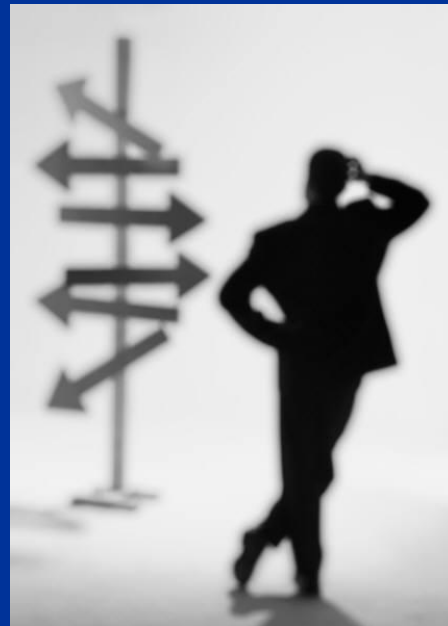
- Increased capacity for financial self-sufficiency was associated with:
  - having a job with higher occupational status
  - having a proactive coping style
- Decreased capacity for financial self-sufficiency was associated with the presence of a physical co-morbidity

# Job Retention Strategies

- Readiness Development
- Choosing the Preferred Environment
- Keeping for Success and Satisfaction

# Readiness: Why look at it?

- Readiness for Change is key to the discussion of job retention, since gaining and sustaining employment involve change.





# Job Retention Strategies: Readiness Development

- Readiness Development is the enhancement of the person's willingness to participate in the rehabilitation process.
- Related to Dr. Prochaska's Stages of Change (Precontemplation, Contemplation, Planning, Action, Maintenance, Termination)

# Readiness Factors

- Need
- Commitment
- Awareness
- Relationship



# Need for Change

- Need for change is related to one's dissatisfaction with an environment or situation.
- High dissatisfaction leads to need for change.

# Readiness Factor: Need for Change

Type of facilitator	Return to work	Sustained Employment	Financial Self-Sufficiency
Reluctance to continue living in poverty	X		
Desire to avoid homelessness	X		
Fear of continuous dysfunction	X		
Desire to increase own income	X		
Need to support family/children	X	X	

# Commitment: Desirability

- “Grass is greener”
- “Pull” toward a better situation.
- Cost-benefit analysis.

# Readiness Factor: Commitment: Desirability of the Change

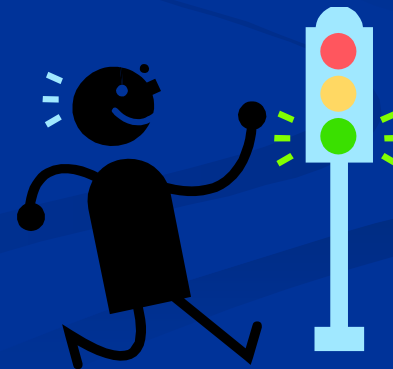
Type of facilitator	Return to work	Sustained Employment	Financial Self-Sufficiency
Interest in job content		X	
Finding meaning in work		X	
Motivation to increase quality of life			X
Need to increase income			X

# Desirability: Stay or Go

<b>Sample costs</b>	<b>Sample benefits</b>
Making this change sounds like a lot of work.	Getting involved with rehabilitation might help me figure out what I want to do
Making this change might take a long time.	By taking the time to be careful with my decisions, I might make a good choice.
I think I would feel really pressured about getting a job	I might not feel so pressured if I have help looking for a job.
I might apply for a job and get it, so I might feel anxious about whether or not I can handle it.	I might apply for a job and get it, so I might feel proud.
I would have to make an effort to attend.	I would have somewhere to go, something to do, and someone to help me.

# Commitment: Positive Expectations

- Belief that change is possible.
- Belief that change is going to be positive.





# Commitment: Positive Expectations of the Change

Type of facilitator	Return to work	Sustained Employment	Financial Self-Sufficiency
Desire to contribute to society	X		
Desire to be respected by children	X		
Persistence in searching for job with better fit		X	
Positive impact of work on overall recovery		X	
Desire to do more with one's own life	X		

# Commitment: Self-Efficacy

- Belief that the person has the capacity to make change happen.



# Commitment: Self-Efficacy

Type of facilitator	Return to work	Sustained Employment	Financial Self-Sufficiency
Not afraid of losing the job in case of hospitalization		X	
Determination to get better	X		
Feeling good about ones' self after initial work success		X	

# Commitment: Support

- People
- Places
- Things
- Activities

# Commitment: Support for the Change

Type of facilitator	Return to work	Sustained Employment	Financial Self-Sufficiency
Effective psychiatric medications, incl. PRN	X	X	X
Support/ encouragement of mental health providers	X	X	X
Support of peers	X		X
Support of friends	X		
Support of family	X	X	X

# Awareness

- Awareness of self
- Awareness of environments

# Readiness: Awareness

Type of facilitator	Return to work	Sustained Employment	Financial Self-Sufficiency
Awareness of positive impact of work on self-esteem	X		
Awareness of the work success of other consumers	X	X	
Prior work experience	X		
Strong work ethic	X		

# Relationship

- The degree to which a partnership exists, in which both people bring their unique talents, gifts, and expertise in their work toward a mutually agreeable goal.



# Readiness Factor: Relationship

Type of facilitator	Return to work	Sustained Employment	Financial Self-Sufficiency
Vocational rehabilitation services	X	X	
Involvement in a self-advocacy group	X		X
Psychotherapy	X	X	X
Support/encouragement of mental health providers	X	X	X

# Readiness Exercise

1. Choose an environment you are considering change in.
2. Identify the people, place, activities, role, etc. that make up the environment.
3. Ascertain your feelings associated with the characteristics, and the reasons for those feelings.
4. Assess your overall satisfaction with the environment.

# Job Retention Strategies: Choosing

- A personalized and systematic process that assists the person to identify key interests, values, and preferences,
- as well as to analyze the skills, supports and qualifications related to the initial goal as the person prepares to get into the preferred environment.

# Why Choosing?

- Choosing a job well maximizes the potential of the person to sustain the preferred placement.



# Choosing: Start with identifying personal criteria

Type of facilitator	Return to work	Sustained Employment	Financial Self-Sufficiency
Job-person fit (interest in job, functional capacity and limits)	X	X	X
Interest in job content		X	
Earning a decent income		X	X
Persistence in searching for a job with a better fit		X	
(Willingness to accept any job and any wage)	X		

# Personal Criteria

- Those criteria upon which the person will make a work or career decision.
  - Based on past and current experiences
  - 1-2 word criterion names
- With operationalized definitions (measurable and observable)
- Research possible work environments with criteria in mind.

# Personal Criteria: Definitions

- *Consistent schedule*: The number of weeks per month when Libby's schedule is fixed and predictable.
- *Creative work*: The percentage of job duties each week that require Libby to make a design decision.

# Choosing: Personalized Assessment

- Helping the person to understand how their:
  - Skills
  - Resources
  - Qualificationsrelate to their preliminary goal (based on interests and personal criteria)
- Assisting person to select finalized goal



# Assessment

- A skill is a complex job function that a person *does*.
- May involve implicit and explicit requirements of the environment, or personal requirements for success and satisfaction.
- From: Certificate Program in Psychiatric Vocational Rehabilitation Training Curriculum

# Assessment: Skills

Type of facilitator	Return to work	Sustained Employment	Financial Self-Sufficiency
Functional capacity	X		
Efficient work self-regulation	X	X	X
Overcoming attendance problems		X	
Improved coping capacity			X
Risk-taking capacity	X		X

# Assessing Resources

- A resource is a person, place, thing, or activity needed to do the job well.
- Assess the need for and access to supports necessary for the goal.

# Assessment: Resources

Type of facilitator	Return to work	Sustained Employment	Financial Self-Sufficiency
Transportation		X	
Financial support of family			X
Having affordable housing			X
Symptom remission/ mental stability	X	X	X
Having a mentor	X		
Spirituality	X	X	X

# Assessing Qualifications

- A qualification refers to a job requirement for training, experience, credentials, or personal characteristics.
- Assess the existence of qualifications required by the environment.

# Assessment: Qualifications

Type of facilitator	Return to work	Sustained Employment	Financial Self-Sufficiency
Personal drive	X	X	X
Resilience	X	X	X
Risk taking capacity	X		X
Determination to work	X	X	X
Career change	X	X	X
Acquiring new or additional professional training	X	X	X

# Choosing Exercise

1. Think about your dream job.
  - (It may be unrealistic!)
2. What are 3:
  - Specific skills,
  - Resources, and
  - Qualifications needed for that job?
3. How far away from that goal are you?
4. Do you still want to move toward that goal?  
Why or why not?

# Getting

- Getting a job is acquiring access to and acceptance by the preferred vocational placement.
- Employment programs tend to spend lots of time with this aspect of the process.



# Getting: our research

Type of facilitator	Return to work	Sustained Employment	Financial Self-Sufficiency
Volunteering	X		
Work Opportunity	X		
Being given a chance to work	X		
Internal recommendation for position	X		
Persistent job search	X		
Help of mental health provider to get MH job	X		

# Job Retention Strategies: Keeping

- Keeping a job is acquiring the essential skills, accessing the supports, and arranging for the accommodations that are needed for success and satisfaction in the preferred environment.

# Keeping: Skills

- A skill is something that a person *does*.
- A skill is evidenced in the masterful performance of a set of observable behaviors according to standards, for a purpose, in appropriate circumstances over time.
- Skills, once mastered, are lasting.

# Strategies for Enhancing Skill

- Assess skills related to the goal environment
- Teach skills directly
- Enhance performance of a skill

# Assessing Skill

- Identify what is required by the goal environment
- Assess the person as close to the goal environment as possible
- Share the process and results with the person

# Teaching Skills

- Get specific!
- Develop content outline
- Create lesson plan
- Review performance, plan for new learnings

# Enhancing Performance

- If the person has the skill, but is not using it when, where, with whom, and for how long it is needed.
- Develop intervention to help person know what is needed (break it down into component parts), and begin to take steps to use skill in correct circumstances.

# Accessing Supports

- Assisting the person to get the people, place, thing, and activity resources needed for satisfaction and success in the goal environment.
- May require skill intervention so person can utilize the support.



# Keeping: Supports

Type of facilitator	Return to work	Sustained Employment	Financial Self-Sufficiency
Family proud of the person's success		X	
Counseling to figure out SSA policies		X	
Employer long-term disability insurance		X	
Support of supervisor		X	X
Support of coworkers		X	
Earning a decent income		X	X

# Arranging for Accommodations

- Arranging for accommodations is negotiating for specific job changes and employer-provided supports to compensate for a person's functional limitations.
- Refers to “reasonable accommodations” required by U.S. law under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

# Keeping: Accommodations

Type of facilitator	Return to work	Sustained Employment	Financial Self-Sufficiency
Flexible working hours		X	
Initial reduced workload		X	
Gradual increase of work responsibilities		X	
Accommodations		X	X
Disclosure/non-disclosure		X	
Having autonomy at work		X	

# Keeping Exercise

1. Identify at least 3:
  - People
  - Places
  - Things
  - Activities that support you in your work.
2. What other supports do you need to satisfied and successful?
3. What skills do you need to enhance in order to access those supports?