

**Let's Talk Employment:**  
A Guide for Family Members  
of Individuals in Mental Health Recovery



**Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation**

# Let's Talk Employment: A Guide for Family Members of Individuals in Mental Health Recovery



We **hope** that this **Guide** will **help** you start  
the dialogue  
about **employment** and promote  
**collaboration** among persons in  
mental health **recovery**, families, and other  
partners...to **achieve** employment **goals**.

***JOAN RAPP, PROJECT DIRECTOR***

## Who are we?

**Boston University Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation** is a research, training, and service organization dedicated to improving the lives of persons who have psychiatric disabilities. It was founded nearly 40 years ago by Dr. William Anthony, one of the leading pioneers in psychiatric rehabilitation.

Our work is guided by the most basic of rehabilitation values, first and foremost, that persons with psychiatric disabilities have the same goals and dreams as any other person.

Our mission is to increase the likelihood that they can achieve these goals by using strategies based on the core values of recovery and rehabilitation in order to improve the effectiveness of people, programs, and service systems.

*This Guide is property of the Trustees of Boston University.*



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***LET'S TALK EMPLOYMENT:***  
**A GUIDE TO EMPLOYMENT FOR FAMILY MEMBERS**

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## INTRODUCTION

### Why Work?

Here are ten individuals who would like to tell you what work has meant to them. "We Can Work." New York Association for Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services (NYAPRS), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dC4FQpn0Fko>.

Marcy



When considering employment for persons in mental health recovery, it helps to start with the **positive reasons** for choosing employment. Employment helps to:

- Add meaning to someone's life
- Provide opportunities to make own decisions & choices
- Provide opportunities to move forward in self-determination
- Decrease symptoms; Promote Skill building and leadership opportunities
- Create opportunities to learn, grow and recover
- Extend circle of natural supports
- Reduce isolation/increase opportunities for socialization
- Increase income (for better quality of life)
- Contribute to the broader community
- Generate hope by proving recovery is real
- Role model for people living with mental health conditions
- Mentor others with mental health issues on reentering the workforce
- Promotes full community Inclusion

This Guide emphasizes that families can bring positive attitudes and serve as role models, which are two essential factors to vocational success.

## Who should use this Guide?

This Guide is designed to help family members of unemployed people with mental health conditions remove barriers that often interfere with the ability to seek, obtain, or keep meaningful employment. Since many definitions of “family” exists for different people, the purpose of this Guide is to allow the person living with a mental health condition to determine who is considered “family” to them.

The user of the Guide could be a parent, sibling, adult child, grandparent, roommate, partner, relative, or friend. The common feature is that the person “helping” intentionally provide informational, emotional, or tangible support while the job seeker completes the actual work. The beneficiaries of this guide are the persons with mental health conditions who are open to receive the support of their loved ones to attain employment.

For the purpose of this Guide, we refer to persons with psychiatric disabilities in different terms, such as “your family member,” “persons in recovery,” “persons with mental health conditions,” or “job seekers.” We are including those who have serious psychiatric disability due to mood and/or thought problems.

These psychiatric disorders include serious depression and anxiety, psychotic disorders, as well trauma related functional issues. For the “job seekers,” we include all those who are of age to obtain employment, primarily those ages 18 and up, but we also may mention the value of high school employment and training supports which could occur earlier than age 18.

Families most often are the ones who know the individual the best and want nothing more than for them to have a fulfilling and meaningful life, including employment and supportive relationships. Families also may be most knowledge-able about when it is important for their loved one to take a rest or time out from the stresses of work. The key is to try to keep things in balance and help the individual to go forward when she or he is ready and wants to take the next step.



## Suggestions for use of this Guide

Use whatever portions of this Guide you feel are needed for your family situation. The Guide was designed to complement the “Repository of Employment and Vocational Recovery Resources” (<http://cpr.bu.edu/resources/employment/>). Share these two resources (the Guide and Repository) with other families that you might know who also have a member with a mental health condition. For those who are not familiar with the resources for vocational support, pay particular attention to **SECTION 5 of this Guide** – and to the links to resources that give a more complete description of each resource, such as Vocational Rehabilitation, IPS Supported Employment, Rehabilitation Clubhouses, etc.

### Resources

Goebert, D. (2014). [Cultural disparities in mental health care: Closing the disparities](#). *Psychiatric Times*.

(2011). Shortage of mental health treatment for racial/ethnic minorities especially African Americans. *Texas Tribune*.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oCG4l21Mexk>

This video, entitled “Gifts and Possibilities” by Denise Bissonette, a Vocational Consultant and Educator from Canada, teaches about the “possibilities rather than the disabilities.”



[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DNQqd\\_PRKdY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DNQqd_PRKdY)



## 1. To Work or Not to Work?

### Questions your family member are likely to ask:

It may be helpful to look at questions that are likely to occur to your family member when considering employment. There are many factors that a person will think about when deciding whether or not to work, or if they want to delay working until a future date.

#### A. Can I see myself as an employee?

##### What you should know:

It is common that those with mental health conditions think of themselves as a **“disabled person,”** which often overshadows their identity as a **successful employee.** It is possible to develop a stronger worker identity before pursuing an actual job. If this is not an issue, the “preparing for work” step often can be skipped, allowing the job seeker to go directly to supported employment.



Building Worker Identity

##### Suggestions:

Some of the steps that may be helpful in building worker identity and confidence are:

- Complete a skills development curriculum in high school
- Complete a self-assessment e.g. work history, interests and skills
- Complete an internship or volunteer work to experience what it is like to have the routine of working
- Participate in a rehabilitation clubhouse program that is based on the work-ordered day. Paid work opportunities often emerge from this (in 46 states and not all communities)

- Complete a workbook or guidebook to discover what steps would be meaningful or helpful in developing a career

As a supportive family member, you might find out what would be needed in order to complete the bulleted items above. You also may simply talk to your family member about their interests, dreams, and hopes about working. This might give you an idea about what their worries are or what they see as barriers to employment. Consider using a resource, such as:

### Resources

[IPS Employment Resource Book](#). Center for Practice Innovations. Columbia University, (2014). A workbook for job seekers; See especially pages 17-28 for some factors job seekers would consider prior to a decision to work, some sample conversations with family and cultural factors. Free download in English and Spanish. Searching for internships online and at job fairs.

[Center for Parent Information and Resources](#) while family member is still in school; most relevant if the family member has an Individualized Education Program (IEP) as a special education student.

Savickas, M. L., & Hartung, P. J. (2012). My Career Story: An autobiographical workbook for Life-Career success.

[http://www.vocopher.com/CSI/CCI\\_workbook.pdf](http://www.vocopher.com/CSI/CCI_workbook.pdf)

### **B. Do I have the energy and personal resources to work successfully?**

This is an important question for those who are not particularly active in the community or who may have limited networks of support. In this situation, the focus is on building energy and the network of potentially supportive people.

### **What you should know**

It is helpful for your family member to have a daily routine that requires the completion of tasks or projects both at home and/or outside of the home. This can help to determine how they are doing and what help might be needed to move forward.

The idea is to evaluate and build readiness for the responsibility of employment. When your family member is struggling with the issue of whether they are able to work, one of the most important roles of families is reflective listening rather than direct advice.

## Suggestions

You can borrow principles from an approach called “Motivational Interviewing,” a strategy for helping others to change. You could ask open-ended questions, then reflect back to your family member what you think they were trying to say (without judging or directing). The idea is that helping someone to change is really helping them to reflect on what they already know, rather than telling them how to “fix it.” Here are some examples of how it works:

- **O**pen-ended questions  
Example: *What kind of help do you think you need to go back to work?*
- **A**ffirmations  
Example: *Great. You really have been giving some thought about your choice and doing your research.*
- **R**eflective Listening  
Example: *So you think that you need more training to be able to work at the job you want.*
- **S**ummary Statements  
Example: *I think I understand. You really want to work, you know the pros and cons, but you want to find a way to get additional training first. Is that right?*

Here is a video example of [Motivational Interviewing and Employment](#) session with OARS labeled, you can watch a video with a potential job seeker.



When someone can commit a certain number of hours per day to a fixed schedule of activities, this is a big step toward self-knowledge and answering the big question: “Can I do it?”

When completing tasks (such as doing laundry, raking leaves, painting a room, shoveling snow) or projects (such as tending a garden or training a dog), your

family member is helping to build readiness. It is possible to build the capacity for activity a little at a time. Your family member may begin to notice at what point energy or attention improves and interest increases. One strategy is to break down a task into smaller steps, then gradually increase the size of the steps until there is a sense of accomplishment. Families can help by identifying tasks or activities that need to be done, encouraging participation in the activities, and acknowledging a job well done.

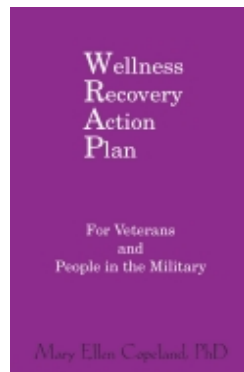
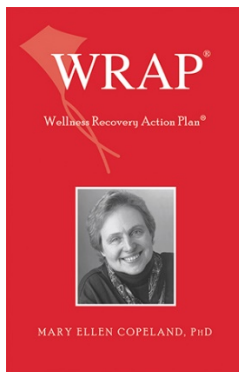
Developing wellness is another aspect of preparing for work. In other words, if your family member does not yet have a worker identity, structuring time during the day for wellness activities also can help with building readiness. Your family member can develop a daily structure including some exercise, meditation, yoga, walking, or other wellness activities that contribute to wellbeing and concentration.



There also are structured guides to dealing with health and mental health issues as well as preventing or dealing with crises, which many help your family member feel more confident.

[Wellness Recovery Action Plan](http://psychcentral.com/library/id239.html) is widely used in mental health programs and by self-help groups. It also has been adapted for Latinos, Veterans, Families, Addiction, Kids and People with Developmental Disabilities. Copeland, M. Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP).

<http://psychcentral.com/library/id239.html>



There are many resources your family member can use for building concentration and focus, such as simple games, crossword puzzles, Sudoku, and other online games. There may be programs or services that also can help with building readiness, and we will consider them in a later section.

### Resources

Boston University, Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation on Readiness: [Assessing and Developing Readiness](#) for Rehabilitation (includes work or any personally developed goal.)

Online games at: <http://www.ibraining.com/>

[Whole Health Action Management](#). WHAM is a training program and peer support group model developed to increase resiliency, wellness, and self-management among people with mental health conditions and substance use disorders.

Swarbrick, M. (2010). Peer wellness coaching supervisor manual. Freehold, NJ: Collaborative Support Programs of New Jersey, Institute for Wellness and Recovery Initiatives. [Wellness Coaching](#) is a training manual to help coach individuals on the dimensions of wellness.

### C. Do I know how to find the right vocational professional?

A vocational professional can be the most important support your family member will need. Some vocational professionals are in programs where their role is very obvious, such as the state Vocational Rehabilitation Agency Counselor or the America's Job Center Employment Specialist. Supported Employment Programs, which are excellent at rapid job placement, may not be quite so easy to find as they may be listed on the Internet under a Community Mental Health or other agency. It is a matter of finding the right agency for you family member's specific needs. [Benefits Specialists](#) also can be invaluable to potential job seekers by translating the maze of information on benefits and employment. See links on the next page for how to find a vocational professional.

## What you should know:

Each possible resource for employment services is likely to have criteria that your family member has to meet in order to get help. For example, your family member might have to live in a certain area, be in a specific age range, be part of another agency like the Department of Mental Health, be involved with a certain treatment team, or have particular diagnoses.

## Suggestions:

Some possible doors your family member can try to enter for vocational support include:

You can do an Internet search of supported employment programs in your state. If this doesn't work, contact the state Dept. of Mental Health in your area or search the Internet for your state's directory of local offices.

### Resources

[State Mental Health agencies](#) Administrative Offices

[State Vocational Rehab Agencies Admin Office](#) They can help to assess the individual, develop a vocational plan and provide or coordinate the services necessary to attain the goal

[Rehabilitation Clubhouses](#) in 46 states (in-house volunteering; transitional employment paid, part time- employment in own job with supports; independent employment.

[Vocational Services for Veterans](#)

[http://www.benefits.va.gov/vocrehab/employment\\_tracks.asp](http://www.benefits.va.gov/vocrehab/employment_tracks.asp)

[Vocational Professionals through Ticket to Work](#) A benefit of the Social Security Administration for Persons on SSI.

[Programs of Assertiveness Treatment](#) Free downloads. Not all programs have strong employment focus so explore in advance.

These are services generally open to all citizens (not restricted to people with disabilities) but they are supposed to serve persons with mental health or physical/ developmental disabilities as well:

[America's Job Centers Locator by State](#)

[Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act \(WIOA\)](#) – find resources.

**D. Do I really understand how earnings will interact with benefits such as Social Security, veterans, medical, housing, or whatever benefits might be relevant to me?**



### **What you should know:**

The relationship between benefits and work can be not always clear. There tends to be much misinformation or incomplete information. People often make choices not to work or to remain in part-time entry-level work because someone has told them that this is the best option when it is not the whole story. What happens to benefits when my family member starts to work? This has a complex answer and we strongly recommend you read this carefully.

### **Resources**

[Benefits and Employment How it Works](#). You may want to go over it with your family member/job seeker.

For veterans this may be helpful, and consult a Veterans Employment Specialist Veterans Benefits and Work:

<https://cpr.bu.edu/resources/employment/families/think-about-work/faq/benefits-and-work/veterans-benefits/>



VA Fact Sheet:

<https://cpr.bu.edu/app/uploads/2015/07/Veterans-Benefits-Factsheet.pdf>

Here is a [GLOSSARY OF BENEFITS TERMS](#)

The questions related to benefits and work should be asked very early on in the “thinking about work” phase of the process so that any chances of misinformation or partial information can be minimized. The best approach is to have [Benefits Specialists](#), who guide you through the maze of benefits and earnings and answers all your questions. However, not all states or all communities provide access to such a person. If this is the case, an Employment Specialist may be your interpreter of the benefits – earnings issues.

In addition to cash benefits and concerns about work, an equally important factor to look at is medical benefits and what will happen when someone works. If your family member retains even one dollar of SSI cash benefit, medical benefits will be retained. If your family member has been on SSDI for two years or more and goes to work, they retain their Medicare as long as they are still on SSDI, such as through a trial work period. Many employers will pick up health care benefits often for full time workers. There is a way for working disabled persons who have any SSI benefit to retain Medicaid while working. Certain criteria are necessary under [1619 b section of Social Security](#). It works as long as the worker is still considered “disabled” until income reaches a level determined by the state.



Persons with disabilities in selective states also can benefit from the Medicaid Buy-In if they meet the eligibility criteria. It allows those who would not be able to continue Medicaid while working to purchase Medicaid at a lower rate, similar to buying private insurance. Forty one states participate, and you can learn more by contacting your social security administration local office.

Some of the Medicaid benefits and other federally-subsidized health benefits (e.g., Affordable Health Care Act or its replacement) vary from state-to-state as some of the states offer different subsidies. Medications often are very expensive,



and if your family member does not have sufficient coverage through health benefits, some pharmaceutical companies will provide medications at no cost. For those on Medicare who have limited income for premiums, deductibles, and copayments of their Medicare Part D prescription drug plan Social Security has a program called [Extra Help](#).

With the **right information** and using the **incentives** provided by the Social Security Administration, a job seeker with a disability almost always will end up with a total of more money. The next goal is to make the dollars **s-t-r-e-c-h**.



### **Suggestions:**

Learn the basics of how **work and benefits interact**. Get the right information and keep up to date.

Another important strategy is to make the dollars **stretch**. In many areas of the U.S., housing and related costs are so high that a large portion of a person's income is spent for housing and related costs. The amount of money coming into the household is not the only thing that affects the quality of life. Some of the ways you can help your family member make the dollars stretch include: applying for housing subsidies (probably the most helpful), food stamps (SNAP), using food banks, clipping coupons, and shopping at thrift shops or second-hand stores both traditional and online stores.

You can assist your family member by locating professionals who can help maneuver the world of health related benefits. You could start with your local Department of Mental Health or state Vocational Rehabilitation agency. If your family member is working with a Supported Employment program, there should be Benefits Specialists who can help.

## ***2. What Families Can Do to Help Job Seekers Overcome Vocational Barriers***

### **What Questions Should I Ask?**

- What are some barriers we might expect?
- What should I do if my family member does not want my help?

### **What You Should Know**

As mentioned in other sections of this Guide, being a **role model** and providing a **positive attitude** toward employment are perhaps two of the most important ways that families can support the process of vocational recovery. If families can promote persistence, hope, optimism, resilience, and confidence (without nagging), it is extremely beneficial to the job seeker. Filling the position of “role model” does not mean that you are expected to be a perfect person; it simply means that you try to show enthusiasm for your own work whether it is in a job outside or inside the home. It is really the effort to help that counts, even if it does not seem successful at first. If you don't know exactly how to help, remember it is the willingness to be supportive that matters, not always knowing the right thing to say.

### **Suggestions**

It is important not to oversimplify the process or to underestimate the barriers that one has to overcome in order to get and keep employment. Advice is not always the best way to motivate someone to go to work, especially if the person does not think any of these options are good or simple.

You still can support your family member, even if you do not agree with their decisions about employment; you can listen, provide positive comments when deserved, and offer tangible supports that your family member wants or needs. You also can borrow some of the practices that Employment Specialists use from Motivational Interviewing. Some short version principles:

- **R**esist telling the person what to do. Avoid telling, directing, or convincing the person what to do.
- **U**nderstand the person's motivation; his or her values, needs, abilities, barriers to change, and what is important.
- **L**isten with empathy; be active listeners with more attention to the individual's motivation than yours.
- **E**mpower the person to set his or her own goals and identify ways to overcome barriers.

Consider how you would respond to these barriers:

- **Disincentives in the public benefits** (Social Security, Medicaid etc.) The structure of public benefits is often a chief deterrent to working and is seen as a barrier, typically by the person in recovery, but also by the families who may have worked very hard over a long period of time to obtain the benefits. With the right information and benefits counseling by very knowledgeable specialists, job seekers may be able to come up with a plan which enables them to net more money than with benefits alone. Using work incentives provided by Social Security can be helpful in increasing income.


Using resources that help to stretch dollars, such as housing subsidies, thrift shops, clipping coupons, and food stamps (SNAP) also can make employment worthwhile. Misinformation or insufficient information can get in the way of persons in recovery achieving employment. As for health benefits, they have to be carefully researched so that the employer, Medicaid, Medicare, and/or other federal/state resources dedicated to health benefits are accessed by the "employee."

With the right information, the fear of losing benefits can be reduced. It is critical to get: [Benefits Specialists](#) to help find the way through the maze of policies.

- **Attitudes, expectations of others, and the culture of unemployment.** Professional and family expectations can encourage or discourage people in recovery from considering or pursuing employment. Clinicians, family, or

friends may feel that employment is either not possible or not in their best interests. Because of the extremely high percentage of people with psychiatric disabilities who are unemployed (about 85%), potential job seekers may feel that unemployment is the norm for a reason; thus unemployment becomes part of their culture.

Social views of mental health conditions contribute to the generally low expectations for employment. Clinicians and families can be supportive and encourage employment while avoiding placing pressure on the job seeker to choose specific employment goals.

- **Fear of too much stress or fear of relapse.** You or your family member may think that work will cause too much stress or even trigger a relapse. As with people who do not have disabilities, high stress at work may be a result of the wrong match – either the work environment may not be right or the job itself is not right. People in recovery can be taught how to manage stress at work and adopt wellness activities that can be utilized to prevent or reduce stress. Should someone have a relapse, it may be short term, enabling a return to work. If the employee has to leave a job, benefits can generally be reinstated on an emergency basis, until benefits are re-determined or the person goes back to work in a different job.
- 
- **Lack of confidence.** This can occur when someone has no work history or a problematic work history. It even can occur when someone has had a good work history, but now is dealing with a mental health condition. In any situation, a person can be lacking in confidence to such a degree that they will not consider working or postpones actions that could lead to employment. Families can assist in helping to restore confidence or get through a series of small accomplishments. A family member might also volunteer to take the job seeker to a Job Fair or Resource Fair.
  - **Inability to fluently communicate in English.** Family members can assist the individual in finding English classes, if they are open to the idea. An employment specialist or any other resource person could practice essential phrases and questions with the job seeker. The individual also can seek employment in environments where fluent English is not as important.

- **Discrimination (all forms).** There are many types of discrimination (mental health conditions, racial, ethnic, gender identity, religion, etc.), so people in recovery may experience it on more than one front. Employment specialists, clinicians, and families all can be helpful in teaching how to deflect discrimination and stigma, whether it is subtle or more obvious. Sometimes if the employee receives accommodations, there may be resentment by coworkers, which is a little different than discrimination due to disability itself. Being prepared for these different types of aggressions with awareness and skills will help the employee to maintain employment and reduce the stress that might occur.
- **Worrying about losing the job.** This is another expression of the lack of confidence in employment. An Employment Specialist or Job Coach can assist the employee with boosting confidence and reducing anxiety.
- **Insufficient access to effective vocational services.** Although we know through research that there are some effective approaches to psychiatric vocational rehabilitation, those effective models often are missing from many communities. This may be due to insufficient funding or lack of priority in the service system. Employment Specialists and families sometimes can find resources that are a good fit for the job seeker or help to transport the job seeker to another area where the vocational services are available. Families can be a tremendous force in advocating for the development of vocational services. Only around 2% of those in need of supported employment services receive them.
- **Insufficient clinical services.** Clinical services that are suited to one's culture, language, values, and beliefs may be unavailable in your community or may only exist in a very limited way. It is still worth searching for clinical services in your community or in another community that your family member can reach. Alternative or complimentary health practices also should be easily accessible to maintain a good health/mental health balance.



- **Insufficient job protection.** See Section 12 for the policies and legislation around job protection. While helpful to many, sometimes these policies and legislation are not enough to assist in helping someone to save their job when it is in jeopardy. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA or ADAA), for example, does not always have “strong teeth.” Although it was a hard-fought victory to pass the ADA, it is not uniformly or assertively enforced. Refer to the next page for locations for ADA Centers that offer some legal advice.

Should your family member not want your help, ask them how you can be most supportive. You might give some examples of how that might work by using a friend to provide an informational interview (practice interview), by helping to get a bus pass, or by providing another specific support. If your family member still does not want you to do anything, just remain available.

## Resources

Cook, J. Subcommittee on Employment and Income Supports of the President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health. (Oct. 1, 2006). Employment barriers for persons with psychiatric disabilities: Update of a report for the President's Commission. *Psychiatric Services*.

<http://ps.psychiatryonline.org/doi/full/10.1176/ps.2006.57.10.1391>

Henry, A., & Lucca, A. (2004). Facilitators and barriers to employment: The perspectives of people with psychiatric disabilities and employment service providers. *Work*, 22(3):169-82.

Abstract at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/15156083>

Moss, K., & Burris, S. (2007). The Employment Discrimination Provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act: Implementation and Impact. [The Future of Disability in America](#). National Academy of Sciences.

[ADA CENTERS](#)— national network throughout the U.S. can offer consultation and advice (cannot represent clients legally).

Bond, G. (2016). Evidence for the Effectiveness of Individual Placement and Support Model of Supported Employment.

<https://ipsworks.org/index.php/library/>

### *3. Vocational Decisions & Vocational Resources*

#### **What Questions Should I Ask?**

- What kind of **resources** can help choose and get employment?
- What specific programs serving mental health are especially important?



#### **What You Should Know**

Too often people with mental health conditions have received more attention for their disability than their ability, more attention to symptoms and problems and less attention to their strengths. For someone with little or no work history, building a sense of “worker” is important. As mentioned earlier, one can build worker identity by volunteering, interning, or by actually working. Work through a vocational program, in particular, helps to form worker identity through a series of self-assessments, training, or work experiences. It is important to be able to identify some of the key employment resources and models for people with psychiatric disabilities, as discussed below.



## Suggestions

As your family member is ready to take the next step beyond “considering,” you might help them to “rewrite” their own vocational story by focusing on wellness, interests, and strengths. This can be a motivation-building activity. For help with resumes, cover letters, applications and interviews, see **EMPLOYMENT RESOURCE BOOK** under Finding Vocational Resources on the next page.

Keep in mind that peer professionals (other people in recovery), who experienced positive results in employment can be extremely effective in providing support at any stage. If your family member does not have peer support, you may help to point them in the right direction (see section 6 below).



### Resources

Yanos, P., Roe, D., & Lysaker, P. (2010). The impact of illness identity on recovery from severe mental illness. *American Journal of Psychiatric Rehabilitation, 13*(2), 73–93.

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2927828/>

**Finding Vocational Resources:** Some vocational services are generic, which is, part of an existing educational program or facility. For example high school students may receive help from the vocational support person or special education job coach at the school. Homeless programs may have job development services within the program. Colleges and technical schools have their own placement offices. In such situations the staff may or may not have expertise with working with persons with mental health conditions. Here are some other vocational resource possibilities.



## Resources

Employment Resource Book (free download in

English) <http://practiceinnovations.org/Products/Product/rvdsfpid/26>

Employment Resource Book (free download in Spanish)

<http://practiceinnovations.org/Products/Product/employment-workbook-outside-new-york/ips-employment-resource-book-spanish-pdf>

**Individual Placement and Support**: This ever-growing approach to **Supported Employment** offers rapid job placement services tailored to individuals with mental health conditions. This is a heavily researched (evidence-based) model of service and includes close collaboration with clinicians and employers. To find an IPS Supported Employment Program in your state or area, you can do an Internet search and/or contact the Department of Mental or Behavioral Health in your area for information on the location and eligibility for IPS services. Eight specific principles guide the IPS model and help it to be an extremely effective model.

Principles include:

- Competitive employment is the goal
- IPS supported employment is integrated with treatment
- Zero Exclusion – as long as it is the client's choice, no one is turned away
- Services are based on client preferences
- Benefits counseling is important throughout the process
- Rapid job search is provided without need for other evaluations and begins within the first 30 days
- Systematic job development is provided by Employment Specialists who work with the clients and the employers for the right fit
- Time-unlimited supports are provided for as long as needed and wanted.

The Department of Mental or Behavioral Health may help locate programs with their listing of **Central Offices** (you may ask if there is an Employment Specialist to further guide you). When your family member is ready to begin the job-finding process, contacting the IPS Supported Employment program in your area would be an excellent place to find the vocational professional to work with. The IPS

program will help your family member to consider, choose, get, and keep employment.

Combining evidence-based practices, especially with IPS Supported Employment, may improve your family member's chances of being successful in employment. For example, [Thinking Skills for Work](#) is another evidence-based practice that can help your family member to deal with the cognitive requirements of a job, such as memory and concentration. It currently is available in portions of Massachusetts, Illinois, Oregon, New York, and New Hampshire. By combining the two approaches, job seekers have a much greater chance of being successful.



**[State Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies](#)**: “VR” can help to assess the individual, develop a vocational plan, and provide or coordinate the services necessary to attain the desired goal. A Rehabilitation Counselor works with the individual job seekers to decide what they want to do and develop a plan to achieve the goal. Rehabilitation Counseling staff serve people with many different disabilities and have access to a wide array of services and supports for assessment, training, placement, and job retention.

There typically are offices throughout the state and services are supported by combined federal and state resources. VR agencies may fund programs, such as IPS Supported Employment and Rehabilitation Clubhouses by sharing funding with other agencies. VR often can help with academic or vocational training funds, job supplies, uniforms, transportation, job coaching, on-the-job training, and many other vocational supports on an individual basis. They also may support through contracts vocational programs such as Supported Employment.

**[Rehabilitation Clubhouses](#)** exist in 46 states but not all communities. There are four levels of work: in-house volunteering; transitional employment, paid part time work in jobs held aside for club members; supported employment in person's own job but with support of the program and independent employment. The programs work with individuals at whatever stage of vocational recovery they might be in. Many also offer social and housing supports in addition to work units, transitional employment, supported employment, and independent employment.



[America's Job Centers \(One Stop Career Centers\)](#) in each state: These Centers serve large numbers of people, but have direct connections to employers and often direct access to specific training programs. There are many on-site resources and workshops, such as computer skills, help with applications, or job finding.

Professional vocational services for **veterans**: [The Veterans Administration](#) offers Therapeutic and Supported Employment Services including Individual Placement and Support (IPS) service and Transitional Work at every site, Community Based Competitive Employment at some locations (less support services than IPS), Vocational Assistance at some locations, a two-session training on resumes, interviews, and job searches. There is also another set of VA programs for homeless veterans. In addition to the VA, there are many non-profits and veterans services agencies operated in the cities and towns. Veterans' representatives typically are available at the America's Job Centers (see above).

Finding Vocational Professionals through the [Ticket to Work](#) Program: This is a benefit of the Social Security Administration, which provides SSI recipients a list of potential providers and the type of individuals or disability groups they serve. Services are free of charge.

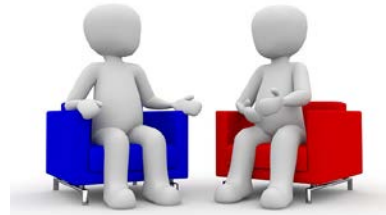


[IPS Employment Resource Book](#). Although this resource book is written for Supported Employment job seekers, it is really usable for anyone for things, such as resumes, cover letters, applications and interviews. Center for Practice Innovations, Columbia University. (2014) A workbook for job seekers; free download is available in English and Spanish.

## 4. Disclosure Planning

### What Questions Should I Ask?

- If my family member chooses to disclose, when is the best time to do it?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of disclosure?



### What You Should Know

The issue of disclosure of disability is vital to deal with very early in the “considering work” phase due to the overwhelming problems of discrimination against people with mental health conditions. Since these concerns tend to compound when factors, such as race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc., intersect with a disability, it is important that the job seeker review with an informed person, such as the Employment Specialist, the pros and cons of disclosure, the best times for disclosure, and the job seeker’s personal decision about disclosure based on this information. Then it is recommended that the job seeker develop a **Disclosure Plan** which details the decision to disclosure.

If the decision to disclose is made, then the plan should describe who will disclose to the employer, what will be disclosed (e.g., the person has a disability), and when/how the disclosure will occur. Keep in mind that when someone works with an Employment Specialist or Rehabilitation Counselor who is working with an employer on the job match, this is an **automatic disclosure** of a disability (although the details of the disability do not need to be disclosed). The exception is that if the professional and the job seeker agree that they will apply on their own with no disclosure, there is no direct contract by the Employment Specialist on behalf of that individual.



## Suggestions

The Employment Specialist or Rehabilitation Counselor would review with the job seeker the pros and cons of disclosure for the specific employer and the specific job. Your family member may agree to disclose for one employer and not for another. For example, if they apply for an entry level job they might decide to disclose while they might decide not to when applying for a skilled or managerial job. All of this should be, to the extent possible, contained in the **Disclosure Plan**. On the next page is an example of a Disclosure Plan. (Job seekers or Employment Specialists can design their own if needed.)

|                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| <b>DISCLOSURE PLAN</b> | <b>Madison Options Inc., Denver, CO.</b> |
|------------------------|--|

**NAME:** Tamara

**DATE:** December 20<sup>th</sup>

**WHO:** Employment Specialist, Julian

**WHAT:** Julian will talk to one or more employers about Tamara. He will propose Tamara as a potential employee, so the employer will know that she has a disability because of his company/program. The employer will not know a diagnosis (or even that the disability is a mental health condition). Julian will make reference to a potential accommodation, but will not explain why it is needed or even what the accommodation might be.

**WHEN:** The automatic disclosure comes at first contact when Julian, the Employment Specialist, proposes the job seeker to the employer.

The next stage of disclosure will happen if Tamara is hired by the employer. At the time of hiring, or after hiring, she will let the employer know that she may need accommodations. The timing of this will depend on how Tamara sees the opportunity and her insight about the situation.

**NEEDS:** Tamara's functional needs are:

Needs help with focus when first beginning new tasks; tools to increase concentration and organization; supportive and flexible work environment to minimize stress; support for attending treatment. This will be explained by Tamara (and Employment Specialist, if needed). She will request:

- Flexible hours in which to attend treatment sessions twice per month.
- Keeping a water bottle at her work station in case she needs to hydrate several times per day.
- Weekly supervision instead of every two weeks to review performance and find ways to improve and resolve problems and to provide positive feedback when it is warranted.
- Development of a chart of duties broken down into steps to help with focus.

- Written directions for any computers or other electronic equipment and how to access data or material.
- Headphones to block out background noise.

This plan was developed and accepted by:

Employment Specialist: **Julian**  
Job Seeker: **Tamara**

Date: April 29<sup>th</sup>  
Date: April 29<sup>th</sup>



## Resources

[Disclosure for Youth](#) Job Accommodation Network

ODEP. [Youth Disclosure and the Workplace](#)

[Disclosing Your Disability](#) to an Employer  
Boston University, Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation

U.S. Health and Human Services. (2008). [SELF DISCLOSURE](#)

## *5. Steps Towards Employment: Example of a Vocational Plan*

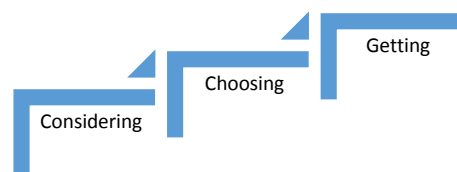
### What Question Should I Ask?

- Can you elaborate on the steps to employment?
- What would an example of a vocational plan look like?

### What You Should Know

Each job seeker follows his or her own process or journey on the road to vocational recovery. For some, decisions are made quickly and without extensive thought about complexities. Others need more time, thought, and mini steps before finally applying for and receiving the job of their choice. At times, someone will take steps forward and then go back to a previous step or rethink decisions. (It also happens that someone almost unexpectedly will decide to pursue work.)

The following are steps in the process of achieving employment; they may be considered wide steps than can include many small steps. You will find more on the process of keeping employment in Section 11.



**Considering** involves job seekers being able to:

- Evaluate their interests, strengths, & limitations as they apply to work.
- Consider the impact of wages and potential incentives to work if on Social Security, Health benefits, and/or Veterans benefits.
- List the pros and cons of working vs. not working.
- Talk to other peers about their experience returning to work.
- Find out what possible supports there would be to choose and get employment.

**Choosing** involves looking at a variety of options for education, training, employment, and/or career. This step often requires:

- Narrowing down possible areas of employment to pursue.
- Establishing a vocational goal that takes into account the job seeker's interests and talents as well as labor market forecast.
- Identifying any necessary training and selecting a program to provide the training.
- Exploring and selecting the vocational supports & partners that will be needed.
- Developing a plan of services, supports, and time frames to achieve the goal. In some cases this plan might include steps that are preliminary, such as an internship or on job training.
- Identifying potential job types.



**Getting** involves the job seeker, with support of others, obtaining the desired employment or career position.

- Potential employers and jobs are identified.
- Applications and cover letters are sent.
- Job interviews are obtained for the final desired employment situation.
- Follow up with each employer is completed and handwritten thank-you notes to employers who provided interviews are sent.
- Choice is made.
- The supports that are necessary to make the job successful are in place along with any certifications, licenses, prerequisites or accommodations that might be needed.

See also section for “Keeping” the job.

## **Suggestions**

**Vocational Plan:** Whether working primarily with a supported employment program, school system, clubhouse program, or vocational rehabilitation agency, the job seeker is required to help develop and sign a plan with the goals and services required to get and keep employment. All accommodations that your family member anticipates needed should be included in the vocational plan, described specifically in the portion about job finding and job keeping. Here is a sample plan; depending on the agency, the state, and other factors, it will take different formats.



| <b>VOCATIONAL PLAN* (SAMPLE)</b>   |  |
|--|--|
| <b>ARIZONA DES, VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION</b>  |  |
| <i>Date: December 10<sup>th</sup></i>  | <i>NAME OF PARTICIPANT: Juan</i>             |
| Vocational goal/s (order of preference)  |  |
| 1. Registered & certified pharmacy technician - estimated time is 10 months from this date.                      |  |
| 2. Pharmacy technician   |  |
| 3. Pharmacy associate  |  |
| <u>Services</u>  | <u>Provided By</u> <u>Key Person/ Agency</u> |
| <u>Training for Pharmacy Technician</u> <u>AZ Dept. of Economic Security, Voc. Rehab.</u> <u>Martina</u>         |  |
| <u>In conjunction with CVS Pharmacy</u>  |  |
| <u>Registration (fee)</u> <u>AZ Dept. of Economic Security, Voc. Rehab.</u> <u>Martina</u>                       |  |
| <u>Certification</u> <u>Study books &amp; test tutor provided by CVS</u> <u>County Rd. CVS</u>                   |  |
| <u>Therapy and Support</u> <u>Flagstaff MH Center</u> <u>Benjamin</u>  |  |
| <u>Job Finding Services</u> <u>AZ Dept. of Economic Security, Voc. Rehab (&amp;CVS)</u> <u>Martina</u>           |  |
| A. Negotiating accommodations: very detailed job task lists; extra break/day; additional supportive supervision. |  |
| B. Post-Employment Follow up (90 days) <u>AZ Dept. of Economic Security, Voc. Rehab</u> <u>Martina</u>           |  |
| <u>Employment Support (ongoing)</u> <u>Flagstaff MH Center</u> <u>Benjamin</u>                                   |  |
| <u>Review progress</u> <u>AZ Dept. of Economic Security, Voc. Rehab.</u> <u>Martina</u>                          |  |
| <u>Signatures:</u>   |  |
|  |  |
| <u>Juan</u>  | <u>Date: December 10<sup>th</sup></u>        |
| <u>Martina</u>   | <u>Date: December 10<sup>th</sup></u>        |

**Resources:**

[Finding a Job That is Right For You?](#) Job Accommodation Network

## ***6. Myths and Facts – What Happens When My Family Member Goes to Work?***

### **What Question Should I Ask?**

- What are some common myths and facts about employment?

### **What You Should Know**

- a) **Myth:** My family member has a mental health condition, and it is unlikely they will ever be able to work again.

**Fact:** Most individuals with mental health conditions who take care of their health/mental health can work. (Sometimes there is some readiness building that is needed).

- b) **Myth:** Most people with mental health conditions don't want to work.

**Fact:** The majority of people with mental health conditions (about 65%) say that they want to work. With the right information that percentage might be higher!

- c) **Myth:** If my family member goes to work, they will lose their cash benefits, health benefits, subsidized housing, etc.

**Fact:** When your family member: a) is very well-informed about the relationship between employment and benefits; b) takes advantage of work incentives; and c) takes all financial factors into account, they most likely will have a net income greater than their benefits. This is true whether the person continues on some cash benefits or not. Should someone need to leave a job, benefits can be reinstated quickly, if the correct procedures are followed.

Securing health benefits, whether through the employer or through public benefits, has a greater chance now than ever before as more Americans have access to health benefits. It is of the utmost importance that your family member have excellent information and support in financial

management. Nothing happens automatically in terms of securing income and health benefits, all the correct procedures have to be followed and in the correct time frame.

- d) **Myth:** When my family member goes to work, he or she will most likely have a relapse or be hospitalized.

**Fact:** There is no hard evidence that this is likely to happen. More often the reverse is true, that when someone works in the right job, work promotes recovery. The idea that work causes relapse or increased illness generally is not supported by research. Our colleagues, Joe Marrone and Ed Golowka, wrote in the *Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal* a timeless article entitled: [If Work Makes People with Mental Illness Sick, What Do Unemployment, Poverty, and Social Isolation Cause?](#)

- e) **Myth:** My family member is from another culture and does not have strong English, so they would never be able to find a decent job.

**Fact:** Many people who have good work habits, but have cultural challenges can still find good jobs. <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/forbrn.pdf>

### **Suggestions:**

Become familiar with the myths and facts, especially as they relate to employment and share with your job seeker/family member. Discuss them together since there may be misinformation that leads to being sidetracked on the road to employment. Try to have facts if you or your family member have to deal with others in the community, who still are clinging to the myths. Take opportunities to have a discussion with other extended family members or clinicians who discourage your family member about working because of the “myths.”

## Resources

[Myths and Facts About Mental Illness](#) National Center on Workforce and Disability

[NAMI Myths and Facts](#)

Canadian Mental Health Assn. [Myths and Facts about Mental Illness](#)

Frounfelker R. L., Wilkniss S. M., Bond G., Devitt T. S., & Drake R. E. (2011). Enrollment in supported employment services for clients with a co-occurring disorder. *Psychiatric Services*, 62, 545–547. (Facts about working).

<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/233538565> Making the Case for IPS Supported Employment

Institute for Community Inclusion. [One Stop Disability Resource Manual. Myths and Facts. pp 169-171.](#)

## 7. Job Keeping: Skills & Supports

### What Questions Should I Ask?

- What are the some effective methods of job keeping?
- What if my family member gets discouraged if they do not succeed in keeping a job?

### What You Should Know

Job keeping can be accomplished as a result of the skills of the individual employee, the supports of the vocational services provider (if there is one), as well as the supports and accommodations provided by the employer. It is a three-way recipe to success.



**The Employee:** Working consistently to learn and perform the job duties required by the employer is the first responsibility of the employee (**explicit or hard skills**). At the same time, the employee is practicing good work habits and learning the social and interpersonal behaviors that fit with the culture of the company and of

the specific unit where the employee works (**implicit or soft skills**). There will be problem-solving challenges along the way, and the person's Job Coach or Vocational Professional should be helpful in anticipating and solving those problems.

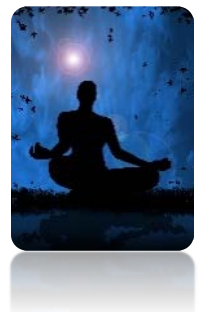


Stress hardiness is another characteristic that results from the employee's daily practice of wellness activities that prepares him or her for stress that might occur on the job. Some job-related stress may result from the job itself or events on the job (coworker leaves, company changes hands, supervisor is angry, etc.). At other times, there may be "transitional stress" (also called the rehabilitation crisis), which happens when someone is moving to a level of greater independence and greater responsibility (such as starting a new job, moving to an apartment, working additional hours, or getting promoted.)

"The 'rehabilitation crisis' is the experience of the ... person who has accepted the challenge to grow, has achieved significant movement toward his goals, and is now feeling overwhelmed by his changing/changed state. The client has advanced far enough in the process to begin to experience a transition in his activities, his relationships, and his sense of himself. He is proud of his progress, yet sad for what he must give up and frightened of the uncertainties he must face. He is in conflict and must choose to go forward or return to his previous state. He is giving up old ways; he has yet to establish new ways. He is **in transition** and he is vulnerable."

(McCrary, et al)

If the employee knows that stress WILL occur, he or she can prepare by daily meditations, breathing exercises, mantras, or other stress-hardiness building practices that the individual has developed over time. It is the once or twice daily practices that help prepare for coping so that when the stressful event occurs, he or she will be ready. There are approaches that also consider stress as a "friend," who can teach us important life lessons. [How to Make Stress Your Friend TED TALK](#), video by Kelly McGonigle.



**The Employer:** Perhaps the most important way that the employer helps the employee to keep a job is through excellent supervision, which incorporates a positive and hopeful attitude, helpful criticism, finding solutions to work challenges, flexibility, and teamwork. Sometimes the supervisor will use a compliment “sandwich” which means wedging a helpful criticism between two compliments. See section 12 for further information about accommodations.

## Suggestions

Although your family member may have a long-term goal of tapering off medications and therapy, it is likely that at least during certain stages of adjustment to employment, maintaining good treatment will be important. The “right” treatment is different for each person and depends on many factors in addition to physical and mental health. For some, it means the correct medication and correct dose, supportive therapy, or specialized therapies, such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Dialectical Behavioral Therapy, or treatment for substance abuse. Some people will need and want holistic or complimentary approaches, such as yoga, meditation, exercise, physical therapy, cognitive training, and others.

Employment does have a new set of demands and stresses for many people and it is important for the employee to keep tuned into what they might need to modify in their treatment or wellness plan. Having a Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) also is a good support. Clinicians should be knowledgeable about your family member’s employment progress and problems. The support of the family may be ensuring that your family member, who is now working, gets the clinical services that he or she thinks are needed. Your family member may need help in selecting clinicians, transportation, holistic approaches, or other treatment supports.

If an employee is terminated from a job or chooses to leave because it is not a good match or other reason, this is not necessarily a failure. It is a chance to learn what works or does not work for them. Family members and Employment Specialists can help to frame the experience as “one step closer to the right job” and move on. From each job something can be learned whether it is “what I like” or “what I don’t like.” Often there are great discoveries, such as a skill or interest

the employee did not know he or she had. When one job ends, it is just time to move on with the new learning to the next.

Keep in mind that programs, such as some of those previously mentioned (e.g., IPS Supported Employment, Clubhouses, Veterans Administration and other veterans' services, state Vocational Rehabilitation agencies) can offer job-keeping supports through Employment Specialists, Clubhouse staff and members, or Job Coaches to work with the employee and employer to make the job as successful as possible. They also may help the employee to move on to another job or educational program when the time is right.

## Resources

[Stress Hardiness. American Psychological Association](#)

## Leaving a Job

If voluntarily leaving a job, it is generally best to give at least two weeks written notice. State the reasons for leaving in a somewhat gentle way. Examples might be: "I want to find a position that is the right match for me," or "I am working towards a job that is a better career move for me." Thank the employer for the opportunity to work there. Apart from serious problems in the workplace, the employee usually is better off if they leave on good terms so that the employer can provide a good reference.



If there was a serious grievance, such as toxic work place, abuse by someone in the workplace or other major problem, your family member might help to develop a written notice with the help of the Employment Specialist or an advisor at one of the [ADA Centers](#) available in each region of the U.S. It is important future job references that you avoid major confrontation in the workplace. For more in depth advice on job leaving see this website:

<https://www.thebalance.com/resignation-do-s-and-don-ts-2063025>.

## 8. Job Protections

### What Questions Should I Ask?

- What protections are my family member entitled to?
- What are the important things about the Americans with Disabilities Act?
- How do I help my family member to remain protected after starting a job?

### What You Should Know

The commonly known job “protections” specific to people with disabilities are outlined in the [Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#) and the [Amended Act \(ADAAA\)](#). This law makes it illegal to discriminate against a qualified person with a disability in the private sector as well as in state and local governments. The law also makes it illegal to retaliate against a person because the person complained about discrimination, filed a charge of discrimination, or participated in an employment discrimination investigation or lawsuit. The law also requires that employers reasonably accommodate the known physical or mental limitations of an otherwise qualified individual with a disability, who is an applicant or employee, unless doing so would impose an undue hardship on the operation of the employer's business.

### Suggestions

It is important for employees with psychiatric disabilities who want or need accommodations to best perform their job duties to be sure to get documentation from a licensed clinician about the type of accommodations needed and the presence of a disability.

A specific diagnosis does **not** need to be given to the potential employer. When accommodations are needed, the employee has to present the documentation and also be able to specify the type of accommodations being requested. Assistance from an Employment Specialist may be helpful in suggesting accommodations. Examples of common accommodation include: Additional supervision focused on positive feedback, support and criticism (such as a compliment “sandwich” in which the





criticism is wedged between compliments and supports). Modified schedule; Extra support from a coworker “buddy”; Very clear job description with aids like duty check list; Time off to attend therapy appointments; Help with removing distractions.

## Resources

[Job Accommodation Network Services to Various Audiences.](#)

[Job Accommodation Network Ideas for Mental Health Disabilities.](#)

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

**For Job Applicants:** [Title VII of the Civil Rights Act](#) prohibits job discrimination based on religion, color, race, national origin, or sex. The law also makes it illegal to retaliate against a person because the person complained about discrimination, filed a charge of discrimination, or participated in an employment discrimination investigation or lawsuit. The law also requires that employers reasonably accommodate applicants' and employees' sincerely held religious practices, unless doing so would impose an undue hardship on the operation of the employer's business.

Other protections may be found in the [Fair Labor Standards Act](#) (FLSA) as amended, also known as the Wages and Hours Bill. These protections apply to workers in four types of employment. This act regulates wages, hours, bonuses, tips of the workers, and other employment factors.

Benefits related to taking leave are outlined under the [Family and Medical Leave Act \(FMLA\)](#), which may help employees who have mental health conditions to take time out for their own or family member's illness/treatment. Under this act, leave may be granted, but the employer and the employee have to be eligible to provide/take the leave. The employee has to provide written explanation of the need for FMLA leave.

[Webinar](#) on Job Accommodations from Boston University's Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation in partnership with the Job Accommodation Network. Joan Rapp and Melodie Whetzel.

[Video](#) on Job Accommodations by Province of Alberta

[ADA Resources available in each U.S. Region](#). National ADA Centers provide information and legal advice on individual situations or concerns about rights. Excellent and informative resource about all aspects of the ADA, especially accommodations. [Job Accommodation Network \(JAN\)](#) also provides training and consultation for employers, persons with disabilities, providers of services, and others.

[Website on Fair Labor Standards Act](#)

[Video](#): Mental Health Conditions and the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)

## 9. Cultural Issues and Special Populations in Employment

[Report of the Surgeon General 2001](#):

*“America draws strength from its cultural diversity. The contributions of racial and ethnic minorities have suffused all areas of contemporary life. Diversity has made our Nation a more vibrant and open society, ablaze in ideas, perspectives, and innovations. But the full potential of our diverse, multicultural society cannot be realized until all Americans, including racial and ethnic minorities, gain access to quality health care that meets their needs.”*

### What Questions Should I Ask?

- What cultural concerns may impact employment?
- How can the Employment Specialist and the employer help to accommodate cultural needs?

### What You Should Know

“Culture is central, not peripheral to recovery,” as cited by the Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association ([PRA](#)) in their principles of Multicultural Services. Culture is really central to the understanding of mental health condition and to

the overall treatment. (Mental Health: Culture, Race, and Ethnicity: A Supplement to Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General. [NCBI](#))

If your family member is a part of a racial, ethnic, religious, sexual, or other minority; it is important that any cultural concerns related to work are expressed to the Employment Specialist and, at times, to the employer. The Employment Specialist can work to keep the doors open to employment for all populations and to recommend supports or accommodations that would help individual job seekers with needs, such as translation of policies, meeting notes, and other materials or interpreters for required meetings.

At times, there may be outright discrimination in hiring, promoting, firing, and layoffs. More often there are more subtle forms of bias or micro aggressions that occur in the workplace. These micro aggressions, such as stopping the conversation when the employee enters the room or leaving someone out in a social situation, can be very hurtful and reinforce feelings of isolation or can hurt their confidence.

The employee who is a minority may have to adapt to the majority culture, which can be very stressful for many people especially those who have been out of the workforce for a while. Families and Employment Specialists can be helpful by being supportive to the individual, but also by rehearsing ways to deal with micro aggressions. Rehearsing verbal responses and body language to use when someone is feeling uncomfortable about lack of acceptance in the employment setting would be especially helpful. For someone who is potentially discriminated on multiple levels (e.g., race, disability, and ethnicity) feeling armed with assertive language can be very helpful.

Families can help their family member to identify what supports or accommodations (cultural) might be needed and how to communicate these to the Employment Specialist or the employer. Here are some questions a family member might suggest to be part of the conversation with an employment specialist and their family member:



- How does one's cultural values impact our vocational identities?
- How did your cultural upbringing influence your values about employment?
- What kind of views does your culture have about disability and unemployment?

## Suggestions

The employee (family member) should let the employer know if there are certain holidays or customs that are very important and also how the employee plans to observe them. Some jobs would be unacceptable to a family because of cultural or religious values, so these concerns should be communicated to the Employment Specialist.

The culture of unemployment, which exists for people with mental health conditions, can make the idea of employment very challenging, even frightening. Employment rates, already low, are getting worse for people with mental health conditions (23% employed in 2003 down to 17.8% in 2012) ([NAMI](#)). This is in spite of the increased availability of specialized employment services, such as Supported Employment.



In addition to responding to the cultural issues related to employment, families are dealing with the need for cultural competence in the full array of services needed for mental health conditions. Often there are cultural, linguistic, or racial barriers to mental health services, so strategies are needed in these situations.

There are, in a sense, different layers of culture, and though we typically do not think of a business as a “culture,” there are considerations in the local business community that the Employment Specialist would take into account when matching the job seeker with the employer. Each company and each work environment has its own culture. In some cases, there exists racial discrimination.

## Resources

### Cultural Issues: Racial and Ethnic

Gere, B. O., & Flowers, C. R. (2016). Vocational services and outcomes of psychiatric clients from a Midwestern state. *Journal of Psychology & the Behavioral Sciences*, 2(2). <http://iafor.org/archives/journals/iafor-journal-of-psychology-and-the-behavioral-sciences/10.22492.ijpbs.2.2.03.pdf>

Alegria, M., Atkins, M., Farmer, E., Slaton, E., & Stelk, W. (2010). One size does not fit all. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research*, 37(1), 48–60.

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2874609/>

### Family Repository, Boston University

<https://cpr.bu.edu/resources/employment/families/think-about-work/starting-the-conversation/cultural-considerations>

### Surgeon General Resource Directory

Sharing Hope: An African American Mental Health Guide

### Latino Families:

<http://www.nami.org/Find-Support/Diverse-Communities/Latino-Mental-Health>

<http://www.nami.org/getattachment/Find-Support/Diverse-Communities/Latinos/ESPERANZAFamilyGuide.pdf>

### Native American Resources:

<https://www.benefits.gov/benefits/benefit-details/915>

Consortia of Administrators for Native American Rehabilitation

<https://www.csavr.org/canar>

Division of Indian and Native American Programs Dept. of Labor

<https://www.doleta.gov/dinap/>

Oklahoma Vocational Services for Native Americans:

<http://www.okdrs.org/job-seekers/home>

## **Other special populations:**

Some groups that require special skills, sensitivities, or resources in mental health and employment services include: immigrants, veterans, deaf and hard of hearing, young adults, residents of rural areas, LGBT community (and many others.)

### **Immigrants:**

Immigrants play an important role in the overall American workforce. In some cases, whole industries depend on immigrant labor. Some immigrant workers may not have a family support system in the U.S. but often are motivated by employment in order to send money to their families. Members of the immigrant workforce, who also have mental health conditions, may need more coaching, support, and help understanding the norms (from professionals and the natural community). What can job seekers who are immigrants do to get jobs?

Non-U.S. citizens, who wish to qualify to work in the U.S., can apply under one of many work programs. They may apply for a work visa with permanent residence in the U.S., as well as those who wish to apply for a temporary work visa. It should be noted that the state Vocational Rehabilitation agencies are not able to serve directly or indirectly (through providers) individuals who do not have a valid Social Security card. Therefore, it is important to search out other possibilities that are not bound by such restrictions for needed services. Because of this, it is important to know what the funding sources are for those programs, such as Supported Employment or Clubhouses.

[Non-citizen employment a.](#)

[Non-citizen employment b.](#)

[Information about green cards](#)

Once the immigrant has verified that he or she can be authorized to work in the U.S., he or she can begin the search for employment (unless the employment is attached to a specific employer for a specific purpose and time frame, such as an agricultural company that hires seasonally). Any restrictions on employment need to be established as well. "The only eligible individuals are either: citizens of the United States, aliens who have been lawfully admitted to permanent residence (popularly known as having a "green card"), or individuals expressly authorized by

USCIS (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, Department of Homeland Security) to be employed.” (Harvard Law School, p.2)

Ingraham, N. (2011). Citizen guide: Hiring non-citizens. Bernard Koteen Office of Public Interest Advising. Harvard Law School. [Hiring Non-Citizens](#)  
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

### [Employment of non-citizens in the federal government](#)

Immigrant labor force in the U.S.

[http://www.seattlejobsinitiative.com/wp-content/uploads/BeyondHeadlines\\_APR2013.pdf](http://www.seattlejobsinitiative.com/wp-content/uploads/BeyondHeadlines_APR2013.pdf)



What can employers do to integrate and support immigrants in the workforce & reduce language barriers?

<http://hrcouncil.ca/hr-toolkit/documents/HIO-Employer-Guide-EN.pdf>

Although this is a Canadian Human Resource Council document certain sections are relevant to U.S. employers, especially: 1) Why Hire Immigrants?, 2) Foreign Credentials and Work Experience, 3) Working with Cultural Differences, and 4) Preparing Your Workplace

<http://www.wtb.wa.gov/Documents/WIOABARRIERPOPULATIONchart.pdf>

Good worksheet from the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. Includes specific disadvantaged groups, including a number of cultural groups, immigrants, disabled. It also describes some of the barriers, implications of barriers, and solutions.

<http://www.jff.org/sites/default/files/publications/ImprovWplaceELL.pdf>

Informative resource. Includes specific examples from Portland, Chicago and



other U.S. cities. Focuses on the manufacturing industry and how it deals with its ESL workers. Provides specific examples of programs that are effective in helping immigrant workers to overcome the language barrier.

<http://www.nfib.com/content/resources/staffing/how-to-train-non-native-english-speakers-at-work-63545/>

From the Small Business Association, with specific suggestions on how to train non-Native English speakers.

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/20140603143206-20499125-how-to-overcome-language-and-cultural-barriers-in-the-workplace>

Good article based on personal experience, with specific approach to overcoming the language barrier.

<http://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/alfresco/publication-pdfs/2000330-Engaging-Employers-in-Immigrant-Integration.pdf>

Engaging Employers in Immigrant Education (research report)

## **Veterans:**

There are many different employment services for veterans: federal, local, and private non-profits. Veterans often need guidance through the maze of possible vocational services and benefits (financial, medical, and family). It is important to respect the many “cultures” and “subcultures” within the military and the important role that veterans can play in supporting one another in the general recovery and the vocational recovery program.



### Resources

[Employment Guide for Veterans](#)

[Veterans' Culture/s and Veteran-Centered Care](#)

Benefits for Veterans with Psychiatric Disabilities

[www.veteransdisabilityinfo.com/psychiatric-disability.php](http://www.veteransdisabilityinfo.com/psychiatric-disability.php)



## Deaf and Hard of Hearing:

As with many ethnic groups, those who have both mental health conditions and deafness have to overcome multiple barriers to employment, and there are few professionals who are qualified to serve them. Vocational Rehabilitation agencies typically have been one of the leading providers or funders of services for the deaf (as they relate to employment). They can, for example, provide interpreting services for job interviews or communication equipment.



Employers often need to be educated about how to make the workplace accessible for the deaf and hard of hearing employees through accommodations, such as captioned training videos, interpreting for certain meetings and other specialized supports.

<http://www.signlanguagenyc.com/creating-deaf-accessibility-in-the-workplace/>

[Deaf Culture Online](#): Many aspects of deaf culture that are not understood by the “mainstream.” These factors are critically important to understand in relation to employment.

[Jobs specific to the deaf community](#)

## Transition Age Youth

Youth with mental health conditions in the 16-25 age group often have grown up with technology and without decades of hospitalization and disability. There is so much hope and potential for young people. There are also unique challenges in getting through the various helping agencies geared for adults. That is why the services and supports designed especially for this age group can be effective. Employment and education along with peer support are key for this age group. The Workforce Investment Opportunity Act (WIOA) is providing additional vocational and educational resources for disabled individuals who are young adults. There is a range of services from tutoring, mentoring to paid and unpaid work experiences and many more. (See Hoff link below).

Further information is available through [the Vocational Rehabilitation agency.](#)

[Research and Training Center on Transition Youth. University of MA. Medical School](#)

National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability  
[Successful Transition Models for Youth with Mental Health Needs: A Guide for Workforce Professionals.](#)

[Bridging the gap Across Transition. Job Accommodation Network.](#)

[Work Early, Work Often Campaign. Transition to Work](#)

[Resources for Youth Transitioning to Adulthood](#)



## **Rural Populations**

Gold, P., Meisler, N., Santos, A., Carnemolla, M., Williams, O., & Keleher, J. (2006). [Randomized Trial of Supported Employment Integrated With Assertive Community Treatment for Rural Adults With Severe Mental Illness.](#)

Travers-Gustafson, D., Preston, K., & Hudson, J. (2009). [Mental Health: Overlooked and Disregarded in Rural America.](#) Center for Rural Affairs.

Rural areas present a number of special challenges for those with mental health conditions. While high school is often the time of onset of illness, fewer rural students may graduate high school. Over a third of African Americans and a quarter of whites in rural high schools do not graduate. Even those who graduate face lower likelihood of achieving employment, post-secondary education, or employment requiring higher-level skills.

Many rural Americans have less access to mental health services than non-rural Americans, and mental health problems tend to be about 2 to 3 greater (Safran, 2009).

Safran, M., Mays, R. A., Huang, L. M., McCuan, R., Pham, P. K., Fisher, S. K., McDuffie, K. Y., & Trachtenberg, A. (2009). Mental health disparities. *American Journal of Public Health, 99*(11), 1962-1966.

The risks of unemployment in rural areas remain high considering low levels of education, technical ability, employment experience, and job availability in rural areas. Helping rural residents to find meaningful employment requires strong networking and creativity. Employment Specialist or Rehabilitation Counselors have to have a number of ongoing relationships with the communities they serve in rural areas in order to keep in touch with employment, transportation, and other resources in that area. Telehealth and remote video capacity are also important in rural areas.

[Telehealth Use in Rural Healthcare](#)



## Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered (LGBT)

Members of the LGBT community, who also have a mental health condition, face at least two forms of discrimination. Encouraging them to have confidence in their particular identity and knowing they are accepted by the family is especially important. It can build a foundation for confidence in the workplace.

The NAMI website outlines a number of challenges the LGBTQ community faces, especially the discrimination on both counts: mental health problems and sexual orientation. There are many resources outlined in this website.

<https://www.nami.org/Find-Support/LGBTQ>



## Persons with Forensic History

Those with forensic histories, who also have a mental health condition, may face additional challenges obtaining employment. The first thing that the individual

should do is find out what their official criminal offense record (CORI Report) shows. This is available from the state in which the person resides. For additional information about supporting someone with criminal offense history consult our [Family Repository](#).

One website has been dedicated to job finding for persons with forensic backgrounds (not specific to mental health): <https://www.70millionjobs.com>

Some states have developed Certified Peer Specialists or Forensic Peer Mentors, who have forensic histories specifically to support others with similar histories.

Here is the list by state of the agency which provides the training for [Certified Peer Specialists](#). They may be able to direct you to Forensic Peer Specialists, if they are in that state.

To find out more about this initiative in Georgia, you may contact the Forensic Peer Mentoring Project, Gena Garner, Forensic Peer Mentoring Coordinator at: [peermentoring@gmhcn.org](mailto:peermentoring@gmhcn.org) or 404-723-6018.

California (but similar resources in other states)  
[Legal Resource Library on Expungement](#)

[Free Expungement Resources \(by state\)](#)

## ***10. Peer Support for Your Family Member***

### **What Questions Should I Ask?**

- Why is peer support important?
- How can my family member find peers to communicate with?

### **What You Should Know**

Persons with mental health conditions often find great strength and inspiration from others with similar conditions, who have been able to find the skills, opportunities, and supports to achieve meaningful goals. You and your family member may want to subscribe to the [Recovery Library](#) as developed by Pat

Deegan, an outstanding peer leader and voice of persons in recovery. It is regularly updated and always provides first person accounts of recovery.

## Suggestions

There are numerous ways that you can help your family member find peer support for their vocational journey. Here are a few:

- Informally through friends or associates in recovery, who have successfully handled their own vocational challenges;
- Through a program that has peer support built into its vocational services.
- Through a program that is a totally peer-run program with some emphasis on work.

## Resources

Peer support in the workplace. Video from Sun Life Canada.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ofewGy7vyGA>

Intentional Peer support. Steven Morgan.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JE0bofujN78>

Intentional Peer Support. Sheri Mead.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q1w\\_HGQWTiU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q1w_HGQWTiU)

Davidson, L., Bellamy, C., Guy, K., & Miller, R. (2012). Peer support among those with severe mental illness. *World Psychiatry*.

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1016/j.wpsyc.2012.05.009/full>

Family Peer Support for Employment. Sylvie Bouchard.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SNRmPv35uRQ>

International Association of Peer Supporters

<https://inaops.org/>

National Empowerment Center

<http://www.power2u.org/consumerrun-statewide.html>





## 11. Partnering With Providers

### What Questions Should I Ask?

- Why is it beneficial to partner with providers?
- What would my primary role be in a partnership?

### What You Should Know

With your family member's permission, you can communicate with vocational services providers. This primarily is to give them information about your family member, such as methods that have been helpful in the past, skills, and talents that your family member might have, or the most effective ways to communicate with them. The two most valuable ways that families can support their loved ones are 1) being a good role model and 2) giving positive messages. You can serve as a model for your family member by having a respectful, mutual-working relationship with vocational services providers.



### Suggestions

If you collaborate successfully with vocational providers, with their permission, it sends a good message to your loved one. There may be options for you to be part of a planning session, but most of the time that should not be necessary. Should your family member not wish you to communicate with their vocational service provider, you might tell them that you will respect that wish. You might also ask why they would like to keep you out of the loop. There may still be exceptions that your family member might agree to, such as an open house, social event, or family night. In the event of an emergency you can contact the vocational provider to let them know what has happened (a one-way communication).

## Resources

Leggatt, M. (2002). Families and mental health workers: The need for partnership. *World Psychiatry*, 1(1): 52–54.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1489835/>

Addresses ways in which mental health professionals need to work with families; not about vocational services per se, but does include need for a wide array of services including rehabilitative services.

[Questions about partnering](#). Boston University Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation. Explores how to partner with providers, promote respect from the vocational provider.

## 12. What about Career Development?

### What Questions Should I Ask?

- If my family member has never worked before, how do they begin career planning?
- Is it realistic for my family member to consider a career?

### What You Should Know

For many people with serious mental health conditions, they begin their road back to employment at entry-level jobs, often on a part-time basis. If we were to compare their “reentry” or “first job” part of the employment journey to a young high school or college student, they would look similar. Unfortunately, for many people in recovery, they end up for long periods in these entry-level, part-time jobs and do not know how to move on to a job that has more meaning or offers higher pay, in other words, to have a real career.

It is hard to predict who will get a job and just as difficult to predict who will have a career or a really meaningful job. The best position is to be ready and supportive for either one (or both) to happen. Often career choices do require

having the training and skills that anyone would need (as well as special supports for someone with a mental health condition). Most colleges, universities, and training organizations that have any federal funding offer accommodations and supports for students with disabilities. Other vocational resources also can have some training funds or resources for those pursuing a career (e.g., Dept. of Labor, Vocational Rehabilitation, Trade Unions, etc.)



### **Suggestions:**

- 1) **Speak to your family member about the career option.** Families play an essential role in the career development of individuals in recovery. They provide encouragement and support, but more importantly, they serve as important role models. Share your own career path with your family member (or that of other extended family members). Tell them about the challenges you faced or those that other members of your family faced in establishing a successful career.
- 2) **Encourage your family member to consider the career option.** Another barrier to career development for individuals in recovery are the negative messages that they receive about pursuing their career. They may receive these messages from a variety of sources, including providers and sometimes other loved ones. Individuals in recovery need to be reminded of their personal accomplishments (whether work-related or not) and need to explore their work-related goals and expectations. For example, it is helpful to weigh the pros and cons of the career option.
- 3) **Explore the career option.** Sometimes individuals in recovery may not know what career to pursue or whether to return to a previous career that was disrupted. Remind them that career development is a lifelong process which does not end when a job ends. It typically begins in childhood and continues well into adulthood. Most of the time, we think of the “career



ladder” or “career lattice” where a person takes one step after the next to get to their ultimate goal. Instead, it is more helpful to think of a career as a “jungle gym” where a person may need to take sideways and even backwards step to get to their goal or goals.



Taking a step back can provide an opportunity to reflect on what someone is really interested in.

*As Michael Jordan said, “I've missed more than 9,000 shots in my career. I've lost almost 300 games. 26 times I've been trusted to take the game winning shot and missed. I've failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed.”*

- 4) **Help create a career story:** Here are some basic questions to ask your family member to get the process started: a) Who are you?, b) Where in the world of work would you like to be?, and c) How will you connect to occupations that you might like? To guide this exploration, you can use “My career story: An autobiographical work for life-career success (Savickas & Hartung, 2012; see below). Individuals in recovery need help figuring out what kind of work they want to do and how to go about it. All of this requires planning, feeling hopeful, feeling in control of the future, exploring possibilities (many of which are TERRIFYING), building confidence, solving problems that get in the way, and tapping into both internal and external resources.

Savickas, M. & Hartung, P. (2012). A workbook for helping individuals to get on a career path. My Career Story.

[www.vocopher.com/CSI/CCI\\_workbook.pdf](http://www.vocopher.com/CSI/CCI_workbook.pdf)

## Resources

U.S. Department of Education outlines the law and [other information about accommodations](#) for students with disabilities in post- secondary schools or colleges.

[Vocational Empowerment Photovoice](#) – Vocational empowerment is about feeling confident in one's own ability to get and keep a job. Photovoice is a way that an individual or a group can capture strengths, problems, or concerns by combining photographs and written text.

[Career Builder Website](#)- helps the career seeker to get started

[Occupational Outlook Handbook/ Website](#) – helps the career seeker to expand their ideas about what is possible through the U.S. Dept. of Labor's guide to hundreds of careers.

[O\\*NET](#) – another Dept. of Labor Resource in a different format. Occupations are identified based upon criteria, such as personal interests, work values, and work environment.

[National Career Readiness Certificate](#) issued by ACT (formerly American College Testing), is a portable, evidence-based credential that measures essential workplace skills & is a reliable predictor of workplace success. This credential is used across all sectors of the economy.

[Website](#) for finding Career Fairs throughout the U.S.

[Explore Careers America's Career One Stop](#) features this page, which contains materials, such as self-assessments, occupational resources, and industry information.

The Center for Reintegration is a non-profit organization promotes helping people with mental health conditions find meaningful work, restore relationships, and move toward independent living.

[Listing of America's Job Centers](#) (One Stop Career Centers) by state.

[Free Choose-Get-Keep book in Spanish](#) on vocational rehabilitation.

Restrepo-Toro, M. E., & Spaniol, L. (2002). *Guía del modelo de rehabilitación vocacional: Elegir-conseguir-retener*. Boston, MA: Boston University, Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation.

## ***13. Alternatives to Traditional “Job Placement” (i.e., customized employment; self-employment)***

### **What Questions Should I Ask?**

- Are any of the options that are alternatives to traditional jobs relevant for my family member?
- Why are creative alternatives beneficial?

### **What You Should Know**

Some individuals have functional, familial, or other pressing reasons for wanting or needing a non- traditional alternative employment situation.

### **Suggestions**

Several approaches have been used to accommodate the needs and interests of individuals with mental health conditions:

#### **a. Customized employment:**

In all situations we should strive to achieve the best match possible for employee and employer. However, there are some individuals for whom a very tailored or engineered job situation is best. Customized employment is a flexible process designed to personalize the employment relationship between a job candidate and an employer in a way that meets the needs of both. It is based on an individualized match between the strengths, conditions, and interests of a job candidate and the identified business needs of an employer. Customized employment utilizes an individualized



approach to employment planning and job development — one person at a time one employer at a time.

Examples:

- **Task reassignment:** Some of the job tasks of existing workers are reassigned to a new employee. This reassignment allows existing workers to focus on the critical functions of their job (i.e., primary job responsibilities) and complete more of the central work of the job. Task reassignment typically takes the form of job creation, whereby a new job description is negotiated based on current, unmet workplace needs.
- **Job carving:** An existing job description is modified — containing one or more, but not all, of the tasks from the original job description.
- **Job sharing:** Two or more people share the tasks and responsibilities of a job based on each other's strengths.

*Vocational Story of Customization: Arturo wants to work in customer services. He knows from previous experience that he is good at helping customers with problems or questions, but is not good at trying to interest them in other products or be on the sales end of things. In looking at the team at the company, the employer found that some other employees enjoyed the sales part of the job, and others were good at problem solving and complaints. The employer worked with the team, which helped to restructure jobs so that those who were not good at sales all worked together serving customers only, while the others primarily dealt with sales. Two were able to do both. This provided a perfect job for Arturo and in the end helped others as well.*

#### **b. Self-Employment:**

Having one's own business can be challenging in many ways, and we often hear about the number of businesses that fail in our communities. However, self-employment also can be a good choice for persons with disabilities in that it allows them to have more control over the work setting, hours and conditions and to choose a type of business that has meaning. There are two main types of self-employment: 1) a person works solo providing a product or service, 2) one or more persons with disabilities own a business and employ others. Individuals interested in operating their own business also can purchase a franchise, provided they have the capital to invest and have explored all that is involved in the

franchise. Sometimes families have their own business and can carve out a **meaningful** job/role for their family member with a mental health condition in the business.

As with a regular job, it is equally important that if someone embarks on their own business that they have the right support to make it successful. That would include help with choosing the right type of business for a particular community; help in getting financing; help managing the business in every aspect and support for dealing with stress, personal or disability-related problems. The idea is to choose a business that is not too high a risk either in a business sense or in a personal sense.

The guidebook on [Self-Employment for People with Disabilities](#). (2013). Office of Disability Employment Policy. U. S. Dept. of Labor includes extensive information on factors for successful self-employment; models of self-employment tested in different states; webcasts with resources for funding a new business and success stories of self-employed disabled individuals.

One ambitious self-employment project is at the Bedford, MA, Veterans Administration's Vocational Rehabilitation Program. Supported Self-Employment provides a structured training program for prospective self-employed veterans with mental health conditions. Well over a hundred successful businesses have been launched through the Massachusetts program, which has now spread to New Hampshire.



Some supports in the VA program include 1) business mentors: employers in the community willing to assist a new business owner, 2) education and training: a 3-4 month training in a "street MBA" business plans, marketing, etc. (called the Business Gym), and 3) money management. Early graduates from the program formed a non-profit organization, the Veterans Business Owners Association, to

provide microloans and peer supports to disabled Veteran business owners. The VBOA is a key partner in all activities. About 52% of those who enter the training become self-employed. Qualitative data support the view that participation is highly energizing for Veterans with an interest in self-employment. Participants find the opportunity to pursue this goal to be a focus of their interest in returning to the community, and motivate them to take a wide range of recovery-oriented steps.

Another option that your family member might undertake would be a "Social Business," which is generally a non-profit organization established to deal with one or more social problems, such as providing supports to low-income or disabled individuals, offering services such as tutoring, peer mentoring, outreach, or housing search. The supports someone would need to be successful may be similar to a for-profit business, but there may be some different funding options. The Social Business is usually not dependent on donations or public funding.

While the above-mentioned supports may not be available to your family member within a single program, an Employment Specialist (e.g., IPS Supported Employment, state Vocational Rehabilitation agency) might be able to assist with helping your family member locate financial or mentoring supports. Some clever networking could help to bring together people with disabilities, who have started or want to start their own business. Programs like the Social Security PASS plan or the Small Business Administration could be used for the financial start up.

## Resources

Job Accommodation Network (JAN) Team that answers questions on self-employment.  
<http://askjan.org/entre/index.htm>. U.S. Dept. of Labor

<https://www.dol.gov/odep/categories/workforce/CustomizedEmployment/what/>

<https://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/customizedemployment.htm>

U.S. Dept. of Labor. Guidance Workbook on Customized Employment

[https://www.dol.gov/odep/documents/2e984b1d\\_f2de\\_40dd\\_b3c4\\_3b4073b67ca5.pdf](https://www.dol.gov/odep/documents/2e984b1d_f2de_40dd_b3c4_3b4073b67ca5.pdf)

<http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/featureMar2015.asp>

<http://www.bedford.va.gov/careers/Bedford-psych-postdoc.doc>

## 14. Recovery for the Whole Family

### What Questions Should I Ask?

- How can I support the rest of my family while also supporting the member in recovery?
- Why is it important to consider recovery for the family as a whole?

### What You Should Know

Since serious mental health conditions impact the whole family, recovery supports should be available to the whole family as well. One of the most important factors that helps persons in recovery to have goals and to work towards goals is the understanding that recovery is possible, especially if the person and the family choose the right supports. There are many views of recovery but here are three of the well-known definitions

- Recovery is a way of changing one's attitudes, values, feelings, goals, skills and roles. ([Anthony](#))
- Recovery is an attitude, a stance, and a way of approaching the day's challenges. ([Deegan](#)) <http://www.patdeegan.com>
- Recovery is a journey of healing and change allowing a person with a mental health problem to live a meaningful life. ([SAMHSA](#)). Here you will also find the 10 components of recovery.
- Recovery is a journey to reclaiming a meaningful life. Here you will find a description of what services should look like if they are really focused on promoting recovery.  
(Farkas, M. (2007). The vision of recovery today. What it is and what it means for services. *World Psychiatry*, 6(2), 1-7.

### Suggestions

You will note that recovery does not mean the same thing as cure. As the idea of recovery applies to the whole family, there are a number of supports that can be helpful. These include:

**Family therapy** attempts to help the family grow its resources and improve family functioning. This means both the individual with mental health condition and



family recovery from the crises of mental health conditions with the help of therapy.

**Family education intervention**, or “psychoeducation,” is a research-based practice, which helps support partnership among consumers, families, providers, and others. Professionals or family peers serve as facilitators and try to respect the cultural context of the family. Psychoeducation programs have resulted in improvements in coping skills, relapse reduction, reduced family burden, and with many other benefits. Family interventions that improve family outcomes have a strong positive effect on the outcomes of individuals in recovery.



A reference on services for families that are evidence based: Dixon, L., McFarlane, W. R., Lefley, H., Lucksted, A., Cohen M., Falloon, I., Mueser, K., Miklowitz, D., Solomon, P., & Sondheimer, D. (2001). Evidence-based practices for services to families of people with psychiatric disabilities. *Psychiatric Services*, 52(7), 903-10. Abstract: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/>

**Family self-help supports** can improve family functioning, empowerment and coping. This improvement can only benefit the individual member who is seeking employment. The National Alliance on Mental Illness offers its support and advocacy groups throughout the U.S. and also a training program called Family to Family. Families also can provide valuable advocacy for systems change.



**Family/Community Culture:** It is good to keep in mind that the culture of families and of communities can have a significant impact on how a loved one views work and views their own disability.



Several studies of supported employment (the IPS model) conducted with racial and ethnic minorities reported positive associations between family connectedness and well-being for those with serious mental health conditions, especially African Americans and other U.S. minorities with strong family values. This connectedness also has been studied in relation to young adults and has been found to help vocational success. A study in South Carolina on supported employment confirmed that in African American adults, the quality of life is greater for those who work in regular paid (competitive) jobs and also interact often with their family members as compared to those who did not have frequent family contact. In some areas there are Peer Family Support professionals who offer education and support to other family members.

## Resources

Be familiar with the [SAMHSA 10 Guiding Principles of Recovery](#)

### **National Alliance on Mental Illness:**

[General Website](#)

NAMI - [Family to Family Program](#):

NAMI - [National Resource Center for Hispanic Mental Health](#)

NAMI - [Multicultural Action Center](#)

[SAMHSA Equipping Behavioral Health Systems and Authorities to Promote Family Recovery from Mental Health Conditions and Addiction \(2012\)](#)

[SAMHSA \(For Parents of Children and Teens\) Center for Family Information and Resources. Webinar: An Overview of three models of family peer support.](#)

[Using a Family Wellness Recovery Action Plan is one way to address recovery for the whole family.](#)

Gold, P. B. (2013). Quality of life and competitive work among adults with severe mental illness: Moderating effects of family contact. *Psychiatric Services*, 64(12), 1218-1224.

<http://ps.psychiatryonline.org/doi/abs/10.1176/appi.ps.201200553>

If the job seeker is a parent, there are other considerations to getting and keeping jobs. It is important that the person, who is a parent in this case, consider how working will impact family life and how being a parent will impact the work responsibilities. It would be most helpful to have someone work with the job seeker on these parenting/job issues to assist them in developing plans, finding what resources are needed, and creating emergency plans as well.

Nicholson, J., Beibel, K., Hinden, B., Henry, A; Steir, L. (2001). Critical issues for parents with mental illness and their families. Center for Mental Health Research, Dept. of Psychiatry, University of MA. Medical School, 41-43.

[https://www.uwgb.edu/bhttp/tools/critical\\_issues.pdf](https://www.uwgb.edu/bhttp/tools/critical_issues.pdf)

## ***15. Vocational Recovery Stories***

### **What Questions Should I Ask?**

- How do I find people in my community with stories and personal experiences to share?
- Why is telling vocational recovery stories important?

### **What You Should Know**

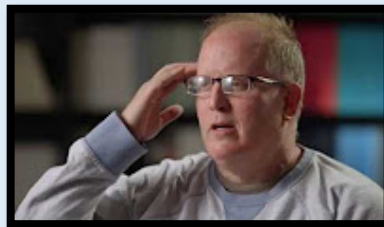
Direct contact with people who are sharing their vocational recovery stories is, perhaps, the most powerful way to understand the experience. An Employment Specialist in a psychiatric vocational program, such as Supported Employment or local Department of Mental Health, you (and your family members) may find out about opportunities to hear first-hand experiences. If you are a member of the local NAMI group, you may ask if a NAMI event could be used to invite employed individuals to share their stories. Should you attend mental health or NAMI conferences or training activities, keep an eye out for presentations on employment by persons in recovery. If you or your family member wish to access stories quickly, the online resources below may be helpful.

## Suggestions

These stories can be used to inspire your family member, other families, and providers. They also can serve as tools with which to educate the public about the truth behind mental health conditions. When people with mental health conditions share their stories of vocational recovery, it helps them and others who are considering working or currently working that successful employment is possible. Sharing recovery stories, especially vocational recovery stories, helps to inspire hope about living a meaningful life. Here are just a few stories available in video or printed form online. Not all the strategies that the people in these examples used will work for potential job seekers. It is a matter of using these examples as inspiration in determining what will help your family member the most in their search for employment and also what strategies work for them as unique individuals.

### Resources:

[Boston University Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation. Five stories of vocational recovery.](#) Click on the photo near Road to Recovery.



***Bruce***

[Stories from the Bridge, New York City](#)

[Stories from State of Washington](#)

[Vocational Recovery Stories from State of Oregon](#)

[Stories from Chrysalis, Madison, Wisconsin](#)

[Employment stories from the Job Club of the Institute of Mental Health, Singapore](#)

[Stories of Recovery from South Carolina](#)

The Boston University Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation has a useful [LinkedIn network page](#) that serves as a forum for anyone interested in discussing issues or questions surrounding employment for those with mental health obstacles.

### **Additional Resources Related to Employment:**

A series of vocational curricula:

- Vocational Illness Management & Recovery  
<https://cpr.bu.edu/store/curricula/vocational/vimr>
- Vocational Peer Support  
<https://cpr.bu.edu/store/curricula/vocational/vps>
- Vocational Empowerment Photovoice  
<https://cpr.bu.edu/store/curricula/vocational/vep>
- Empoderamiento vocacional a través de Fotovoz  
<https://cpr.bu.edu/store/curricula/vocational/vep-espanol>

### **Additional Resources for Families:**

Mueser, K., & Gingerich, S. (2006). The complete family guide to schizophrenia: Helping your loved one get the most out of life. *Chapter 26. Work and School*

<https://www.guilford.com/books/The-Complete-Family-Guide-to-Schizophrenia/Mueser-Gingerich/9781593851804>

Based on decades of research and experience, authors offer pragmatic suggestions, show you how to prioritize needs, resolve everyday problems, and encourage your family member to set life goals.

Spaniol, L., Zipple, Marsh, D., & Finley, L. (2000). *The role of family in psychiatric rehabilitation*. Boston: Boston University Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation.

<https://cpr.bu.edu/store/curricula/role-of-the-family>

Spaniol, L., & Massachusetts NAMI/DMH Curriculum, Training, and Practice Consortium. (2004). *What professionals need to know about families*. Boston: Boston University Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation.

<https://cpr.bu.edu/store/curricula/professionals-families>

### **Additional Resources of Interest:**

McNamara, S., Nicolellis, D., & Forbess, R. (2011). *Self-directed psychiatric rehabilitation activities*. Boston: Boston University Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation.

<https://cpr.bu.edu/store/curricula/self-directed-psych-rehab-activities/>

McNamara, S. (2015-2016). *Self-directed skill lessons*. Boston: Boston University Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation.

<https://cpr.bu.edu/store/curricula/self-directed-skill-lessons>

We hope that this Guide has been helpful and would appreciate your comments or suggestions. You may write to [psyrehab@bu.edu](mailto:psyrehab@bu.edu).

You may also wish to explore the Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation's: [interactive web-based resource for families](#). Thank you.

## **THE JOY OF WORKING**

