



Boston University College of Health & Rehabilitation Sciences:
Sargent College
Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation

Fact Sheet: Career Development

Although career development is a lifelong process, vocational identity and competencies are shaped frequently during adolescence to young adulthood (Devadason, 2007; Hargrove, Creagh, & Burgess, 2002). But for individuals with psychiatric disabilities, this developmental period often coincides with the onset of a mental health condition, thus interrupting the process of vocational exploration and development, leading to significant career disadvantages.

Recent evidence from studies on various employment services suggests that job training, career guidance, and current labor market information are critical elements that help unemployed individuals make informed decisions about training opportunities and their careers. In addition, evidence suggests that receiving training and employment services concurrently produced superior employment and earnings outcomes when compared to either getting directly placed in a job or receiving education and training—further evidence demonstrating the value of going beyond direct job placement and focusing on career development (U.S. Departments of Labor, Commerce, Education, and Health and Human Services, 2014).

Some Facts about People with Mental Health Conditions and Employment

- The employment rate of adults served by the public mental health system reported as being 20% (SAMHSA, 2017a)
- While approximately 30% of people served by the public mental health system are unemployed and want to work (SAMHSA, 2017b), less than 2.0% receive supported employment services (SAMHSA, 2017b)
- The number of Social Security Disability beneficiaries with mental disorders rose 38% between 1996 and 2009 (Frey et al., 2011)
- 70% of individuals in recovery who have college degrees earn less than \$10/hour (United States, 2003)

At Boston University's Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation, we believe that helping individuals in recovery achieve meaningful work leads to greater engagement in work, a fuller life, and increased access to resources.

Opening Doors is a new career guidance intervention for individuals in recovery that uses traditional career guidance resources, progressive employment principles (to promote rapid engagement with the workforce), and mainstream Internet-based resources to support the career development of individuals with serious mental health conditions.

Factsheet



The Opening Doors curriculum is expected to assist participants expand their knowledge of career resources and enhance skills in using the Internet for career exploration, which are critical to today's workforce. Participants are assisted in identifying their career values, aptitudes, skills and credentials, select career interests, explore potential occupations, map critical career development activities, and develop a career plan and goal. The group-based component of the intervention orients individuals to Internet-based resources not generally part of vocational services for individuals in recovery. There also are opportunities for participants to engage in a variety of pre-vocational activities, such as informational interviews with employers, job shadowing, apprenticeships, on-the-job training, etc. Additional components of Opening Doors includes teaching individuals about the nuances of disclosure of disability and accommodations in the workplace and skills and strategies to enhance and maintain wellness in one's career or work. As a final product, participants will prepare an electronic career portfolio.

The following is the expected impact of Opening Doors:

- Individuals participating in Opening Doors are expected to have greater:
 - Clarity of their career goals by developing a career plan
 - Knowledge of career resources
 - Use of internet-based resources for the purpose of career exploration,
 - Pre-employment activities through informational interviews with employers (e.g., job shadowing, apprenticeships, on-the-job training)
- Opening Doors is designed to add to the array of tested vocational interventions in the field
- Opening Doors has the potential for use in multiple settings (e.g., in addition to evidence-based supported employment interventions, in community college settings, etc.)
- Meaningful integration of resources available to the mainstream population

References

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Resources

- **Association of People Supporting Employment First:** APSE supports Employment First to facilitate the full inclusion of people with disabilities in the workplace and community. (<http://apse.org/>)
- **Boston University, Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation, Services Division:** For job readiness programs, classes, and individualized coaching. (<https://cpr.bu.edu/living-well>)
- **Employment Repository & Vocational Recovery Resources:** Helping people with psychiatric conditions choose, get, and keep employment. (<https://cpr.bu.edu/resources/employment>)
- **Employment and Training Administration:** Department of Labor employment initiatives and services. (<https://www.doleta.gov/>)
- **Job Accommodation Network:** Accommodation ideas for individuals with psychiatric conditions. (<https://askjan.org/media/psyc.htm>)
- **Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission:** Vocational Rehabilitation Employment services for individuals with disabilities. (<https://www.mass.gov/vocational-rehabilitation>)
- **Transitions to Adulthood Center for Research:** Recovery and rehabilitation resources for young adults with psychiatric conditions. (<https://www.umassmed.edu/TransitionsACR/>)
- **National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI):** A guide to higher education and employment-related mental health resources. (NAMI Compass: <https://namimass.org/resources/education-employment-training>)

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