

INNOVATIVE ASSESSMENT AND ADJUSTMENT STRATEGIES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH MENTAL ILLNESS, SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND MICA

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Abstract

This presentation will discuss two innovative approaches to maximizing the employment potential of persons with mental illness, substance abuse and MICA. One approach is community based using county funds and resources to provide vocational assessment, training and employment; the other, is clinic based, expanding the services of a culturally diverse, community based mental health clinic, to include multi-lingual training and job placement in computer skills and the operation of a boutique open to the public.

Both approaches stress person-centered, criterion referenced, qualitative vocational assessment, adjustment and job placement strategies.

Introduction

The traditional vocational rehabilitation service delivery model does not have the inherent flexibility necessary to address the unique needs of individuals with chronic mental illness, substance abuse and mental illness/chemical abuse (MICA). Often, individuals with these disabilities have little family support, have been homeless and have questionable job skills. They are among the most marginalized of America's impoverished groups. Some are at the bottom of Maslow's hierarchy of needs-seeking food, clothing and shelter. Others are invested in programs of recovery for mental illness and/or substance abuse and are afraid to leave, lest they relapse. Many have not worked recently and feel inadequately prepared for today's job market.

While mental health consumers may consider the prospect of getting a job intimidating, they are now being viewed as having employment potential. Funders of mental health, substance abuse and supportive housing programs are developing holistic service delivery models that now include employment as an important program outcome. In addition, many welfare-to-work programs include persons with mental health disabilities in their employment initiatives. This paper discusses how two metropolitan New York community rehabilitation programs have developed employment preparation and placement programs in response to these initiatives.

THE GUIDANCE CENTER VOCATIONAL ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM

The Guidance Center is a organization committed to providing clinical services, family support services, educational services, therapeutic nursery, psychiatric rehabilitation, continuing day treatment, supported housing, geriatric services, substance abuse treatment and vocational rehabilitation services to individuals in Westchester County, New York. All clinical programs are New York State Certified for the provision of mental health services. The Guidance Center's Vocational Services Department has several vocational programs, which provide services to individuals with mental health and substance abuse disabilities. The Vocational Enhancement Program (VEP) of the Vocational Services Department is designed to meet the vocational needs of individuals in state funded substance abuse treatment programs who are also in recovery from mental illness, have cognitive/learning/ attention deficits, and have employment histories that are sketchy at best. Consumers of this program are given the opportunity to choose, get and keep jobs

at a level consistent with their needs, skills, interest, abilities, and desires as well as dealing with their substance abuse/mental health issues.

The New York State Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) funds the Vocational Enhancement Program through the Westchester County Department of Community Mental Health. The initiatives of welfare to work have given impetus to OASAS to address the special needs of this segment of consumers receiving substance abuse services. In light of the fact that New York State is a "work first" state, OASAS realized it had a substantial number of consumers with substance abuse/mental health issues who are not ready or able to be transitioned into the current labor market without attention being paid to their special needs.

The Vocational Enhancement Program serves 200 consumers throughout Westchester County. The staff members are mobile and provide services on-site to consumers at drug treatment programs. The program is designed to work in collaboration with treatment program staff members in establishing and carrying out vocational goals with these consumers to assist them in entering and/or re-entering the job market. The goal of this initiative is that drug rehabilitation treatment program and vocational rehabilitation staff members will work jointly to support these consumers toward gainful employment with successful retention rates.

The Vocational Enhancement Program has two vocational rehabilitation counselors, one learning disability specialist, and one psychologist. The role of this staff is to provide comprehensive specialized vocational assessments and/or remediation needed by this population in order to assist these consumers in making realistic vocational/educational plans that best meet their needs.

Services Offered:

Outreach - Outreach is offered to drug rehabilitation treatment program staff members to assist them in identifying appropriate consumers for vocational/educational and employment services. VEP staff members assist treatment program staff members in developing and defining criteria for referrals. This initiative works only with those consumers who in addition to substance abuse have mental health/cognitive concerns. VEP staff members work with staff members at each site in case-finding, problem-solving, vocational/educational planning, and follow-up.

Assessment - Assessment of consumers on-site at alcohol and substance abuse programs include educational, vocational, psychological, and neuropsychological evaluations. The vocational rehabilitation counselors identify the presence of any psychiatric, cognitive, learning disabilities, and/or life issues, which may interfere with an individual's ability to choose, get, and keep a job.

Educational/Vocational Plans - An individualized vocational/education plan is developed with each consumer based upon referral and intake information and data collected during the assessment period. This is reviewed and discussed with consumers during the course of their participation. A comprehensive written vocational rehabilitation report on each consumer includes his/her educational and vocational history; legal, medical, and treatment history; summary of interests, values, aptitudes, and achievement indices; behavior(s) observed at assessment and review sessions; recommendations for successful implementation of vocational/education goals; and rationales for these recommendations are provided to each referring treatment program and each consumer.

Vocational Counseling - Vocational counseling services are provided to all individuals to assist them in making realistic vocational choices that meet their needs and provide a supportive base for helping them deal with the transition to work.

Utilization of Resources - The program participants of VEP are referred to the Guidance Center's Vocational Services Department for supported employment in the competitive jobs, the public

works program (a cleaning contract with the City of New Rochelle), our sheltered workshop, independent job placement services, or any other program within the agency that will facilitate consumers being job ready and assists them in obtaining competitive employment. Only those participants deemed appropriate by both VEP and treatment program staff members will be referred for services. After a vocational assessment has been completed, program participants may also be referred to training programs in the community funded by JTPA, VESID (Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities, New York's State VR system) and BOCES (Board Of Cooperative Educational Services) provides adult basic educational and training). Some BOCES programs are hosted in OASAS funded treatment programs and provide services on site.

Learning Disability Remediation - On site individual and small group tutoring and remediation by the learning disability specialist is provided to consumers who may have severe learning/cognitive deficits and mental health issues, which may lead to unsuccessful participation in community or on-site educational/vocational programming. This remediation allows consumers to be successfully involved in such programs and better able to choose, get, and keep a job.

Team Building - Participation and integration of VEP staff members into the treatment teams of various alcoholism and drug treatment programs is the crucial element for success of this program. The heightened visibility of Vocational/Educational services ensures follow-through and completion of recommendations made in the vocational/educational assessment reports. The collaboration of the two staffs works well to provide comprehensive support for consumers in reaching desired outcomes.

In-service Training - The VEP staff members offer in-service training to treatment program staff, facilitate on-site vocational readiness development activities, and offer on-site vocational skills groups. All of these efforts allow VEP staff members to increase the visibility and emphasis on vocational rehabilitation as a core part of the drug treatment process within various alcohol and substance abuse rehabilitation programs.

Follow-up Services - The VEP staff members monitor consumer progress toward employment goal attainment by doing 30, 60, 90, and 180-day follow-up. This includes face-to-face meetings with the VEP counselor, consumer, treatment program staff members, Department of Social Services, and Intensive case managers. Regular participation by one of the vocational rehabilitation counselors in team meetings and involvement in consumer planning at treatment programs, as well as, follow-up with community agencies where consumers have been referred for services.

Support Groups - There are on-going mutual support groups. Consumers who have completed assessment and begun their vocational plan will be encouraged to participate in on-going support groups, which meet on a monthly basis.

HENRY STREET SETTLEMENT COMMUNITY CONSULTATION CENTER

Henry Street Settlement's Community Consultation Center (CCC) is a New York State Certified Mental Health Clinic operating with funding from both the New York State and City Offices of Mental Health. Programs include a Day Treatment Program for the severely and persistently mentally ill (SPMI), and an out-patient clinic and specialized HIV mental health services for individuals and families. During the past year, two new vocational programs have been developed. Both programs focus on developing consumer

choice and empowerment through self assessment, career development, work hardening and other 'in vivo' assessment and adjustment approaches for persons with chronic mental illness.

The first, *The Unlimited Employment Preparation Program*, is a time limited vocational training program designed to assist clinic consumers to develop job readiness skills while receiving psychiatric support services. Funded by a special grant from the New York State Department of Mental Health, this program uses an on-site clothing and gift shop as the training vehicle. Participants learn sales, merchandising, inventory-control, data entry and maintenance skills while participating in vocational focus groups that stress job seeking and keeping skills. The annual goal is to increase the vocational functioning of up to twenty- five clients, with ten obtaining competitive, supported or volunteer jobs.

The second, *The Unlimited Computer Training Program*, is a six month training program for individuals with psychiatric diagnoses, residents of therapeutic communities receiving mental health services (MICA) and mental health consumers requiring instruction and support services in many languages, i.e. Spanish and Chinese (Mandarin and Cantonese). This is Henry Street's first program funded by the New York State Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID), the state VR program. Based on a performance based contract, it begins with a two week assessment of computer related skills followed by five modules of training and one module for job placement, payable after 90 days of employment. The goal is to train and place ten individuals during the first year.

The following information is provided to describe the methodology developed for each program.

The Unlimited Employment Preparation Program:

1. Work Interest Assessment. Beginning in 1999, all applicants for mental health services complete a Work Interest Assessment as part of the intake process. This assessment determines a consumer's current level of work activity, initial interest in returning to work or school, time frames for beginning vocational preparation activities and how Henry Street staff can be of assistance in achieving these goals. The social worker files the completed Work Interest Assessment along with a Referral for Vocational Services in a tickler file arranged by date. The vocational rehabilitation counselor monitors this file and interviews each consumer at the pre-determined interval.

2. Vocational Interview. Upon completing a Vocational Questionnaire, the consumer meets with the vocational rehabilitation counselor to determine work interests, initial vocational assessment questions and program schedule. In cooperation with the social worker and *The Unlimited Boutique Manager*, a pre-vocational readiness determination is made and a vocational assessment plan developed.

3. Pre-Vocational Assessment. Consumers participate in a situational assessment in the boutique for approximately 3 hours per day for five days over a four-week period. Depending upon interest and availability, they may perform sales, stock receiving, merchandising, inventory control, store maintenance, basic data entry and/or record keeping tasks. The Boutique manager rates each individual's learning style, ability to follow instructions, ability to communicate in English and perform the work assignments using a situational assessment rating form based upon job/task analysis (Form A). Each item is rated on a five point rating scale with 5 being employable and 1 being unsatisfactory - not ready for training. A baseline of work related behaviors is determined by completion of *The Work Personality Profile* developed by Bolton and Roessler (1986). There are four possible outcomes of this assessment: a) continuation in *The Unlimited Employment Preparation Program*; b) formal Vocational Evaluation to determine eligibility for CCC's Computer Training Program or other VESID funded education or training; c) return to work; or d) remain/return to the day treatment program.

4. The Unlimited Employment Preparation Training Program. Using the results of the Pre-Vocational Assessment, an individualized training plan is developed by the participant and vocational

rehabilitation counselor. This plan is shared with the Boutique manager and job developer and identifies key behavioral and skill areas that need to be addressed. Progress in achieving these goals is measured by the rating instruments described above. In addition, participants receive on-going counseling and engage in Vocational Focus Groups led by the vocational rehabilitation counselor or job developer. These groups assist participants in learning appropriate on-the-job behaviors and attitudes; disability management strategies; values clarification; career decision making skills; goal setting; budgeting and basic financial planning; resume preparation; interviewing skills; and the impact of working on benefits/social security work incentives. This vocational training/work adjustment program uses curriculum and videos published by Matrix Research Institute/University of Pennsylvania Research & Training Center on Vocational Rehabilitation & Mental Illness, Arkansas Research and Training Center in Vocational Rehabilitation, University of Wisconsin-Stout, JIST WORKS, and Boston University's Psychiatric Rehabilitation Model.

5. Job Development, Placement and Follow Up Services. Incorporating the philosophy of *Choose, Get, Keep* espoused by Boston University (Danley, 1997) and enumerated by Farley, et. al. in *Employability Assessment and Planning in Rehabilitation and Educational Settings*, the job developer meets with each participant to determine work preferences, values, job needs and other employment reinforcers. A customized job development plan is developed taking into account each participant's preferred industries, work locations, size of work group, nature of supervision, transportation needs, child care, work schedules, disability management issues/needs, etc. Participants work with the job developer in applying job seeking skills, identifying job leads and obtaining employment. Successful outcomes include full-time, part-time, supported and transitional employment as well as volunteer placements. Initial job coaching introduces the participant to the job requirements, specific tasks to be performed, work schedule, transportation alternatives and any work site culture or customs. On-going job supports are provided for ninety days following placement. Individuals who need continued job coaching and meet state funding requirements are recommended for long-term job coaching support. Post Employment Services include individual counseling, job coaching, evening and alumni support groups. Employer assistance and staff training are provided as requested. Work Opportunity Tax Credits and on-the-job (OJT) training funded by state VR are arranged as indicated.

The Unlimited Computer Training Program:

1. Referral. Prospective candidates for computer training come from two external sources: VESID, the state VR agency and Su Casa, a residential drug treatment program; as well as internal, CCC's VESID eligible clinic consumers whose Pre-Vocational Assessment indicates interest and ability in learning computer operations. A one-page referral application is completed by the referring counselor or social worker and sent to the vocational rehabilitation counselor along with verification of client's disability and any other relevant background information. This information is reviewed and an intake interview is arranged.

2. Intake Interview. Prospective candidates complete a seven page Consumer Self-Assessment Vocational/Educational Profile (Neville, 1996). This detailed questionnaire expands the usual demographic data inquiry to include: descriptions of special skills; occupations of family members and other role models; personal and vocational goals with methods of achieving these goals, and how CCC can be of assistance in achieving these goals; a self rating of fourteen employment assets and twenty two employment obstacles; a medical information checklist; a physical/environmental limitations checklist; and a one page personal history. The last asks candidates to describe how their disability has impacted their lives and how participation in CCC's program will help them get a job, return to school and/or live more independently. The vocational rehabilitation counselor reviews this profile with the candidate, clarifying information and adding missing information where necessary. An Intake Summary is prepared summarizing the client's relevant history and counselor's impressions of candidate's readiness for training/employment and recommendations.

3. Two Week Vocational Evaluation. Preliminary evaluation questions are included in the recommendations section of the Intake Summary and expanded upon during the first day of the evaluation.

Depending upon the questions posed by the consumer, CCC staff and referral source(s), the Individual Evaluation Plan includes varying aspects of the following:

- Formal testing of skills, interests, aptitudes, learning styles.
- Clarification of work values, preferences and disability management issues.
- Observation of behavior, work tolerance and relatedness.
- Situational assessments to determine level of comfort, ease and interest in using computers as well as overall readiness for training leading to employment.

The vocational evaluation consists of two hours of formal testing, values clarification and person centered planning activities in the evaluation lab and three hours of situational assessment in the computer lab each day. The results indicate the consumer's ability to meet *The Unlimited* Computer Training Program's entrance criteria:

- Demonstrated interest in computer related occupations.
- Sixth grade reading level.
- Typing speed of 10+ correct works per minute
- Treatment compliance.
- Ability to independently complete computer tutorials.
- Attendance and punctuality.
- Ability to actively participate in Vocational Focus Groups.

The evaluation results are reviewed with the consumer and referring counselor. Recommendations include computer training at CCC or other program options that will better serve the individual's need. A narrative report supplemented with a situational assessment of computer related skills (Form B) is shared with the consumer and referral sources.

4. Computer Training. The Unlimited Computer Training Program is designed to be completed in five to six months, depending upon the initial strengths and skills of each participant. The program offers:

- Basic instruction in keyboarding using *Mavis Beacon Teaches Typing* software.
- Instruction in *Word for Windows*, the most widely used software application and *Windows NT*.
- Job seeking skills instruction using primarily the *Job Seeking Skills Workbook* (Boerner, 1994) and *Job Savvy* (Ludden & Ludden, 1998).
- Internships in local businesses, hospitals and other divisions of Henry Street Settlement.

Using the results of the vocational evaluation, an Individualized Training and Employment Preparation Plan is developed which identifies each student's instructional, behavioral and employment goals and objectives. Progress toward meeting each goal is monitored by the vocational rehabilitation counselor and reported to VESID upon completion of each training module. A bilingual computer instructor teaches participants how to use components of *Microsoft's Office Suite Software* including Access and Excel and using the Internet. Each student receives his/her own copy of instructional workbooks with CD-ROM's that provide interactive training, performance based quizzes and highly interactive tutorials that feature step-by-step projects and lessons. The curriculum is divided into five modules of instruction. Students are required to successfully complete each module before proceeding to the next. Progress in each module monitored by three sources:

- The computer instructor rates each students performance using the Computer Training Progress Report which details the criterion for mastery of each training module, typing speed and accuracy, learning styles, work behaviors and recommendations for training and employment .
- The internship supervisor completes a Work Site Assessment rating each consumer's performance on assigned tasks and duties, learning abilities, work behaviors and attitudes and recommendations for training and employment (Form C).
- The job developer records each consumer's progress in attaining job seeking skills in daily case notes, participation in vocational focus groups, resume preparation, cover letters, mock interviews and individual job search activities.

Summarizing the highlights of these reports and counseling sessions with the consumer, the vocational rehabilitation counselor prepares a one page cover letter/narrative report of each consumer's progress in achieving specific instructional, behavioral and employment preparation goals for each report period.

Copies of this letter and the rating instruments are sent to the referral source and shared with the consumer. Continuation in the program is dependent upon substantial completion of goals.

5. Job Development, Placement and Follow-Up. The procedure for job placement efforts is basically the same as that developed for the Unlimited Employment Preparation Program described above. The primary differences involve the availability of off-site internships and funding. The Employment Preparation Program is a vocational training program located entirely within the CCC clinic and is funded by a grant from the New York State Office of Mental Health. The Computer Training Program provides both on-site training and off-site internships to allow students the opportunity to apply skills learned in the classroom on a real job in the community and to obtain a recent job reference. This program is funded by the state VR agency (VESID) through a performance-based contract. As such, payment for placement services is dependent upon competitive employment outcomes of at least twenty hours per week lasting ninety days or more. All other outcomes are not billable.

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THE UNLIMITED BOUTIQUE PRE-VOCATIONAL ASSESSMENT

NAME	EVALUATION DATES
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RATING SCALE:

Rate Each Item on a 5 Point Scale:

- 5 - Exceptional (Employable)**
- 4 - Above Average (Great Potential)**
- 3 - Average (Potential)**
- 2 - Below Average (Potential Questionable)**
- 1 - Unsatisfactory (Not Suitable for Training)**
- N/O - Not Observed**

General Learning Ability

- Follows & retains instructions
- Able to make decisions
- Able to learn from and correct errors
- Problem solving ability
- Able to communicate in English
- Able to comprehend English

WORK DUTIES/ASSIGNMENTS

STOCK RECEIVING

- Unpacking merchandise
- Checking merchandise with packing slip
- Noting missing items on packing slip
- Checking Packing Slip with Order
- Sorting merchandise by size & style

MAINTAINING STOCK

- Re-folding/re-hanging merchandise
- Replenishing stock
- Re-pricing sale articles

STORE MAINTENANCE

- Sweep mop vacuum floors
- Dust clean display shelves & cases
- Clean doors walls mirrors
- Clean bathroom: sink toilet mirror
- Empty trash Replace plastic bag
- Make coffee Clean coffee pot
- Replenish soda machine Rinse Cans

CLERICAL DUTIES

- Maintaining mailing list
- Copying sales flyers
- Folding flyers
- Inserting flyers into envelopes
- Placing mailing labels on envelopes
- Stamping sealing envelopes

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Return to work full time part time
- volunteer
- Two Week Vocational Evaluation
- CCC Computer Training
- Additional Education/Training
- Six Month Employment Preparation Program
- Continue in Day Treatment

PREPARING STOCK FOR SALE

- Pricing/tagging merchandise
- Steaming merchandise
- Hanging/folding merchandise
- Placing on rack/shelf
- Merchandise display

SALES DUTIES

- Greeting Customers
- Assisting with purchases
- Writing up sales slip
- Ringing up sales on cash register / calculator
- Calculating sales tax
- Processing credit card sales
- Bagging merchandise
- Boxing/Wrapping gift merchandise
- Answering phones
- Phone etiquette

RECONCILING BANK

- Count Bank to \$50.00 at beginning of day
- Add all tickets/receipts for day
- Add actual cash, checks & charges (income)
- Balance Books: receipts = income
- Determine Daily Profit: Subtract \$50.00 from income
- Determine weekly receipts
- Determine monthly receipts

COMMENTS:

DATE

JEAN LAGALIA, MANAGER, THE UNLIMITED

HENRY STREET SETTLEMENT COMMUNITY CONSULTATION CENTER
Unlimited Computer Training Program
SITUATIONAL ASSESSMENT

FORM B

NAME _____

EVALUATION DATES _____

Rate Each Item on a 5 Point Scale:
5 - Exceptional (Employable)
4 - Above Average (Great Potential)
3 - Average (Potential)
2 - Below Average (Potential Questionable)
1 - Unsatisfactory (Not Suitable for Training)
N/O - Not Observed

Recommendations (check one)

- Employable with training
- Employable with training and job coaching
- Not ready for training
 - lacks keyboarding skills
 - disability management issues
 - other: _____

APPEARANCE

- Grooming
- Appropriate dress
- Personal Hygiene

WORK HABITS

- Attendance
- Punctuality
- Industriousness
- Maintenance of effort

WORK TOLERANCE

- Attention span
- Emotional endurance
- Ability to handle pressure
- Frustration level
- Adaptability or flexibility

WORK ATTITUDES

- Interest in work
- Self confidence
- Dependability
- Initiative
- Motivation
- Cooperation
- Leadership
- Independence
- Response to constructive feedback

RELATIONSHIP/PERSONALITY FACTORS

- Relationship to co-workers
- Relationship to supervision
- Ability to work independently

GENERAL LEARNING ABILITY

- Ability to follow written instructions
- Retention capability
- Decision making ability
- Ability to learn from and correct errors
- Problems solving ability

COMPUTER LEARNING STYLE

(Check one)

- Learned with limited instruction
- Required additional instructor assistance
- Required additional practice
- Required constant assistance
- Unable to improve with additional instruction/practice

COMPUTER KEYBOARDING SKILLS

Technique:

- Uses correct fingering/wrist placement
- Strikes keys confidently/knows keyboard
- Muscular coordination
- Correct words per minute: _____
Accuracy: _____

File Management:

- Ease in using mouse
- Using Explorer to locate folder
- Browsing folder structure
- Understands floppy disk vs hard drive
- Locates folders
- Moves files between folders
- Deletes files from Windows
- Creates new files
- Opens existing files
- Saves files to floppy or hard disk

Comments: _____

SITE: _____ SUPERVISOR: _____

NAME

EVALUATION DATES

Rate Each Item on a 5 Point Scale:
5 - Exceptional (Employable)
4 - Above Average (Great Potential)
3 - Average (Potential)
2 - Below Average (Potential Questionable)
1 - Unsatisfactory (Not Suitable for Training)
N/O - Not Observed

APPEARANCE

- Grooming
- Appropriate dress
- Personal Hygiene

WORK HABITS

- Attendance Days Absent
- Punctuality Days Late
- Industriousness
- Maintenance of effort

WORK TOLERANCE

- Attention span
- Emotional endurance
- Ability to handle pressure
- Frustration level
- Adaptability or flexibility at work

WORK ATTITUDES

- Interest in work
- Self confidence
- Dependability
- Initiative
- Motivation
- Cooperation
- Leadership
- Independence
- Response to constructive feedback

RELATIONSHIP/PERSONALITY FACTORS

- Relationship to co-workers
- Relationship to supervision
- Ability to work independently

GENERAL LEARNING ABILITY

- Follows & retains instructions
- Able to make decisions
- Able to learn from and correct errors
- Problems solving ability

WORK DUTIES/ASSIGNMENTS

- Filing
- Arranging and updating House Keeper Time Sheets
- Stamping and sending Time Sheets to specified personnel
- Phone etiquette
- Contacting clients to update information regarding house keepers
- Filling out questionnaires
- Data entry tasks such as changing dates, adding details from questionnaires, etc.

OTHER ASSIGNMENTS:

DLN/IL: 998

Comments: _____

SUPERVISOR/DATE

