



EBP Times

LATE JANUARY 2006 NEWSLETTER

SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT EDITION

Job Matching

Highlighting Success: Four County Mental Health Center

One of the critical principles of evidence-based practice in supported employment is that choices and decisions about work and support are individualized and based on the person's preferences, strengths and experiences. That means that employment specialist assist consumers to find jobs based on what their passions and dreams are rather than what is available in the job market. This can be a fun and creative task for employment specialists, but can also be a great challenge. Consumers generally have reasonable expectations regarding the kinds and types of work they want and are able to do (Bond, 1998); and research also indicates that consumers stay longer at jobs they choose and have an interest in (Becker, 1996). Therefore, effective job matching is critical in supported employment.

Good job matching entails understanding what is important to the consumer, what their strengths and interests are as well as what they enjoy. It also involves exploring past work experience and skills – understanding what skills and knowledge the consumer gained from each job as well as the positive and negative aspects of each job. In addition, it is important to explore what kinds of potential job supports and accommodations might be needed to create successful employment for the consumer. The Vocational Profile is one tool that supported employment specialists use to engage consumers in exploring their past work history, skills, interests, strengths and hobbies in order to create an appropriate job match. While the consumer may have an immediate idea of the kind of job they want and where they want to work, it is important to engage the consumer in an exploration of employment options. Some individuals who have experienced the challenges that come with severe mental illness sometimes feel relegated to low paying, entry level work. But, it is critical for both consumers and employment specialists to take the time to explore and dream of what the perfect job might look like.

Four County Mental Health Center based in Independence, Kansas serves four rural counties in south central Kansas and has approximately 225 SPMI consumers being served by nine supported employment specialists. They have been implementing evidence-based practice in supported employment for approximately a year and a half. Their supported employment team includes Diana Compton, the agency's Employment and

Education Support Supervisor, and their staff: Alvin Bryant, Sheryl Ratliff, Brent Thomson, Kelly Bradford, Becky Foreman, Fred Savage, Frank Peterman, Frank Lucivero, and French Hey.

This dedicated and exceptional staff work hard to identify clients' preferences, interests, skills, and needs and to find competitive jobs in the community that match those preferences. And, in this issue of EBP Times we will take a look at how Becky Foreman, Supported Employment Specialist with Four County Mental Health in Independence, Kansas and Steve Alford worked together to make his "dream" job come true.

The Consumer's Story:

Three months ago I was unemployed and had been for many years. I had not worked because I had been in and out of hospitals. I am diagnosed as schizophrenic and have recurrent auditory hallucinations. I merely fantasized about working in the historical building because it is the largest and most impressive building in Independence. The building has a canopied grand entrance and contains 5 stories of marble-lined hallways. Life seemed boring and I felt I had no purpose. My day was mostly "killing time".

Today work is the highlight of my day. I greet patrons entering the building while I clean the main lobby entrance. My daily tasks include keeping the entrance doors sparkling clean, maintaining the cleanliness and gleam of the lobby and hallway floors, and maintaining the appearance of the break room. I am responsible for five floors a week, including 4 restrooms on each floor. My daily task list requires that I work as quickly and efficiently as possible. Employees in the building praise me for keeping their workplace clean. Weekends are now something special, because I am "off".



Steve Alford stands in front of his workplace.

Note: Client gave permission for use of his name and picture.

The Employment Specialist's Role:

Supported Employment determined through a strengths assessment that Steve had worked years ago as a janitor and enjoyed the work. Furthermore, his specific dream was to work in that one building in Independence. Due to Steve's auditory hallucinations it was evident that SE would have to establish an alliance with the manager of the building so necessary accommodations could be made for Steve to work.

The SE worker had noticed untidy restrooms and dirty floors in the stately building and had personal knowledge that the manager is not routinely on the business premises. With this in mind, the SE worker proposed to the manager that he make a list of daily maintenance tasks and allow a consumer to perform the tasks on a trial basis. The manager provided a list of tasks which seemed extremely challenging. The SE worker

agreed to supervise completion of tasks and assured the manager that Steve had the physical ability and experience to perform the tasks. Steve is tall and physically active and takes pride in transforming messes and dirt into order and cleanliness.

The SE worker then coached Steve to prepare for an interview. Steve was told to explain in detail the cleaning, sweeping, mopping and janitorial skills learned through the years. He opened the interview by exclaiming that he had always dreamed of being a janitor in the corporate building. Steve displayed such overwhelming enthusiasm and desire that the manager hired him on the spot and agreed that Steve could wear a headset at work.

Steve now exuberantly cleans everything in sight. The manager is extremely meticulous concerning maintenance of the building and Steve meets the requirements. Steve missed a week of work due to surgery and the manager held his job open. Employees and patrons comment on the great upkeep of the building. SE is thrilled. But most importantly, Steve is proud and happy to re-enter the mainstream workforce as a solid contributor who happens to hear voices in the background.

Becker, Deborah R., Drake, R., Farabaugh, A. and Bond, G.R. (1996). Job preferences of clients with severe psychiatric disorders participating in supported employment programs. *Psychiatric Services* (47) 11, 1223-1226.

Bond, G. R. (1998). Principals of the individual placement and support model: empirical support. *Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal*. (22) 1, 11-23.

If you have additional questions about job matching or the EBP supported employment project, please contact the supported employment trainers/consultants: [Linda Carlson](#) or [Galen Smith](#), or call 785-864-4720.

People, Places and Events

- Supported Employment Training for Spring 2006:
 - Basic Supported Employment Training, March 15-16
 - Advanced Supported Employment Training: Collaborating with VR for Success

To register, please log onto:

<http://www.socwel.ku.edu/mentalhealth/Spring%202005%20Trainings/Spring%202006.htm>