Best Practice in Employment If Living with a Mental Illness

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History of LakeCity

- 1972 Dartmouth Activity Centre
- 1982 LakeCity Woodworkers
- 1988 Community Employment Program

Programs: Woodworking Shop
Community Employment
TREES Program
reBOOT

- Currently working with over 350 clients, averaging 11 new referrals per month and 10 paid jobs per month
Psychosocial Rehabilitation is a process through which individuals with psychiatric disabilities develop skills and supports they need to live, learn, socialize and work in the environment of their choice.
Supported Employment

- A significant part of Psychosocial Rehabilitation is Supported Employment: it is an evidence-based practice for individuals living with persistent and severe mental illness.
- The elements of Supported Employment:
  - Finding paid employment is the goal
  - Client chooses the types of work interested in
  - Rapid job search and attachment
  - Integration with the mental health treatment plan
  - Disability benefits counselling
  - Time-unlimited support from Employment Counsellors
Recovery

- Role Recovery is helping individuals with psychiatric disabilities develop the skills they need to be successful.
- Individuals with mental illness can recover and can lead a satisfying and productive life.
- Recovery can occur even though symptoms remain or reoccur.
- Recovery from mental illness does not mean the illness is gone.
- Recovery is not a linear process. It involves growth and setbacks, periods of rapid change and little change.
- Being employed is a key part of the recovery process.
Obstacles

- Gaps in work history
- Limited employment experience
- Lack of confidence
- Fear and anxiety
- Workplace discrimination/inflexibility
- Social stigma
If you are involved in a supported employment program, Community Services will allow you to keep the first $300 plus 30% of your monthly net earnings.

Income statements cover the period from 15th of a month to 14th of next month, have to be returned by 17th of the month.

Income is based on the pay stubs you receive in this period.

Budget for the end of the month – employment earnings may reduce your regular social assistance cheque.

Earning more than your monthly budget will end your eligibility for social assistance.
Community Services Medication Benefits

- Transitional Pharmacare available for one year if eligibility for benefits ends
- Extended Pharmacare may be available indefinitely if medication costs are high
- Nova Scotia Pharmacare Plan is available to all low income Nova Scotians
Navigation of CPP-D - you can work and keep your benefits

- Earn $5000.00 before you need to contact CPP-D
- If “gainfully employed” - more than $10,800 per year – may be ineligible for CPP- D but can fast track back during the next 5 years
- No medical coverage
- Notify CPP-D of changes in hours/wages
Adjustment Factors: Medications and changes to work hours

• Medication schedule may need to be adjusted – wake up time and/or bed time may change
• Need to keep mental health team informed of changes – physical work may change med absorption in the body
• May need med dosage reduced to enhance alertness
Accommodations

• Negotiate with the employer either before job begins or after being hired
• Need to set realistic goals and emphasize abilities
• Accommodations could include flexible hours of work, work in area with few distractions or alter job description/duties
Rescheduling Activities

- Medical appointments outside of work hours
- Social activities to fit around work hours
- Adjusting sleep patterns – avoid staying up too late when working the next day
Culture of work

• Maintaining appropriate boundaries and initiating small talk – not discussing one’s illness
• Accepting direction and constructive criticism
• Obtaining appropriate work clothing
• Going to work despite inclement weather
On going follow-up

• Having regular communication with the employer if LakeCity developed the job for the worker
• Trouble-shooting to generate ideas to overcome problems with our client while employed is open-ended
Supporting, Individuals Living with Mental Illness, in Employment

Thank You