

## **UIC Science Showcase Podcast Series**

### **Transcript for “What are the Long-Term Effects of Supported Employment Services?”**

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Announcer: Thank you for visiting the University of Illinois at Chicago’s Health & Recovery Science Showcase. The following recording comes to you from the UIC Center on Integrated Health Care and Self-Directed Recovery. Visit our online Science Showcase to obtain free information about research on health, self-direction, and employment in the behavioral health field.

Hello, my name is Jane Burke-Miller and I’d like to welcome you to this podcast on the long-term effects of supported employment. In this podcast, I’ll review the research on long term employment outcomes among adults with serious mental illness who have received supported employment services. I also will describe the results of the most comprehensive study of the topic to date which was conducted here at our Center. This podcast will be of interest to people seeking supported employment services, as well as to service providers, and policy makers. References for all the studies cited in this review are available in the podcast transcript.

The desire for employment among people living with severe mental illness and the benefits of work to the financial and emotional well-being of people with psychiatric disabilities are well-known (1-6). Yet, it is estimated that between 39% and 68% of U.S. adults with psychiatric disabilities remain outside the labor force in any given year (7), and over 80% of adults receiving public mental health services are unemployed (8). Moreover, people with psychiatric disabilities represent a significant proportion of beneficiaries of the Social Security Administration’s Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Disability Insurance (SSDI) (9). SSI and SSDI beneficiaries rarely attain economic self-sufficiency once enrolled in these programs (10).

There is ample research showing that evidence-based supported employment services substantially improve employment outcomes for people with psychiatric disabilities. This research includes systematic reviews of the scientific evidence (15-18) and results of multistate demonstration programs involving SSI and SSDI beneficiaries (19-20). However, analysis of the likely cost-benefit of greater use of supported employment points to gaps in the knowledge base, including the long-term effectiveness of supported employment programs (21).

Studies of supported employment typically involve one to two years of service delivery and outcome observation. For example, in a review of 11 published studies of evidence-based supported employment, 4 incorporated 24 months of follow-up, with the other 7 studies ranging from 6 to 18 months (22). One exception is a 5-year follow-up study of 100 unemployed adults with severe mental illness in Switzerland who were randomly assigned to supported employment or traditional vocational rehabilitation (23). At the 5-year follow-up, 28% (13/46) of those in the supported employment group were in competitive work without active support, and another 15% (7/46) were competitively employed and receiving on-going support from an employment specialist.

Here at the UIC Center on Mental Health Services Research and Policy, we conducted a study of the effects of evidence-based supported employment services on vocational outcomes over a 13-

year follow-up period. We studied 449 adults with psychiatric disability who had participated in a large randomized controlled trial of supported employment. We looked at their Social Security Administration data from 2000 to 2012, which was the 13-year period following the original study of supported employment services. We used random effects regression models for longitudinal data to compare the supported employment and control condition participants on their long-term outcomes of any employment and amount of earnings. Another outcome we looked at was suspension or termination of Social Security Administration disability cash payments due to work. This suspension or termination of SSI or SSDI benefits is called “nonpayment status following suspension or termination for work” or NSTW.

Overall outcomes for the supported employment group were notable across the 13-year follow-up, with 36% of participants having any earned income and 15% ever attaining NSTW. In longitudinal models adjusting for time, geographic region, and participant characteristics, we found that supported employment recipients were almost 3 times as likely as controls to be employed over the 13 years. Supported employment participants had significantly higher earnings per month than controls over time, by an average of \$24/month. The supported employment group was almost 13 times more likely than controls to attain NSTW status. The supported employment effect declined significantly over the 13 years, perhaps due to declining labor force participation as the cohort aged, incomplete Social Security Administration data, or the severe economic downturn of 2008.

The significant positive effect of supported employment on employment outcomes over the long-term adds to the evidence base of ways to help career-oriented workers escape from a cycle of poverty and dependence on Social Security disability benefits. These include expanding access to supported employment services to larger numbers of people, thereby reducing their dependence on public disability payments while holding jobs that pay a living wage. A recent analysis suggests that expanding access to supported employment would be unlikely to result in drastic budgetary savings to the Social Security Administration; nonetheless, supported employment is more cost-effective than traditional vocational rehabilitation programs and results in beneficial social and personal outcomes. These are positive arguments for increasing funding and expanding access to supported employment (21). Finally, while best practice supported employment models such as Individual Placement and Support (IPS) are well-established, expanded use and access should be informed by research-based innovations in delivery including early intervention and cognitive enhancement treatment (36, 37).

For more information on evidence-based supported employment, including a presentation on our Center’s study of long-term effects of supported employment and a tool to help you determine if supported employment is right for you, visit the University of Illinois at Chicago Center on Mental Health Services Research and Policy. Thank you.

Announcer: Thank you for listening. You can obtain additional recordings, or download a transcript, by visiting the Science Showcase on the Center’s web site.

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