

UIC Solutions Suite Webinar Series

Transcript for webinar on *Seeking Supported Employment: What You Need to Know*

Recorded by Judith Cook

Slide 1 (announcer):

Thank you for visiting the University of Illinois at Chicago's Health & Recovery Solutions Suite. The following recording comes to you from the UIC Center on Integrated Health Care and Self-Directed Recovery. Visit our online Solutions Suite to obtain free tools that promote health, self-direction, and employment for the behavioral health field.

Slide 2:

Hello. My name is Judith Cook. I direct the University of Illinois at Chicago's Center on Integrated Health Care and Self-Directed Recovery. Our Center offers an online Solutions Suite, containing free tools for the behavioral health field. These tools promote wellness, self-direction, and employment for people in mental health recovery. You can visit our Solutions Suite on the web site where you found this webinar, at www.center4healthandsdc.org. Today, I'll be discussing how to use our career self-determination workbook called *Seeking Supported Employment: What You Need to Know*, which is offered in our Solutions Suite.

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Our Center and the Solutions Suite are jointly funded by two federal agencies. First is the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research, of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Community Living. Second is the Center for Mental Health Services of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. The work of the Center does not necessarily represent the policy of any agency or endorsement by the federal government.

Slide 4:

There are several learning objectives for this webinar. One is to understand the concept of supported employment and why it's important for people in mental health recovery who want to work. The second is to become familiar with the content of our workbook, how to use it to rate supported employment programs, and what the program score means. The third is to learn how the workbook can be used to help people find high quality vocational assistance.

Slide 5:

Let's start by learning more about supported employment. It's a service that helps people with disabilities find and keep jobs. The goal is to help people get a competitive job, which is a position that anyone can apply for, that pays minimum wage or more. After learning what kind of work people want, staff called employment specialists help them find open positions and submit an application. This can include assistance with updating resumes and coaching on how to act during job interviews. If they are selected, staff help people complete the hiring process. Once people are working, staff help them deal with any problems they have so they can keep their jobs. If people lose a job, they get help finding a new one.

Slide 6:

Supported employment follows several important principles. One principle is that everyone with a mental health condition who wants to work can receive supported employment. Another principle is that peoples' employment services are integrated with treatment for their mental health condition. The focus is on competitive jobs that match participants' preferences for what kind of work they want to do.

Slide 7:

Another important principle is that people should know exactly how working will affect any disability benefits they are receiving, such as SSI or SSDI. That's why personalized benefits counseling is provided. In supported employment, people get help finding jobs soon after they decide to work. There's no waiting period like there is with other employment models. The employment specialists focus on building direct relationships with employers that have the kinds of jobs their clients are looking for. Finally, people get help for as long as they want it and need it in supported employment programs. This is especially important if people lose their jobs because they get help right away finding new ones.

Slide 8:

These principles are very important because research shows that programs following them work better than other types of employment services. Supported employment has been proven to work better at helping people find and keep good jobs than other approaches like sheltered workshops, transitional employment, and looking for work on your own. That's why our workbook measures how much a program follows the evidence-based principles of supported employment.

Slide 9:

Let's discuss how people use the workbook. First, they read an introduction and think about questions like, Is working what you really want to do right now? What kind of job would you like? How many hours a week do you want to work? and Do you already have the skills & qualifications you need?

Slide 10:

Next, if they decide they're ready to work, people read about the different routes they can take to finding a job. One is to do it on their own, which is the way most people find their jobs. Another is called transitional employment, which is a service that gives people temporary jobs that are set aside exclusively for workers with disabilities. Still another is sheltered work, where people get paid below minimum wage, according to how much work they finish. Finally, there's supported employment. If people decide they want supported employment, they keep reading to find out how to locate a program.

Slide 11:

There are several ways to find a supported employment program. One is to contact your state or county mental health authority and ask where programs are in your area. Another is to contact your state vocational rehabilitation agency and ask them about programs. You can also look online for mental health programs that offer supported employment. You do this by going to www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov and searching by state or zip code. There's also a toll-free phone number to call. Once you find a program, you'll want to see whether it offers supported employment because not all do. You can check the program's website or call and ask if they offer supported employment services.

Slide 12:

Now, let's discuss how to use the workbook. You'll start by calling the program and asking to schedule a visit to see about joining it. Mention that you want to meet with someone for around 30 minutes to ask some questions and get information. Be sure to read the helpful tips on how to get ready for the meeting. They will help you feel more comfortable and prepared.

Slide 13:

I mentioned that you'll be asking questions from the workbook. There are 19 of these and they include questions like: Does your program place clients in jobs that are permanent? What's the average amount of time people take to get a job? and Does your program help clients keep their jobs if they go into the hospital or need to take time off for mental health reasons?

Slide 14:

You'll listen to the answer to each question and mark the score in the booklet during the meeting. Once you leave the meeting, you can total the score. The score will tell you about the quality of the program. Based on that knowledge, you can make a decision about joining. The booklet also includes a list of the questions on one page that you can tear out and give to staff beforehand if you like.

Slide 15:

Next let's talk about scoring. We designed the workbook to be easy to score. Think about a stoplight where red means stop and green means go. Each question gets an answer in either the red zone or the green zone. If the answers to the first 5 questions are all in the red zone, that means the program doesn't provide supported employment services. Thus, you should "stop" and think hard before you decide to go there.

Slide 16:

If at least one of the first five questions gets a green score, add up the answers to the remaining questions to get the program's total score. If that score is 16 to 19, it's an excellent program. It has all or almost all of the important ingredients of supported employment and you might want to "go" there. If the score is 11 to 15, it's a good program that has many of the important services you need. Consider joining if it seems to meet your needs. If the score is 6 to 10, the program is missing some important services. If the employment staff are willing to add some services, you might consider joining. Finally, if the score is 1 to 5, the program has very few of the services that make supported employment effective. If they cannot add some services, you may be better off seeking employment on your own.

Slide 17:

You may be wondering who should use this workbook. It's designed for people in mental health recovery who want a good job in the regular workforce. It's also helpful for people who are considering whether to work, and curious about what kinds of services might help them. Finally, it is useful for people who want to learn more about what supported employment is and how it works. Service providers and supporters also will find it helpful for these reasons.

Slide 18:

There are different formats in which you can use the workbook. We designed it as a self-guided tool that people can use on their own. It also can be used along with a peer, other supporter, or service provider. Some people use it in groups where they read and discuss the information. Then they support each other in preparing for the program visit. Afterwards, they come together to discuss the programs' scores and decide what they want to do next.

Slide 19:

Next, let's talk about some logistics. The workbook is 22 pages long and it's written at a 7th grade reading level. You'll want to download it from the Internet, print the pages, and then staple them in booklet form. Finally, remember that you should only add up the score after the interview is over and you've left the meeting.

Slide 20:

I'd like to share an example of how one group used *Seeking Supported Employment*. An occupational therapist working at a state psychiatric inpatient facility decided to use it with her "Getting Ready for Discharge" group. She had group members read the booklet together and they then discussed whether they wanted to work. After that they reviewed and talked about the different types of employment approaches and discussed which model they preferred. Since they all wanted supported employment, they practiced reading the questions aloud to each other.

Slide 21:

Next the occupational therapist helped group members do some research to find supported employment programs near where they lived. Since they were in the hospital, they couldn't visit these programs right away. So, they used the hospital's phone to call and make appointments to visit the programs a month after discharge. The group leader made sure to be available by phone to support people before and after their visits, and several did complete these meetings.

Slide 22:

Thanks for your interest in how to use our workbook on supported employment. If you still have questions, you can request free technical assistance from our Center, which we offer on a time-limited basis. Call us at 312.355.1696 or click the "free technical assistance" button on the Seeking Supported Employment page of our web site.

Slide 23 (announcer):

Thank you for listening. You can obtain additional Solutions Suite recordings, or download a transcript, by visiting the Center's web site.