

# FIGHTING FOR OUR LIVELIHOODS:

Developing sustainable job opportunities for economic self-sufficiency

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# EMPLOYMENT AND MENTAL ILLNESS: THE BACKSTORY

- *“They don’t want to work”*
- *“The can’t work”*
- *“They can work when we control the jobs”*
- *“They CAN work competitively... but not sure they can hold jobs for long.”*

## BUT WHO ARE “THEY”?

- PEOPLE TODAY RECEIVING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES
- THE UNIVERSE OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE RECEIVED MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

# WORK IS GOOD

➤ Emotional

➤ Functional

➤ **Income**

- Basic needs
- Independent community living

# LOW WORK RATES FOR PEOPLE DIAGNOSED WITH SERIOUS MENTAL ILLNESSES

Labor force participation

25%

- Ill
- Disability insurance
- Give up looking

Unemployment

32-61%

Underemployment

- 70% of people with SMI who have college degrees making less than \$10/hr.

# DO THESE RATES HAVE TO BE THIS LOW?

Yes

No

If they can be higher, then by how much?

Can we do something about this?

Should we spend time doing something about it?

# EBPing it: SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

- Competitive employment is the goal.**
- Eligibility is based on consumer choice.
- Consumer preferences are important.
- Job search starts soon after consumers express interest in working**
- Services are integrated with comprehensive mental health treatment.**
- Personalized benefits counseling is important
- Follow-along supports are continuous.*
- Employment specialists systematically develop relationships with employers based upon their client's preferences*

Evidence based practice for helping people get part-time, low paying jobs that typically last months\*

Whom does it work for?

# BARRIERS TO SUSTAINED WORK

- Personal challenges, such as anxiety & learning disabilities... fears about losing benefits
- Family pressures
- Nature of the position
  - Match
  - Clarity
  - Complexity
- Workplace culture and practice [Organizational social capital]
  - Supervision
  - Other workers
  - Stigma, discrimination
  - Wellness, promoting psychological capital
- Health and health care access
- External employment supports

# THE SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS CHALLENGE

Largest and fastest-growing group of people with disabilities collecting SSDI

Rarely terminate benefits due to their **fear of losing resources** that support their daily well-being.

Concerned with:

- Illness
- Bad job match
- **Job difficulties**
- Other

**Are we aiming too low?**

**Are aiming in the wrong direction?**

# AIMING TOO LOW: WHAT IS THE GOAL... OR INTENDED OUTCOME?

- Working
- Competitive working
- “Sustainable jobs”
  - Decent paying
  - Full time
  - Benefits
- Working and developing
  - Internships
  - Entrepreneurship
  - Self-employment
- Careers
  - Education

# AIMING IN THE RIGHT

## DIRECTION: CAPITAL THEORY, A MORE HOLISTIC PERSPECTIVE

- ❖ Human
- ❖ Cultural
- ❖ Psychological
  - ❖ Resilience
  - ❖ Persistence
  - ❖ Confidence
- ❖ Social- personal
- ❖ Social- workplace
  - ❖ Supervision
  - ❖ Other staff

# SOCIAL CAPITAL

Collective value of one's social network connections and resources that generate instrumental, informational, and emotional support

*Personal social capital* includes ties with “natural supports” and “formal supports”

- Dis/encouragement,
- Advice, and
- Professional connections

***Organizational-social capital:*** Social relations within the organization-

- Staff
- Employment practices that stabilize employee relationships and clarify roles and policies, such as reasonable pay and clear job descriptions.

Significant predictor of job satisfaction and productivity

Career  
Development

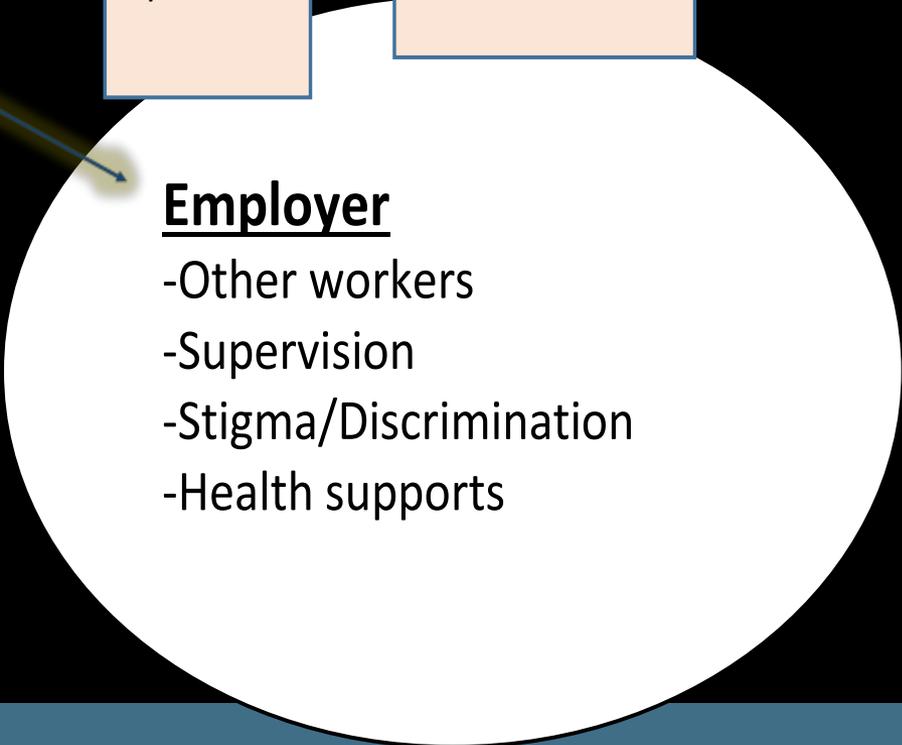
Competitive  
Employment

Education/Training

Sustainable  
employment

*Job  
specialist*

*Internships*



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How can employers improve the work environment for people with mental health conditions?

What is our role in encouraging employers?

# DEMAND SIDE, EMPLOYER-BASED STRATEGIES

Focus on the interests, attitudes, and capacity of an organization that might employ people with SMI

- Strategies
- Incentives

# KEY BEST PRACTICES CATEGORIES

Job description

Supervision

Health promoting

Employees as individuals, flexibility

Addressing stigma/discrimination

Disclosure and reasonable accommodations

Human Resources

Transparency

# EXISTING [BEST PRACTICE] LAWS AND PROGRAMS NOT FULLY LEVERAGED

FMLA

Employment Assistance Plans (EAPs) and the like

ADA and state related laws

Short term disability insurance (STDI) and

Return to Work (RTW) strategies

Addressing Stigma-person/person, education, training

Health care- Peer jobs, Recovery coaches

# FMLA (FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE ACT(S))

Requires covered employers to grant employees 12 weeks of leave per year to address serious health conditions

- 12 months of work
- At least about 24 hours per week
- Employer with 50 or more employees

Though possibly through state FMLA law

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# ADA- DISCRIMINATION

## Hiring

All aspects of employment, including social events  
Includes hostile workplace

## Reasonable Accommodations

## Hostile workplace

## Addressing stigma and discrimination

- Contact
- Education

# ACCOMMODATIONS

Reasonable Accommodations: Modifications or adjustments to ordinary business operations toward supporting a *qualified* employee with a disability perform *essential* job functions.

## Mental Disability

- Impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of an individual.
  - assessed without regard to mitigating measures, including medications
- A record of such an impairment.
- Being regarded as having such an impairment

# KEY ASPECTS OF RAS

## ❖ When to take action:

- Request or other notice of needing help
  - No particular communication method required of employee
- “Other obvious”

## ❖ RA Threshold Standards

- **Reasonableness:** Is the suggested accommodation reasonable?
- **Undue Hardship:** Will the suggested accommodation put *undue hardship* on the organization (productivity, quality, impact on other staff)?
- **Interactive process**

# Working Well® process for addressing job difficulties and developing RAs (Toolkit chapter 7)

## I. Questions to be addressed in order:

1. What are the job's primary functions/tasks?
2. What primary functions/tasks is the peer is having difficulty with?
3. What are the challenges and barriers to successful execution of these functions/tasks?
4. What [type(s) of] accommodations might help the peer to perform these functions/tasks?
5. What is the most effective and reasonable accommodations(s)?

### II. Independent preparation by employee and/or supervisor:

- Review of questions and
- Information gathering

### III. Co-party Interactive Dialogue, Elements:

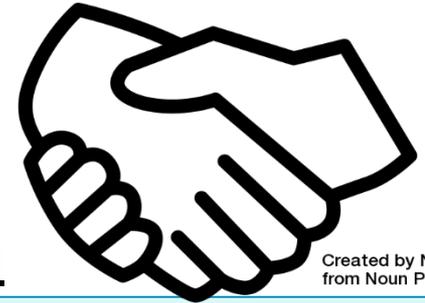
- ADA rules of interactivity
- Principles of solution focused negotiation
- Strengths/Needs analysis

### IV. Establish RA

- Implement RA
- Monitor and change as needed
- Evaluate process

# ACCOMMODATIONS ARE PREPARATION AND PROCESS!

- ❖ Interactive dialogue between YA TPM, supervisor, & 3<sup>rd</sup> party
- ❖ One size does not fit all
- ❖ Generate multiple solutions
- ❖ Agreement is established & written down



Created by Nikolay Necheuhin  
from Noun Project

## Questions to Foster Discussion:

- ❖ What is the likelihood that the accommodation(s) will be effective? How will we know they are effective?
- ❖ How long will the accommodation(s) last? When will the impact be reviewed?
- ❖ What will the short- & long-term impact of the accommodation(s) be?
- ❖ What accommodation(s) are less burdensome & likely to be effective?
- ❖ What has worked here in the past for ?
- ❖ What has worked in the past for *this* employee?
- ❖ Why is a accommodation being requested? Or suggested?
- ❖ Undue hardship?

\*Working Well software

# INFRASTRUCTURE FOR EMPLOYING PEOPLE WITH SMI

Top management to endorse and actively participate in the development of a corporate culture that supports the employment of people with SMI

Communications, e.g., Champions

HR

Training, orientation

Toolkits that organize instructional materials for businesses to support employees

Prominent disability/inclusion offices

# TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR EMPLOYING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

DOL, Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP)

WOIA, Implementation, Program guides

- Work-based learning opportunities- Apprenticeships
- One-stops

JAN (Job Accommodation Network)

ADA centers

Source America- Pathways to Careers

SAMHSA/NIDILRR TA centers- Transitions RTC, BUCPR

Toolkits (e.g., [https://www.umassmed.edu/globalassets/transitionsrtc/publications/effectivelyemployingyoungadultpeerproviders\\_a\\_toolkit.pdf](https://www.umassmed.edu/globalassets/transitionsrtc/publications/effectivelyemployingyoungadultpeerproviders_a_toolkit.pdf))

Technical Assistance Collaborative- JD

# INCENTIVES (BEYOND THE PURE BUSINESS CASE) Tax Credits

## Apprenticeships

ADA and state anti-discrimination laws

Regulatory provisions released in 2013 require federal contractors to set a seven percent workforce utilization goal for the employment of individuals with disabilities, though direct incentives have yet to be developed

- encourages employers to set strategic goals, including the development of tools to track the number of employees with disabilities.

Talent maximization

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