

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS HEALTH SCIENCE CENTER

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Department of Psychiatry

Utilization of Supported  
Employment in a Population  
Re-entering the Community  
from Nursing Home Care

Addendum Manual to  
Cognitive Adaptation Training  
for the Money Follows the Person  
Behavioral Health Pilot

# Utilization of Supported Employment in a Population Re-entering the Community from Nursing Home Care

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Gordon Butler

Harry Cunningham

Natalie Maples-Aguilar

Dena Stoner

Allen Pittman

Dawn Velligan

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# Learning Objectives:

*After completing this manual you will be able to:*

- *Identify clients who desire to work and help them develop a plan towards their employment goals.*
- *Describe how to implement the basic principles of Supported Employment in helping a client realize his or her employment goals.*
- *Describe the work of job development and identify possible strategies to bring client and employer together.*
- *Describe some basic principles of good resume writing and interviewing skills.*
- *Outline some barriers and issues in the areas of disclosure, criminal background, and transportation as well as possible strategies for addressing these barriers and issues.*
- *Describe tools of motivation such as peer support, spirituality, family support, recovery, and other community resources and how these tools might help a client meet his or her employment goals.*

## Introduction

In this manual you will be introduced to the guidelines for Supported Employment, an evidenced based practice to help consumers with mental health disorders obtain jobs with competitive wages based on their field of interest. It is written as an addendum to the Cognitive Adaptation Training (CAT) for Money Follows the Person Behavioral Health (MFP-BH) Pilot Manual. The intention is to help train CAT therapists to implement supported employment techniques within the MFP-BH population. The manual will discuss the benefits of working, the key concepts of the supported employment model, and how to implement this model with your clients. We also briefly discuss possible barriers and solutions when implementing a supported employment program within the MFP-BH context. This manual is not intended to replace training in supported employment, but rather to augment teachings by a trained specialist.

## Why Work?

Why is work so important, and why should we support it as a goal for our clients? Privileges come with employment, including making money. The extra income allows consumers to obtain things that many of us take for granted like a decent place to live, the possibility of a car, the latest electronic gadgets, and going out to eat once in a while. Most people find a sense of purpose through work as their work gives them a reason to get moving each day. Work brings status, money in one's pocket, or even the ability to look people in the eye when they ask what we do. It connects us to our family and community, allows us to give back to others and it is often the source of our closest friends. Work can give meaning to our lives and a sense of routine and well-being. No one grows up dreaming of living on disability and consumers don't choose to be ill. Given a choice, a large majority of consumers in the community mental health system say they would want to work.

Work is related to people moving ahead in their lives. It is often an important aspect of pursuing goals that are personally meaningful to them; a way that many consumers successfully take responsibility for managing their lives and illness. Work is often intimately connected to the process of recovery from illness as they move from a place of resigned acceptance to a sense of mastery over their symptoms that allows the possibility and hope of a satisfying life. One could argue that work is as important a treatment offering as medication for many consumers. Just as critical as medication is to helping many consumers manage distressful symptoms, work is a critical part of creating vibrancy in life, positive emotions and future hope. For many people, work is a vital part of what makes their lives life worth living.

Do all our consumers need to work? No. We know there are some people who experience symptoms of severe mental illness whom have little motivation to work. Some are resigned to the limited lifestyles that their Social Security and other benefits allow. For others, they fear a job infers full-time work, or that they would lose all of their financial and insurance benefits.

For some, their last experiences with work were painful and they may have vowed never to risk that sense of failure and shame again. Ironically, many consumers are discouraged from working by well-meaning professionals and family members. The outdated attitude of consumers being viewed as severely impaired people who need to be cared for and protected from unnecessary stress still influences many peoples' beliefs toward consumers becoming employed. However, given the opportunity to work at a job that interests them, does not jeopardize their benefits and offers support to help sustain their job, you would find that most consumers will seriously consider work. We have a tough path ahead, but there is little doubt that working holds considerable benefits for all.

## Why Use the Evidence-Based Supported Employment Model?

Hundreds of vocational programs for people with disabilities will label the employment-focused services that they offer as “supported employment.” Be aware that the term supported employment can describe vastly different services from program to program. To understand why the specific model of Evidence-Based Supported Employment, has been chosen and not a more traditional practice of supported employment, it helps to clarify the difference between the two primary philosophies of vocational services.

The leading supported employment model that has been practiced by state vocational rehabilitation workers and by mental health professionals for the last 20-30 years across the country has been commonly called the Train-Place model. That model assumes that mentally ill consumers learn in a slow stepwise fashion and need to be protected from the stress of competitive employment. It often dictates comprehensive testing and assessment to identify obstacles to job “readiness.” Consumers are frequently required to go through comprehensive pre-employment training to learn generic social and work behaviors to prepare them to take on the role of a worker. The Train-Place model led to the development of sheltered workshops, trial work periods, work adjustment jobs, set-aside jobs specifically for people with disabilities, and mental-health agency run businesses.

In earlier times, when people had spent long periods in state institutions, it’s possible that those types of strategies were effective. Today, the outlook for people experiencing serious mental illness is very different. Consumers are focused on being more connected to their community. Like everyone else, they want work that has meaning, matches their interests and may lead to a career. It is ineffective to train people for “hypothetical” jobs instead of real ones. Many consumers using the Train-Place model find themselves in isolated, segregated and overly protective settings that reinforce the stigma of mental illness. Consumers in these instances are too often socialized into “patient-hood” rather than being integrated into the mainstream labor force. A lot of consumers are lost along the way while participating in these services, as they grow tired or bored of the long testing required before they can actually work. Others set their sights lower and lower because of the few challenges offered by artificial work situations.

In contrast, the practice of Evidence-Based Supported Employment, herein referred to as SE, has at its philosophy a Place-Train Model, or most accurately, a “help them search for, and then support them while on the job” model. This model attempts to rapidly help people with severe mental illness to enter and succeed in real world

settings. It helps people to have a balanced work experience in which both the benefits and challenges of work are faced like any one of us who may struggle to find and maintain work, with the added benefit that consumers in SE are offered supports to help them make adaptations to their jobs. Those supports can last for a long time and include a variety of strategies to help consumers maintain jobs that fit them, and at times to find new jobs when an old job is not working well.

Under the philosophy of a Place-Train model, consumers are helped to find a mainstream job in the community for which anyone could apply. It doesn't mean set aside jobs, working at a job that the consumer does not "own," a sheltered-employment position, a temporary job that is meant to train a consumer for the real thing in the future, or doing work that does not begin to connect to a consumer's preferences. These types of jobs are not inspiring or sustaining for most people. Getting paid at least minimum wage, and working in settings that include people who are not disabled is far more motivating for most of our consumers. Future hopes and dreams are a part of work for most people, and why should it be any differently for consumers? SE is intended for even those people in our agencies with the most severe disabilities, because a person's motivation to work can overcome the most significant obstacles that a disability brings. Finally, one of the significant differences between SE and other vocational models is that SE includes the component of ongoing support once a person begins to work.

The evidence behind SE is significant. This is not a new practice. It has been present for more than 20 years, although it has met with expanding popularity in the past 10 years in the US. Many states and counties in the United States have instituted SE implementation efforts to spread the practice. Its value and usefulness can be seen in several different dimensions. For example, it has specific principles that provide clear guidance to the staff of a SE team. Additionally, an impressive body of materials has been developed to help professionals use the practice in a straightforward and faithful way. And finally, it has more than a dozen randomized controlled research trials carried out by different researchers which demonstrate its effectiveness at helping consumers find and sustain jobs. In addition to higher rates of work, the research on consumers receiving SE also reported better control of psychiatric symptoms, higher self-esteem, and more satisfaction with finances and with leisure.

## The Eight Principles of Supported Employment

The practice of SE follows a set of principles that are derived from research completed over the past 25 years. SE practitioners who partner with consumers to help them find and maintain work can feel confident in the effectiveness of the skills and strategies they use in their work when they are guided by these principles. The eight principles of SE are:

### 1. Zero Exclusion

All consumers who want to participate in SE are eligible.

This principle is as simple as it sounds. The only requirements for participation in SE are: a willingness to find competitive employment and having experienced symptoms of a serious mental illness. This is in contrast to most traditional vocational programs that discourage people from pursuing competitive employment because of:

Poor work history	Current substance use	Missed appointments
Acute symptoms	Cognitive problems	Frequent crises
Poor hygiene	Recent hospitalization	Criminal background

There is no dispute that some of the above factors make it more difficult for people to find and keep employment. The reality is, however, that plenty of people with one or more of those concerns successfully find and maintain employment. Too often, practitioners make predictions about who will find a job and who won't. They may base those predictions on "common wisdom" or on their past experiences helping people to find work. The troubling dilemma with predicting is we only have to be wrong once to do a consumer a horrible disservice. Even if only one out of ten consumers defies our predictions, we have risked giving up on someone who had the ability and desire to move closer to employment, and all that may come with it.

The real key to consumers being successful at finding and keeping a job is the motivation that they bring from within themselves. The practitioner is most helpful when they help or support the consumer to find and build upon that inner

motivation that will help him or her overcome obstacles to being employed. It is a mistake to assume that consumers won't do well at work because they may have poor histories of treatment compliance. For some consumers, work is the key to their eventual willingness to participate more actively in mental health services because they see these services as a means to job success.

## 2. SE is Integrated with Mental Health Treatment

CAT therapists work closely with the mental health team to coordinate work plans.

The integration of SE within the overall psychiatric rehabilitation treatment team creates a vehicle for discussing and addressing a number of other issues related to a consumer's employment goals. These issues might include issues of cognitive difficulties that surface when a consumer faces the new demands of returning to work, or an increase in symptoms such as anxiety while beginning a new job. A consumer might need guidance in managing that anxiety or, if severe enough, a change in medication. An integrated treatment team that includes CAT therapists, an employment specialist, a psychiatrist, and nurses that all meet regularly can recognize these issues and help consumers resolve them in a way that does not jeopardize their employment goals. A consumer's ability to meet employment goals acquires a significant boost when the work of SE is integrated within the overall psychiatric and mental health rehabilitation treatment plan.

The lack of an integrated approach can lead to frustrating results when different service providers of the same consumer advocate different messages. For example, the consumer's psychiatrist might discourage work efforts because of a fear of increasing stress, while other providers are actively working with the consumer on a job search. While not all employment specialists and CAT therapists may belong to an integrated treatment team, regular contact with the other mental health providers is important to establish. For example, holding short case conferences at bimonthly or quarterly intervals with all/each treatment provider for a consumer could be the next best attempt to having the consumer benefit from a team approach.

### *A Case Example:*

Luis is a man in his 30's who has considerable motivation to work. He wants a job that involves working on cars. Through his brother, he hears about a job at a car dealer changing oil and installing new tires on customer's cars. He successfully goes through the first job interview and thinks he has a good chance of being hired. He reports that he is nervous because the job requires him to be focused and energetic early in the morning, a time of day that he normally feels sedated and a bit distracted because of the effects of his prescribed Seroquel tablets taken upon waking. He wonders if he should disclose to the employer that he takes medication. He also reports that he needs to buy about \$150 in tools and clothing to start the job. Luis is discouraged at first and leans toward giving up on the job.

The CAT therapist is able to contact Luis' psychiatrist and case manager to talk to them about this situation. The psychiatrist is supportive of Luis' attempts to work and changes the time of day that the Seroquel is taken. The case manager remembers that Luis is still

active with The Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) and contacts his DARS worker and learns that DARS is willing to make a quick decision about buying tools and clothing for Luis. When his DARS counselor discovers that Luis has a good chance of maintaining employment for the next few months, she agrees to the purchases once Luis confirms that he is hired. The case manager also offers to have increased contact with him for the first few weeks on the job.

### 3. Competitive Employment is the Goal

SE helps consumers find and keep community based jobs at competitive pay.

The definition of competitive work includes:

- Regular jobs in the community, both full-time and part-time
- Work setting includes people who are not disabled
- Pays at least minimum wage
- The consumer “owns” the job just like anyone else in a competitive workplace
- Receiving the same pay and benefits of anyone else who does the job

Most people with disabilities would prefer to work in community settings at a job that belongs to them. The status of having a “regular” job is highly valued. Competitive work can usually be obtained directly without the need to first participate in training programs, sheltered workshops, or volunteering. The need to be given meaningful work instead of the make-busy tasks of traditional vocational programs for the disabled has discouraged too many consumers from discovering the many ways that work can add purpose to their lives. When people are treated as capable, they often surprise everyone and live up to expectations.

Occasionally people participating in a CAT program may only respond to a more step-wise movement toward competitive work. Their lack of confidence, fears toward work, low levels of motivation, or poor current cognitive abilities may require that intermediary steps toward competitive work help move them to a future of a regular job. The decision to not focus the job search on competitive employment should be considered very carefully to ensure that the consumers are not underestimating their current work potential, or that others are not being overly protective of them. This decision should only be reached with clear, strong consumer preference, and after consultation with others on the treatment team.

### 4. Good Benefits Counseling is Readily Accessible

Benefits-planning motivates consumers to work. It provides guidance to make informed decisions about balancing work income and keeping eligible for benefits.

The fear of losing benefits is a critical barrier in pursuing work and the reason many consumers decide not to work. The need to understand how employment will affect Social Security payments, Medicaid, and other benefits is often the first step for a consumer to decide whether to and how much to work. At times, family members also

need to be involved in this process because they may have considerable influence on the consumer's decisions about work. Only highly accurate and timely benefit information provided by a benefits expert will suffice. Nothing will turn a consumer away from work more than the consequences of making poor decisions based on faulty information provided by others. A good benefits counselor needs to constantly update his or her own knowledge on benefits in order to provide solid advice.

Good benefits counseling shouldn't disappear once the consumer is ready to work. Clear information about how to report his or her income, deal with increase in hours, or decide whether or not to take a raise in pay may all require contact with a benefits specialist. (Discussion about obtaining good benefits counseling services will be discussed further in this manual.)

## 5. Rapid Job Search

The consumer is looking for work early in the process of Supported Employment.

A rule of thumb of SE is to work with the consumer to start contacting employers within a month of first meeting with the employment specialist. A few weeks are often all that is needed for the consumer and employment specialist to gain information about the consumer's job preferences, the consumer's past work experiences, and to explore ideas about a plan to find employment. Once that information is collected into a vocational profile (see Appendix III), and an employment plan is agreed upon, the usual next steps are to initiate the process of identifying likely work sites, contacting employers and applying for jobs.

The past practice in which employment programs required extensive vocational testing and long training periods to develop "readiness" to work often led consumers to give up in discouragement, or to settle for rote tasks in a protective environment such as sheltered workshops or mental health agency run businesses. A more effective strategy is to use the consumer's motivation that led him or her to want SE services to find work as quickly as possible. The consumer's motivation to keep the job then often becomes the driving force to adapt his or her behavior to the needs of the job.

## 6. Follow-Up Supports are Encouraged to Maintain Jobs

The employment specialist stays involved for as long as needed.

Once a consumer finds a job, the SE work doesn't stop. Starting and maintaining a new job is often difficult for anyone, especially if he or she hasn't worked for a while. Some people require frequent contact with their CAT specialist that focuses on work issues directly before and after starting a new job. Issues such as finding transportation, obtaining work clothes, worrying about possible changes to their benefits, and generally coping with the anxiety of a new situation are common. Once stability is reached in the new position, the supports might consist of the CAT specialist having occasional contact with the employer, providing money management skills training, or helping the consumer to cope with job performance appraisals. Above all, follow-up

supports should be individualized to the specific demands and strengths of the consumer.

The supports should last as long as needed, although other members of the consumer's treatment team such as the case manager might agree to provide the bulk of that support once the person's job performance has been stable for several months. The SE model also encourages the use of natural supports in the participants' lives to seek assistance such as rides to work, developing helpful relationships with co-workers, and leaning on friends and family for emotional support. The amount of support a person gets to help him or her maintain a job is critical to his or her success on a job.

## 7. Consumer Preferences are Key

Job finding is based on the consumer's individual preferences, strengths, and work experiences.

This principle is the guiding light for work done helping consumers find and keep jobs. Most people discover that they are more likely to be motivated doing a job if the work they do is interesting to them, and when it matches the types of work environments and job locations that suit them. Traditional vocational services too often have relied on knowing what specific jobs are available in the consumer's area, and then trying to steer their consumers to apply for those jobs. While that might be a good solution for someone who desires any job for the sake of earning money, it frequently leads most people to become discouraged and unhappy with their employment.

The challenge for the CAT therapist is to be patient, persistent and willing to help the consumer come to specific decisions about preferred types or work, specific work environments, and number of hours to work each week that will help lead to a good job match. The trick to this principle is to learn as much as one can about the preferences that motivate and inspire a consumer, to find out what things the consumer has learned from past job experiences, and to identify which jobs match the consumer's strengths. It is also critical to work with the consumer to make informed decisions about the issues of disclosure of his or her mental illness to employers. This is not a simple yes or no decision for consumers, but one demanding that a number of choices be made about whom to disclose to, how much to disclose, and when to disclose. Disclosure is such a critical subject that it will be discussed more at depth later in this section on SE.

## 8. Build Relationships with Employers

Help people find jobs by understanding the needs and preferences of employers

Helping people find work may require more than looking through want ads in newspapers or searching online. While people do find work through those activities, most jobs are filled through word of mouth from acquaintances, or by developing relationships with potential employers. Establishing relationships with employers is not an easy process. It involves identifying businesses that appear to be a good match with the consumer with whom you are working. Depending on the consumer's ability to approach employers, and depending on his/her willingness to allow you talk to employers for him or her, determines whether the focus of the job search involves

teaching and practicing specific skills with the consumer to contact employers on his or her own, or whether the CAT therapist needs to take a more active role in contacting employers. In some instances, the therapist's role consists of negotiating a deal between a job seeker and employer that pleases both of them at the same time, and then doing what it takes to make that deal work. This topic of job developing in SE will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

## Disclosure

To disclose or not to disclose? At some point in an interaction with an employer, either during the application process or after hire, consumers are often faced with the dilemma of whether or not to reveal some information about their mental health status. A consumer might worry about needing time off for medical appointments, wonder if certain job tasks could be modified due to heightened anxiety, or recognize the need for a quieter desk location to concentrate. These situations can arise at any point during the process of looking for and starting a job. All of a sudden the consumer feels panic as he or she recognizes the need to instantly make a decision about disclosure in the middle of a critical time in the employment process. For this reason, the consumer and CAT therapist need to explore the decision about disclosure very early on during their discussions about looking for work.

The decision about disclosure often involves many possible decisions depending on a particular job's demands on the consumer, on each separate situation with an employer, with a supervisor, and even with individual co-workers. Those decisions might involve what to tell, how much to tell, how early to tell, and who to tell. Sometimes the decision involves a gamble about whether the consumer predicts the potential employer will suspect that they experience mental health symptoms, or a prediction about whether the consumer believes that his or her symptoms will become a concern on the job. It is the consumer's right to make his or her own disclosure decisions, but most consumers would benefit from an ongoing thoughtful process of shared decision making with the CAT therapist in order to make informed choices about disclosure.

By law, a consumer does not have to disclose that he or she is living with a mental illness. The consumer is in control of how much information to give. This is valuable information given 60-75% of employers are unwilling to employ persons with mental illness, depending on the severity and stigma of the illness. This is part of the disadvantage of disclosure where a consumer may find a job opportunity where disclosure invites stigma and creates lost opportunities. The advantage of disclosure, however, is that it allows the CAT therapist to communicate with employers on behalf of the consumer. It also means that the consumer will not have to feel deceitful. There are many avenues for the CAT therapist to explore with a consumer when it comes to disclosure, but a good rule is to disclose only what is necessary to do the job.

Some information for the CAT therapist to consider when discussing disclosure with a consumer relate to the consumer's personal situation. For example, how well can the consumer handle stigma? What is the consumer's sense of pride or self esteem; is he or she able to handle being rejected because of his or her illness? Is his or her employment record solid enough to show potential employers the ability to do the job despite living

with a mental illness? A CAT therapist needs to have this conversation with a consumer and explore how he or she would like to proceed.

Other disclosure considerations have to do with the employer situation. Questions for the CAT therapist to consider include the type and size of the business. Sometimes a locally owned small business in which the owners are involved in a mental health advocacy organization, such as NAMI, might indicate a place of possible employment where a consumer can be more comfortable disclosing. Look for places where people with disabilities are being employed, such as Walgreens, as possible places of employment. In addition, there are other considerations for the CAT therapist to bring up with a consumer such as the consumer's particular skills in relation to the job. Sometimes the skill set a consumer possesses is rather unique and well suited to a specific job, allowing the consumer more freedom to disclose. If a consumer does choose to disclose, there are different levels to be considered.

There are generally four levels of disclosure. There is a general level of disclosure that is reflected in the statement – “I have a medical condition.” On this level of disclosure there is no indication of psychiatric issues. The next level of disclosure is just a little more specific without mentioning any sort of diagnosis – “I have some difficulty with stress,” or “crowds seem to bother me.” The third level is when mental illness is explicitly mentioned – “I have a psychiatric disorder.” At this level of disclosure the consumer faces the possibility of stigma, of running into ignorance about mental illness and perhaps jeopardizing their chances of landing the job due to this ignorance. The fourth level is when a specific diagnosis is given – “I have schizoaffective disorder.”

The CAT therapist can help the consumer strategize about which level of disclosure to employ in speaking with potential employers. Role playing with the consumer can be a helpful way to practice different techniques of disclosure. If a consumer chooses to disclose, he or she may find it helpful to provide some context of his or her mental illness and how it may realistically affect his or her ability to perform his or her job duties. For example, a consumer may add, “Although I do have a diagnosis, it does not define who I am. I am a hard worker, carry myself professionally, and feel confident this job is a great fit for me.” Another possibility is, “I realize that you may have some concerns about that diagnosis, which is understandable. However, I want to assure you that I will be giving my all to this job and I think it will be a great fit.” When possible, consumers should know the laws protecting people with disabilities (including mental illness) from employment discrimination. The following websites are helpful: <http://www.disabilityrightstx.org/resources/protection-and-civil-rights>  
[http://governor.state.tx.us/disabilities/resources/employment\\_protections/](http://governor.state.tx.us/disabilities/resources/employment_protections/).

## Developing a Job Profile

One of the first tasks for the CAT therapist in helping a consumer reach his or her employment goal is to develop an accurate assessment of the consumer's work history and interests. This particular assessment is referred to as a job profile and the knowledge gained from this profile is often crucial to helping a consumer find a good job match.

When compiling a job profile, a CAT therapist needs to avoid any extended assessment period that might slow down the job search. This means that the CAT therapist needs to create the job profile as quickly as possible in order to begin the job search but at the same time realize this type of assessment is often an ongoing process. As the CAT therapist and the consumer work together on the job search, information relevant to the job search might emerge that needs to be noted in the job profile in order to help produce a successful outcome.

Attached in Appendix III is a Job Profile Checklist. This checklist can help a CAT therapist gather relevant information in a quick and organized manner while giving the CAT therapist a better understanding of the skills and experiences a consumer can bring to the job search. The Job Profile Checklist can also highlight any unusual skills or experiences that might be in need of further exploration by the CAT therapist and consumer.

## Job Development

The work of job development, a key component of successful SE, depends significantly on whether an SE specialist is available to the CAT team. An SE Specialist typically spends a substantial amount of time in the area of job development (roughly 50%). However, if there is no dedicated SE Specialist on the team, the work of job development is realistically understood as reduced in scope. Still, this important component of successful SE can still be undertaken with a change in emphasis. Three areas to focus for the CAT therapist are: 1) developing the consumer's network of contacts, 2) managing employer perceptions and 3) building social skills.

When SE is an additional duty of the CAT therapist, it is likely necessary to shift from developing an employment specialist's network to developing the consumer's network. While the CAT therapist can use what little time he or she has to develop business networks of his or her own, it makes more sense to help consumers develop their own business networks by helping them explore their connections to employment through family, friends, and past employers. People tend to have more connections than they think and consumers with psychiatric disabilities are no different. The CAT therapist can help the consumer think through all of his or her connections in the community to find someone who can give him or her an interview or open a door for him or her as a reference. Who you know still goes a long way in securing employment in our society.

While developing the consumer's network is the key strategy, a CAT therapist also needs to be aware of available resources in the community, including:

- **Craigslist.** There are a number of job listing sites and organizations, but currently Craigslist.org seems to be the most effective and timely. A therapist may introduce Craigslist to a consumer as a viable source for current job postings.
- **Employment Network (EN).** Your local EN is often your best source for reliable benefits information. An EN is an entity that contracts with the Social Security Administration to either provide or coordinate the delivery of vocational services to SSN beneficiaries. Their goal is to help to increase opportunities for people with disabilities to pursue meaningful careers and earn income in their communities. A list of available Texas Employment Networks can be found at the following website: <http://www.chooseworkttw.net/resource/jsp/SearchByStateAction.jsp#search-results>
- **Consumer Run Organizations (CROs).** CROs are run by and for mental health consumers. A consumer-run clubhouse or drop-in center, for example, would have a

staff, director and voting board comprised of mostly consumers. These programs strive to respect the inherent worth and dignity of each individual. They focus on individual empowerment and personal choice in working towards the management of symptoms and the hope of recovery. A directory of consumer run organizations can be found at the National Empowerment Center website: <http://www.power2u.org/consumerrun-statewide.html>

- **Texas Workforce Commission (TWC).** TWC is the state agency charged with overseeing and providing workforce development services to employers and job seekers. They provide support services including child care for select populations participating in workforce training and administer the unemployment benefits and tax programs. For job seekers, the TWC can offer career development information, job search resources, training programs and, unemployment benefits. You can learn more about TWC at <http://www.twc.state.tx.us/>.

A CAT therapist can also spend time working with a consumer in the area of managing employer perceptions. The presence of a trustworthy, consistent SE specialist in the community generally has the effect of changing employers' minds about mental illness and opens the door for more consumers to find work. While the CAT therapist might not have the time to play that role, the CAT therapist can help consumers manage the perceptions of those who come into their network. For example, the CAT therapist can help a consumer be appropriately dressed, groomed and prepared for the meeting which may address preconceived notions of what mental illness looks and sounds like. Someone with severe mental illness who arrives to an interview (and for work) dressed suitably, is conversational, and works diligently goes a long way in addressing the stigma of mental illness. Many people receiving CAT services see themselves as survivors, having persevered through a difficult journey and come out on top. A CAT therapist should help foster hope and acknowledge the difficulties and risks associated with searching for employment.

Another area a CAT therapist can work on with a consumer is socialization. A consumer who is comfortable in social situations can also have the effect of changing employer perceptions regarding mental illness, which in turn, expands the work of job development. A significant number of consumers find themselves isolated as a result of their illness and lose some of their social skills. This loss of social skills hinders the ability to return to work and sometimes reinforces the stigma surrounding mental illness. Helping a consumer grow his or her social skills, perhaps through engaging a clubhouse or a consumer operated support group, is often crucial to finding employment as well as changing the perceptions of potential employers.

## Good Resume and Interviewing Skills

The purpose of the resume is to get an interview and the purpose of the interview is to land the job. A CAT therapist can help a consumer develop good habits in both areas, habits that are crucial to meeting the goals of the resume and interview. While producing a resume or preparing for an interview can be an overwhelming experience for some consumers, a CAT therapist can help deconstruct that experience by pointing out a few elements that are a part of every good resume or interview.

There is no magic to a good resume, just a few solid elements that can go a long way towards securing an interview. Elements of a good resume are:

Keep the resume to one page.

Strengths, skills, and work desired need to be at the top of the page.

If there are gaps in employment history, expressing your time of service in terms of years and not months (ex., 2007 – 2011 rather than 9/07 – 4/11) can help minimize the initial attention given to gaps in work history.

**DO NOT** put medical or background issues on the resume.

In the interest of keeping the resume to one page in length, do not list your references on the resume. Instead put “references available on request.”

With each job listing, list the name of the company, the position held, and a brief (1-3 lines) summary of work performed. Keep it short and relevant!

In this day and age of online applications, it is imperative that the CAT therapist encourage the consumer, after submitting the online application, to introduce himself/herself to the company. Generally this means finding the person responsible for filling the position, the consumer making a brief introduction to the manager (“Hi! I am \_\_\_\_ and I just wanted you to know that I have applied for the position. I hope you will consider me.”), dropping off a hard copy of the resume, and then leaving. With online applications becoming the norm, this allows the person responsible for hiring to put a name and face together which has proven to be advantageous for our consumers when it comes to getting interviews.

When it comes to preparing for an interview, it is often helpful for the CAT therapist to put the consumer through a trial or mock interview. It is recommended that the CAT therapist engage another person who is preferably not known to the consumer to play the role of the interviewer. The interviewer takes the consumer through a mock interview (sample questions are supplied in Appendix II) while the CAT therapist offers feedback. Good interview skills may include:

Good, consistent eye contact by the consumer.
Physical engagement (i.e. leaning forward to show interest, relaxed shoulders).
A smile! Even when anxious or nervous, a smiling interviewee tends to get a second look.
Knowledge of strengths and how to articulate them. One good practice to spend a few minutes before the actual interview to review his/her strengths.
Competence to handle questions of employment gaps, background issues, and medical issues in a way that the consumer is comfortable with while presenting a positive picture.
Dress and physical appearance. The CAT therapist can help review acceptable attire and physical appearance.
Having a list of questions prepared for the interviewer. The CAT therapist can help the consumer show interest in the job by doing some homework on the company and being prepared to ask some relevant questions concerning the job.
A pre-interview routine. The CAT therapist can help the consumer find the interview location before the interview. Arriving 15 minutes early is always recommended. Help manage pre-interview anxiety by focusing on the strengths the consumer brings to the interview and/or breathing exercises.
Answer the questions! The CAT therapist can help the consumer stay focused during the interview by working on answering the questions being asked during the mock interview.

A successful job hunt often hinges on the interview between the consumer and the prospective employer. Practicing these skills with the consumer is crucial to ensuring a successful interview.

## Criminal Background

A number of the consumers we work with have criminal background issues that need to be discussed when a CAT therapist is helping them find work. Some states, such as Texas, make it difficult for people with felonies on their record to obtain employment. Not impossible, but difficult. There are some tactics that a CAT therapist can employ to help a consumer deal with background issues. One rule is do NOT list the felony on the resume. This might seem obvious, but a number of resumes have included criminal histories with poor outcomes. A consumer needs to be open and honest about convictions when asked, but does not need to list it on the resume. When the convictions are going to be discussed with a potential employer, a CAT therapist can remind the consumer of the importance of showing remorse for past behavior and to assure the potential employer of a changed perspective or different current circumstances.

The first job after a conviction is often crucial to successful employment beyond incarceration and probation since the more employment a consumer has after a conviction, the less concern regarding a consumer's behavior on the job. A CAT therapist can help a consumer focus on getting a job, even if not the most desired, after a conviction with the purpose of reducing employer concern about criminal behavior. A CAT therapist can also help the consumer obtain a criminal record identical to the one an employer might receive, which can assist in decision making about which job to pursue.

Another source of help for the consumer who has a criminal background and seeking employment is the CAT therapist's reputation and relationship with businesses in the community. If the CAT therapist has a productive relationship with a particular business, possibly having successfully helped consumers obtain jobs there in the past, the CAT therapist might find the employer more willing to consider hiring a consumer with a criminal background. Sometimes in the course of doing the job, a CAT therapist discovers people in the community who have had family members with mental illness and criminal background issues and can help open the door for a consumer with similar issues. This type of resource can be invaluable for the CAT therapist in helping consumers find employment.

## Utilizing Tools of Motivation

For a number of consumers who express a desire to work or volunteer, the path to reaching these goals can appear overwhelming and filled with doubt and anxiety. Often, motivation for employment goals fades due to this fear. Below are a number of tools that can be utilized by the CAT therapist and consumer to help a consumer stay motivated in his or her desire for work.

### 1. Peer Support

Sherry Mead, a leading authority on peer support, writes that, “Peer support occurs when people provide knowledge, experience, emotional, social or practical help to each other.” ([Sherry Mead, David Hilton, Laurie Curtis, "Peer Support: A Theoretical Perspective."](#)) Peer support offers a variety of benefits for consumers including social support, providing consumers with positive psychosocial interactions that help decrease isolation and build self-confidence. A peer provides an experiential knowledge that is often missing when working with clinical staff; a unique, pragmatic knowledge of someone who has “been there, done that” contributes to improving a consumer’s quality of life.

A Supported Employment peer is someone who can offer the benefits listed above and who has also found meaningful work, whether it be employment or volunteer work. When a consumer expresses interest in going to work it is often advantageous for the consumer to develop a relationship with other consumers trained in peer support for the social support and experiential knowledge as well as the hope and determination a peer supporter brings. A CAT therapist needs to be aware of the peer support programs available in the area and how to help a consumer get involved in peer support programs. Some examples are The International Center for Clubhouse Development (ICCD) Clubhouses, consumer-run organizations that can be found through the community mental health center or NAMI, and dual diagnosis recovery programs. If the consumer is a veteran, then the VA becomes an option as a number of veteran mental health peer organizations are developing all over the country who are associated with the VA. It is in the interest of the CAT therapist seeking to help a consumer return to work to be aware of these organizations, how to contact them, and how well they have helped consumers in the area.

### 2. The Recovery Model

Knowledge of the Recovery Model, which is the basis for SE, has been described by SAMSHA as having the following components –

<b>Self-Direction</b> - The individual chooses his or her own path to recovery and to the life goals which he or she has set for himself or herself.
<b>Individualized and Person-Centered</b> - Everyone has his or her own unique recovery/journey based on his or her culture, experiences, strengths, preferences, and needs.
<b>Empowerment</b> - An individual should have a range of options to choose from and the opportunity to be in control of his or her life and his or her destiny.
<b>Holistic</b> - Recovery encompasses the whole person including, mind, body, spirit, and community and services should support these needs.
<b>Non-Linear</b> - Recovery is not a step-by-step process but a journey with constant growth, occasional setbacks, and learning from experience
<b>Strengths-Based</b> - Emphasizes the many capacities, resiliencies, talents and coping-abilities that individuals have as well as the many roles they play in life including partner, caregiver, friend, student, employee, etc.
<b>Peer Support</b> - Consumers help consumers through mutual support creating relationships, community, and valued roles.
<b>Respect</b> - Accepting and appreciating consumers, protecting their rights and working to fight discrimination and stigma all enhance respect
<b>Responsibility</b> - Consumers are responsible for their own self-care and journeys of recovery
<b>Hope</b> - The message of hope is that people can and do overcome the barriers and obstacles that confront them.

A CAT therapist can encourage the consumer to become aware of the recovery model and how it relates to the CAT therapist/consumer relationship as well as how this understanding of mental illness can be motivating for someone who is seeking employment.

### 3. Spirituality

Spirituality exists whenever we struggle with the issue of how our lives exist within the greater scheme of things. Everyone needs meaning and purpose in his or her life; it is what motivates us to seek a better life. Creating an ongoing conversation with a consumer about what he or she loves, what gives him or her hope, and his or her sense of purpose in life can help a consumer grow in his or her motivation for work and a more independent life. It is helpful that a CAT therapist not dismiss a consumer when he or she talks about hope and meaning, but to help him or her explore these areas as a source of strength. It is also unhelpful for a CAT therapist to try and convert a consumer one way or another.

A CAT therapist can help a consumer locate and engage a spiritual community that seems compatible with his or her understanding of the world. This not only helps a consumer strengthen his or her spiritual life but also helps to decrease the effects of isolation by engaging in a community of people of whom he or she can be a part. Engagement in a spiritual community, especially one that is loving and hopeful, can be a powerful antidote to the loneliness and isolation often inflicted upon a person experiencing mental illness.

## Barriers and Solutions in Supported Employment Implementation

The addition of the supported employment intervention to an already existing CAT program does not come without some obstacles. One such barrier could be the lack of a dedicated SE specialist. Rather, in this model the CAT therapist is taking on additional responsibilities on top of an already full workload. Executing SE effectively can be quite time intensive. It is possible that the CAT therapist will struggle to find adequate time to help develop resumes, complete applications, and do the work of job development while also fulfilling normal CAT duties. To cut down on the time intensity, we have developed a generic job application (Appendix I) the consumer can complete (possibly as homework) and transfer information to the actual job applications. The job profile checklist (Appendix III) can also be a timesaver. These tools result in a reduction in the amount of time needed to work with the consumer. Another solution may be reducing the caseload for each CAT therapist. While a normal full time CAT caseload ranges from 15-18, a CAT + SE caseload may range from 10-15, depending on how many consumers are actively pursuing work at one time.

Another barrier in this particular population is the level of consumer isolation. The basic social skills necessary for many jobs may be reduced in consumers due to a duration of time in a nursing facility or physical and/or mental illness. When someone has been in a nursing home for an extended length of time he or she may have become accustomed to being told what to do next or have become socially isolated. The ability to initiate social contact and interact with some degree of confidence becomes damaged. Going from this type of isolation to working with a group of people in a grocery store becomes frightening, regardless of how much the consumer desires work. To overcome social isolation, the CAT therapist can encourage participation at clubhouses or community organizations. As consumers begin to participate in organizations such as these, a vast improvement can be seen in social integration and confidence. The CAT therapist can also practice social skills via role play, in-vivo or with a mock interview (Appendix II).

A third barrier to effective implementation of supported employment within an MFP-BH population includes access; access to transportation, access to the internet, and access to treating medical staff. Consumers may express concern about their ability to get to and from work. Solutions to transportation difficulties vary from person to person. Differing levels of physical disability make some modes of transportation impossible. Also, living in remote areas with no public transportation systems makes getting to and from work problematic. For those with access to the bus line, CAT therapists can help consumers learn to use the bus; including traveling with them to be

certain they are knowledgeable and comfortable with the route. To resolve access to the internet, the CAT team can work to find nearby libraries and other places with free internet access. You may also utilize flash drives to transfer files.

Access to treating medical staff may also be a barrier. While the CAT therapists work closely with the consumer's HMO, the consumers each see his or her own private physician, resulting in everyone seeing different doctors. This is not a closed system where the case manager has access to the physician or treatment team at the clinic. If medications need to be adjusted or symptoms better managed, the consumer may benefit from preparation for an upcoming visit (i.e. writing down a list of questions/concerns) or the CAT therapist may accompany the consumer to the visit if preferred.

## Summary

While some barriers are challenging or discouraging, we know that a significant number of consumers want to work. This question of desire to work is not the first topic that comes to mind for a CAT therapist when intervening during the first year post nursing home discharge. The CAT team focuses on more basic needs such as hygiene, transportation to doctor's appointments, nutrition, etc... Asking the consumer if he or she desires to work needs to be a more prominent question addressed. The CAT and Supported Employment models complement each other so it is not necessary to devote time to only CAT or SE. It is possible to integrate the two, although some accommodations to both programs are needed to offer the best and most comprehensive care to help the consumer fulfill their goal of working. While the efforts can be difficult for both you and the consumer, the payoff is well worth it. Our team wishes you luck in your efforts to help make a difference in peoples' lives!

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# APPENDICES

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- I. SAMPLE JOB APPLICATION
- II. MOCK INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
- III. JOB PROFILE CHECKLIST

Appendix I

**MFP-BH Sample Application Information**

Applicant Name \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

Current Address:

Number and street \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State & Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Date of birth \_\_\_\_\_

Social Security # \_\_\_\_\_

**Employment Positions**

**Are you applying for:**

- Temporary work – such as summer or holiday work?  Y or  N
- Regular part-time work?  Y or  N
- Regular full-time work?  Y or  N

What days and hours are you available for work? \_\_\_\_\_

If applying for temporary work, when will you be available?

\_\_\_\_\_

If hired, on what date can you start working? \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_

Can you work on the weekends?  Y or  N

Can you work evenings?  Y or  N

Are you available to work overtime?  Y or  N

**Personal Information:**

If hired, would you have transportation to/from work?  Y or  N

If hired, would you be able to present evidence of your U.S. citizenship or proof of your legal right to work in the United States?  Y or  N

If hired, are you willing to submit to and pass a controlled substance test?  Y or  N

Are you able to perform the essential functions of the job for which you are applying, either with / without reasonable accommodation?  Y or  N

If no, describe the functions that cannot be performed

\_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever been convicted of a criminal offense (felony or misdemeanor)?  Y or  N

If yes, please describe the crime - state nature of the crime(s), when and where convicted and disposition of the case. \_\_\_\_\_

### **Education, Training and Experience**

#### **High School :**

School name: \_\_\_\_\_

School address: \_\_\_\_\_

School city, state, zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of years completed: \_\_\_\_\_

Did you graduate?  Y or  N

Degree / diploma earned: \_\_\_\_\_

#### **College / University:**

School name: \_\_\_\_\_

School address: \_\_\_\_\_

School city, state, zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of years completed: \_\_\_\_\_

Did you graduate?  Y or  N

Degree / diploma earned: \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Vocational School:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, state, zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of years completed: \_\_\_\_\_

Did you graduate?  Y or  N

Degree / diploma? : \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Military:**

Branch: \_\_\_\_\_

Rank in Military: \_\_\_\_\_

Total Years of Service: \_\_\_\_\_

Skills/duties: \_\_\_\_\_

Related details: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have any other experience, training, qualifications, or skills which you feel should be brought to our attention, in the case that they make you especially suited for working with us?  
[ ] Y or [ ] N

If yes, please explain

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### Employment History

Are you currently employed? [ ] Y or [ ] N

If you are currently employed, may we contact your current employer? [ ] Y or [ ] N

Below, please describe past and present employment positions.

Name of Employer: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
Business Type: [ \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City, state, zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Length of Employment (Include Dates): \_\_\_\_\_  
Position & Duties: \_\_\_\_\_  
Reason for Leaving: \_\_\_\_\_  
May we contact this employer for references? [ ] Y or [ ] N

Name of Employer: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
Business Type: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City, state, zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Length of Employment (Include Dates): \_\_\_\_\_  
Position & Duties: \_\_\_\_\_  
Reason for Leaving: \_\_\_\_\_  
May we contact this employer for references? [ ] Y or [ ] N

Name of Employer: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
Business Type: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City, state, zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Length of Employment (Include Dates): \_\_\_\_\_  
Position & Duties: \_\_\_\_\_  
Reason for Leaving: \_\_\_\_\_  
May we contact this employer for references? [ ] Y or [ ] N

**References**

List below three persons who have knowledge of your work performance.

Name - First, Last: \_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City, state, zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_  
Number of Years Acquainted: \_\_\_\_\_

Name - First, Last: \_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City, state, zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_  
Number of Years Acquainted: \_\_\_\_\_

Name - First, Last: \_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City, state, zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_  
Number of Years Acquainted: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix II

### **Mock Interview Questions**

This appendix is to assist the consumer in preparing for an interview.

- Tell me about yourself. (Talk about disclosure with your client)
- What are your strengths?
- What are your weaknesses? (Remember that “none” is not an answer)
- How do you define “being on time?”
- Describe a situation in which you were asked to do something wrong. What did you do?
- How would you describe yourself?
- Describe a time when you handles a stressful situation successfully.
- Tell me about a time when you solved a problem.
- Give me an example where you et and achieved a goal.
- How do you resolve conflict?
- Describe a time when you had to follow a policy you didn’t agree with.
- Describe a time when you had to prioritize because you had too many things to do.
- Describe a time when you had to make a quick decision.
- Describe a time when you successfully dealt with someone you didn’t like (or vice versa).
- What courses in school did you like/dislike?
- How do you count back change?
- Give an example of a time you showed initiative.
- Describe a recent situation where you dealt with an upset customer or coworker.
- Tell me about your worse / best boss.
- Describe a situation where you planned ahead to avoid potential problems.
- Why did you leave your last position? (Again, walk through disclosure options)
- Why do you want to work for our company?
- How can you contribute to our goals?
- Explain your qualifications for this position.
- Where do you want to be in five years?
- How would your parents/teachers/former employers describe you?

- Why should we hire you over other people?
- What do you do best? (Be confident!)
- Tell me about your first/most recent paying job.

**Off the Wall:** (often the interviewer wants to know how you think by asking questions such as these. When asked a question such as one of these questions, slow down and walk through your thinking process aloud. *All of these questions have been asked before in real interviews.*)

- If you were an animal, what would you be and why?
- What is your strategy at table tennis?
- What did you play with as a child?
- How would you rate your life on a scale of 1 to 10?

**Appendix III**

**Job Profile Checklist**

This appendix is to assist the consumer in organizing his/her thoughts concerning employment goals.

Client name \_\_\_\_\_

1) List short term work goals in client's own words.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2) Client preferences

- a. Type of work \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Work setting \_\_\_\_\_
- c. Hours \_\_\_\_\_
- d. Income needed \_\_\_\_\_

3) Client's dream for a career goal

\_\_\_\_\_

4) Work background

- a. Education \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Work history \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- c. Military history \_\_\_\_\_
- d. Reasons for leaving jobs \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- e. Positive experiences \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- f. Problems at work \_\_\_\_\_

5) Work skills

- a. Vocational skills \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- b. Interviewing skills \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- c. Interests \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- d. Work habits
  - i. Attendance \_\_\_\_\_
  - ii. Dependability \_\_\_\_\_

iii. Stress tolerance \_\_\_\_\_

6) Other factors

a. Transportation \_\_\_\_\_

b. Natural supports \_\_\_\_\_

c. Substance use \_\_\_\_\_

d. Criminal background \_\_\_\_\_

e. Preference for disclosure of illness \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**NOTES**

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