

## CHAPTER 3

### Section 3.3.1. Evidence Based Supported Employment Overview

There cannot be a genuine conversation about personal recovery for individuals with disabilities without including meaningful employment. William L. Gorman, in a discussion paper for the Center for Disabilities and Development University of Iowa, summarizes the critical financial situation for individuals with disabilities:

*Individuals with disabilities are poor (63% are unemployed) and even when employed, individuals with disabilities earn substantially less than their non-disabled peers (roughly 72% to the dollar). Public assistance represents 59% of the total income of individuals with significant disabilities vs. only 8% of the total income of people who have no disability. One of every three adults with disabilities lives in very low-income households as opposed to one of every eight non-disabled adults.*

*Public assistance is tied to remaining poor. Asset limits generally force individuals with disabilities on government assistance to choose between maintaining health insurance and being employed. People with disabilities have fewer bank accounts, lower graduation rates and are less likely to own their own home or other financial assets than persons without disabilities. Those with disabilities who have been on government assistance relative to their disability have been conditioned to be cautious of overstepping their income limits or asset limits, because if they do, they will most likely be cut off from health care, housing, employment or supportive living assistance. The reality is a child with significant disabilities born in the United States today has little chance of gaining access to assets and escaping poverty, despite advances in health care and technology. (July 2009)*

**Section 3.3.2** outlines the national discussion for offering supported employment as a means to lift a person out of poverty and as a way to establish a sense of personal worth for individuals with disabilities. William Gorman's July 2009 article is provided where he outlines critical changes that need to be made in our public assistance rules. He provides numerous training opportunities and websites to help individuals and families address the challenges of the public system. The next eleven documents are components of the "Tool Kit" for evidence based supported employment provided by the federal agency, Substance Abuse and Mental Illness Services Administration (SAMHSA). The tool kit is based on research with individuals living with serious mental illness. However, the principles are being generalized for individuals with disabilities, whether physical, intellectual, mental health, or some combination of the three. The first eight articles are arranged from the overview of the evidence that employment matters and the steps to implement the evidence based practice (EBP) of supported employment. The next three documents focus on the fidelity of the implementation, and the last document is a simple summary of the core principles of the model.

**Section 3.3.3** provides clinicians, consumers and family members with materials to start the discussion about meaningful activity and work. The Michigan model for developing a vocational profile is listed once the conversation has moved to specific vocational goals. There is a helpful PowerPoint that can assist the individual as to what information and when to share about their disability with a prospective or current employer. The section concludes with a list of websites that are more technical in nature about accessing federal programs related to employment and disability benefits.