

Seven Core Principles

Supported Employment (SE) is the evidence-based practice that helps people with mental illness find competitive jobs in their local communities with rapid job-search and placement services.

There are seven core principles that make the SE model different from traditional vocational programs. The principles are briefly described below. Research has demonstrated that these principles produce positive consumer outcomes and improved program and service-system outcomes.

1 ZERO EXCLUSION POLICY

All consumers who want to work are eligible for help, even if they

- Have experienced job loss in the past;
- Lose a job(s) while enrolled in SE;
- Are still experiencing symptoms of mental illness;
- Are still using alcohol or other drugs*;
- Have problems with transportation;
- Do not know how to fill out an application;
- Do not know how to talk to an employer;
- Do not have previous training;
- Are afraid they might not learn the job fast enough; or
- Are afraid they might not fit in with others.

**The use of alcohol and other drugs may limit consumer job choices because many employers test for drug use. If consumers can pass a drug test, their choices of jobs typically increase.*

2 CONSUMER PREFERENCES ARE IMPORTANT

The mental health case manager and supported-employment specialist help each consumer identify his or her personal strengths, skills, and interests. These are excellent motivators. Consumers who find jobs that they want experience a higher level of satisfaction and tend to keep their jobs longer. The case manager and employment specialist are trained to give as much or as little help as the consumer wants.

3 RAPID JOB SEARCH

Once a consumer expresses the desire to work, his or her case manager will contact the employment specialist. In two to three weeks, the specialist may be helping the consumer research jobs, fill out applications, and interview with potential employers. The case manager will also contact a benefits counselor. Research shows that fewer people obtain employment when their job search is delayed. The SE service model does not require consumers to complete lengthy pre-employment assessment, training, and workshops.

4 A COMPETITIVE JOB IS THE GOAL

The employment specialist is committed to helping each consumer find a regular part-time or full-time job in the community that pays minimum wage or more. A regular job is a competitive job that anyone in the community can apply for. The SE model only endorses competitive jobs for several reasons:

- Consumers like competitive jobs more than they like sheltered work.
- Competitive jobs reduce stigma by enabling consumers to work side-by-side with people who may not be experiencing mental disabilities.
- Competitive jobs inspire self-esteem.
- Consumers want to live in the mainstream of life.

5 EMPLOYMENT IS INTEGRATED WITH MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Employment specialists are included in service-team meetings, and they work closely with case managers, psychiatrists, and other professionals to help consumers achieve their employment goals. Team members openly discuss and find solutions for clinical issues that affect work performance, such as the following:

- Medication side effects (e.g., drowsiness)
- Persistent symptoms (e.g., hallucinations)
- Cognitive difficulties (e.g., problem-solving skills)
- Other rehabilitation needs (e.g., social skills)

6 TIME-UNLIMITED SUPPORT

Some consumers need support over long periods of time. Therefore, consumers are never terminated from SE services, unless they request it.

7 PERSONALIZED BENEFITS PLANNING

Benefits counselors help consumers calculate exactly how much money they can make at their jobs without disrupting benefits, such as Medicaid insurance, supplemental security income (SSI), and social security disability insurance (SSDI). Benefits counselors advise consumers and caregivers about the following:

- Benefits requirements
- Income ceilings
- Work incentives
- Other issues and regulations related to employment benefits



ABOUT US

The Ohio Supported Employment Coordinating Center of Excellence (Ohio SE CCOE) is a technical-assistance organization that helps service systems, organizations, and providers implement and sustain the SE model with fidelity. The SE CCOE provides these services:

- Service systems consultation
- Program consultation
- Clinical consultation
- Training and education
- Research and evaluation

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Resources

Deborah R. Becker and Robert E. Drake, MD (2003). *A Working Life for People with Severe Mental Illness*. New York: Oxford University Press, Inc.

SAMHSA Supported Employment Toolkit
www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/cmhs/communitysupport/toolkits/employment/default.asp