

Supported Employment

Policy Issue: Supported employment is the right of all Canadians. Persons who experience mental health issues have the same rights to employment as Canadians who have other disabilities. Having any form of illness or disability should not exempt a person from the rights, joys, benefits or financial advancement which is outcomes of participating in employment.

Why Is This an Issue? Many persons who experience mental health issues face barriers to employment due to a variety of reasons. These reasons range from lack of employment opportunities, stigma, lack of work experience or skills, dependency on government programs for medications and medical coverage (and therefore a hesitancy to leave these programs), low self-esteem or confidence, fear, no support or assistance to help the person “get their foot in the door”, and lack of employer education in regards to mental health issues, acceptance and support.

The CCAMHR needs to address this issue as a unified voice on our stance of the importance of supported employment. The CCAMHR advocates for the needs of persons with mental health issues. One of the primary needs of a person experiencing mental health issues is inclusion. Inclusion means full inclusion and employment is a key component of this.

“Employment, or engaging in some form of meaningful work/ activity, is well recognized as a key determinant of health and essential to mental health. Conversely, unemployment has a negative effect on mental health. We know that unemployment is the leading cause of poverty, and that poverty is a leading cause of poor physical and mental health. Therefore, meaningful work and employment must be viewed as essential components to establishing and maintaining positive mental health.”

*Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care
Mental Health Implementation
Task Force Final Report*

Target Audience of the Policy - who are we addressing the position to?

Federal and Provincial Governments, Provincial Support Programs, Employers, Unions, Rehabilitation Specialists, Peer Support, and Private and Public insurance are major stakeholders and must be advocated to on all phases of the supported employment programs including consultations, program development and employment support.

Brief Analysis of the Issue

What is supported Employment?

“Supported employment programs typically provide individual placements in competitive employment - that is, community jobs paying at least minimum wage that any person can apply for - in accord with client choices and capabilities, without requiring extended prevocational training... They actively facilitate job acquisition, often sending staff to

Supported Employment

Authored By: David Gallson

- 1 -

Ratified: 3/31/2007

accompany clients on interviews; and they provide ongoing support once the client is employed (Gary Bond, 2001).”

20% of Canadians will personally experience a mental illness in their lifetime. Wilkerson (2000) (2001) (2002)

Many mental health issues are episodic. Symptoms may appear periodically, and with little advance notice.

Most income support and benefits programs have inherent disincentives to working to one’s capacity, particularly if one’s capacity to work is unpredictable and episodic.

We will be advocating to provincial support programs to heighten allowable earnings for persons who can only work part-time. This will allow persons to increase their earnings, enjoy increased mental health, develop social networks, increase self-esteem and maintain their community involvement. We must also advocate for increased funding for employer and union mental health educational programs which will provide training for front line and management. Educating those in positions of hiring persons with mental health issues is a key component of eliminating workplace stigma.

Current Gaps

- Supportive Skills Training and Mentoring
- Self-Esteem, Structure and Confidence
- Advocacy
- Participant Representation between Program and Employer
- Flexible Scheduling
- Income Support access - When episodic illness occurs, barrier free re-entry to support
- A comprehensive benefits coverage
- Supportive Work Environment
- Management and Peer support through workplace training and inclusive programming
- Employers need the tools to support people who suffer from episodic illnesses
- Conversely, employees need the tools and requisite support to re-integrate successfully back into the workplace
- Early intervention programs must be designed to assist employees navigate the Disability Insurance Claim and Accommodation Processes

Components of Conducive Work Environments

- Flexible time/ schedule
- Income and benefits whether or not working
- Allowance for rest
- Meaningful work
- Obtain the support of workers and their representatives
- Obtain the commitment, support and participation of management
- Supportive work environment
- Social inclusion

Supported Employment

Authored By: David Gallson

- 2 -

Ratified: 3/31/2007

- Peer support and employment maintenance components are crucial to successful entry/ re-entry to the workforce
- Establish organizational and employee health as “twin priorities” among managers in business
- Hope is a critical pathway to recovery. Empowerment and achievement of hope fosters recovery and wellness.

In 1998, Health Canada conservatively estimated that the economic burden of mental health problems was \$14.4 billion a year. More recent calculations, which include indirect costs, suggest that upwards of \$30 billion is lost to the Canadian economy annually due to mental health and addiction problems (Scientific Advisory Committee to the Global Business and Economic Roundtable on Addiction and Mental Health. (2002)

- Three million (est.) Canadians suffer from depression. Only 187,500 (est.) are both diagnosed and properly treated. That’s slightly more than six per cent. (“Depression At Work” The Unheralded Business Crisis In Canada - Global Business And Economic Roundtable On Addiction And Mental Health (July 2000)
- Disability represents anywhere from 4% to 12% of payroll costs in Canada; mental health claims (especially depression) have overtaken cardiovascular disease as the fastest growing category of disability costs in Canada (Wilson, M., Joffe, R., & Wilkerson, B. (2002)
- Stress, burnout and physical or mental health issues are the main issues limiting productivity in Canada, Canadian CEOs say (Productivity Through Health: A FGIworld CEO Study on Health and Productivity in Canadian Industry. (2005)
- Depression is distributed within the Canadian labor force of 14 million at a 10 per cent rate, meaning about 1.4 million working Canadians have the disease. (“Depression At Work” The Unheralded Business Crisis In Canada - Global Business And Economic Roundtable On Addiction And Mental Health (July 2000))
- Stress and mental health-related problems currently represent 40-50% of the short-term disability claims among employees of some of Canada's largest corporations Wilkerson (2000) (2001) (2002)

Recommendation/Conclusions

- That the Knowledge Exchange Center as recommended by the Kirby Commission be created as part of the Mental Health Commission.
- That research on Best Practices be commissioned with results shared among all stakeholders.
- That mental health training and sensitivity be provided to all managers and employees as part of their orientation.

Supported Employment

- That provincial support programs follow the lead of the Ontario Disability Support Program in that it provides persons who re-enter the workforce continued medical coverage if employer does not have medical coverage plan or until such plan begins (i.e. after 3 months employment). This coverage should not be restricted by time. If employer does not have coverage, medical coverage through support program should continue. Extending drug, dental and vision care benefits to recipients exiting support programs for employment unless coverage is available from an employer is a key supportive measure which will eliminate barriers for persons with mental health issues.

Policy Statement: That the CCAMHR adopt a policy statement that states that all mental health consumer/survivors living in Canada be entitled to supported employment opportunities.

Bibliography

Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Mental Health Implementation Task Force Final Report

http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/pub/mhitf/mhitf_mn.html

Global Business and Economic Roundtable on Addiction and Mental Health (July 2000)

<http://www.mentalhealthroundtable.ca/index.html>

Ontario Disability Support Program

<http://www.mcsc.gov.on.ca/mcss/english/pillars/social/programs/odsp.htm>

Supported Employment

Authored By: David Gallson

- 4 -

Ratified: 3/31/2007