The Hidden Disability
Employment Implications for Individuals with Substance Use Disorder and Mental Illness

April 30, 2018
Focusing on Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders Conditions

Acknowledgement that a “Hidden Disability” can take many forms:

- AIDS/HIV
- Chronic health conditions
- Attention Deficit Disorders
- Autism Spectrum Disorders
- Brain Injury
- Chronic Pain

- Hearing Loss
- Learning Disabilities
- Migraine Headaches
- Multiple Chemical Sensitivity
- Sleep Disorders
- Vision Impairments, etc...
Let’s discuss some barriers that you think an individual with substance use disorder or mental illness might have...
Typical Barriers

- Legal Conviction History
- Gaps in employment / inconsistent work history
- Lack of higher education / lack of high school completion
- Restrictions on employment based on probation / parole
- Inability to return to previous field of employment
- Transportation barriers
- Stable Housing
- Lacking appropriate work clothing / interview clothing
- Financial disincentives

- And last but not least... STIGMA
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QficvVNIxTI
8 DIMENSIONS OF WELLNESS

EMOTIONAL
Coping effectively with life and creating satisfying relationships.

ENVIRONMENTAL
Good health by occupying pleasant, stimulating environments that support well-being.

INTELLECTUAL
Recognizing creative abilities and finding ways to expand knowledge and skills.

PHYSICAL
Recognizing the need for physical activity, diet, sleep, and nutrition.

OCCUPATIONAL
Personal satisfaction and enrichment derived from one’s work.

FINANCIAL
Satisfaction with current and future financial situations.

SOCIAL
Developing a sense of connection, belonging, and a well-developed support system.

SPIRITUAL
Expanding our sense of purpose and meaning in life.
Disclosure

Let’s look again at some of the common employment barriers and discuss benefits / drawbacks of disclosure:

• Legal conviction
• Gaps in employment
• Limited education
• Restrictions on employment based on probation/parole
• Inability to return to previous place of employment

• Transportation barriers
• Stable housing
• Financial disincentives
• Lacking appropriate work/interview clothing
Let’s give disclosure a try!

Disclosure Practice
Prepare a speech to discuss barriers during the job interview process.

First... *WHY* help your client prepare a speech?
Speech tips for your client

- Bring it up before the interviewer does, if possible. (Why?)
- You want to stress that you take responsibility for the barrier and you don’t put the blame on others. Why do this? Employers have stated that they want people to be honest and open about their backgrounds; and especially show that they have dealt with the barrier and have an attitude of acceptance / maturity.
- Be aware of your tone of voice when you discuss the barrier.
- Have responses prepared when they ask you about your barriers. Be positive about the steps you have taken since then, but don’t go into unnecessary details. Be brief and to the point.
Speech tips for your client (continued)

• Focus on the future and talk about how your skills will make a positive contribution to the company.

• If you are still working with someone that is helping you with overcoming the barrier(s), consider offering that information to the interviewer as another person that can vouch for your rehabilitation.
Disclosing a barrier is one thing... disclosing a diagnosis is another.

When is disclosing a diagnosis a good idea for your client?
What if your client does not want to disclose?

Considerations

• Weighing pros and cons
• Personal choice
• Job references
• Practice interviews
• Other?
Small Work Group Discussion

Do you think there any differences in the approach by the Employment Specialist/Job Placement professional when placing someone in employment with a mental health or substance use disorder disability versus other disability categories?
Small Work Group Discussion (continued)

Case Studies!
Advocating with employers

Strategies that work
Strategies for advocating with employers

- Participate in business networks (i.e. Chamber of Commerce)
- Host employer open houses
- Maintain electronic database to track employer contacts
- Send thank you cards and holiday cards
- Maintain contact with employers after job has ended
- Patronize local businesses
- Network with former employees and colleagues
- Conduct informational interviews
- Try to meet with CEO or other key personnel (i.e. hiring manager, HR staff)
- Learn and use business language
- Sell the benefits of hiring people with disabilities
Strategies for advocating with employers (continued)

• Suggest variety of work experience options (i.e. part time, shared job, internships)
• Provide information on tax credits & financial incentives
• Assist with accommodations
• Present a solution to an identified business need (ex: high turnover)
• Provide testimonials
• Sell agency & services
• Look for new businesses
• Look for small businesses
• Remain accessible and available
• Facilitate natural supports
• Problem solve around employee performance problems
Other ways to assist and prepare your client

• Learn about hiring incentives and how to present them to the employer
• Research “ban the box” practices in your area
• Explore if your client would benefit from federal and/or state bonding programs
• Get your client an updated RAP sheet and review for discrepancies
• Encourage your client to do volunteer work before they begin the job search process
Thank you for your participation.

Presenter Information:
Donna Marcello,
Director of Recovery Support Services, East House
dmarcello@easthouse.org