

Mental Health Association in New York State, Inc.

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Working to ensure available and accessible mental health services for all New Yorkers



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Legislative Issue Brief

Employment

Background

Persons diagnosed with a serious mental illness experience significantly higher rates of unemployment compared with the general population. Studies show that undetected, untreated, and poorly treated mental disorders interrupt careers, leading many into lives of disability, poverty, and long-term dependence. Unemployment rates among adults with serious mental illness are as high as 90 percent—the worst level of employment of any group of people with disabilities.

Yet, most individuals with psychiatric disabilities want to go to work but are inhibited by a system of care that does not prioritize employment and in many situations actually disincentivizes individuals going back to work.

Supported employment programs provide people with severe mental illness opportunities for direct placement in competitive jobs that pay regular wages and include accompanying support services designed to help them perform their job. Supported employment services can include job coaches, specialized job training, and transportation. An advantage of supported employment programs is their ability to facilitate rapid job searches and placements, without the need for lengthy prevocational training. Individualized job placements can include consideration of the individual's preferences, strengths and work experiences.

Recommendation

- Additional Funding for Supported Employment in Mental Health
- Support adding \$2 million in the budget to help fund employment programs in clubhouse programs across New York State

Transportation

Issue: Access to employment opportunities and programs that support the employment needs of people with psychiatric disabilities are only as effective as one's ability to physically get to work. Transportation remains one of the more significant barriers to successful employment for people with special cognitive and behavioral needs. Creative solutions are needed that will require coordinated

efforts on the part of state and local mental health and transportation agencies as well as community-based service providers.

Recommendation:

- MHANYS is advocating for funding to support transportation pilots that will help insure that individuals with psychiatric disabilities have greater access to transportation services