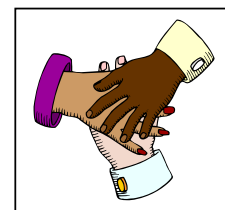


A New Model . . . A New Priority

As part of its transition to a recovery-oriented system of care, the DMHAS Southwest Connecticut Mental Health System (SWCMHS) has made employment a centerpiece of its increasingly focused recovery system. In doing so, SWCMHS has:

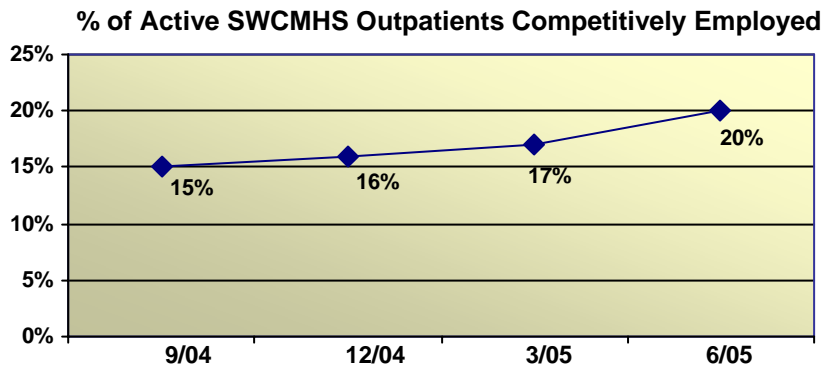
- Adopted an evidence-based approach to employment services that differs significantly from how the agency had been providing services; and
- Aligned an organizational focus around employment making it *everybody's* priority.

SWCMHS embraced the *Supported Employment* model, formerly known as *Individual Placement and Support (IPS)*, created by Debbie Becker and Robert Drake. Beginning in the summer of 2003, the organization began embedding **employment specialists** onto clinical teams at its Bridgeport and Stamford sites. Employment specialists are generalists who provide support in *all* phases of the employment process. What makes this service different from traditional supported employment is that the employment specialist is a member of a clinical team. Previously, if someone needed vocational services, they were referred to an outside provider when they were deemed "ready to work" by clinical staff. Although the employment specialist is the person who spends the majority of his or her time actively assisting the individual in person to obtain and maintain employment, the entire team now works together to support the person as they pursue their career.



Fully integrated teams make employment everyone's responsibility and have better employment outcomes.

Employment Can Foster Recovery!



Over the course of one year, competitive employment among SWCMHS clients increased from 15% to 20%, an increase of 33%.

Getting all treatment staff to focus on employment represents a major culture shift at SWCMHS. The progress made to date is a promising beginning. The organization has set goals of 25% employment by July 2006, and 35% by July 2007. Currently, 50% of outpatient teams include employment specialists. By 2006, the SWCMHS anticipates having employment specialists on *all teams*. In addition, SWCMHS created the expectation that all staff (not just employment specialists) must focus on employment by making employment one of its *Key Performance Indicators*.

SWCMHS has also started to look more closely at how the recovering person's actual job corresponds with their stated employment goals, whether they are working the hours they prefer, whether they are staying on the job, and whether they get benefits. *In other words, the organization is focusing on the same things you or I would care about in a job.* The SWCMHS believes that meaningful employment is a cornerstone to instilling hope and the potential for recovery for the people we serve.

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For a previous *INFORMATION* piece on this topic, follow the link to [Supported Employment Services](#).