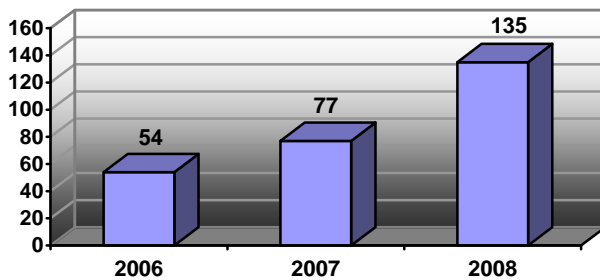


Setting the Bar High for Employment Outcomes

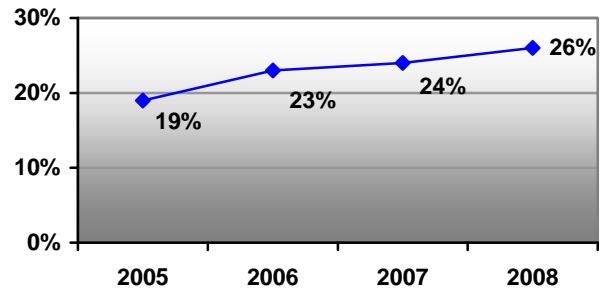
Employment and educational services are integral to the DMHAS goal of offering recovery-oriented services for persons who experience mental health and substance use conditions. Four years ago, DMHAS River Valley Services (RVS) began a network-wide Employment Initiative designed to increase employment rates for persons receiving support from its local mental health system on the premise that individuals in recovery should have opportunities and supports to become involved in meaningful activities of their choice and contribute to the broader community, and that evidence-based employment services can be very successful in helping individuals who want to work.

At the onset of the initiative, only 19% of the people served in the RVS network had been employed in the previous six months. A target employment rate of 50% was established as the goal. In December 2008, the annual employment survey demonstrated that 26% of persons served in the network had been employed in the previous six months. **Progress is being made and positive trends are emerging.** The number of new jobs obtained in 2008 increased to 135 as compared to 54 in 2006, **an increase of 150%.** The RVS **Young Adult Services program had an employment rate of 77%** in the recent survey. These results are hopeful, promising and encouraging.

Number of Jobs Obtained



Employment Rate of Persons Served



Key Ingredients for Successful Employment Outcomes

- An integrated service approach with employment supports embedded within clinical treatment teams.
- Flexible employment services and supports that respond to individual's strengths and preferences.
- Continuous employment retention supports, as needed.
- Employment and educational goals are prominent in individualized recovery plans.
- Flexible engagement strategies that address concerns about work, school and entitlements.
- A culture that is hopeful and views employment as a vital element in the recovery process
- Newsletters and celebrations that promote success stories.
- Strong partnerships with the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, CT Work Centers and benefits counselors.
- Peer Supports to provide mentoring as well as individual and group support.



Supported employment has been the most extensively studied model of vocational rehabilitation for persons with psychiatric disabilities and ample evidence supports its effectiveness. In these studies, persons in supported employment programs are more successful in obtaining competitive work, they work more hours, and they earn more wages from competitive employment than persons receiving other vocational services.