

COVID-19 Response

"During COVID, some of our employment clients could have given our staff an in-service training on how to manage anxiety."

*—Paul Miller,
Supported Employment Coordinator,
WCMHS*

Employment teams reported that some of their clients were better prepared to manage anxiety during COVID-19 than the general population. As individuals who had developed go-to strategies and skills, clients were eager to get back to jobs that were temporarily shut down, knowing the isolation could be detrimental to their mental health.

With referrals down, many employment staff were redeployed to support clients in creative ways, such as distributing tablets for telehealth services and coaching clients on how to use them, and delivering meals, groceries, medications, activities and emergency supplies to clients.

CRUCIAL BENEFITS COUNSELING

When COVID-19 hit, some Supported Employment coordinators quickly convened a weekly benefits counseling meeting with Disability Rights Vermont and the Vermont Department of Mental Health to help clients successfully navigate the complexities of unemployment payments, stimulus payments, hazard pay for peer staff, and social security regulations to avoid falling of the SSDI benefits cliff. In addition to client-specific consultation, the group reached out to Vermont's congressional delegation on advocacy to ensure that overpayments during COVID were waived.

Employment Services Promote Mental Health Recovery and Build Workforce

PRIORITIZING EMPLOYMENT

VCP network agencies provide assessment, job development, job coaching, and other supported employment services to youth and adult clients who have mental health challenges that can get in the way of finding and maintaining a job. The JOBS (Jump On Board for Success) Program for young adults and the Individualized Placement and Supports (IPS) model for adults in CRT/CSP Programs support the development of an individualized plan to help clients find a good match for their interests and skills. Agencies also refer to and collaborate with Vocational Rehabilitation services.

REACH AND IMPACT

In FY20, agencies provided employment support to clients of all ages and abilities:

- 562 clients in CRT/CSP; 316 young adults; 71 adults in outpatient therapy programs; and 23 adults in substance use disorder treatment.
- Agencies provided employment supports to at least 50 individuals who were on the street or homeless; 172 Vermonters who resided in a group home (144) or residential care (38) setting; 11 who were in a psychiatric hospital at intake; and at least three who were in a correctional facility.
- 25% of adult clients with serious mental illness received an evidenced-based supported employment intervention, compared to 2% nationally*
- [17.3% of CRT/CSP clients were employed in the third quarter of FY20](#), the highest statewide average in 10 years. Average earnings for the quarter were \$2757.
- Overall in FY20, 22% of CRT/CSP clients achieved employment; when CRT/CSP clients received six or more employment services, their rate of employment reached 60%.

*Source: 2019 SAMHSA National Outcome Measures Data



Landscape Work at Lamoille County Mental Health Services