

***DMH Clients and Employment
in Western Massachusetts:***

The Consumer Perspective

Massachusetts Consumer Satisfaction Team, Inc.
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I. INTRODUCTION

Mental health consumers often struggle with employment issues, but many of them still want to work. In order to gain more information about people with mental illnesses and employment, the Massachusetts Department of Mental Health (DMH) hired the Massachusetts Consumer Satisfaction Team, Inc. (MCST) to interview DMH clients about the reasons they seek and keep work. MCST developed a structured qualitative survey that permitted DMH survey participants to describe their own work-related motivations and obstacles. The flexibility of the qualitative survey format allowed the MCST interviewer to ask survey participants for additional information when needed.

This survey project was intended to benefit both mental health program administrators and mental health consumers. Administrators can use the data to guide future improvements in program and systems planning. By answering the survey questions, many participants seemed to gain a greater understanding of their own work-related issues.

II. METHOD

A. Participants

MCST surveyed 24 DMH clients living in the Springfield site area and 17 DMH clients in the Holyoke/Chicopee site area about their experiences with employment issue. These 41 survey participants belonged to one of four employment status categories. The nine consumers in the “Unemployed” category had been unemployed for a year or more. The nine participants in the “Recently Employed” category were not employed at the time of the interview, but had been employed within the last year. The 13 individuals in the “Training for Employment” group were enrolled in job training programs like the Lighthouse Clubhouse in Springfield or the Supported Employment and Education (SEE) program in Holyoke/Chicopee. Finally, the 10 participants in the “Currently Employed” group held full-time or part-time jobs paying at least the minimum wage at the time of the interview. As Table 1 shows, the largest proportions of survey participants were female, in their forties, living alone without professional supports, and single.

The ages of those surveyed ranged from 20 through 58 years old, with a median age of 46. An examination of ages according to the different employment status groups showed that “recently employed” survey participants had a younger median age of 37. A majority (59%) of all survey participants were female, though the group of “currently employed” individuals consisted of a slight majority of males.

A majority of respondents reported never having been married (61%), with 24% reported being married and 13% divorced. (One answer (3%) fell into the “other” category.) Almost equal amounts reported having children, with twenty-one (51%) with children and twenty (49%) without children.

Just under half (49%) consumers surveyed lived alone without professional supports. Over one-quarter made use of such supports as supported housing (17%) or a group home (12%). Of the remainder, 17% shared living quarters with a spouse, significant other or other roommate, and 5% had no stable address.

B. Survey

Although survey formats differed slightly depending on participants' employment statuses, the general survey covered four aspects of work. (See sample survey in Appendix I.) The first section included questions about participants' desire and motivation for employment. Questions about preparing for employment and acquiring a job comprised the second section. The third section incorporated many questions about being and staying employed, such as questions about job duties; supervisors, peers, and the workplace environment; job accommodations; DMH-funded employment support programs; community supports; public benefits; and self-concept on the job. The last section included questions about future career goals.

C. Procedure

MCST conducted interviews between April and August of 2001, and each survey participant received a \$10 incentive payment. Survey participants were recruited first using direct mailings. After limited success with the mailings, DMH case managers and service providers helped recruit the remaining survey participants. The Lighthouse Clubhouse in Springfield, MA was especially helpful in locating potential participants.

III. RESULTS

MCST examined all survey responses as a group, and then examined the responses within each employment status category. Accordingly, the results of analyses across all employment status categories are presented first, followed by the results for individual employment status categories. The last section contains comments about career interests and future employment plans made by individuals who were training for employment or currently employed. Unless otherwise noted, the results that follow apply to individuals from both Springfield, Massachusetts and Holyoke/Chicopee, Massachusetts. However, individual quotes from the two locations can be distinguished from each other. *Quotes from individuals in Springfield are printed in this italicized font, and quotes from individuals in Holyoke/Chicopee are printed in bold italicized font.*

A. Thoughts about Work from All Survey Participants

A1. Desire and Motivation to Work

All of the 41 consumers interviewed except one expressed a desire to be employed. (The one consumer who did not want to be employed had been employed recently, but expressed concerns about his/her mental and physical health.) For the rest of the survey participants, reasons for wanting to work fell into the several distinct categories shown in Table 2.

The most common reason consumers mentioned for wanting jobs was the desire for independence, self-sufficiency, and the money required to achieve these goals. Over 75 percent of consumers made comments in this category. Some individuals explicitly recognized the connection between money and independence, such as the Springfield consumer who said, *“I want to be more independent. I don’t want to rely on my SSDI check because it’s not enough . . .”* Other consumers mentioned specific things they wanted to purchase, such as *“. . . a car so I could go back and forth to school and work.”* Still others just talked about their desire for independence, such as the individual who mentioned wanting *“to do stuff on my own.”*

Almost half of the consumers also mentioned the benefits that the structure of a job would give to their lives. Several people said that working would encourage them to get out of the house and participate in the community more. Many also recognized the mental health benefits of working. As one Holyoke/Chicopee survey participant said, *“I want a few hours to get out of the house. I want to keep going. I don’t want to just stay at home and think about my illness and problems.”*

Over one-quarter of consumers thought that working would give them a sense of confidence and well-being. Many consumers mentioned the self-esteem benefits of employment. Others talked about the sense of empowerment that employment could give them. As one individual said, *“I like something to do which makes me feel worthwhile . . .”*

Survey participants mentioned some other reasons for desiring employment, including the desire to make a contribution to society and the desire to be with other people. Two people in Springfield who had been employed recently and one person in Holyoke/Chicopee who was training for employment said that they did not want to be a burden on taxpayers or the economy. Finally, two people who were currently employed and one person who had been recently employed mentioned the benefits specific to holding a job, such as the skills gained through employment.

Consumers’ Life Improvements from Employment

When asked about the ways that employment had or could improve their lives, survey participants’ responses were similar to their reasons for wanting employment. (See Table 3.) Once again, the most common theme was the greater independence, self-sufficiency, and money that employment would provide; over 60 percent of respondents mentioned this improvement. Exactly half of the participants who answered the question included the improvements in confidence, pride, and general well-being in their response. Just less than half of consumers interviewed also identified benefits from working and the structure that a job gave their lives. Almost one-fifth of respondents, all of whom were employed either recently or currently, mentioned the benefits to their social lives that jobs provide. And a few respondents who were either training for employment or who had not been employed recently mentioned the education and learning opportunities gained through jobs.

A2. Deterrents to Consumer Employment

Twenty-nine unemployed consumer respondents in three of the employment status categories (recently employed, training for employment, and not employed recently) explained some of the obstacles to employment that they faced. (See Table 4.) The most common obstacle was the fear of new experiences and people; over 40 percent of the respondents mentioned this fear. One Springfield consumer echoed many others' sentiments about new job situations. This person worried about *“going to interviews and meeting the boss and new people. I get nervous meeting new people . . .”*

Many consumers also expressed concern about their own abilities and experience. Just over a third mentioned problems with self-confidence and self esteem. As one respondent explained, *“I have a harder time in presenting myself . . . [and] answering, ‘Why should you get this job?’ [I] pretty much feel like I’m second rate or second class.”* An equal number of respondents voiced concern about their lack of education, experience, and skills. About a third of consumers who answered the question also had doubts about their abilities to arrive at work on time, complete tasks, and form other good work habits.

As hard as these inner obstacles might be to overcome, consumers also recognized that there were many obstacles to employment that seemed beyond their control. Just over one-third of respondents explained that they could not find the type of work to fit their needs. As one individual said, *“In the Holyoke/Chicopee [area], I don’t see a job with creativity. I would be interested in a job in modern dance. I can’t think of anything for a job that would make me happy. A lot of jobs don’t fit me.”* In addition, low wages, lack of benefits, and the removal of government supports after employment prevented individuals from accepting those jobs that were available, according to about a third of the respondents. About one-third of the consumers also commented that existing employment services, including the few available transportation services, were ineffective in combating the bleak employment situation.

A few of the respondents listed other reasons for their lack of steady employment. A little less than one-quarter of the consumers described problems relating to physical and mental illnesses. About one-fifth of the survey participants said that they didn't get the support they needed from other people in their lives or from the larger community. Finally, just over ten percent of the consumers doubted that potential employers would make the workplace accommodations needed by consumers.

B. Thoughts about Work by Employment Status Group

B1. Unemployed Participants Who Had Not Worked in Over One Year

MCST interviewed nine consumers (five from Springfield and four from Holyoke/Chicopee) who had not worked for over a year about their last job. Their median age of 37, with three males and six females. Six were single and three were married, the later three having children. Three lived with their spouse, three lived alone, two in supported housing and one with no stable address. All nine said that they wanted to be employed. (See Table 1 for participant demographics.)

Experience at Previous Job

Respondents had been employed at their previous job for a period of time of between one month to six years, with a median of four months. Six either liked (4) or loved (2) their previous job, with one each saying that: "It was OK," "Didn't like it," "Hated it."

Consumers who had not worked recently recalled a variety of job experiences. Six of the nine participants reported that they held their last job between two and four years ago, while two people had become unemployed a year ago, and one person had stopped working seven years ago. Of the seven individuals who could recall their last job, three reported customer service work in shops or newspaper delivery. Two people remembered working in business support industries as janitors, groundskeepers, and security guards. One individual worked in a laundromat, and another person stuffed envelopes.

Consumers were asked why they had left their last job. For five people, it was mental illness, physical disability, or both:

*I got sick because I was working too many hours and I didn't take care of myself
Due to mental illness, nerve damage in knees, arthritis in hands, physical illness,
suffering from schizoaffective unable to be there due to hospitalization 9 months and shorter
hospitalization after that.*

I ended up going into a hospital.

Asthma, heat, epilepsy.

I got bad eyes. It got so bad that I couldn't work standing and removing staples.

As for the others, one person had personal problems, another got fired for not showing up twice, and for two others the site closed.

Future Job Possibilities

Although more than half of these survey respondents had left their last job because of health problems, these individuals did not believe that health-related issues were the most important reason that they remained without a job. Six of these survey participants had not tried to work since leaving their last job, and they listed a variety of reasons for their continued unemployment. Two individuals from Springfield were going to school instead of working. Two individuals from Holyoke/Chicopee believed that they could not work because of mental or physical illness. And two people from the Holyoke/Chicopee area were working with staff from employment programs to find jobs, but had not found any work yet. As one person noted: ***"[My] employment coordinator... [at the SEE Program] told me they don't have a job for me."***

Three Springfield-area individuals had tried unsuccessfully to return to work since leaving their last job. These respondents had hoped that working would provide them with more experience, money, and interesting activity. For two of these individuals, the disappointment of being unable to keep their new jobs was compounded by the problems they experienced during their trial work periods. One individual couldn't continue working as a janitor because of obstructed breathing due to asthma. Another respondent who volunteered at a child care center

quit because “. . . the other staff took advantage of me by asking me to do the work that they were getting paid for . . . I left because they wouldn't pay me.”

The Ideal Job

All nine were encouraged to portray their ideal job. It was interesting how the answers broke down by region. The three who emphasized support and encouragement were from the Holyoke/Chicopee area:

Support from coworkers.

Confidence in myself, respect, friendship.

Also, I need one-on-one support through commission for blind for job training. ICE will get me a job if I get one-on-one support. I need to talk to my employment coordinator at ICE.

A number of people from Springfield were focused on jobs that could provide them with flexibility and that were not too strenuous:

Need to able to keep or be offered a job despite having a mental illness, part time a couple times a week. If I needed time off to be given it, not disclose mental illness.

Nothing strenuous enough to interfere with breathing—I have emphysema now

Work that I really, really like and work that is not too fast for me—that's calm and that I feel good about working at, like working with kids. And a job that has benefits, like vacations.

A few others from Springfield wanted added incentives to work, with one person wanting a car. And a person from Holyoke wanted a reasonably high paying job.

B2. Unemployed Participants Who Had Worked Within the Last Year

Nine unemployed individuals who had been employed within the last year (six from Springfield and three from Holyoke/Chicopee) were included in this survey. Ages ranged from 32 – 58. Six were female and seven had children. Interestingly, all but one expressed a strong desire to be employed and six were trying to get themselves ready for work again, though without employment supports. (See Table 1 for participant demographics.)

Experience at Previous Jobs

These survey participants had a variety of work experiences. Three people had worked in human services direct care, three in food services, two in technical fields, and one for the post office. Job length varied greatly, from 2 days to 10 years. Those who worked for a period of years often reported that they had not worked steadily during that time

The reasons consumer left their previous job were similar to those who had left their job over one year ago. Three reported job loss because of a flare-up of their mental illness; three said that the job ended or that work became unavailable; two had family or personal problems; and one was injured on the job.

Prior Job Experience- challenges

Consumers were asked how a change their previous job situation could have helped them retain their jobs longer. Five of nine focused directly on the job itself. Two explained that more varied job duties might have made the difference, and three others would have wanted particular job accommodations (job change, hours, training):

I'm capable of more than sewing, but they're not interested. I would have liked to be offered the opportunity to diversify tasks.

If I'd had a chance to learn about other things (job duties) and work with other machines there, which I really enjoyed doing.

Less or no lifting, but it's a requirement of the job.

If they had instead of 12:00 – 8:30 pm if they had 11 – 7, I would have been able to finish the second tour- no three days off, sick days.

Extended training or retraining.

Four respondents believed that their “sense of self” would have to change for them to make it at that job. Two people in particular found that their biggest challenge was working around and with other people, but that they could have been helped by stronger “employment supports:

My mental illness interfered. I felt it was a no win situation of personal issues...being around so many people was overwhelming sometimes; being polite all the time; being available to people to help them..... It depends on the employer.... Sometimes employers are not willing to compromise. They don't want to accommodate you whenever.

I didn't feel like I fit in, people were talking about me... [I'd like] less stress.. too much gossip. If I could've talked to somebody before all the trouble, it would've mad a difference [employment support program].

Sometimes I felt belittled by 'degrading work' like cleaning bathrooms, but I got to the point where I figured a job is a job and just did professionally without it having an impact on my self esteem, even though I had some mixed feeling a about it.

I could have had more self-esteem.”

One person felt that the most significant difference would have been improved employment supports:

MRC kind of failed me a little bit because I was working through MRC at HRV Employment Training Services. They didn't provide me steady employment. It was up and down in terms of finances. I was working as a receptionist and they faded out my job. MRC could've gotten me another job- [at Goodwill]... Project AIM could've given me a job by giving me a stipend for being an AIM neighbor or some other job.

Of note, not one person was concerned that they would lose or had lost their disability benefits. In addition, during the questioning, though this was not the focus, consumers brought up things that had really helped them in maintaining their prior job. Two people had found their employer amenable to accommodation requests- both relating to job attendance; as one person noted: ***“Flex time was helpful all along, as was the manager and supervisor being at ISPS.”***

Three people mentioned help of Lighthouse and Community Enterprises. Another person recognized the encouragement of a MRC counselor, and another stated: *“Having enough friends and working in a respectful manner as a partner.”*

In a few cases, consumers felt the need to leave a job due to emergency family issues, but it was not clear if they would have held onto the job if the employer had a policy for unpaid leave and the consumer was aware of it.

Prospects for Another Job/ Returning to Work

All but one consumer still wanted to work (see motivation section). The one who didn't had both severe physical and mental health problems, but thought s/he felt might be able to work if s/he was *“supported by Lighthouse and could work part-time- The more I participate with Lighthouse I figure the better my chances.”* Another wanted to work but was not making any effort to prepare; this person claimed to be a procrastinator and that neither the clubhouse nor MRC *“have anything for me.”*

All in all, these consumers who had worked recently were not easily discouraged. Of the remaining seven, two consumers from Holyoke were already filling out applications, and one from Springfield was *“networking, looking at job ads, talking to people.”* Three of the four remaining Lighthouse members looking for work were beginning to take some assignments at the club, with one already having taken a job:

I'm slowly learning how to use computers, coming to Lighthouse, possibly moving to the Y, working on personal hygiene.

I try to dress the part as far as being a receptionist. I work here at Lighthouse working at the snack bar, answering phones, typing up articles for the Beacon.

I'm putting in applications, losing weight so I'm in better shape physically and mentally, trying to network, talk with different people, let people know I'm looking.

B3. Participants Who Were Training for Employment

Of the 13 individuals training for employment, seven (four from Springfield and three from Holyoke/Chicopee) were asked about the employment supports they were receiving and other types of help they could use. (As Table 5 shows, the demographics for the seven individuals who were asked about their employment supports did not differ much from the demographics of all individuals training for employment who were included in this survey.) All seven wanted to be employed. The Lighthouse clubhouse was assisting the four individuals in Springfield. The SEE program, the day program, and MRC were each helping an individual in the Holyoke/Chicopee area.

Available Employment Training Supports

The programs in the two geographic regions offered slightly different types of support to people training for employment. The three consumers in the Holyoke/Chicopee area tended to focus on activities related exclusively to the job search. One grateful survey respondent who was an MRC client reported returning to school for clerical skills training. Other comments included:

[My name is] on a waiting list for cleaning crew at day program (will work cleaning offices in area). Being alert and making sure they are going to hire me—inquire almost every day where [my] name is on list... My social worker helped me develop a resume, encourages me, offers to help me fill out applications.

Filling out applications and bringing out new clothes; talking to my job coach and having her help me out by counseling me on job skills.

Springfield clients all had involvement in Lighthouse. One person was working in the employment unit, another in the education unit, and a third was receiving help writing up resumes and filling out job applications. (A fourth person felt that she "... was not getting encouragement and opportunity to work and actually earn money.") Others commented:

There's an employment specialist available. An advocate to talk to, computers with the internet here, newspaper want ads, networking with friends.

I've been looking for a job in the employment unit. I go through the paper with them helping. Call up and get information.

Consumers were asked to comment on the quality of the DMH training services they were receiving. Two individuals receiving vocational services from Lighthouse had polar opposite views as to how the program was helping them: *"Facilitating a dual recovery group ("New Awakenings"), which teaches me leadership skills, including public speaking. It gives me serenity, which in turn helps me in the work force. [It's] MRC when I'm ready to take courses at STCC Business."* Another Lighthouse person was more critical: *"I know their goal is to get people ready for work, but because they are not professionals (e.g., clinicians) they can't address the emotional problems of getting back to work."*

Another Springfield person found assistance from numerous agencies: *"They found me training at MCDI and helped fund my Associates degree, but there weren't jobs available for a degree in human services. Project AIM is giving me a place to stay. I'm in transition right now (moving into a residential program next week). They are helping me with communication skills—I'm going to classes at AIM office downtown every week, learning disarming techniques (conflict resolution). DMH taught me how to repair furniture in a sheltered workshop—Westfield (CHD program) in 1997."*

And a Holyoke person found MRC useful: *"I'm getting it all. Mass Rehab has been great and my therapy has been helpful. I don't want to work until school is over (two years part time)."*

Suggestions for Improvements

People were asked what else could improve their chances of getting a job. Only three people had comments, with two noting the importance of continuing with psychotherapy, and two commenting on their transportation needs.

Transportation: carpool, bus line. Go to therapy weekly. (S3B1)

More help to find a therapist who is willing to listen to me say everything I have to say without circumventing me and telling me there are certain things I shouldn't talk about.

Have someone there to talk to on the job—not necessarily staff—If I was having problems, then someone to talk to about it. Transportation is by staff now—so I'd need to learn how to ride the bus again.

B4. Participants Who Were Currently Employed

MCST interviewed six people from Springfield and four from Holyoke/Chicopee who were working currently. Their median age was 47, with 8 of 10 over the age of 40. Six were male, with four having children. (See Table 1 for demographics.) These consumers had been working for a period of time between one month and six years, with a median of four months. Of the nine survey participants who rated their current job, six liked or loved their jobs, two disliked their jobs, and one had neutral feelings about his/her work.

Preparations for Employment

We asked people how they had prepared for work. Of 10 respondents, 4 said they had done so by being very self-motivated, with two of them adding that staff encouragement had helped. Of those in Springfield, 2 referred to the training they had received at Lighthouse; as one person noted: *“At Lighthouse I had to be there every day and do clean-up unit work to show them that I wanted to work. I trained there then worked at a TE at the Sheraton hotel.”*

Nine of ten consumers said that they had received some sort of DMH supported services in preparing for work, and we asked those nine how the services had helped them. Interestingly, three of them cited assistance in resume writing as very important, and two cited help in developing interviewing skills:

I went to a state funded workshop (Futureworks) on employment training – a three-day workshop on interviewing and resume preparation.

MRC worker showed me how to write a resume. Lighthouse helped me gain employment through a T.E.. But it wasn't significant in either pay or job duties.

They provided opportunities to go through interviews. They provided information on social security and how it would work with working.

Two others cited the program's willingness to pay for their education:

They helped me with school certificate program at STCC (paid for it). It helped me prepared for a career path.

[I feel] the mental health system never gave me any help to further myself towards employment. Mass Rehab offered to put me through college.

Two others commented on their TE experience, and another on other staff assistance:

If a person wants a job and is willing to put the effort out. I've got one TE job now, and one independent, and the supports for TE include time coverage at work if I need it. If I have trouble I go to the clubhouse to talk to staff.

Got me into a T.E position, got me a taste of work. They were very supportive emotionally. Staff and peers were inspiring me to go back to work. Clubhouse (Lighthouse) provided me with a drop in center. where I was out of my apartment, not depressed.

I needed the help—staff were there. I want to do research and find my own jobs. Staff talk to me if I have a problem at work. Staff are there if I need the help.

Challenges in Returning to Work:

Despite these supports, consumers needed to overcome a variety of challenges before returning to work. Consumers were asked what their biggest obstacles were in returning to work, one's that they were able to overcome. The biggest challenges included low self-esteem (3 people), difficulty with motivating oneself to work (3), concerns about a mental illness flare-up (2 people), financial concerns related to social security (2), and in one case personal hygiene. Comments included:

My mental illness. The way the social security system is set up: the more you make, the more your check is decreased, and I live in a place where rent is determined by income, which increases rent. This is extremely discouraging—you rarely get ahead.

My psychiatric disorder made it difficult because anxiety meant I had to psyche myself up for work—use positive thinking, and memory lapses made it difficult to remember to get things done.

The expense of independent transportation, the loss of benefits, and being out of work so long means always getting entry level/low paying jobs.

I have a sleep problem and that can interfere with my ability to get ready for work. I get really nervous sometimes and that interferes with my ability to work.

Given these challenges, consumers were asked what other supports might have been helpful to them that they did not have at this time. The two most common themes emerged here were 1) they wished that staff had treated them better, and 2) they wished they had had more presentable clothing.

The trainer at Lighthouse could've been encouraging, and the trainer at Community Enterprises tells me I'm doing great.

I had no sense of myself. I didn't believe in my own ability to work—between my illness and no work history, I had a really negative self-identity. Lack of wardrobe too. I had no clothes to wear to work.

The MCT program gave me \$150 for clothes and that was enough to get me going until I had been working a while so when I needed more clothes I had money to pay for them.

I think it's important to get supported for the type of employment that I want: real-world work with real-world responsibilities. Somehow, I need the reassurance from a job coach or someone else that things are going to be okay, if I take this job, that my life isn't going to fall apart if I take the job and then lose it.

I would have liked to have used the clubhouse more if they had had better, less demeaning, higher skilled jobs appropriate for a college grad. Being around consumers who were making it in the job market.

Others had very specific recommendations, including:

One of the best ways would've been a job bank for people with disabilities and hiring someone to help you in the process, like a job counselor.

Having training in a sheltered workshop that paid at least minimum wage to begin with. Having opportunities available in something I'd be interested in and something that had value to me.

During this last set of questions, one person offered a serious endorsement:

MCT (Mobile Community Treatment). DMH funded, based in Westfield and Springfield. You had access to your counselor or some other social worker every day of the week. The emotional support that you got there was no where else: it kept you from regressing back to the hopeless/helpless feelings that permeated my entire adult life. MCT gave me bus tokens to get to work. I had to quit my first job (because my boss started smoking in the office and that made me sick) and my social worker encouraged me to not give up, not to believe I would never have another chance—she would counter everything negative I said.

Current Job Satisfaction

When asked what they liked most about their job, the most common response by far was the quality of people with whom they worked (6 respondents), followed by those who liked the qualities of their job (3 respondents). As such, respondents focused on job duties and the community of people surrounding them at work:

Working with others, building friendships. It's something I can do; I feel good about it. Being with people: talking to others, being with them. Having the chance to work with ordinary people in the workplace, which I'd never done before: it makes me feel normal-like a normal human being.

The bosses are nice, the people are nice. It's good work; I like it. Maybe I need a change. It's something I'm so used to doing. It's a routine. When you have a job to do, you have to do it. It gets routine.

Keeps me in touch with other consumers, talking about what we are most concerned about. It's at home, it allows for times when my illness gets in the way.

It gives me motivation to get out of the house, have an ability to meet people and to help the person I'm working with.

I like working outdoors when it's warm out. The people are nice, the boss is good. My coworkers are good. That I get paid. Helps me support myself.

Driving different cars because I like automobiles—and it uses my skills well.

Pampering the flowers—you get to hold them in your hand and wipe them off. It's time that's set at your own pace, you don't have to go fast; you have your own privacy and quiet—no one bothers you.

Consumers were also asked what they liked least about their job, and the response categories varied greatly. (The fact that consumers did not like something about their job did not necessarily make them want to quit.) Two cited problems with transportation, both commenting

that they were at the mercy of the bus system. Three people found their job tasks physically or emotionally draining, with another feeling demeaned because “*Cleaning toilets is something I did 30 years ago and now I’m back to the same minimum wage. It makes me think I have not gotten anywhere.*” Other comments included:

It’s boring. Physically it’s hard and tiring to stand in one place for six hours. Being at work with very little content with people is isolating; it’s not like working in the office.

It’s frustrating talking to people on the phone to gather information and clarify details. [It’s] emotionally draining and underpaid. No time off with pay.

Three people found some of their minor job tasks challenging and frustrating:

When I gotta punch in and I don’t get the time right, I have to call somebody to help me. The hardest part is being so very conscientious about the driving challenges; the car dealer can be pushy and traffic can be very heavy and chaotic (many cars, many people, at times and everybody’s going at the same time without a monitor to keep people in line.

Sometimes a difficulty finding where the items go.

Another indication of job satisfaction is how consumers view their job longevity, and impediments to staying on the job longer than they had planned. Of the ten respondents:

- three expected to stay with their job for no more than 3 months
- one had an expectation of staying for not more than a year.
- six wanted to stay as long as they could, or in one case until they get a college degree

Those who did not expect to stay on the job very long (eg., 3 months) did not see any impediments to staying that long. (Given their low expectations, this was not surprising.) Of the remainder, the two major concerns were: 1) that their supervisor would be changed (3 people), 2) that their hours would change. (4 people). The person who was expecting to stay exactly one year was concerned “*that a poor supervisor could drive me out. If the supervisor said I wasn’t doing it right when I think I’m doing a good job. It’s happened before—I thought I was doing it right and he said I wasn’t, that there was more work to it, so I quit because my confidence came right now.*”

Of those concerned about the consistency of their hours, two people were concerned that their hours would decrease, and two others were concerned that they would increase:

*Hours increasing to the point where I would lose my “disability”.
Being overwhelmed by being asked to do more than six hours a week during the school year.*

I think if I got less hours.

Not enough work.

For these consumers, it appears that for people who want to stay on the job the key to holding on to them is consistent hours and regular and good supervision.

Consumers were asked how their jobs could be more rewarding. Six of ten people had responses, though they were multiple. Answers broke down into four categories:

More opportunities for peer relationships (4 people)

More interaction with other employees. I'd like to be part of a team instead of working alone/ being isolated.

Interaction with people in an office setting.

I'd like to have the opportunity to interact with people more (in a social way).

Better communication among peers.

Opportunities to Improve Job Performance (3 people)

Using my skills better-so I can keep busier with a wider range of tasks.

Driving more expensive cars, the ones I drive in my lane are older and under a certain value. I'd like to drive for the high-line lane again.

Hiring better workers who want to work or can work better. We could get our job done faster and better.

Better Workplace Environment (3)

-air-conditioning

-better equipment

-Having a booth to sit... Being able to sit down sometimes.

Better Supervision (2 people)

Share with me how I am doing, good or bad.

More attention, so I can go to him when I need to. Right now I can't because I don't know him (but I know who he is and we've talked). Most of the time he's not around.

Employment Supports

Six of the 10 employed individuals surveyed said that they were receiving some sort of outside employment supports while working. Two individuals were obtaining help from MRC, two were working with the Lighthouse clubhouse, and two were receiving DMH case management services. In almost all situations, workers were available to talk to the consumers about improving their work and adjusting to their new work situations. In most cases, consumers were satisfied with this assistance: *"From the Lighthouse: employment unit provides me with information on social security benefits and how to adjust to work, in all ways including income changes."*

B5. Reflections on Careers and Future Plans by Individuals Who Are Employed or Training for Employment

Respondents who were currently employed or training for employment were asked additional questions about their satisfaction with their career and their future plans. The following explanation describes their responses.

Feelings of Success

When consumers who were either currently employed or training for employment were asked about their present employment success, answers differed by employment status group. Of the currently employed consumers, four said they were successful, five said they were unsuccessful, and one gave reasons he or she was successful as well as reasons he or she wasn't successful. Of the survey participants who were in training for employment, seven said they were successful and two said they were unsuccessful.

A comparison of self-identified successful individuals in the currently employed group with the self-identified successful individuals in the group training for employment revealed different reasons for feelings of employment success. (See Table 6.) In the currently employed group, two felt successful because they felt they could take care of themselves. As one consumer said, ". . . *I feel successful because I'm able to carry on.*" Other employed participants felt successful because they were satisfied with their jobs, their accomplishments, and the supports available to them in the community.

Meanwhile, over half of the group of individuals training for employment who felt successful referred to their satisfaction with their accomplishments. These individuals seemed proud of their achievements. One such survey respondent said, ". . . *I've learned to deal with the trials I've gone through . . . I step up to learning, try new things, and keep going.*" Over 40 percent of the consumers in employment training felt successful because they were satisfied with their jobs and job performances. Two individuals in the job training group felt successful because they could take care of themselves.

As Table 6 shows, the individuals who did not feel successful identified many of the same topology for their lack of success, although it differed according to individuals' job status. Half of currently employed individuals who did not feel successful were concerned about their inability to deal with their mental illness, such as the person who said, "***I'm mentally ill. Once you're put in the hospital, people don't forget it.***" Other reasons for feeling unsuccessful included participants' concern of their inability to take care of themselves and their lack of satisfaction with their jobs and accomplishments. Meanwhile, only two survey respondents in job training did not feel successful. These respondents were dissatisfied with their current job situations, their accomplishments, and the available community supports.

Career Plans

When consumers were asked whether they had any career goals, all but one of the 10 currently employed consumer respondents answered in the affirmative. Only one of the nine consumers in employment training did not mention career plans. A few of these consumers (one in the currently employed group and two in the job training group) mentioned goals related to the

availability of more work hours and money. Most of these individuals had specific types of careers in mind. As Table 7 shows, careers in mental health treatment and advocacy and careers in helping professions like social work and nursing were listed the most. Also mentioned were careers in technical fields, administration, trades, and manual labor.

When asked about the steps they would need to take to achieve their career goals, the responses of individuals who currently had jobs differed somewhat from the responses of individuals in job training. (See Table 8.) Almost three-quarters of consumers with jobs said that they would need more education. Over 40 percent of these employed individuals said that they needed to work on their job searches, and almost a third said that they needed more job training and experience.

Consumers in job training had a wider variety of steps they needed to take. Education and job search strategies were important for them, since these steps were mentioned by two-thirds and one-fifth of job trainees, respectively. However, one-fifth of these individuals also listed the need to solve logistical issues like transportation problems, and one-fifth recognized the need for support from family and friends. One such support-focused consumer already had friends a potential new workplace and wanted to get a job there *“because having people you know there won’t make it as scary as when you don’t know people . . .”* Finally, a few of these job trainees thought that they needed to obtain more job skills and experience or learn to control their mental illnesses better.

Obstacles to Future Career Plans

All but one of 18 consumers who were asked about obstacles to fulfilling their career goals believed that such barriers existed. As Table 9 shows, the most commonly mentioned obstacle for the remaining 17 consumers was the lack of needed education, training or skills; over one-third of the survey participants recognized this obstacle, and some had tried to overcome this problem in the past with little success. A consumer in this situation wanted to get a GED but recalled, *“MCDS had basic classes, math retraining, etc., and I went there for two weeks and I quit because I got frustrated.”*

Many other obstacles existed, however. Almost one-quarter of respondents listed their need for transportation or housing near their jobs, and almost one-quarter talked about their lack of self-esteem and confidence. Two individuals recognized their lack of good job search skills or good work habits as impediments to their career growth, two recognized the limitations caused by their physical or mental illnesses, and two talked about their fear of losing government benefits. Also mentioned as obstacles to career fulfillment were fear of new situations, lack of available jobs, and lack of support at work.

When asked about solutions to these problems, 13 of the 15 consumers who answered the question had suggestions; two provided no ideas. As Table 10 shows, almost 40 percent of the consumers with suggestions focused on ways to improve their job searches. Nearly one-fourth suggested that developing more life skills and social skills would help them, and nearly one-fourth believed that obtaining more work experience would improve career prospects. Two respondents suggested each of the following: learning more about the availability of government supports, continuing treatment for their illnesses, exploring other sources of transportation, and

developing more confidence to take risks. Finally, only one of the consumers who answered the question mentioned pursuing further education.

IV. DISCUSSION

MCST's survey of mental health consumers in western Massachusetts revealed some encouraging information. Almost everyone surveyed wanted to be employed. First and foremost, a majority of consumers interviewed wanted to be self-sufficient and independent, which employment offers from both a financial and social perspective. Additionally, about one-half were looking for a day structure that would keep them stable and healthy and at the same time give meaning to their lives. Many of those were looking for a sense of confidence and well-being they would get from a job well done.

Those interviewed noted several significant obstacles to employment. Almost all interviewed had not worked for a long period of time and had received disability income (prior to their current job if working). For many during that period, life had lost meaning and their day had lost form- few people in their lives had expectations of them beyond the hope that they could stay out of a hospital. Many of those interviewed expressed some level of concern about whether they could (again) deal with the responsibilities/expectations of employment (egs, adhering to specific hours, responding to training, handling time pressures), and in being in an environment where their mental health condition would not be a safe topic of conversation (eg., disclosure issues.) In short, many consumers recognized that they faced a "culture shock"- new people and new experiences that they would be introduced to.

Consumers were also deterred because they thought they lacked vocational skills and an educational background, and some did not necessarily want to work for low wages after having received social security benefits. While these deterrents are in some ways generalizable to anyone who has been out of work for some time, the stigma and effects of mental illness seem to create a stronger dampening of one's self-confidence. Despite all of this, as noted, this group wanted to work.

The different employment-related experiences of survey participants provided some unique perspectives that broadened the understanding of working and mental illness. Consumers training for employment were receiving a wide variety of services, with a number emphasizing the direct assistance in developing resumes and filling out job applications as critical. Employed people with mental illnesses had used a variety of services, including programs supported by DMH, to prepare for and find their jobs. **All people when referring to work emphasized the importance of strong relationships with supervisors and coworkers, satisfying job tasks and regular and continuous hours for a good work experience.**

It is significant to note that of those not working or in training to work, most wanted to be employed. Reasons for leaving a previous job varied, but it was often due to personal issues, physical problems or mental problems; it is not clear if consumers were provided appropriate support after losing a job, as some found it challenging to return to work or job training without

good supports. We recommend that those who lose a job be supported, as many may be ready to return to work immediately or a short time thereafter.

Survey participants who were working currently or who were in employment training had many different career aspirations. Most wanted to work as mental health advocates, mental health treatment workers, or other human service related professionals, perhaps because of their own experiences as consumers of mental health services. Other careers mentioned included vocations in technical fields like engineering and computer science; trades like electronics; administration; and manual labor. Survey respondents realized that achieving these career goals would require more education, better job search strategies, and other changes in their lives. These participants recognized that obstacles like low self-esteem and lack of transportation were preventing them from achieving their goals.

Policy Implications:

- Since most DMH consumers think about working and in fact want to work, all would benefit from ongoing and individualized counseling and support about the possibility of their working.
- Consumer's fears of and aspirations for work need to be explored and addressed in the job training and job search process. Finding the right job, with appropriate support, supervision and training seem to be most important
- Once on the job, almost all consumers desire what most workers want- regular feedback, peer camaraderie, and a "slap on the back" occasionally for a job well done. While most workers would benefit from this support, people who have been out of work due to mental illness are more vulnerable in their absence due to greater struggles with self-esteem and a lack of experience in the workplace. Attention to a consistent work schedule is critical.

As such, it seems important to find "good" employers, who employ effective supervision techniques; and better yet, finding "mentors" in the workplace, who could help them adjust to their new environments, provide regular attention and feedback, and career goals guidance.

- Consumers' chances of succeeding in the workplace would improve greatly if they received additional help outside the job. After consumers obtain jobs, DMH-support services could ensure that they retain adequate care for their mental and physical health needs. People would be less likely to leave jobs if they received guidance in understanding and maneuvering workplace rules and in requesting reasonable accommodations. (This could include basic education on the Americans with Disabilities Act.) Those who lose their jobs could be tracked so that the reasons for their workplace problems could be addressed and similar problems could be avoided in the future.

V. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Table 1: Demographics of Survey Participants by Employment Status

	Recently Unemployed (n=9)	Recently Employed (n=9)	Training for Employment (n=13)	Currently Employed (n=10)	ALL PARTICIPANTS (n=41)
# Females	6 (66.7%)	6 (66.7%)	8 (61.5%)	4 (40.0%)	24 (58.5%)
Age					
Mean	36.6	44.1	43.7	46.2	42.8
Median	37.0	45.0	48.0	47.5	46.0
Range	25-53	32-58	20-58	28-58	20-58
Housing					
Living alone w/o professional's help	3 (33.3%)	4 (44.4%)	6 (46.2%)	7 (70.0%)	20 (48.8%)
Sharing home with one other person	3 (33.3%)	3 (33.3%)	1 (7.7%)	0 (0%)	7 (17.1%)
Living in supported housing	2 (22.2%)	2 (22.2%)	2 (15.4%)	1 (10.0%)	7 (17.1%)
Living in group home	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	4 (30.8%)	1 (10.0%)	5 (12.2%)
Not living at stable address	1 (11.1%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (10.0%)	2 (4.9%)
Marital Status ¹					
Single	5 (55.6%)	2 (22.2%)	8 (61.5%)	8 (80.0%)	23 (56.1%)
Married	3 (33.3%)	4 (44.4%)	1 (7.7%)	1 (10.0%)	9 (22.0%)
Divorced	3 (33.3%)	3 (33.3%)	1 (7.7%)	1 (10.0%)	5 (12.2%)
Other	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (7.7%)	0 (0%)	1 (7.3%)
# with Children	3 (33.3%)	7 (77.8%)	7 (53.8%)	4 (40.0%)	21 (51.2%)

Note: Italicized percentages were calculated by dividing the number of participants in each employment status category with a listed characteristic by the total number of individuals in each employment status category.

¹One participant in the “Recently Unemployed” category and two participants in the “Training for Employment” category did not reveal their marital status. However, these individuals were included in the calculations for the percentages of participants in each marital status for their respective categories and for the entire group of survey participants.

**Table 2: Reasons Consumers Desire Employment
by Employment Status**

Reasons Employment Desired	Recently Unemployed (n=8)	Recently Employed (n=8)	Training for Employment (n=13)	Currently Employed (n=10)	TOTALS (n=39)
Want independence, self-sufficiency, & money	6 <i>(75%)</i>	6 <i>(75%)</i>	10 <i>(76.9%)</i>	8 <i>(80.0%)</i>	30 <i>(76.9%)</i>
Want benefits of structured activity	7 <i>(87.5%)</i>	3 <i>(37.5%)</i>	5 <i>(38.5%)</i>	3 <i>(30.0%)</i>	18 <i>(46.2%)</i>
Want a sense of confidence & well-being	1 <i>(12.5%)</i>	4 <i>(50.0%)</i>	3 <i>(23.1%)</i>	2 <i>(20.0%)</i>	10 <i>(25.6%)</i>
Want to make contribution to society/others	1 <i>(12.5%)</i>	1 <i>(12.5%)</i>	1 <i>(7.7%)</i>	1 <i>(10.0%)</i>	4 <i>(10.3%)</i>
Want to work/be with other people	1 <i>(12.5%)</i>	1 <i>(12.5%)</i>	1 <i>(7.7%)</i>	1 <i>(10.0%)</i>	4 <i>(10.3%)</i>
Don't want to be burden	0 <i>(0%)</i>	2 <i>(25.0%)</i>	1 <i>(7.7%)</i>	0 <i>(0%)</i>	3 <i>(7.7%)</i>
Want benefits specific to job	0 <i>(0%)</i>	1 <i>(12.5%)</i>	0 <i>(0%)</i>	2 <i>(20.0%)</i>	3 <i>(7.7%)</i>

Note: Italicized percentages were calculated by dividing the number of individuals in each employment status category who mentioned a listed reason for desiring employment by the total number of individuals from a location's employment status category who answered the question.

**Table 3: Consumers' Life Improvements from Employment
by Employment Status**

Life Improvements from Employment	Recently Unemployed (n=9)	Recently Employed (n=8)	Training for Employment (n=6)	Currently Employed (n=9)	TOTALS (n=32)
Independence, self-sufficiency, money	5 <i>(55.6%)</i>	6 <i>(75.0%)</i>	3 <i>(50.0%)</i>	6 <i>(66.7%)</i>	20 <i>(62.5%)</i>
Sense of confidence pride, & well-being	2 <i>(22.2%)</i>	4 <i>(50.0%)</i>	4 <i>(66.7%)</i>	6 <i>(66.7%)</i>	16 <i>(50.0%)</i>
Mental and physical health benefits of structured activity	6 <i>(66.7%)</i>	3 <i>(37.5%)</i>	2 <i>(33.3%)</i>	4 <i>(44.4%)</i>	15 <i>(46.9%)</i>
Benefits to social life	0 <i>(0%)</i>	5 <i>(62.5%)</i>	0 <i>(0%)</i>	1 <i>(11.1%)</i>	6 <i>(18.8%)</i>
Education & learning	0 <i>(0%)</i>	0 <i>(0%)</i>	2 <i>(33.3%)</i>	2 <i>(22.2%)</i>	4 <i>(12.5%)</i>

Note: Italicized percentages were calculated by dividing the number of individuals in each employment status category who mentioned a listed life improvement by the total number of individuals from a location's employment status category who answered the question.

**Table 4: Deterrents to Consumer Employment
by Consumer Employment Status**

Deterrents	Recently Unemployed (n=8)	Recently Employed (n=9)	Training for Employment (n=12)	TOTALS (n=29)
Fear of new experiences and people	2 <i>(25.0%)</i>	4 <i>(44.4%)</i>	6 <i>(50.0%)</i>	12 <i>(41.4%)</i>
Lack of appropriate jobs	4 <i>(50.0%)</i>	2 <i>(22.2%)</i>	4 <i>(33.3%)</i>	10 <i>(34.5%)</i>
Lack of good work habits	2 <i>(25.0%)</i>	5 <i>(55.6%)</i>	3 <i>(25.0%)</i>	10 <i>(34.5%)</i>
Lack of money, benefits	2 <i>(25.0%)</i>	4 <i>(44.4%)</i>	4 <i>(33.3%)</i>	10 <i>(34.5%)</i>
Lack of self-confidence, self-esteem	1 <i>(12.5%)</i>	6 <i>(66.7%)</i>	3 <i>(25.0%)</i>	10 <i>(34.5%)</i>
Unhelpful services, other services needed	3 <i>(37.5%)</i>	5 <i>(55.6%)</i>	2 <i>(16.7%)</i>	10 <i>(34.5%)</i>
Lack of education, skills, experience	3 <i>(37.5%)</i>	1 <i>(11.1%)</i>	5 <i>(41.7%)</i>	9 <i>(31.0%)</i>
Handicaps from physical or mental illness	2 <i>(25.0%)</i>	3 <i>(33.3%)</i>	2 <i>(16.7%)</i>	7 <i>(24.1%)</i>
Lack of support from community, other people	2 <i>(25.0%)</i>	2 <i>(22.2%)</i>	2 <i>(16.7%)</i>	6 <i>(20.7%)</i>
Lack of job accommodations	2 <i>(25.0%)</i>	1 <i>(11.1%)</i>	0 <i>(0%)</i>	3 <i>(10.3%)</i>

Note: Italicized percentages were calculated by dividing the number of individuals in each employment status category who mentioned a listed employment deterrent by the total number of individuals from a location's employment status category who answered the question.

Table 5: Demographics of Individuals Training for Employment Who Completed Entire Survey and All Individuals Training for Employment Included in Survey

	Completed Survey (n=7)	Included in Survey (n=13)
# Females	5 <i>(71.4%)</i>	8 <i>(61.5%)</i>
Age		
Mean	39.7	43.7
Median	46	48.0
Range	20-58	20-58
Housing		
Living alone w/o professional's help	3 <i>(42.9%)</i>	6 <i>(46.2%)</i>
Sharing home with one other person	0 <i>(0%)</i>	1 <i>(7.7%)</i>
Living in supported housing	1 <i>(14.3%)</i>	2 <i>(15.4%)</i>
Living in group home	3 <i>(42.9%)</i>	4 <i>(30.8%)</i>
Not living at stable address	0 <i>(0%)</i>	0 <i>(0%)</i>
Marital Status ¹		
Single	4 <i>(57.1%)</i>	8 <i>(61.5%)</i>
Married	1 <i>(14.3%)</i>	1 <i>(7.7%)</i>
Divorced	0 <i>(0%)</i>	1 <i>(7.7%)</i>
Other	1 <i>(14.3%)</i>	1 <i>(7.7%)</i>
# with Children	4 <i>(57.1%)</i>	7 <i>(53.8%)</i>

Note: Italicized percentages were calculated by dividing the number of individuals in each employment status category who mentioned a listed employment deterrent by the total number of individuals from a location's employment status category who answered the question.

¹One participant who completed the entire survey and two participants who were included in the survey did not reveal their marital status. However, these individuals were included in the calculations for the percentages of participants in each marital status listed.

**Table 6: Reasons for Consumers' Feelings of Success and Non-Success
by Employment Status**

Categories on which Consumers Based Judgments of Own Success	<u>Currently Employed</u>		<u>Training for Employment</u>		TOTALS (n=20)
	# w/ Feelings of Success (n=5)	# w/ Feelings of Non-Success (n=6)	# w/ Feelings of Success (n=7)	# w/ Feelings of Non-Success (n=2)	
Satisfaction with accomplishments	1 <i>(20.0%)</i>	1 <i>(16.7%)</i>	4 <i>(57.1%)</i>	1 <i>(50.0%)</i>	7 <i>(35.0%)</i>
Satisfaction w/ current job and job performance	1 <i>(20.0%)</i>	2 <i>(33.3%)</i>	3 <i>(42.9%)</i>	1 <i>(50.0%)</i>	7 <i>(35.0%)</i>
Ability to take care of self	2 <i>(40.0%)</i>	2 <i>(33.3%)</i>	2 <i>(28.6%)</i>	0 <i>(0%)</i>	6 <i>(30.0%)</i>
Ability to deal with mental illness	0 <i>(0%)</i>	3 <i>(50.0%)</i>	0 <i>(0%)</i>	1 <i>(50.0%)</i>	4 <i>(20.0%)</i>
Availability of needed supports in community	1 <i>(20.0%)</i>	0 <i>(0%)</i>	0 <i>(0%)</i>	0 <i>(0%)</i>	1 <i>(5.0%)</i>

Note: Italicized percentages were calculated by dividing the number of individuals in each employment status category who mentioned a listed success-related category by the total number of individuals from a location's employment status category who answered the question.

¹ "Currently Employed" consumers included four consumers who said they were successful, 5 consumers who said they were not successful, and one consumer who gave ways in which he or she was successful as well as ways in which he or she was not successful. This ambiguous consumer's comments were included in the totals for the successful and the unsuccessful consumers.

Table 7: Career Interests of Consumers by Employment Status

Career	Training for Employment (n=5)	Currently Employed (n=8)	TOTALS (n=13)
Mental health advocacy or treatment	3 <i>(60.0%)</i>	3 <i>(37.5%)</i>	6 <i>(46.2%)</i>
Helping or care-taking	1 <i>(20.0%)</i>	3 <i>(37.5%)</i>	4 <i>(30.8%)</i>
Technical, engineering, or computers	1 <i>(20.0%)</i>	1 <i>(12.5%)</i>	2 <i>(15.4%)</i>
Trades (i.e. Electronics)	1 <i>(20.0%)</i>	1 <i>(12.5%)</i>	2 <i>(15.4%)</i>
Administrative	0 <i>(0%)</i>	1 <i>(12.5%)</i>	1 <i>(7.7%)</i>
Manual labor	0 <i>(0%)</i>	1 <i>(12.5%)</i>	1 <i>(7.7%)</i>

Note: Italicized percentages were calculated by dividing the number of individuals from in each employment status category who mentioned a career by the total number of individuals from a location's employment status category who answered the question.

Table 8: Consumers' Steps to Achieve Career Goals by Employment Status

Necessary Steps	Training for Employment (n=9)	Currently Employed (n=8)	TOTALS (n=17)
Obtain education	6 <i>(66.7%)</i>	5 <i>(71.4%)</i>	11 <i>(68.8%)</i>
Search for job	2 <i>(22.2%)</i>	3 <i>(42.9%)</i>	5 <i>(31.3%)</i>
Obtain job training and experience	1 <i>(11.1%)</i>	2 <i>(28.6%)</i>	3 <i>(18.8%)</i>
Obtain interpersonal support	2 <i>(22.2%)</i>	0 <i>(0%)</i>	2 <i>(12.5%)</i>
Solve logistical issues (i.e., transportation)	2 <i>(22.2%)</i>	0 <i>(0%)</i>	2 <i>(12.5%)</i>
Control mental illness	1 <i>(11.1%)</i>	0 <i>(0%)</i>	1 <i>(6.3%)</i>

Note: Italicized percentages were calculated by dividing the number of individuals in each employment status category who mentioned a listed step by the total number of individuals from a location's employment status category who answered the question.

Table 9: Consumers' Obstacles to Achieving Career Goals by Employment Status

Obstacles	Training for Employment (n=8)	Currently Employed (n=9)	TOTALS (n=17)
Lack of education, skills, training	3 <i>(37.5%)</i>	3 <i>(33.3%)</i>	6 <i>(35.3%)</i>
Lack of self-esteem and confidence	1 <i>(12.5%)</i>	3 <i>(33.3%)</i>	4 <i>(23.5%)</i>
Lack of transportation or housing near job	1 <i>(12.5%)</i>	3 <i>(33.3%)</i>	4 <i>(23.5%)</i>
Fear of losing government benefits	1 <i>(12.5%)</i>	1 <i>(11.1%)</i>	2 <i>(11.8%)</i>
Lack of good job search skills or good work habits	0 <i>(0%)</i>	2 <i>(22.2%)</i>	2 <i>(11.8%)</i>
Limitations of mental and/or physical illnesses	1 <i>(12.5%)</i>	1 <i>(11.1%)</i>	2 <i>(11.8%)</i>
Fear of new situations	0 <i>(0%)</i>	1 <i>(11.1%)</i>	1 <i>(5.9%)</i>
Lack of available jobs	1 <i>(12.5%)</i>	0 <i>(0%)</i>	1 <i>(5.9%)</i>
Lack of support at work	1 <i>(12.5%)</i>	0 <i>(0%)</i>	1 <i>(5.9%)</i>

Note: Italicized percentages were calculated by dividing the number of individuals in each employment status category who mentioned a listed obstacle by the total number of individuals from a location's employment status category who answered the question.

Table 10: Consumers' Solutions to Career-Related Obstacles by Employment Status

Solutions	Training for Employment (n=3)	Currently Employed (n=10)	TOTALS (n=13)
Improve job search	1 <i>(33.3%)</i>	4 <i>(40.0%)</i>	5 <i>(38.5%)</i>
Develop life skills and social skills to improve self	0 <i>(0%)</i>	3 <i>(30.0%)</i>	3 <i>(23.1%)</i>
Obtain work experience	1 <i>(33.3%)</i>	2 <i>(20.0%)</i>	3 <i>(23.1%)</i>
Consider other sources of transportation	0 <i>(0%)</i>	2 <i>(20.0%)</i>	2 <i>(15.4%)</i>
Continue treatment for illnesses	1 <i>(33.3%)</i>	1 <i>(10.0%)</i>	2 <i>(15.4%)</i>
Develop confidence to take risks	0 <i>(0%)</i>	2 <i>(20.0%)</i>	2 <i>(15.4%)</i>
Learn more about availability of government supports	1 <i>(33.3%)</i>	1 <i>(10.0%)</i>	2 <i>(15.4%)</i>
Obtain more education	0 <i>(0%)</i>	1 <i>(10.0%)</i>	1 <i>(7.7%)</i>

Note: Italicized percentages were calculated by dividing the number of individuals in each employment status category who mentioned a listed solution by the total number of individuals from a location's employment status category who answered the question.