



Strategies, actions and interventions that Case Managers and Direct Service Providers can implement to create better employment outcomes

- Encourage employment goals when creating a treatment plan.
- Encourage consumers to talk about what a "recovered" life might look like in their life (*"recovery" meaning that an individual has created a life not defined by their illness*).
- Encourage consumers to simply practice describing themselves to you in “non-disabled” ways (moving away from diagnosis, symptoms and hospitalizations to interests, strengths and past work experiences – volunteer or otherwise).
- Help consumers, unsure that they have any marketable qualities, identify concrete experiences, strengths, personal characteristics, skills or interests that could make them appealing to employers.
- Move away from encouraging pre-vocational activities and support any effort to work in a real job - part-time, temporary, full time, etc. (*Research out of Boston University has shown that participation in pre-vocational activities do little to prepare consumers for working. Other research shows that the best preparation for a job ... is a job*).
- Know where consumers fall regarding employment on the “Need for Change Survey”. Follow up with individuals who are “Interested but Not Ready”, ascertaining if they are: retired; fear benefit loss; fear failure; are uncomfortable with the unknown; do not think they are capable enough; other?
- Need For Change Scale can be found in the Maine Can Work 2022 workbook: <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/sites/maine.gov.dhhs/files/inline-files/Maine-Can-Work-7-Edition-June2022.pdf>
- Use “Motivational Interviewing” techniques to address employment reluctance.

- Move quickly to create an *Action Plan* when an individual shows interest in employment.
- Have the individual visit employment sites and just observe people working.
- Provide support for someone considering or starting a job by:
 - Visiting the job site with the individual before starting or applying for the job
 - Driving the individual to the job the first day or two.
- Help consumers realize that the illness is seldom a reason why individuals with mental illness lose jobs
- When addressing the financial benefits of working encourage the consumer to identify something concrete that they would like to save for with the additional income.
- Provide help with problems related to transportation to the job that include ride sharing, bus coaching, assistance from friends or family and car ownership.
- When a consumer goes on a date that doesn't go well most competent, caring clinicians would ask what went wrong, what a person would do differently next time if anything and encourage them to try again. There should be a similar response to a job effort that doesn't go well.
- Invest as much time in someone who has started a potentially life changing job as you would for someone who is having a life changing crisis.