

A Seat at The Table for Mental Health



Employment for People with Mental Health Disorders

Employment plays an important role in mental health and wellness. For people with mental health conditions, employment can promote recovery, social acceptance, and independence. It also can provide people with a critical sense of purpose and self-worth. Primary barriers to employment for people with mental health conditions are stigma and discrimination, fear of losing government assistance, and inadequate treatment and vocational services.ⁱ

Key Facts

- Only 22% of people with serious mental health illness are estimated to be employed, about 1/3 of the general U.S. population's labor participation rate.ⁱⁱ
- Only 12% of those with serious mental illness are employed full-time.
- 1 in 25 adults in the U.S. (9.8 million people) experiences a serious mental illness that limits one of more major life activities in a given year.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Two-thirds of people with serious mental illness would like to work.^{iv}
- "Supported employment" programs, which match individuals with jobs that align with their interests and skills while providing them with on-the-job assistance, can be very effective at improving employment rates.^v
- The Illinois Individual Placement and Support (IPS) offers a one-stop source of services for Illinois residents with psychiatric disabilities, their families, their employers, and service providers (<http://www.illinoisips.org/>).^{vi}

Possible Questions for Discussion

- How can employment help people living with mental health conditions?
- What are the barriers to employment for people with living with mental health conditions?
- How can these barriers to employment be addressed? What role can supported employment programs play?
- What are the benefits for an employer who participates in a supported employment program such as IPS?

Supporting Employment for People with Mental Health Conditions

Resources for Individuals with Mental Health Conditions

- Visit the Illinois Individual Placement and Support (IPS) website: <http://www.illinoisips.org/>.
- Look through information from the Illinois Department of Human Services on IPS and advice on how to conduct an effective job search: <http://www.dhs.state.il.us/OneNetLibrary/27897/documents/Brochures/4615.pdf>.
- Visit an Illinois Department of Human Services' Family Community Resource Center. Call (800) 843-6154 to find the nearest location to you.

How Families and Friends Can Support Employment

- Encourage your loved one or friend to reach out to their mental health treatment provider to see whether IPS services are already available to them.
- Be supportive of your loved one or friend's desire to work and help form a key part of their support network – finding a job often isn't easy, and many people need encouragement after unsuccessful job applications.
- Help your loved one or friend avoid predatory advertisements that promise large amounts of money for minimal amounts of work.
- Talk to mental health advocate groups (e.g. local NAMI chapter) as well as personal contacts in your community who can help.

Why Employers Should Join Supported Employment Programs

- Learn the benefits of creating a more inclusive business culture that benefits from a wider range of people's distinctive talents.^{vii}
- People with disabilities – including mental health conditions – can bring unique insights to your strategy, products, marketing, and business processes.
- Tax credits and incentives may be available to participating employers.

About The Kennedy Forum

Just as President Kennedy rallied the nation to dream big and set audacious goals 50 years ago, The Kennedy Forum in Illinois is working toward lasting change in the way mental health and addictions are considered and treated. Our mission is to end stigma against mental health and substance use disorders in both attitudes and practice. We believe that strong, bold leadership, strategic collaboration with partners and concerted action, it is possible to build a future with a health system that fully recognizes that the brain is part of the body and all persons are treated with dignity. Join us at www.thekennedyforumillinois.org

RESOURCES

- Illinois Individual Placement and Support (IPS): <http://www.illinoisips.org/>
- NAMI Illinois, IPS / Supported Employment: <https://namiillinois.org/ips-supported-employment/>
- SAMHSA Supported Employment Evidence-Based Practices Kit: <http://store.samhsa.gov/product/Supported-Employment-Evidence-Based-Practices-EBP-KIT/SMA08-4365>
- Dartmouth University Presentation on IPS Supported Employment: http://www.dartmouth.edu/~charky1/page40/page90/page17/files/ips_se_overview.pdf
- Getting to Work: Promoting Employment of People with Mental Illness: <http://www.bazelon.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=TWG5AEIvqjs%3D&tabid=738>
- Mental Health America, "Meaningful Work and Recovery": <http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/meaningful-work-and-recovery>
- EARN, Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion: <http://www.askearn.org/>

ⁱ Judge David L. Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law, Getting to Work: Promoting Employment of People with Mental Illness <http://www.bazelon.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=TWG5AEIvqjs%3D&tabid=738>

ⁱⁱ Ibid.

ⁱⁱⁱ National Institute of Mental Health, Serious Mental Illness (SMI) Among U.S. Adults, <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/prevalence/serious-mental-illness-smi-among-us-adults.shtml>.

^{iv} Testimony of Dr. Gary Bond before Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Dartmouth Psychiatric Research Center, <https://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/meetings/3-15-11/bond.cfm>

^v Judge David L. Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law, Getting to Work: Promoting Employment of People with Mental Illness <http://www.bazelon.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=TWG5AEIvqjs%3D&tabid=738>

^{vi} NAMI Illinois, IPS / Supported Employment, <https://namiillinois.org/ips-supported-employment/>

^{vii} U.S. Department of Labor, Diverse Perspectives: People with Disabilities Fulfilling Your Business Goals, <https://www.dol.gov/odep/pubs/fact/diverse.htm>.