



JUNE 2009

# RECOVERY TIMES

*Healthy People, Healthy Communities. Let's Make It Happen!*

State of Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services

Thomas A. Kirk, Jr., Ph.D., Commissioner

## Emphasis on: Innovative Employment Services / Approaches

### CEDARCREST HOSPITAL EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Employment Services at DMHAS' Cedarcrest Hospital are continuously evolving to provide a range of opportunities for individuals served. Traditional work experiences within the facility and opportunities for supported or competitive employment in the local community have been in place for four years. These work experiences, along with counseling and education, have enabled both individuals served and staff throughout the facility to view employment as an attainable goal. Employment is now routinely considered in the development of individualized recovery plans.

Within the past year Employment Services have expanded in-house work experiences to include a training program that focuses on developing customer service skills. The program utilizes the New Hope Café – a drop in center within the hospital where coffee, other beverages and snacks are for sale to both individuals served and staff. Individuals who participate in the training program learn and practice retail customer services skills such as handling money, operating a cash register, managing inventory and maintaining a clean, safe, customer friendly environment. Contact with customers also provides opportunities to practice communication and social interaction skills. Initially this program was viewed as a stepping stone to community employment, and although current economic conditions offer limited opportunities for competitive employment, the benefits of the program are still evident in participants' expressed gains in self confidence.

Participants have also responded positively to the newest facility based position, Speaker-Employee Orientation. This position provides individuals with the opportunity to present his/her perspective on their recovery during the orientation for new employees, volunteers, and students. An individual who is selected to participate in this program receives a stipend payment for their services. So far, seven individuals have participated and they have described the experience as empowering. Client presentations have been well received and appear to be meeting the goal of providing additional education with a personal component to increase awareness of the recovery process for individuals we serve.

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### CT BUSINESS HELPING TO PREPARE FUTURE WORKFORCE THROUGH YOUTH MENTORING

The CT business community has embraced mentoring as an investment for creating a viable future workforce in the state. In 2008, the not-for-profit Governor's Prevention Partnership (GPP), one of DMHAS' Prevention Resource Links which serves as the primary advocate for mentoring programs statewide, recognized over 100 businesses that participate in youth mentoring, serving as positive role models to more than 750 youth. From smaller companies focused on architecture and engineering, to major manufacturing, insurance and banking corporations. Businesses that participate in mentoring often allow employees release time from work so that mentoring can take place during the school day.

There are 660,986 children between the ages of 5 and 18 in Connecticut, 25 % of who are living in situations that put them at risk for personal and academic failure and longer term economic failure. The potential loss of these children who may never connect with the state's economic promise has profound implications for CT's citizens, policy makers, educators and business leaders. Mentors help reduce the risk to these children. They create relationships of lasting influence that play a wide range of roles: sounding board, friend, life or career coach, academic advisor. Mentoring has proven results for both the children and the adults who care enough to make the commitment to meet regularly. Young people who have a mentor are more likely to:

- Stay in school and go on to college
- Improve their academic achievement
- Raise their life aspirations
- Stay away from drugs
- Avoid fights and other violent behavior

Recently, Pratt and Whitney employees teamed up with the East Hartford Middle School to create a pilot mentoring program, "The Quest to Fly," an after-school enrichment program promoting science, technology, engineering and

mathematics (STEM) that provides an innovative inquiry-based approach to learning about aeronautics and aerospace. Webster Bank became involved in mentoring several years ago and currently has 83 mentors participating in school-based programs in 22 communities. In Bridgeport, the web-based Wi-mentoring program has expanded to now include 108 mentors matched from Sikorsky Aircraft, Pitney Bowes, RBS, United Illuminating and professionals from the medical field. Whether the model is project-based group mentoring, school-based mentoring or mentoring through the Internet, Connecticut's business and government leaders have invested in a cost-effective prevention strategy that works.

For more information on the above, contact Jill Spinetti, President/CEO, GPP, at 860-523-8042. For more information on DMHAS' Prevention/Health Promotion Unit, contact [Dianne.Harnad@po.state.ct.us](mailto:Dianne.Harnad@po.state.ct.us) or 860-418-6828.

### DEVELOPING CAREER POSSIBILITIES THROUGH EDUCATION

Awareness of one's true career path emerges through a learning process that occurs when individuals pursue personal choices, or goals, regarding vocational activities. Once a person has *decided* upon a particular job or field of work, or volunteer opportunity, and then *acts* upon that decision by actively pursuing their new goal, the journey toward career exploration and self-knowledge begins. Once they *decide*, then *do* – once they *get moving* – they develop the freedom to fine-tune their direction. Sometimes the cycle is repeated several times before one finds the path that's right for them. Often individuals begin the journey along an educational track, while others seek education opportunities because they've recognized that it may help them achieve their career goals.

Although prioritized differently depending upon individual circumstances, most people would include among their personal goals the following vocational activities that:

- Are enjoyable and life giving,
- Foster financial stability and independence,
- Allow for personal growth, and
- Connect us to others in community.

The benefits of education in promoting employment goals and wellness, along with individual choice, career development and a pathway to self-sufficiency, has been the foundation for DMHAS' Southwest CT Mental Health System's (SWCMHS) collaborative with the City of Bridgeport's Adult Education System.

In the past several years, individuals' self-directed goals have shifted significantly to include employment. While the literature suggests that successful employment correlates to levels of education obtained, approximately 37% of individuals served in this region have not completed a high school degree. Barriers identified that frustrate individuals' pursuit of educational activities included lack of support in the classroom specific to students' needs, low involvement in community programs and resources due to lack of awareness, and the absence of motivational support through either a paid or unpaid natural support person. As a pilot initiative, SWCMHS teamed up with Bridgeport Adult Education to develop a pilot initiative that consisted of a ten-week enrichment course for adult students seeking to complete their General Education Diploma (GED). Curricula were designed to assist participants to:

- Discover the importance of good learning habits and time management through class discussion, team projects, and individual assignments;
- Demonstrate the ability to navigate and find information on the GED-level via the Internet, Bridgeport Public Libraries, and Greater Bridgeport Community Provider Resources (learned by practical experiences of field trips to city libraries, obtaining library cards, connecting to tutoring services, and initiating groups for on-going support);
- Become a member of a learning team, and through completion of class assignments, explore personal and professional social skills, learning styles, and group dynamics as it relates to educational team projects; and
- Demonstrate knowledge of next steps after completion of the GED Program by understanding basic knowledge of college level standards and requirements to further your educational goals.

The outcomes thus far have included increased enrollment of individuals registered into the GED Program, increased enrollment of individuals seeking post-secondary education and an agreement with the Adult Educational System to continue our collaboration and embedment of our course being offered at the Adult Education Center in Bridgeport. We look forward to continued learning for all of us.

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## **EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT: PARTNERS IN RECOVERY**

DMHAS' Western CT Mental Health Network (WCMHN), including the Danbury, Torrington and Waterbury areas, has been actively involved with integrating people in recovery in educational experiences that lead to and maintain community competitive employment. Last summer, WCMHN took an aggressive step and applied for a Federal/State Transformation grant to train 25 people in recovery from WCMHN in a ten-day structured training program to learn skills in preparation to be recovery support specialists through Recovery Innovations of Arizona. (RIAZ). The goal was to link graduates with mental health providers and to help the graduates to move into full-time or part-time employment.

It is now seven months later and some of the graduates have taken positions as mental health practitioners bringing their education, training and "lived" experiences into the workforce. Other graduates have chosen to use their training within their current jobs or have decided to pursue further education. To continue with moving forward, representatives from WCMHN attended the CT Transformation Network (CTN) meeting and plan to learn more about the new Advocacy Unlimited, Recovery University, and Recovery Support Specialist certification. In addition, the CT Recovery Employment Consultation Service (CRECS), part of Focus on Recovery United, was scheduled to be at the CTN meeting providing additional training and some employment information. The future looks brighter and WCMHN is willing and interested in continuing as an active partner in the recovery movement.

For more information, contact [Elizabeth.Lazariel@po.state.ct.us](mailto:Elizabeth.Lazariel@po.state.ct.us) or 203-805-6414. For information on WCMHN, contact [Colette.Anderson@po.state.ct.us](mailto:Colette.Anderson@po.state.ct.us) or 203-805-6400.

## **HARTFORD EMPLOYMENT COLLABORATIVE (HEC)**

HEC plays a lead role in the sharing of information and is the planning body for employment initiatives in the Hartford area. DMHAS' Capitol Region Mental Health Center's (CRMHC) leadership continues to make it a priority that work is everyone's business. HEC is a resource for employment providers to meet others, share experiences and exchange information. HEC meets quarterly and its two primary functions are to act as a clearinghouse for the sharing of vocational information and as a planning body for the CRMHC *Annual Work Plan* and other employment initiatives in the Hartford area. Participants include CW Resources, Easter Seals, Chrysalis Center, Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, CT Business Leadership Network, New England Assistive Technology (NEAT), Department of Labor, and InterCommunity Mental Health Group. The CRMHC Employment Work Plan objectives are updated quarterly via HEC, with annual review and update of the Plan's goals by a statewide employment subcommittee. Additionally, CRMHC Peer Recovery staff are now managing a CRMHC employment website, which can be accessed via the DMHAS website.

For more information, contact [Karen.Evertson@po.state.ct.us](mailto:Karen.Evertson@po.state.ct.us) or 860-297-0903.

## **INNOVATIVE EMPLOYMENT SERVICES/APPROACHES**

Vocational Rehabilitation Services are an integral part of the Person-Centered Recovery Planning process. Individuals who request vocational services have the opportunity to participate in a wide range of services, including vocational counseling, vocational testing, resume writing, pre-employment skill building, vocational groups, and work placement.

Participants in DMHAS' CT Valley Hospital (CVH) vocational services work closely with their vocational counselors to develop vocational goals and objectives. If the individual's goal is to participate in a Vocational Training Work Program, the vocation counselor works closely with the individual to identify a work location. There are many work locations across the CVH campus, including the Greenhouse, Valley View Cafe, Boutique, Dining Rooms, and Collating Center. These are "real" work experiences: individuals have an opportunity to build important skills that can be transferred to a community vocational setting. Vocational staff oversees the job placement and work closely with the work supervisor on the vocational progress of each employee.

Approximately 150 individuals participate in the Vocational Training Work Program. All participants are paid minimum wage for hours worked. Participants build a variety of skills, including going to work on time; remaining at work for the shift; interacting positively with supervisors and co-workers; learning new technical skills; preparing for community employment; and building confidence. The more productive we are, the better we feel about ourselves. CVH is very proud of its Vocational Program. Staff works hard with individuals to offer them work opportunities within the hospital system that can be translated into competitive employment when they are discharged.

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