

**SURVEY OF EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS IN NYC SPECIFICALLY FUNDED TO  
SERVE PERSONS WITH PSYCHIATRIC DISABILITIES  
May 2001**

**Rationale for Survey**

New York City's capacity to deliver employment services to persons with psychiatric disabilities has never been greater. The growth of and interest in, employment programs for persons with mental illness has exploded during the past decade as a result of innovative program models that have proven to be successful in moving persons with disabilities into the competitive workforce. Once faced with a dearth of employment programs and models, New York City is currently faced with a proliferation of employment services that demand greater attention and accountability.

Prior to 1988, New York City offered individuals with psychiatric disabilities few real options to enter into the competitive workforce. The majority of employment programs were either paid prevocational programs with little to no movement to real competitive work, or sheltered workshop employment that provided below minimum wage, piece rate jobs. The most attractive option was Fountain House's transitional employment, but it was restricted to members of the Fountain House program.

Introduced in the 1980's, supported employment (SE) is an approach to helping people with severe disabilities obtain competitive employment. By the late 1980's, several supported employment programs were operating in New York City as a result of federal demonstration projects, NYC Dept. of Employment-Private Industry Council grants, and New York State Office of Mental Health demonstration projects providing innovative vocational-clinical services to adolescents making the transition to the adult mental health system. Only one of the above funded programs served persons with psychiatric disabilities. In 1990, the New York State Office of Vocational and Educational Services (VESID) funded nine SE programs in New York City specifically to serve persons with psychiatric disabilities. VESID has subsequently funded two additional SE programs in New York City. The New York State Community Mental Health Reinvestment Act of 1993 enabled the New York City Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Alcoholism Services (DMH) to greatly expand the number of supported employment programs for adult consumers with serious and persistent mental illness. Twenty-two (22) new employment programs were established with reinvestment dollars over the last 7 years. In 1995, transitional employment opportunities were expanded through DMH funding of eleven (11) new clubhouse programs throughout New York City.

Employment programs are currently funded by a variety of agencies including VESID, OMH, DMH and HUD. SOMH, DMH and VESID fund 10 different employment program types including assisted competitive employment (ACE) funded through DMH, supported employment intensive funded through VESID, and special employment programs funded through SOMH. A total of 87 separate employment grants have been awarded to 46 different agencies in New York City. Given the success reported in the psychiatric rehabilitation literature of supported employment, it is imperative to conduct a survey of the employment services being administered in New York City to determine the relative strengths and weaknesses of these programs in relation to nationally recognized, exemplary employment program model practices and outcome standards.

**Selection of measure:**

The Quality of Supported Employment Implementation Scale (QSEIS) is a 33-item interviewer-rated checklist designed to measure implementation of supported employment programs for people with severe mental illness. The scale has been field tested in several states, including New Jersey and Kansas. Interviewers averaged 84% agreement in item ratings. Subscale scores are significantly correlated to program outcome data.

The QSEIS has been selected for use in surveying New York City employment programs because it offers comparison to other employment programs across the nation, and allows for within City comparisons between programs of different philosophical origins.

### **Method**

**Sample selection and recruitment-** The New York Work Exchange in collaboration with its funding sources and advisory board will identify the universe of employment programs within New York City funded specifically to serve persons with psychiatric disabilities. More specifically, the Work Exchange will identify the names, telephone, fax numbers and addresses of the Executive Directors of agencies that provide employment programs, and the names, telephone and fax numbers and addresses of the program directors of these employment programs. Program officers of the primary funding source of each of the employment programs identified for this survey will be asked to contact their respective employment programs to notify them of the New York Work Exchange survey and to request full participation and cooperation in the project.

After receiving confirmation that the employment program has been contacted by its funding source, the New York Work Exchange will send a letter to the agency executive director and program director of the employment program introducing the rationale and method of the survey. These letters will be followed up by telephone calls made by the Exchange research associate staff to schedule telephone survey interviews. Telephone survey interviews will begin Monday December 4<sup>th</sup>. Interviews will be administered jointly by two, trained raters. Scoring will be consensus-based, that is, the two trained raters will discuss their independent ratings and arrive at a consensus rating that will be used for scoring purposes. It is anticipated that two interviews will be scheduled each day, one in the morning and one in the afternoon until all programs interviews are completed. Phase one program interviews are expected to be completed by Friday, March 30.

### Data management and analyses

Data is to be entered into SPSS, a computer-based statistical data management and analysis program by research associates. The complete data set will be sent for data analysis to Dr. Gary Bond, an NIMH Research Scientist located at the Indiana University at Purdue University in Indianapolis. Dr. Bond will provide aggregate data analyses as well as individual program reports. These analyses and reports are scheduled to be completed by June 15 contingent upon a delivery of the data by April 1, 2000.

### Staff Training.

Research Associates at the New York Work Exchange will be trained on the use of the QSEIS by research staff hired by Dr. Gary Bond. On-site training is scheduled for Monday and Tuesday, November 27 and 28. Phone consultation and training will continue throughout the interviewing. The trainer will participate in the initial 5 or 6 survey interviews through the use of conference calls to ensure proper administration of the survey instrument. The trainer will be available on an as-needed basis for consultation concerning scale scoring throughout the course of the survey.