

SAMHSA Supported Employment Clinical Guideline

MVP Health Care, as part of its continuing Quality Improvement Program, adopted the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s Supported Employment Evidence-Based Practices toolkit. The full guideline is available at: [Supported Employment Evidence-Based Practices \(EBP\) KIT | SAMHSA Publications and Digital Products](#)

Impact of The Condition

Serious mental illness (SMI) is defined as a mental, behavioral, or emotional disorder resulting in serious functional impairment that substantially interferes with or limits one or more major life activities. The clinical and psychosocial burden of mental illness is particularly concentrated among those who experience disability due to SMI. SAMHSA reports that in 2020, there were an estimated 14.2 million adults aged 18 or older in the United States with SMI. This number represented 5.6% of all U.S. adults. The prevalence of SMI was higher among females (7.0%) than males (4.2%). Young adults aged 18-25 years had the highest prevalence of SMI (9.7%) compared to adults aged 26-49 years (6.9%) and aged 50 and older (3.4%). The prevalence of SMI was highest among the adults reporting two or more races (9.9%), followed by AI/AN (American Indian/Alaskan Native) adults (6.6%). The prevalence of SMI was lowest among NH/OPI (Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander) adults (1.2%).

About 70 percent of adults with serious mental illnesses report a desire to work (Mueser et al., 2001; Rogers et al., 2001). Consumers and families consistently identify finding and keeping jobs as a top priority. Approximately 60 percent of consumers can be successful at working when using SE services (Bond et al., 2001). Finding, obtaining, and sustaining employment while also maintaining access to mental health care and general well-being can be a challenge to many with SMI. [Summary of the Guidelines](#)

People with serious mental illnesses have many strengths, talents, and abilities that are often overlooked, including the ability and motivation to work. Supported Employment (SE) is an evidence-based approach to vocational rehabilitation for people with serious mental illnesses. The approach is to identify competitive employment in the community and to ensure an environment that provides for their needs. This approach is self-guided and draws on motivation, strengths and preferences of a person to determine their own goals. The SE programs are based on a core set of practice principles:

- Consumer Choice – anyone may participate
- Integrated Services – a comprehensive treatment plan with employment, rehabilitation, and clinical specialists
- Competitive Market – jobs from an open labor market and at least minimum wage
- Benefits Counseling with an employment specialist – many people may work and still receive some public benefits
- Timely Support – start looking for jobs early in the program
- Continuous Supports – helping consumers maintain the employment
- Consumer Preferences – making choices based on strengths and preferences

SE services are intended to be a component of an integrated, comprehensive approach to mental health treatment. There are no pre-vocational assessments, trainings or exclusions based on diagnosis or work history. Employment specialists help to explore employment opportunities in the community and provide the follow-along supports. The SE model has been shown to have better outcomes for employment than the traditional approaches of prevocational programming, sheltered work, and transitional employment. SE is one component of meeting the needs of consumers in an environment of limited resources. The SE model, an evidence-based practice, is one of the most effective service strategies available, demonstrating consistent, beneficial outcomes for consumers and decreasing mental health disparities in the community.

MVP Health Care recommends that providers caring for people with SMI consider Supported Employment programs for their patients and that health systems consider using and maintaining high-fidelity SE programs.

In conjunction with these guidelines, MVP Health Care offers Case Management for members with behavioral health conditions. If you would like to refer your patients to the Case Management program, please call the MVP Case Management Department at **1-800-852-7826**.

This guideline is not intended to replace the role of clinical judgment by the physician in the management of this, or any other disease entity. It is an educational guideline to assist in the delivery of good medical care. All treatment decisions are ultimately up to the physician. Where medication recommendations are made, please refer to each health plan's formulary for coverage considerations.

MVP Health Care updates its clinical guidelines at least every two years. The review process is also initiated when new scientific evidence or national standards are published. Practitioners are alerted via the web site and by written notices from the plan via fax or newsletter. A hard copy of the clinical guideline can be requested by calling the MVP Quality Improvement Department at **(800) 777-4793 extension 1-2247**.

References

1. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration: [Supported Employment Evidence-Based Practices \(EBP\) KIT | SAMHSA Publications and Digital Products](#)
2. National Institute of Mental Health: [NIMH » Mental Illness \(nih.gov\)](#)
3. SAMHSA: [Transforming Lives Through Supported Employment \(SE\) Program | SAMHSA](#)