

Plan for Approaching Employers

Consumer name: _____

Medical record number: _____

Date started: _____

Dartmouth Psychiatric Research Center, 2008

(http://dms.dartmouth.edu/dsec/resources/tools/forms/disclosure_worksheet.doc)

Some people who use supported employment services ask their Supported Education and Employment Specialist to talk to employers on their behalf. For instance, if a consumer is interested in factory jobs, the SEES might go out to meet some managers of factories to learn more about the jobs that currently exist there and to explore possible job matches to the client's skills and experience. When SEES talk to employers, they usually tell the employer that they work for an employment program at a mental health program. Sometimes this strategy helps people find work a little more quickly or helps people find a very specific type of job. Further, if a consumer gets hired, the SEES can help talk to the employer in order to mitigate or address any issues the client might face as they make the adjustment to the workplace.

Some people who use supported employment services may not want to give the Supported Education and Employment Specialist permission to talk to employers on their behalf. Instead they may ask for help with job leads, filling out applications, practicing interviewing skills or other things that can help them find a job. People use this strategy when they don't want employers to know they are working with a supported employment program. Many people find that they are successful with jobs by using this approach.

Either option is fine. You should pick the strategy that feels most comfortable to you. It is also ok to change your mind at any time during the job search or after you are hired.

It's important for you and your SEES to talk about the possible pros and cons of introducing the SEES to employers. The reasons that some people would not want to use this approach include:

- Some people are fearful that employers won't hire them if their disability is known. It is true that there is stigma about mental illness and that some employers probably do discriminate. It is also true that some employers are interested in working with programs like supported employment.
- Some people don't mind if their supervisor knows they are working with a program, but they wouldn't want their co-workers to find out. The SEES can ask your supervisor to keep this information confidential but there aren't any guarantees that the information won't slip out.

- Some people say that they do not want to disclose that they are in recovery from mental illness because they are making progress in their recovery and feel that it is not necessary to share this information with employers. They can feel more empowered by dealing with employers on their own.

The reasons that a consumer might want the Supported Education and Employment Specialist to talk to employers can include:

- **To get job search assistance.** The SEES can talk to employers about the reasons that you would be a good employee, can find out more about the available jobs and can try to set up interviews with employers. The SEES can also work with an employer to carve out a job that will match your specific skills and experience as well as scheduling and transportation needs.
- **Designing supervision and feedback.** It can be helpful for some employees to have regular or even extra feedback about their performance on the job so that they can gauge their progress and quickly gain confidence in their ability to do a good job. The IPS specialist can help arrange this kind of extra help.
- **Negotiating job accommodations:** There are certain laws in place that can help employers and workers to design special accommodations to the workplace that can make a job more “do-able” for some people with physical disabilities and mental illness. Your Supported Education and Employment Specialist can help you to identify any needs you might have and explore with employers how your needs can be met with simple changes to the job or job schedule.

You probably have your own feelings about disclosure. Try working on the table below with your SEES.

Possible Advantages of Disclosure	Possible Disadvantages of Disclosure

When Supportive Education and Employment Specialists talk to employers, it is usually possible for them to keep some things private. For example, some people don't want their Supported Education and Employment Specialist to share information like a diagnosis or medications. Talk this over with your SEES and write down the things that you wouldn't want them to share with an employer.

If you think that you might want your SEES to speak with employers, the two of you can discuss what he or she might say. For example, if a consumer thought he might be anxious at first, the SEES could say, "He might have a little difficulty with concentration at first because he is anxious about doing a good job. However, after a couple of weeks, I'm sure that he will be accustomed to the job and his concentration will be fine." You and your Supported Education and Employment Specialist should stop here and talk about some of the things that he or she might say to employers.

For now, what is your preference about approaching employers?

- " I don't want my SEES to talk to employers.
- " I am not sure right now and I would like some more time to think about this and receive some more information.
- " I don't want my SEES to share information about me with employers. However, if my SEES is talking to an employer who has the type of jobs that I like and s/he hears about a good job lead, I'd like to hear about that. Maybe I'll decide to disclose for that employer.
- " It is fine with me if my SEES talks to employers on my behalf.

Consumer signature

Date

Supported Education and Employment Specialist signature

Date