On May 1st the KUSSW Office of Mental Health and Training sponsored the biannual Evidence-Based Practice Supported Employment Summit to learn from each other and recognize the outstanding work and achievements of those supported employment programs that have implemented EBP-SE in Kansas.

Michael Donnelly, Kansas Rehabilitation Services Director, and Steve Erickson, Kansas Mental Health Director provided introductory remarks stressing the importance of assisting persons with psychiatric disabilities to achieve competitive employment. Both made the point that, not only is work important for recovery, more inclusive community tenure and achieving better mental health outcomes, but also to move people out of poverty.

**Keynote Speaker: Joe Marrone**

Joe Marrone provided the keynote address. Joe is a Senior Program Manager for Public Policy at the Institute for Community Inclusion. He is a national consultant and speaker on employment and workforce development for people with disabilities and has expertise in people with psychiatric disabilities. Joe stressed that while being employed is relatively good for you; what is absolutely essential is dealing with long term unemployment as a major clinical crisis. Joe indicated that community mental health systems must own employment independent of vocational rehabilitation services while continuing to engage VR as a partner.

Consistent with the stress on moving people out of poverty, Joe stated, “People should work because employment is an essential part of the citizenship paradigm and citizenship is part and parcel of a Recovery focus.” Joe also made the point that assisting people to get off public assistance, i.e., TANF and SSA, should be seen as an outcome for mental health systems to achieve; not because of the concern about public expenditures (although important) but because staying on public assistance will continue to keep people in poverty with less control of their lives. Lastly, Joe said, “Helping people to become economically engaged and move out of poverty is our goal, not just creating better employment program models. ([Click here to link to view Joe Marrone’s power point presentation](#)).
Consumer Testimony
No day celebrating the supported employment achievements of our state’s community mental health centers would be complete without hearing from some of the consumers who are working. They are the ones who deserve recognition. After all, they are the ones who struggle, display courage, and are persistent in their efforts to achieve and sustain competitive employment on a daily basis. This year we heard from two consumers, Patricia Pierce and Ann Speicher of how obtaining employment has and continues to play a vital role in their recovery.

Patricia receives services at Wyandot Center for Community Behavioral Health Care in Kansas City, Kansas and Ann receives services from Bert Nash Center. Their stories are emblematic of what most consumers go through in their journey to reintegrate into competitive employment including uncertainty about being able to return to work, taking some courageous first steps and receiving SE services, obtaining a job after what is sometime years of being unemployed, receiving ongoing support to help maintain employment, and lastly proving to themselves and everyone else they are capable individuals and workers able to meet the needs of the employers they work for. Please take the time to read both Patricia’s and Ann’s story in their own words, it is what makes those who provide and work in supported employment so important. (Click here)

Supported Employment Exemplary Awards & VR Partnership Awards
Steve Erikson, Kansas Mental Health Director, present the Supported Employment Exemplary Awards. In order for an EBP-SE site to receive the Exemplary Award the agency’s SE program needed to meet at least four of the five following criteria: (1) Achieve an average score of 4.2 on their latest Fidelity Review, (2) Obtain a score of “5” on the diversity item of the fidelity scale, (3) Have a minimum of 45% of the consumers in their SE program competitively employed, (4) Exceed the state’s average per cent (20%) of consumers competitively in the agency’ CSS program, (5) achieve at least a 30% penetration rate of all eligible adult SPMI consumers

The following community mental health centers whose SE programs met the above criteria received the Exemplary Award for Excellence in providing supported employment services:

For the second straight year Four County Mental Health met and exceeded all five criteria. Congratulations to Diana Compton and her staff!

The following agencies met 4 out of the 5 criteria:

Bert Nash Center: Heather Jones, SE Team Leader

Mental Health Asso. of SCK: Amie Kopischke, Career Success Project Coordinator

Valeo Behavioral Healthcare: Kristin Farley, SE Coordinator

Labette Center for MH Services: Trinette Craddock, Program Coordinator

Comcare of Sedgwick County: Kristin Tracy, SE Coordinator

In addition to the Exemplary Awards given to the above agencies, awards were given to a number of Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors in recognition for helping to create effective and helpful relationships with the agencies they serve to produce the best possible
competitive employment outcomes for the consumers who are being served by both. Thank you and congratulations to the following individuals: Dee Ann Mezger, Bob Clark, Melissa Newton, Rick Dorough, Lynda Maddox, and Jamie Hancock.

Congratulations to all the agencies, SE Coordinators and their SE staff for their hard work and dedication in achieving the Exemplary Award!

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