



In recognition of National Disability Employment Awareness Month, the Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law is releasing a new report:

Advances in Employment Policy for Individuals with Serious Mental Illness

Despite the desire of most people with psychiatric disabilities to be employed, and despite most having previous work experience, they have among the lowest employment rates in the United States. We have the tools to change that: supported employment services helps even people with the most significant psychiatric disabilities work in competitive, integrated employment. While supported employment services help states comply with the ADA and Olmstead, improve employment rates, and save money, these services are not widely available. Attitudinal barriers, misunderstandings about how work will impact benefits, current provider incentives, and a lack of coordination between agencies have contributed to underuse of these services. In its report, "*Advances in Employment Policy for Individuals with Serious Mental Illness*," the Bazelon Center offers recommendations to address these barriers and encourages state mental health agencies to expand supported employment. Our recommendations include:

- **Change Attitudes**: Issue strong, positive messages from mental health system leadership setting employment as the goal for everyone. Create government positions dedicated to SE services, set concrete requirements and provide training and assistance for providers. Reach out to unemployed individuals to engage them in SE programs.
- **Clarify Financial Structures**: Convey that financing is available. Establish federal grants for building SE infrastructure and issue guidance that clarifies how to use financial options to finance SE initiatives. Include SE outcomes in state financial requirements and collaborate more to learn how other states are financing their programs.
- **Change Provider Incentives**: Limit Medicaid coverage for segregated day treatment options and give clear instructions on how to use Medicaid to

fund SE. Specify concrete expectations and performance measures for providers.

- **Increase Coordination**: Include SE in Olmstead and other compliance efforts and in Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act development plans. Coordinate SE with other mental health services and ensure the Vocational Rehabilitation program coordinates with Medicaid, Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income.

[READ HERE:](#)
[Advances in Employment Policy for](#)
[Individuals with Serious Mental Illness](#)

Released: October 25, 2018