

June 7, 2011,

**TO:** Executive Directors of Prepaid Inpatient Health Plans (PIHPs) and Community Mental Health Services Programs (CMHSPs)

**FROM:** Cynthia Kelly, Director, Bureau of State Hospitals & Behavioral Health Administrative Operations

**SUBJECT:** *Employment Works!* Policy

MDHHS recognizes that employment is an essential element of quality of life for most people, including individuals with a serious mental illness or a developmental disability; including persons with the most significant disability. Therefore, it is the policy of MDHHS that:

Each eligible working age individual over 14 years old (to correlate with transition planning and related MDHHS policy 1915(b)/(c) Waiver Program Attachment P.7.10.4.1) and ongoing to the age of their chosen retirement-generally seen as around 65 years old) will be supported to pursue his or her own unique path to work and a career. All individuals will be afforded the opportunity to pursue competitive, integrated work. MDHHS shall define "competitive employment" and "integrated setting" using the definitions of those terms listed in title 34, Code of Federal Regulations, section 361".

- (11) Competitive employment means work-
  - (i) In the competitive labor market that is performed on a full-time or part-time basis in an integrated setting; and
  - (ii) For which an individual is compensated at or above the minimum wage, but not less than the customary wage and level of benefits paid by the employer for the same or similar work performed by individuals who are not disabled.
  
- (33) Integrated setting,--
  - (i) With respect to the provision of services, means a setting typically found in the community in which applicants or eligible individuals interact with non-disabled individuals other than non-disabled individuals who are providing services to those applicants or eligible individuals;
  - (ii) With respect to an employment outcome, means a setting typically found in the community in which applicants or eligible individuals interact with non-disabled individuals, other than non-disabled individuals who are providing services to those applicants or eligible individuals, to the same extent that non-disabled individuals in comparable positions interact with other persons.

Each time a pre-planning meeting is held to prepare for a person's plan of service (at least annually); a person's options for work will be encouraged as noted in Contract Attachment P 4.4.1.1 and will be documented during the pre-planning meeting. After exploration of competitive employment options, it is recognized that some individuals may choose other work options such as Ability One contracts, integrated community group employment, self-employment, transitional employment, volunteering, education/training, or unpaid internships as a means leading to future competitive, integrated work.

In the case of employment for persons with mental illness, MDHHS has adopted the evidence-based practice of Individual Placement and Support (IPS). The definition for the outcome of competitive employment for this specific population remains; individual jobs that anyone can apply for rather than jobs created specifically for people with disabilities. These jobs pay at least minimum wage or the customary wage and level of benefits paid by the employer for the same or similar work performed by individuals who are not disabled. Further, the jobs do not have artificial time limits imposed by the social service agency.

This proposed policy shall support persons with serious mental illness and developmental disabilities to receive services and supports to achieve and maintain competitive employment. It is imperative that this *Employment Works!* Policy be shared and reinforced as an expectation with staff responsible for employment services and outcomes and with all supports coordinators and case managers.

In order to measure employment outcomes, MDHHS will compare baseline numbers for all competitive, integrated employment-both individual and group. Additionally, MDHHS will measure facility-based employment each year. It is expected that the total percentage of individuals competitively employed in integrated settings will increase-both individual, integrated employment and group, integrated employment. It is also expected that as both of these types of employment increase, the percentage of individuals in facility-based employment will decrease. This policy supports the incentive for increased competitive, integrated employment for people with disabilities, as written into contract language.

**Expectations for MDHHS:**

- Establish a permanent state-level staff member who has responsibility for further development and overseeing its implementation of the *Employment Works!* Policy.
- Provide technical assistance to the field for program implementation and sustainability and to also provide opportunities for training and development.
- Review existing employment data sources, and establish a strategy for collecting and sharing accurate employment outcome data with stakeholders.
- Establish specific employment goals for the PIHP/CMHSP system data.
- Strengthen the strategy and agreements with Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) and the Michigan Commission for the Blind (MCB) to improve the consistency of MRS/MCB supports for PIHP/CMHSP consumers.
- Encourage and promote the use of best employment practices, including employment practices recognized in the most current Medicaid Provider Manual under Supported Employment Services. (Examples include the evidence based supported employment, customized employment, self-employment, etc.)
- Identify CMHSPs with best employment outcomes, learn from their successes, and highlight these practices.
- Assist PIHPs/CMHSPs in developing expertise in benefits planning.
- Strengthen the role of existing employment working group(s) by establishing a standing employment leadership team.

**Expectations for PIHPs/CMHSPs:**

- Designate a local staff member who shall be responsible for implementation of the *Employment Works!* Policy. Designate this staff member and an alternate to participate in a standing employment leadership team.
- Provide timely and accurate employment outcome data to MDHHS to review and determine employment strategies at least annually.
- Achieve established employment goals/increases.
- Establish strategies and enhance cash match agreements, partnership plus and/or other strategies with MRS and MCB to improve consistency of MRS/MCB supports for PIHP/CMHSP consumers.
- Embrace and promote the use of best employment practices, including EBP SE.
- Share local best employment practices across the PIHP/CMHSP network through conferences, webinars, conference calls, newsletters, cross-agency presentations, etc.
- Designate at least one (preferably two) staff with proven expertise in benefits planning or clear capacity to access timely and accurate information to address immediate employment interests of persons with disabilities.