

CHECK THIS OUT...



Michigan Recovery Center of Excellence

The Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH), in partnership with the Michigan Recovery Council, has implemented the Michigan Recovery Center of Excellence to develop accessible pathways to recovery for individuals with mental illness.

<http://mirecovery.org/Recovery101/Treatments/EvidenceBasedandPromisingPractices/SupportedEducation.aspx>

Issue 20

focus

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TOPIC WATCH

Each month we will feature a different topic; expanding the knowledge, resources, and peer networking in targeted areas. These target areas will include workforce development, transition, supported education, leadership, organizational development, sustainability, and others as they are



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Supported Education Continues to Grow

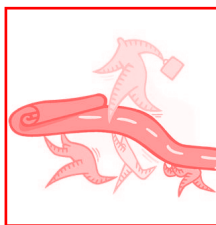
“Research shows that individuals with a mental illness/psychiatric diagnosis are more likely to leave school in both secondary and post-secondary education.”

Supported Education is designed to help people with a serious mental illness/psychiatric diagnosis to overcome the barriers that can cause their early departure (2005 Carol Mowbray, Ph.D., at the University of Michigan). Supported Education has been shown to make a difference for people with a serious mental illness/psychiatric diagnosis in setting educational goals, finding barriers that might cause them problems or make them want to quit, and helping them to make a plan so they can succeed.

There is preliminary information that supported education can increase the educational attainment of individuals with psychiatric disabilities, but researchers agree that this information is insufficient. Many existing studies have been short term and focused on

course completion, and there is no rigorous evidence to suggest that supported education will lead to a greater number of individuals with psychiatric disabilities possessing advanced degrees or certificates. And, to date, there is no rigorous evidence that supported education leads to higher employment rates among participants.

Despite the lack of evidence base, the use of supported education continues to be a significant option for individuals with mental health disorders to assist them in attaining their educational goals. Cited by many as the “only thing out there,” supported education is likely to spread as a primary option for many individuals who need special consideration or accommodations in the post-secondary educational setting.



Are all public colleges required to provide supported education?

No. Prior to graduation from high school, students with disabilities and special educational needs are protected under the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA). This federal mandate requires that schools screen, assess, and provide a specialized education program for students in need of accommodations and special services so they can receive a "free and appropriate public education." After graduation (even with a special diploma), there are no federal mandates for supported education for individuals with mental health disabilities or disorders.

When should I ask about supported education?

Students in transition from high school to post-secondary education and adults returning to education and training opportunities should ask about supported education before they apply to a school. Generally post-secondary institutions charge an application fee. If you require a supported education plan, you do not want to pay an application fee only to learn the program does not have the supports you need to be successful. You may also learn something from how a given school responds to your questions.

If a college offers supported education, does every professor and teach have to abide by the plan?

Maybe, depending on the school or program. Some post-secondary programs have policies that mandate compliance by every faculty member. But, for many programs it is at the discretion of each faculty member. In other words, the teacher or professor can choose to accommodate your needs and follow your supported education plan.

How can I get my school to provide supported education for students with mental health needs?

Educate yourself and your school. There are many excellent books, research papers, and tool kits on supported education. Gather some of these and make an appointment with their disability or special student needs contact person. Help the administration recognize the benefits of supported education and work with them to discover how they can implement a supported education program in their post-secondary program. Share information and help them link with available resources, consultants, and experts in the supported education arena that you know of. Be a part of developing a system that supports and responds to the unique needs of persons with mental health disorders.

If my school does not provide supported education is there anything I can do to help me succeed without it?

Yes. Just because your post-secondary school does not have a supported education program does not mean you cannot have a supported education plan! The plan and accommodations can be developed by pulling together persons from the school and those that support you (such as peer support, family, and others) as a planning team. By using suggested supported education program accommodations that you locate on the internet as a guide, you can develop a plan that will help you succeed. The school can assist you in locating faculty that will be amiable to allowing those accommodations in their classroom. In addition, community supports can be identified and built into the plan, expanding your support system and offering the school additional resources to help them implement the plan and facilitate your success.

The growth and expansion of supported education continues to depend upon the level of requests from students in need, as well as the knowledge of administration, faculty, and community based resources. Persons who can benefit from supported education will need to continue to advocate for program expansion and post-secondary programs, while administration and faculty, along with community providers, will have to step up their recognition and acceptance of the value of supported education in promoting the success of their students with mental health needs. Ideally, as more people become aware of the benefits of supported education, it will become an accepted part of the post-secondary educational landscape nationwide.