

# Focus 2.0

*A Publication of The CAFÉ TA Center*

Issue 5

## What is the Focus 2.0?

The *Focus 2.0* newsletter highlights important issues in mental health, providing timely information on recovery, peer support, and the value of including people with lived experience in the mental health system of care.

Have a suggestion for a topic? Let us know!



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## The National Supported Education Database Survey

**C**AFFETAC and its fellow national consumer and consumer-supporter TA centers are working together to create a database of supported education programs, and **we're asking for your help!**

### What is "supported education"?

Supported education is an approach designed to address the higher education goals of individuals with psychiatric disabilities and/or mental health challenges and support their success in postsecondary settings like community colleges, technical schools, and universities.

Supported education can look different in different contexts, and there are a variety of approaches to helping students with mental health conditions succeed in higher education. Some programs are embedded within specific colleges or universities, while others are free-standing. Some focus on necessary classroom accommodations, some include linkages to care, and some even involve peer support. Whatever a supported education looks like, the thing they all have in common is the goal of helping students succeed and enjoy the many benefits that accompany getting a degree or post-secondary certification.

### Where did supported education come from?

Supported education came into existence after another better-known practice, supported employment, which helps people with mental health conditions find and maintain employment. As this SAMHSA blog explains, "While SE demonstrated success in helping people with psychiatric disabilities choose, get, and keep jobs, a 2011 study on the importance of rehabilitation found that many of those jobs were part-time and low-paying, and did not generally lead to real careers that provided enough income for people to become and remain inde-

pendent” (<https://www.samhsa.gov/homelessness-programs-resources/hpr-resources/supported-education-programs>). Higher education opens new horizons in terms of career choice and long-term financial stability, so why not build a bridge to higher education through supported education, just as supported employment created a path to the workplace?

### **Why are we doing this?**

Ideally, it would be easy for anyone that was interested in pursuing higher education to find a supported education program that could meet their needs. However, despite supported education being a promising evidence-based practice, there is currently no comprehensive listing of supported education programs, and no go-to starting point for individuals or families looking for educational supports.



To fill that gap, the five national consumer and consumer-supporter TA centers are coming together to a **searchable database of diverse supported education programs and services** for individuals experiencing psychiatric disabilities and/or mental health challenges across the United States and outlying territories.

The first step in making that vision a reality is finding out what’s out there. That’s where you come in!

**Do you operate a program that provides dedicated supported education services for individuals with psychiatric disabilities/mental illness?**

Please complete our survey at [https://pitt.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_71fqLc9gJzVbrvg](https://pitt.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_71fqLc9gJzVbrvg).

**Do you know of a college, university, or stand-alone program that supports the educational goals of youth/adults with psychiatric disabilities/mental health challenges?**

Please share information about this survey with them! Find a flyer with info about the survey here: <http://cafetacenter.net/new/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/SurveyFlyer-w-Logos.pdf>.

### **Want to know more?**

If you’d like to learn more about supported education, check out the SAMHSA supported education toolkit at <https://store.samhsa.gov/product/Supported-Education-Evidence-Based-Practices-EBP-KIT/SMA11-4654>.

And for some general tips on things to consider when looking into higher education for students with mental health conditions, check out *Focus 45: Finding the Right Fit: What to Look for in a College or University*, which can be found at <http://cafetacenter.net/new/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/focus45.pdf>.

# Tips for Employers on Hiring People with Mental Health Conditions

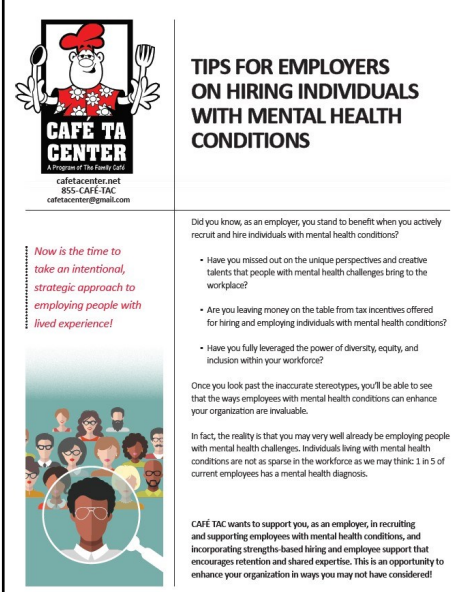
Finding sustainable, quality employment is central to self-sufficiency, thriving in the community, and supporting recovery.

That's why the CAFE TA Center is committed to **bridging the gap between people with lived experience of mental health conditions and employers of all kinds.**

Our new **tip-sheet for employers, [Tips for Employers on Hiring Individuals with Mental Health Conditions](#)**, explains the benefits of hiring people with lived mental health experience, common myths and misperceptions, and inclusive recruiting and hiring practices.

Whether you are an employer of people in the mental health recovery community, or an advocate looking to make the case for your own employment, this will be a great resource for you!

Find it at [http://cafetacenter.net/new/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/TAC\\_EmploymentGuide\\_Final.pdf](http://cafetacenter.net/new/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/TAC_EmploymentGuide_Final.pdf).



**TIPS FOR EMPLOYERS ON HIRING INDIVIDUALS WITH MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS**

Did you know, as an employer, you stand to benefit when you actively recruit and hire individuals with mental health conditions?

- Have you missed out on the unique perspectives and creative talents that people with mental health challenges bring to the workplace?
- Are you leaving money on the table from tax incentives offered for hiring and employing individuals with mental health conditions?
- Have you fully leveraged the power of diversity, equity, and inclusion within your workforce?

Once you look past the inaccurate stereotypes, you'll be able to see that the ways employees with mental health conditions can enhance your organization are invaluable.

In fact, the reality is that you may very well already be employing people with mental health challenges. Individuals living with mental health conditions are not as sparse in the workforce as we may think: 1 in 5 of current employees has a mental health diagnosis.

CAFE TAC wants to support you, as an employer, in recruiting and supporting employees with mental health conditions, and incorporating strengths-based hiring and employee support that encourages retention and shared expertise. This is an opportunity to enhance your organization in ways you may not have considered!

We also want to know about your employment experience, and what you'd like the people doing the hiring and managing to know about hiring, supervising, and supporting workers with mental health conditions. That's why we've created this short anonymous survey to find out what you think about recovery and employment!

Please take a minute to complete to **let us know a little about your employment status, and what you wish employers understood about your workplace experience.** Find the survey at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/WDYWETK>.

## What's Next at The CAFÉ TA Center

We have some ideas about where we'll go next, but it's not about us. We want you to drive the bus! TA works best when people guide the process, and the topics addressed are identified by those that are in search of resources, insight, and support. So let us know what you want to know!

Please take a minute to complete a short survey at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/CAFETAC-survey> to share your feedback.

You can also stay connected with CAFÉ TAC by joining our mailing list at <https://cafetacenter.net/join-our-mailing-list/>, and you can find us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) too!

# Capacity Corner: A Column about Capacity-Building for Your Peer-Run Organization

CAFÉ TAC is pleased to share this feature, a column from CAFÉ TAC Training Coordinator John Ferrone on leadership challenges within peer-run organizations, where many advocates with lived experience direct their efforts to promote recovery and inspire change.

This time the focus is on **the unique relationship between a Board Chair and an Executive Director.**

In past articles we discussed the challenge of the disengaged Board member, tackled the topic of fund-raising, and covered effective committees. The current topic is not only important on its own merit, but it affects the other topics, as well. You see, when the Board of Directors and the Executive Director are not working well together, everything is impacted.

I like to think of the relationship between the Board and the Executive Director (ED) as being like a dance. Let's use that metaphor to explore the dynamic between the Board and the ED, and then we'll discuss some ways to ensure that they "dance" well together.

When two people dance together, one of the following three is true: 1) neither one knows how to dance; 2) only one knows how to dance; or 3) both know how to dance. Stay with me, here, as we're obviously not talking about dancing! What I mean is this: When the Board and the ED work together for the organization, they are "dancing," and either neither of them knows how to do their role, one of them does, or both of them do. There are pros and cons to each of the pairings. Which of the following describes your organization?

*Neither one knows how to dance:* The Board is new and inexperienced, and the members don't understand what their role as a Board is, and the ED is also inexperienced and is trying his or her best to get things done. The result is typically a putting-out-the-fires mode, which is stressful. Either the Board and ED will learn together and form a special bond, or they don't, and the stress results in one or more people leaving.

*Only one knows how to dance:* The Board has been around and understands what needs to happen and has expectations of the ED, but the ED is not as experienced and there is still a lot of stress. Either the ED will be coachable, and the Board will support them, or the ED will define their role in terms of their limited capacity, and the organization will suffer. (It could be the other way around, too, where the ED is experienced and the Board is not).

*Both know how to dance:* Both the Board and the ED are experienced and understand their roles and what it takes to sustain the organization. Either the Board and ED will collaborate and be successful, or there will be some sort of misalignment, possibly a personality conflict, and the Board and ED will battle, to the detriment of the organization.

You've probably noticed that all three types of dancing pairs can be successful, and all three can also fail. So, it doesn't matter who knows how to dance, and who doesn't—the dynamics between the Board and the ED

can be very positive or not, regardless of their experience. So why consider this at all?

If your Board and ED are not getting along well, it is human nature to shift into the blame game and try to win, and that spells “disaster” for your organization. By describing the types of dancing pairs above, though, I have removed the blame game from the conversation—after all, it always takes two to dance, right? What I want you to consider for your organization is that there will always be conflict regardless of the levels of experience of the Board or the ED, so the only constant among dancers is that they are willing to do what is necessary to prevent any conflict that arises from derailing the organization.

In other words, whether either party is a professional dancer or a novice, they can still dance successfully if they know the steps. To that end, consider the following things that you can do to ensure that the dance goes smoothly no matter who is a good dancer and who is not:

1. Ensure that there are job descriptions for the Board members and the ED. Review these job descriptions at least annually and evaluate how well everyone is fulfilling their job description.
2. Articulate a Vision for the organization, and ask this most important three-part question at every Board meeting: “What progress have we made towards our Vision, what roadblocks exist, and what can we do together to move us closer to the Vision?”
3. Make an effort to understand communication and management styles. Set expectations. Discuss, agree upon, and document how the roles of the Board and the ED will be fulfilled, how the two will communicate with each other, and what expectations the two have of each other. Review this document often.
4. The Board President is the primary contact with the ED. Ensure that the two individuals are paying close attention to numbers 1-3 above. And, when there is conflict, address it proactively with open communication.

Obviously, the dancing scenarios described above are not nearly as complex as the realities inside your organization, but in general keep in mind that a Board of Directors and the ED who follow the above 4 points have a much greater chance of dancing effectively together for the benefit of the organization. Toes will always be stepped on, but the people who are able to proactively communicate are the ones who will navigate the challenges they encounter, and become better partners in the organizational development dance with each challenge they overcome together.

*Is there a leadership challenge you’re facing in your peer-run organization or advocacy efforts? We want to hear about it! Reach out to us at [cafetacenter@gmail.com](mailto:cafetacenter@gmail.com) with your question or comment. We will be happy to help, and your challenge might just be the subject of our next Capacity Corner column! (Anonymously and with your consent, of course!)*

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