

## DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH

# STRATEGIC PLAN HIGHLIGHTS

FY15 Third Quarter

## DMH Launching Pilot Sites for Supported Employment

The Mississippi Department of Mental Health is developing and making available supported employment services based on the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's Evidence-Based Practice for Supported Employment and Dartmouth Individual Placement and Supports Model (IPS).

DMH has begun implementation of this program with four pilot program sites operated through the Community Mental Health Centers in Region 2, Region 7, Region 10 and Region 12. These services will be available for adults living with mental illness, and DMH will be collaborating with the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services to leverage each agency's ability to provide employment supports.

"Work is a natural function that the majority of adults in our society want to and are expected to perform," said Thad Williams, DMH Program Planner and Evaluator. "I truly believe that recovery is possible at varying levels and often not achieved through a single intervention.

"Supported Employment, along with other recovery-oriented services and supports, gives the individual the best chance of living a meaningful life after the onset of a disability. Supported Employment is one of the catalysts that can help individuals living with mental illness define what their 'new normal' will be."

Integration is an essential part of a person's recovery, and employment can be an essential part of integration. Employment offers not only independence and a source of income, but opportunities for interaction with all kinds of people, learning experiences in numerous areas and a greater chance for integration with the community as a whole.

Individual Placement and Support (IPS) Supported Employment helps individuals with severe mental illness work at regular competitive jobs of their choosing. Although variations of supported employment exist, IPS refers to the evidence-based practice of supported employment.

Services and supports are performed and coordinated by an Employment Specialist. One of the major responsibilities of the employment specialist is to get to know potential employers within the community, determine what their employment needs are and to educate them on the benefits of supported employment and match those needs with individuals' preferences for work. They also help build vocational profiles with individuals seeking employment, a process that drives individual job development by establishing working relationships and gathering insight into someone's experiences in life rather than focusing on one or two skills that person may have, said Laquitha Ridgeway, Director of Community Support Services with Weems Community Mental Health.

"This process differs from traditional assessments in that it does not measure anything; rather it includes involvement and interaction with the individual in a natural setting," she said.

"It recognizes the importance of focusing on individual skills, experiences, preferences, connections, home, family, friends and need for accommodation, which are all considerations and things needed when looking for a good job."

According to SAMHSA, people who obtain competitive employment through IPS have increased income, improved self-esteem, improved quality of life, and reduced symptoms. Approximately 40% of clients who

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obtain a job with help from IPS become steady workers and remain competitively employed a decade later.

Since January 2015, when DMH provided funding to begin implementation of the supported employment program at the pilot sites, 16 individuals have been referred. Five of those individuals have vocational profiles completed and six have vocational goals determined. Nine of those individuals

have requested assistance with job development.

“Giving individuals living with mental illness an opportunity to work in open competitive jobs not only gives them hope for a higher quality of life, but it also strengthens our communities as a whole,” Williams said.

## — IDD TRANSITIONS UNDER WAY IN PILOT PROJECT —

Successful transition of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities from inpatient programs to the community has been a significant focus of the Department of Mental Health over the past several years.

Two new pilot projects at Ellisville State School (ESS) are aiding in those transition efforts. DMH is entering into a management agreement with Millcreek Behavioral Health and Milne Services to each operate two four-bed houses licensed as ICF/IIDs that will be homes for persons transitioned from the residential programs at ESS. The first people were transitioned to a home managed by Milne in December 2014, and progress is ongoing in securing the locations for the houses and getting certification through the Department of Health.

“These will remain DMH beds, but they will have a separate license and will be operated by Milne and Millcreek,” said Penney Stokes, Director of the Division of Transition Services with the Department of Mental Health. “The people who live there can decorate the way they want, they can do the things they’d like to do and they can live the way they would like to live. It will be their home and still meet federal and state regulations for an ICF/IID license.”

Milne has built two homes and is making plans to open its second. They are being

built specifically for this pilot project. Millcreek is nearing the purchase of one house and expects to build the second one specifically for this project as well.

“The house Millcreek is about to purchase is a tremendous home,” Stokes said. “It’s a four bedroom, four bathroom house. It’s extremely nice. The goal is to have a home just like any other house in the community.”

Transitions have increased significantly since Fiscal Year 2012. As of December 31, 2014, there have been 393 individuals who transitioned from residential programs to the ID/DD waiver, which enables services in the community. During that same time frame, there have been an additional 391 individuals who have been enrolled in the ID/DD waiver from the waiting list.

In the past three years, that is a total of 784 people who are able to receive services in the community.

One family recently shared a note with the Transition Coordinator at South Mississippi Regional Center after their loved one’s transition to the community.

“We can’t thank you enough for everything you’ve done in getting our daughter transitioned to her new home and new beginning to happiness,” the note said. “This is a real dream come true

for our family. Thank you for being a part of our daughter’s beautiful future.”

Maintaining a focus on safety, and making sure family members are aware of that, has aided the transition process. So has the addition of transition specialists who visit sites before, during and after a new transition to make sure supports are in place and all the needs of each person are being looked at and met.

The results of this pilot project have been encouraging so far.

“They have enjoyed the excitement of having their own place,” Stokes said. “They have a bedroom that’s theirs. They are excited with the options and choices they have, and with being someplace different. We’ve had some bumps in the road, but overall it’s been a positive experience for them.”

Once this pilot project is fully operating, both Milne and Millcreek will be operating two houses with four bedrooms each, for a total of 16 individuals.

“Once they have been operating for some time, we will be able to gather data, have a cost report, see what we can learn from this and how this kind of project can best be used for the people who need these services,” Stokes said.



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