

FY 19 Second Quarter

## Expansion of Supported Employment for Mississippians with SMI

**Goal 1, Objective 1.3 — Provide community supports for adults transitioning and/or living in the community to prevent out-of-home placements**

Employment can play a critical role in improving quality of life and mental health outcomes as part of a person's recovery journey. Many people with serious mental illnesses can and want to work, and supported employment services can help those people gain and maintain competitive employment. A Supported Employment pilot project that began with four sites in 2015 is continuing to grow throughout the state with funding provided by the Mississippi Department of Mental Health (DMH).

To help expand the project, in the second quarter of FY19 DMH offered a \$40,000 grant opportunity to the 10 Community Mental Health Centers (CMHCs) that didn't have a Supported Employment program. Seven CMHCs applied for and were awarded the funding. This means by the end of FY19, Mississippi will have a total of 11 Supported Employment programs across the state.

DMH is working with the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services to develop a Memorandum of Understanding to continue the implementation of Supported Employment around the state. The collaboration will involve designated vocational rehabilitation counselors

and CMHC staff coordination of employment as well as recovery services during this project. The CMHCs will hire or designate Supported Employment Specialists to work alongside the vocational rehabilitation counselors to monitor the behavioral health progress of the people employed.

The Supported Employment Specialists working within the collaboration will come from Lifecore Health Group, Timber Hills Mental Health Services, Region 8 Mental Health Services, Hinds Behavioral Health Services, Southwest Mississippi Mental Health Complex, Singing River Services, and Warren-Yazoo Mental Health Services.

In FY18, 257 people were employed through the four supported employment programs for people with serious mental illness at CMHCs in Mississippi. The programs have continued to grow each year, seeing rising numbers of people employed. The first four supported employment sites were in Communicare, Community Counseling Services, Weems Community Mental Health Center, and Pine Belt Mental Healthcare Resources.



# • Strategic Plan Highlights •



People employed through the program have shared positive feedback about what it has meant to them. One participant noted that the supported employment services had helped him keep his job for three years. Others noted that the supported employment staff at the CMHCs were instrumental in keeping their jobs.

When the program began in 2015, DMH researched best practices and chose the Supported Employment Programs of Individual Placement and Support (IPS). Supported Employment, an evidenced - based way to help people diagnosed with mental illnesses secure and keep employment, begins with the idea that every person with a serious mental illness is capable of working competitively in the community.

As planning and development of the program began in FY15, the four initial sites began to provide services in the third quarter, finding employment for 16 individuals in the last half of the year. That number quickly grew, with the sites able to help 108 clients find employment in FY16. In FY17, 116 people were employed through the program. The 257 people employed through the programs in FY18 are the result of nearly 5,000 contacts CMHC program coordinators made during the year with local businesses in their communities.

**"Working gave me hope again along with self-confidence to let me know life is not over," said one program participant. "I am able to pay my own bills, responsible, and can go buy things and not depend on anyone else."**

Just as good has been feedback from the businesses who have worked in the program and provided employment opportunities.

"It has been a pleasure to see the individuals I have supervised grow in their employment and mental health stability with the help of their Supported Employment Specialist," said one employer who has worked with Community Counseling Services in providing job opportunities.

