

The Hidden Disability

*Employment Implications for Individuals with
Substance Use Disorder and Mental Illness*

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Focusing on Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders Conditions

Acknowledgement that a “Hidden Disability” can take many forms:

- AIDS/HIV
- Chronic health conditions
- Attention Deficit Disorders
- Autism Spectrum Disorders
- Brain Injury
- Chronic Pain
- Hearing Loss
- Learning Disabilities
- Migraine Headaches
- Multiple Chemical Sensitivity
- Sleep Disorders
- Vision Impairments, etc...

Barriers to Employment

*Let's discuss some barriers that you think
an individual with substance use disorder
or mental illness might have...*

Typical Barriers

- Legal Conviction History
- Gaps in employment / inconsistent work history
- Lack of higher education / lack of high school completion
- Restrictions on employment based on probation / parole
- Inability to return to previous field of employment
- Transportation barriers
- Stable Housing
- Lacking appropriate work clothing / interview clothing
- Financial disincentives

- And last but not least... STIGMA

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QficvVNIxTI>



Disclosure

Let's look again at some of the common employment barriers and discuss benefits / drawbacks of disclosure:

- Legal conviction
- Gaps in employment
- Limited education
- Restrictions on employment based on probation/parole
- Inability to return to previous place of employment
- Transportation barriers
- Stable housing
- Financial disincentives
- Lacking appropriate work/interview clothing

Let's give disclosure a try!

Disclosure Practice

Prepare a speech to discuss barriers during the job interview process.

First... *WHY* help your client prepare a speech?

Speech tips for your client

- Bring it up before the interviewer does, if possible. (Why?)
- You want to stress that you take responsibility for the barrier and you don't put the blame on others. Why do this? Employers have stated that they want people to be honest and open about their backgrounds; and especially show that they have dealt with the barrier and have an attitude of acceptance / maturity.
- Be aware of your tone of voice when you discuss the barrier.
- Have responses prepared when they ask you about your barriers. Be positive about the steps you have taken since then, but don't go into unnecessary details. Be brief and to the point.

Speech tips for your client (continued)

- Focus on the future and talk about how your skills will make a positive contribution to the company.
- If you are still working with someone that is helping you with overcoming the barrier(s), consider offering that information to the interviewer as another person that can vouch for your rehabilitation.

Disclosing a barrier is one thing...
disclosing a diagnosis is another.

*When is disclosing a diagnosis a good
idea for your client?*

What if your client does not want to disclose?

Considerations

- Weighing pros and cons
- Personal choice
- Job references
- Practice interviews
- Other?

Small Work Group Discussion

Do you think there any differences in the approach by the Employment Specialist/Job Placement professional when placing someone in employment with a mental health or substance use disorder disability versus other disability categories?

Small Work Group Discussion (continued)

Case Studies!

Advocating with employers

Strategies that work

Strategies for advocating with employers

- Participate in business networks (i.e. Chamber of Commerce)
- Host employer open houses
- Maintain electronic database to track employer contacts
- Send thank you cards and holiday cards
- Maintain contact with employers after job has ended
- Patronize local businesses
- Network with former employees and colleagues
- Conduct informational interviews
- Try to meet with CEO or other key personnel (i.e. hiring manager, HR staff)
- Learn and use business language
- Sell the benefits of hiring people with disabilities

Strategies for advocating with employers (continued)

- Suggest variety of work experience options (i.e. part time, shared job, internships)
- Provide information on tax credits & financial incentives
- Assist with accommodations
- Present a solution to an identified business need (ex: high turnover)
- Provide testimonials
- Sell agency & services
- Look for new businesses
- Look for small businesses
- Remain accessible and available
- Facilitate natural supports
- Problem solve around employee performance problems

Other ways to assist and prepare your client

- Learn about hiring incentives and how to present them to the employer
- Research “ban the box” practices in your area
- Explore if your client would benefit from federal and/or state bonding programs
- Get your client an updated RAP sheet and review for discrepancies
- Encourage your client to do volunteer work before they begin the job search process

Thank you for your participation.

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