

Becoming Employed Starts Today (BEST) project

Overview

The Becoming Employed Starts Today (BEST) project is designed to promote sustainable access to evidence-based supported employment. BEST provides consumers with meaningful choice and control of employment, provides support services, uses peer counselors, reduces unemployment, and supports the recovery and resiliency of individuals with serious mental illness, including co-occurring disorders.

The project will provide services to 450 people over five years. Grant Integrated Health in Moses Lake and Columbia River Mental Health Services in Vancouver were the original service providers in the pilot project. In April 2018, Grant Integrated Health chose to end participation in the pilot. The Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery (DBHR) then added two BEST pilot sites: Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe in Port Angeles, and Kalispel Indian Community of the Kalispel Reservation in Usk.

Individuals with behavioral health issues who desire to be employed can access an approach to vocational rehabilitation known as supported employment or the Individual Placement and Support model (IPS). This evidence-based practice assists individuals to obtain competitive work in the community and provides the supports necessary to ensure their success in the workplace.

In addition to direct services, the goals of the project include:

- Create and oversee a Supported Employment Coordinating Committee
- Develop and implement a strategic plan
- Develop training curricula, technical assistance and ongoing guidance to sites
- Develop a supported employment workforce and provide, in-person, virtual, and web-based training; ongoing coaching; and support for credentialing or accreditation

- Create sustainable funding approach
- Participate in Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) cross-site evaluation

Authority

The SAMHSA Center for Mental Health Services awarded Washington the five-year grant from a grant program called “Transforming Lives through Supported Employment.” The purpose of this program is to enhance state and community capacity to provide and expand evidence-based supported employment programs to adults with serious mental illnesses, including persons with co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders.

Budget

The five-year grant award totals \$3.9 million. Annual award totals \$791,420 for FFY18 and \$789,512 for FFY19.

2018 costs/numbers

As of October 2018, 418 individuals have been enrolled in the BEST project.

Oversight

The Supported Employment Coordinating Committee will provide recommendations to the Governor’s Task Force on Employment for people with disabilities and the Governor’s Advisory Committee on Disability Issues and Employment.

For more information

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