



EVIDENCE-BASED
PRACTICES

KIT

Knowledge Informing Transformation

Training Frontline Staff

Supported Education

A Promising Practice



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
www.samhsa.gov

Training

Frontline Staff



Supported Education

A Promising Practice

Acknowledgments

This document was prepared for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) by Karen V. Unger, Ph.D., Rehabilitation Through Education, Portland, Oregon, under contract number P233200500802P and Westat under contract number 270-03-6005 with SAMHSA, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Marian Scheinholtz served as the SAMHSA Government Project Officer.

Disclaimer

The views, opinions, and content of this publication are those of the authors and contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views, opinions, or policies of the Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS), SAMHSA, or HHS.

Public Domain Notice

All material appearing in this document is in the public domain and may be reproduced or copied without permission from SAMHSA. Citation of the source is appreciated. However, this publication may not be reproduced or distributed for a fee without the specific, written authorization from the Office of Communications, SAMHSA, HHS.

Electronic Access and Copies of Publication

This publication may be downloaded or ordered at <http://store.samhsa.gov>. Or, please call SAMHSA at **1-877-SAMHSA-7** (1-877-726-4727) (English and Español).

Recommended Citation

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. *Supported Education: Training Frontline Staff*. HHS Pub. No. SMA-11-4654, Rockville, MD: Center for Mental Health Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2011.

Originating Office

**Center for Mental Health Services
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
1 Choke Cherry Road
Rockville, MD 20857**

HHS Publication No. SMA-11-4654
Printed 2011

Training Frontline Staff

This four-part workbook will help program leaders teach education specialists the principles, processes, and skills necessary to deliver effective Supported Education services. The workbook includes the following:

- Basic elements and practice principles of Supported Education;
- Knowledge and skills to help consumers make informed choices about returning to school;
- Skills and supports to help enrollment activities; and
- Follow-along activities to support educational goals.

It also includes exercises and activities that education specialists can complete to master necessary skills. Use this workbook to train your Supported Education staff.

Supported Education

A Promising Practice

This KIT is part of a series created by the Center for Mental Health Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

This booklet is part of the Supported Education KIT that includes a CD-ROM and seven booklets:

How to Use the KITs

**Getting Started with Evidence-Based
and Promising Practices**

Building Your Program

Training Frontline Staff

Evaluating Your Program

The Evidence

Using Multimedia to Introduce Your Promising Practice

What's in *Training Frontline Staff*

How Program Leaders Should Use This Workbook	A
Prepare program-specific information	B
Prepare agency-specific information.....	C
Visit an existing team	C
Arrange for didactic training	C
Recruit a consultant	C
Cross-train	D
Module 1: Basic Elements and Practice Principles.....	1
Why Supported Education?	1
What is Supported Education?	1
Core components of Supported Education	2
Practice principles	2
How do we know that Supported Education is effective?	4
Exercise: Explore the Benefits of Supported Education.....	5
Module 2: The Choosing Phase—	
Making Informed Decisions.....	1
Making referrals.....	1
Getting the word out about Supported Education	5
Holding the initial meeting.....	6
Setting educational goals.....	7
Selecting an education program	9
Exercise: Identify Supported Education Consumers.....	13
Exercise: Introduce Supported Education.....	15
Exercise: Improve Your Supported Education Program.....	17

Supported Education

A Promising Practice

Module 3: The Getting Phase—	
Beyond the Application	1
Applying for admission.....	1
Applying for financial aid	3
Finding eligibility programs	8
Reviewing consumers’ options.....	9
Registering for college.....	10
Campus policies	12
Services for students with disabilities.....	13
Exercise: Complete an Educational Assessment.....	15
Exercise: Reinforce Your Learning	17

Module 4: The Keeping Phase—	
Promoting Student Success	1
Collaborating with campus disability services.....	1
Collaborating with campus counseling services	8
Communicating with Student Affairs or other administrative offices	8
Monitoring student progress	9
Exercise: Reinforce Your Learning	17
Exercise: Strengthen Your Interactive Skills.....	19

Training Frontline Staff

How Program Leaders Should Use This Workbook

Training Frontline Staff introduces Supported Education staff to the basic principles and skills they need to deliver effective services.

Since being part of a team is an essential part of Supported Education, we recommend that you conduct group training rather than simply giving education specialists the workbook to read on their own.

To make the content easy to manage, we divided the training into four modules.

The four Supported Education Modules in *Training Frontline Staff*

- 1 Basic Elements and Practice Principles
- 2 The Choosing Phase
- 3 The Getting Phase
- 4 The Keeping Phase



The ultimate purpose of this workbook is to help education specialists understand the theory behind the Supported Education model, how Supported Education is delivered, and what skills are necessary to provide services.

Working through these modules as a group creates an opportunity to discuss and master the practice principles and skills that are essential to effective practice.

How to Complete this Four-Session Training

- Arrange for education specialists to meet at least once a week for 4 weeks. You will cover up to one module each week.
- In this workbook, on the page before each module, you'll find *Notes to the facilitator and program leader*. Review the notes to prepare for the training.
- Copy and distribute the module's reading materials so that education specialists can read them before the training session. You'll find electronic folders for each module on the KIT's CD-ROM.
- Copy the exercises for each module so that you can distribute them during each training session. You'll also find them in the electronic folders on the KIT's CD-ROM.
- For each session, ask a different group member to facilitate.
- Complete the suggested exercises for that module.



Prepare program-specific information

In addition to the materials in this workbook, prepare to give education specialists information about Supported Education policies and procedures. These include the following:

- Admissions and discharge criteria;
- Supported Education referral form;
- Interest Inventory and Educational Assessment;
- Educational Goal Plan;

- Criteria upon which the program's fidelity to the Supported Education model will be assessed; and
- Supported Education outcomes that will be monitored.

For sample forms, see *Building Your Program* and *Evaluating Your Program* in this KIT.

Prepare agency-specific information

Develop a plan to train education specialists about other policies and procedures that may be relevant to the agency in which the Supported Education program operates. These policies and procedures might include the following:

- **Consumers' rights:** Education specialists should be aware of the state and federal consumer rights requirements, especially the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).
- **Billing procedures:** Education specialists must know how to document their activities and bill for services.
- **Safety:** Many agencies with existing community-based programs have materials about safety. If safety training is unavailable, plan for training in de-escalation techniques. You might also seek a local law-enforcement agency to provide training in personal safety and crime-prevention strategies.
- **Mandated reporting:** Education specialists must know how to report suspected abuse and neglect. They must also know what to do if they learn about illegal activity and threats of harm to self or others.
- **Integration with other agency services:** Education specialists must know how to interface with other agency staff to ensure that the range of services that consumers need is available and integrated with their education plans.
- **Professional conduct standards:** Education specialists must know the professional conduct standards of their agency as many of the services provided are not traditional mental health services and are provided in community and educational settings.
- **Other policies and procedures:** Consult your agency's human resource office to learn of other program, agency, or state policies that the staff should know.

Visit an existing team

After your Supported Education staff completes this workbook, we suggest that new education specialists observe an experienced, high-fidelity Supported Education program, if possible. If education specialists are familiar with the materials in this workbook before their visit, the visit will be more productive. Rather than having to take time to explain the basics, the host program will be able to show the new education specialists how to apply the basics in a real-world setting.

Arrange for didactic training

After using this workbook and visiting an experienced Supported Education program, the education specialists will be ready for a trainer who will help them practice what they have seen and read. Some program leaders choose to hire an experienced external trainer to help education specialists practice Supported Education principles, processes, and skills. The initial training should take 2 to 3 days.

Recruit a consultant

Once your Supported Education staff begins working with consumers, you are responsible for ensuring that they follow the Supported Education model. This task can be challenging.

You must facilitate a team development process, apply what education specialists have just learned about Supported Education in their own work with consumers, and, at the same time, ensure through clinical supervision that Supported Education staff follow the model.

It is very easy to stray from the model and do something similar to but not quite the same as Supported Education. Sometimes this happens because education specialists believe they are diligently following the model, but they miss some of the more subtle aspects of it. In other cases, Supported Education services start well, but as more consumers enter the program and pressure mounts, education specialists revert to older, more familiar ways of working.

To ensure that Supported Education staff follows the model, work with an experienced consultant throughout the first year of operation. A consultant can provide modeling and coaching either in person or with telephone support to guide you and your staff. Follow up training provided by expert consultants can also help you to meet the challenges of the new leadership roles.

To help you conduct Supported Education training, we include these multimedia materials in the KIT:

- Introductory PowerPoint presentation; and
- Sample brochure.

Once trained, you or your education specialists will be able to use these materials to present routine, in-service seminars to ensure that all staff members within the agency are familiar with the Supported Education program.

As discussed in *Building Your Program*, we also recommend that you use these materials to train members of your Supported Education advisory committee. The more information that advisory group members have about Supported Education, the better they will be able to support the program and its mission.

Cross-train

It is important that staff throughout your agency develop a basic understanding of Supported Education. Cross-training will ensure that other staff members support the work that Supported Education staff undertake. Training is also an opportunity for education specialists and advisory group members to become familiar with one another. Make sure that the advisory group members and education specialists introduce themselves and that they are familiar with one another's roles.

Module 1:

Basic Elements and Practice Principles

Notes to the facilitator and program leader

Prepare for Module 1:

- Make copies of Module 1. Your copy is in this workbook; print additional copies from the CD-ROM in the KIT.
- Distribute the material to those who are participating in your group training. Ask them to read it before the group training.
- Make a copy of this exercise:

Explore the Benefits of Supported Education

Do not distribute until the group training. Your copy is in this workbook; print additional copies from the KIT's CD-ROM.



Facilitating the dialogue:

One of the roles of a facilitator and program leader is to facilitate the dialogue during group training sessions. Some people have difficulty speaking in a group, perhaps because they are timid or soft-spoken. Others may feel professionally intimidated by those with more experience or higher degrees. Conversely, some education specialists will be self-confident and outspoken and will need to learn to listen openly to what others have to say.

As you work together on each module, encourage those who are more withdrawn to express their views and make sure that more vocal group members give others a chance to speak.

Group training also provides the opportunity to assess the anxiety that education specialists may feel about providing Supported Education services. Use your group training time to explore and address issues openly.

Training Frontline Staff

Module 1: Basic Elements and Practice Principles

Many people who live with a serious mental illness have had their education interrupted as a result of their illness. Module 1 presents the basic elements and practice principles of Supported Education. This introduction includes a summary of the research evidence for the effectiveness of the Supported Education model.

Why Supported Education?

The onset of mental illness most commonly occurs between the ages of 15 and 21 (Newman et al., 1996) when young people are beginning to develop their adult roles. During this time, they are completing their education that prepares them to work, developing relationships that create a social network, and learning their rights and responsibilities within their communities. The onset of a mental illness disrupts this process. Once disrupted, it is extraordinarily difficult to recreate.

What is Supported Education?

Supported Education programs help consumers pursue their individual educational goals. It includes a wide range of education options ranging from General Educational Development (GED) to postsecondary education. Offered in tandem with Supported Employment, these programs help consumers develop a sense of self-efficacy and independence.

Supported Education encourages consumers to think and plan for their future. It provides an important step to help consumers use their innate talents and abilities and pursue their personal recovery goals. Also, Supported Education promotes career development to improve long-term work opportunities.

Supported Education follows the “choose-get-keep” model, which helps consumers make choices about paths for education and training, get appropriate education and training opportunities, and keep their student status until they achieve their goals (Mowbray, Brown, & Szilvagy, 2002; Mowbray et al., 2005; Sullivan, Nicolellis, Danley, & MacDonald-Wilson, 1993).

Core components of Supported Education

There are several different models of Supported Education and most programs offer these core services (Brown, 2002):

- **Career planning** including vocational assessment, career exploration, development of an educational plan, course selection, instruction, support, and counseling;
- **Academic survival skills** including information on college and training programs, disability rights and resources, tutoring and mentoring services, time and stress management, and social supports;
- **Direct assistance** including help with enrollment, financial aid, education debt, and contingency funds; and
- **Outreach** including contacts with campus resources, mental health treatment team members and other agencies such as Vocational Rehabilitation.

Supported Education programs offer a combination of these services tailored to meet consumers’ individual needs.

Practice principles

The Supported Education model is based on a core set of practice principles. These principles form the foundation of the approach.

Practice principles of Supported Education

- Access to an educational program with positive, forward progress is the goal.
- Eligibility is based on personal choice.
- Supported Education services begin soon after consumers express interest.
- Supported Education is integrated with treatment.
- Individualized educational services are offered for as long as they are needed.
- Consumer preferences guide services.
- Supported Education is strengths-based and promotes growth and hope.
- Recovery is an ongoing process facilitated by meaningful roles.

Principle 1: Access to an educational program with positive, forward progress is the goal.

Consumers who want to return to school should have the opportunity to do so. Supported Education gives consumers the support necessary to fully and successfully participate in educational opportunities including adult basic education, remedial education, GED, technical programs, college, and graduate school. The goal is not just to keep consumers busy but to facilitate long-term recovery goals.

Principle 2: Eligibility is based on personal choice.

Consumers are eligible for Supported Education services if they express a desire to return to school. Psychiatric diagnosis, symptoms, cognitive impairment, history of drug or alcohol abuse, or other problems should not keep them from pursuing an educational goal. No one should be excluded from receiving Supported Education services if they are interested in resuming their education, are willing to attend class, and will complete the assigned work.

Principle 3: Supported Education services begin soon after consumers express interest.

Returning to school is a big step for many consumers. It may take courage and insight to consider returning to an environment that may hold difficult memories. It is important to respond as quickly as possible to build on the initial expressed interest. A timely response coupled with support and encouragement helps consumers return to this promising and productive role.

Principle 4: Supported Education is integrated with treatment.

Closely coordinating Supported Education services with other mental health rehabilitation and clinical treatment ensures that all mental health practitioners (not just educational specialists) support consumers' educational goals. For this reason, the education specialist is part of the treatment team and an education goal is part of the treatment plan that is recorded and monitored with other goals. Although the education specialist provides Supported Education services, all members of the team help consumers meet their educational goal through an integrated service delivery process.

Principle 5: Individualized educational services are offered for as long as they are needed.

Some consumers struggle with psychiatric symptoms that persist over time so their optimal treatment and recovery requires a long-term commitment. Therefore, Supported Education services should be provided to consumers without time limits. Each academic period, individual needs of active participants are reassessed and Supported Education services are tailored accordingly. The goal is to help consumers become as independent as possible, while remaining available to provide assistance and support when needed.



Principle 6: Consumer preferences guide services.

Consumers are most motivated and work hardest when they strive to get something they want, rather than working for what others want for them. For this reason, consumer preferences guide all phases of Supported Education services. Consumers decide what they want to do and how they want educational specialists to help them.

Note: Serious mental illnesses can cause consumers to feel demoralized or discouraged. Some may need help to rediscover and express their interests and goals.

Principle 7: Supported Education is strengths-based and promotes growth and hope.

Supported Education concentrates on building for the future, rather than dwelling on the past. It is more concerned about who consumers are now and what they can accomplish, than what is holding them back. Although a realistic assessment is important so accommodations can be made, Supported Education emphasizes existing strengths that consumers can use to promote new life and career goals. Inherent in this principle is the idea that growth will occur and hope is realistic.

Principle 8: Recovery is an ongoing process facilitated by meaningful roles.

Although treatment is critical for most consumers to recover, it is not enough. The field of mental health has sometimes overlooked the importance of consumers having meaningful roles. We are all defined by the roles we play, and consumers are no exception. Being a worker, student, family member, or friend are all meaningful roles that give context for living a meaningful life.

When consumers return to school, they assume a very valuable role in our society, that of student. This role implies forward movement, accomplishment, status, and possibilities. Returning to school is often an antidote to internalized stigma and feelings of hopelessness. It signifies a new beginning filled with promise.

As consumers return to school, others receive the message that mental illness is not an end, but like many ongoing illnesses or disabilities, involves redefining a valued person.

How do we know that Supported Education is effective?

The evidence base for Supported Education is building. Studies show that Supported Education programs lead to the following outcomes:

- **More access to and participation in educational programs** (Unger, Pardee & Shafer, 2000; Mowbray, Collins, & Bybee, 1999; Lieberman, Goldberg, & Jed, 1993; Hoffman & Mastrianni, 1993; Cook & Solomon, 1993; Wolf & DiPietro, 1992; Dougherty, Hastie, Bernard, Broadhurst, & Marcus, 1992; Unger, Sciarappa, & Rogers, 1991);
- **Increased competitive employment** (Unger et al., 1991; Dougherty et al., 1992; Solomon et al., 1993; Unger et al., 2000);
- **Improved self-esteem** (Unger et al., 1991; Cook & Solomon, 1993; Mowbray et al., 1999);
- **Reduced hospitalization** (Unger et al., 1991; Isenwater, Lanham, & Thornhill, 2002); and
- **Increased consumer satisfaction** (Cook & Solomon, 1993; Collins, Bybee, & Mowbray, 1998).

For more information, see *The Evidence* in this KIT.

Exercise: **Explore the Benefits of Supported Education**

Studies that have explored what makes a difference in whether practitioners adopt a new practice have found that practitioners are more likely to adopt a practice if it addresses an area in which they feel they must improve. With Supported Education, it may not be so much a matter of whether someone must improve, but rather of delivering services in a new way.

- **Share your experiences about where the traditional service system may have been inadequate in addressing consumers' educational interests and goals.**

- **Identify aspects of Supported Education that address the inadequacies.**





Module 2:


The Choosing Phase — Making Informed Decisions

Notes to the facilitator and program leader

Prepare for Module 2:

- Make copies of Module 2. Your copy is in this workbook; print additional copies from the CD-ROM in the KIT. 
- Distribute the material to those who are participating in your group training. Ask them to read it before meeting as a group.
- Make copies of these exercises: 
 - *Identify Supported Education Consumers;*
 - *Introduce Supported Education;* and
 - *Improve Your Supported Education Program*

Do not distribute them until the group training. Your copies are in this workbook; print additional copies from the CD-ROM.

- Make copies of these materials: 
 - *Supported Education Referral Form*
 - *Supported Education Fidelity Scale;*
 - *Supported Education outcomes developed by your agency, if available; and*
 - *Supported Education brochure and Introductory PowerPoint Presentation.*

Do not distribute them until the group training. A sample referral form may be found in *Building Your Program* in this KIT. Information about the quality assurance instruments is in *Evaluating Your Program*, and the brochure and slides are in *Using Multimedia to Introduce Your Promising Practice*. You may also print these materials from the CD-ROM.

Conduct your second training session:

- Distribute the materials listed above.
- Review the distributed materials and complete the exercises as a group.

Training Frontline Staff

The Choosing Phase—Making Informed Decisions

The Choosing Phase of Supported Education is designed to help consumers make informed decisions about where, when, why, and how to return to school. This module introduces the knowledge and skills needed to undertake the first steps of Supported Education including referral, assessment, setting an educational goal, and choosing an education program.

Making referrals

An effective referral process for Supported Education includes the following:

- Using minimal eligibility criteria;
- Making the referral process simple; and
- Getting the word out about Supported Education.

To make services accessible to as many consumers as possible, keep the referral process simple by using minimal eligible criteria. Educate and inform referral sources to refer consumers who express interest in returning to school directly to the Supported Education program. Do not screen for abstinence, nonviolent behavior, lack of symptoms, perceived readiness, sufficient motivation, age, or hygiene.

Typical eligibility criteria are as follows:

- Consumers who are not going to school but who have expressed an interest in continuing their education; or
- Consumers who are already in school but who are not receiving the education supports that they would like.

Increase the number of consumers engaged in Supported Education services by informing a variety of stakeholders (including consumers, practitioners, and family members) about the availability of Supported Education and the process for receiving these services.

Referrals can come from case managers, other team members, the consumers themselves, and their family or other supporters. Supported Employment specialists particularly can work closely with education specialists to refer consumers who are working but interested in improving their options through education.

Using minimal eligibility criteria

The following vignettes illustrate the components of an effective referral process that uses minimal eligibility criteria. After reading the vignettes, think about possible strategies for solving the problems described.

Ronald's story

Ronald is a 40-year-old man living in agency housing. He has a history of mental health treatment beginning as a teenager. He dropped out of school during the 7th grade. His diagnosis is schizoaffective disorder and alcohol dependence. He has a history of self-harm behavior, including suicide attempts, command auditory hallucinations, paranoia, depression, anxiety, and agoraphobia. He has been clean and sober for 11 years.

He reports having no friends, but a supportive family. Ronald wants to get his GED. His prescriber—who expressed concern that an education program may increase his anxiety and lead to an increase in symptoms, including alcohol and drug abuse—referred him.

Tackling the issues

Q: If you were Ronald's education specialist, what would you do?

While there are no single correct answers for handling Ronald's situation, here are a few ideas:

As Ronald's education specialist, you could educate his team about the advantages of participating in Supported Education by describing other consumers' successful experiences, providing outcome research, and relating education to employment outcomes. To address the prescriber's concerns about increasing Ronald's stress, describe the support services that will be available to him.

Working with Ronald, review his motivation for returning to school. Since he has not been to school since the 7th grade, suggest that adult education classes may be a good beginning for him. Adult education could assess his reading and math skills and provide remedial classes if/where necessary. To address his agoraphobia, plan a travel route and class schedule with Ronald that allows him to take the bus during off hours so he doesn't encounter crowds. Travel with him on the bus to class the first few days until he becomes comfortable being by himself.

With Ronald's agreement, involve a family member or other supporter in Ronald's Supported Education appointments. Discuss Ronald's interest and progress in treatment team meetings so that other team members can also provide personal support and encouragement during Ronald's decisionmaking process.

Making the referral process simple

The following vignette illustrates the importance of having a simple referral process and describes the steps needed to engage consumers when a referral has been made.

Nancy's story

Nancy is a 32-year-old female who has a diagnosis of depression and attention deficit disorder. She obtained her GED in 2002 and has been working in a nursing home as a certified nursing assistant providing personal care to individuals who are elderly.

She would like to upgrade her skills by enrolling in a community college. Her supported employment specialist referred her to the Supported Education program.

Tackling the issues

Q: How you would follow through with Nancy's referral?

While there is no single correct answer for handling Nancy's situation, here are a few ideas.

The process for referring Nancy to Supported Education services should be as simple as possible. It should be standardized and widely publicized.

For example, anyone on the treatment team, including Nancy or her employment specialist, could make her referral. Her referral should be sent to the Supported Education program leader for assignment or directly to the education specialist if only a single staff person exists. As Nancy begins to receive services, the education specialist would notify team members that she was included on the Supported Education caseload.

The education specialist should meet Nancy as soon as possible after the referral. The purpose of this meeting is to get acquainted, confirm Nancy's interest in enrolling in college, and begin the process by exploring her past education experiences. This first meeting could involve the following combinations of people:

- The education specialist and Nancy;
- The education specialist, Nancy, and the employment specialist; or
- The education specialist, Nancy, and a family member or other supporter that Nancy chooses.

Involving another person with whom Nancy is familiar will help her feel comfortable as she forms a new relationship with the education specialist. In this case, including the employment specialist, a family member, or other supporters provides the opportunity to share information and learn about Nancy's support needs. As work begins with Nancy, the education specialist will report her progress to the team and encourage them to support her in her new role.

Getting the word out about Supported Education

The following vignette illustrates the importance of maximizing referrals by telling multiple stakeholders that the Supported Education program is available. After reading the vignette, think about how you would help the staff at Olympia Northwest Health Center maximize referrals.

Olympia Northwest Health Center's story

A new Supported Education program has just been launched at the Olympia Northwest Mental Health Center. At a team meeting, the education specialist described the new program and asked for referrals. Several case managers said that some consumers had been to school but dropped out because it was too difficult.

One mentioned that one consumer had completed his GED and was already taking several courses at a local community college. Another said that several consumers on her caseload had asked about going back to college but she did not have enough time to help them through the enrollment process. A fourth felt that most consumers could benefit from the program and she would refer them to it.

Tackling the issues

- Q:** How would you educate staff about appropriate referrals and the benefits of Supported Education?
- Q:** How could Olympia Northwest Mental Health Center stimulate consumers' interest in Supported Education and increase referrals to their program?

While there is no single correct answer for handling this situation, here are a few ideas.

The overall goal is to encourage consumers to consider continuing their education and helping them access Supported Education services if this is their wish. Place no restrictions on consumers who express an interest. Many levels of education programs exist and, with support, most consumers can benefit. It is very difficult for anyone to predict who will successfully return to school and who will not.

It is very important to the success of the Supported Education program that the expectations of the staff at the Olympia Northwest Mental Health Center be positive. The staff should convey the idea that consumers can recover from a mental illness and live meaningful lives, that they can continue their education and find jobs or develop careers that are satisfying and provide a living wage.

Practitioners must understand that consumers can learn regardless of their diagnosis and symptoms. Cognitive impairments and medication side effects can be ameliorated by gaining support, learning new skills, and having appropriate accommodations.

Strategies to improve referrals

Agency staff may react to a new Supported Education program based on prior expectations and personal and professional experiences. Share information with staff about the program and the kinds of services it will provide to minimize any concerns.

Ask consumers who have successfully returned to school to share their experiences during in-service training and other agency events. You may also have to help consumers become aware of the benefits of returning to school. Displaying posters and brochures where consumer congregate is one way to bring attention to the new program.

The educational specialist can meet with groups of consumers to discuss the pros and cons of returning to school and describe the services available through the Supported Education program. You can hold such meetings at consumer drop-in centers, at the agency, or at consumer and family community meetings. You could conduct this outreach activity regularly to keep consumers aware of the program throughout the year.

Strategies for improving referrals

- Provide one-on-one information or in-service training to staff on Supported Education.
- Provide information and seminars to consumers and their family members or other supporters.
- Inform all stakeholders about the referral process.

Holding the initial meeting

Ideally, the first meeting that an education specialist and consumer have will be informal. The goal is to establish a relationship and learn about the consumer's educational interests and goals. Education specialists ask consumers questions about past education experiences and provide information about the Supported Education program.

Mark's story

Mark is a 30-year-old male who has been diagnosed with schizoaffective disorder. He attended a Supported Education information seminar at the agency and is considering attending college for the first time.

Mark is anxious, self-conscious, and describes himself as a perfectionist. He feels that if he doesn't receive perfect grades he will be letting himself and his family down. He also feels threatened by others in the community and is concerned that they will find out about his mental illness.

Mark has difficulty concentrating and forgets to do tasks for which he is responsible. However, he is motivated and has decided that he would like to attend a local community college and get an associate's degree.

Tackling the issues

Q: If you were Mark's education specialist, how would you begin the process of helping him?

While there is no single correct answer for handling Mark's situation, here are a few ideas.

The first interview is an opportunity for Mark and his education specialist to get to know each other and for him to understand the available services and supports. It also gives the education specialist a general idea about Mark's interest in beginning college. After general questions about his education background and previous experiences with school, what successes he had and where he had problems, his immediate goal of returning to college can be established.

During their second meeting, Mark and his education specialist begin the educational assessment process by completing the *Interest Inventory Tool* and *Educational Assessment* forms. These forms help Mark identify his educational strengths and interests, examine challenges that he has faced and strategies that may help, and understand the supports and resources that are available to him. This information will help Mark and his educational specialist choose the best educational program for him (whether it is adult education, GED, postsecondary, etc.) and begin to develop an *Educational Goal Plan*.

For a sample interest Inventory Tool, Educational Assessment, and Educational Goal Plan, see *Building Your Program* in this KIT.

Setting educational goals

Many Supported Education practices are similar to those of Supported Employment. Both share the practices of setting a goal, developing a plan, integrating the goal with other treatment goals, and providing follow-along support services. However, in Supported Education, more emphasis is placed on goal-setting because of the time, money, and effort involved in meeting an educational goal. Unlike a job in which money is earned, education costs money and, if financial aid is received, expectations are that the money will be well used.

People return to school for many reasons. Some may return to simply try out the experience. Others may want to improve basic skills or to enjoy learning. As new students gain confidence, they may feel comfortable setting career goals or reactivating goals that they had set years before.

Listed below are some common educational goals that consumers have. Their goals are no different from the goals of other students.

Educational goals

- Take an exploratory class;
- Take an activities course;
- Upgrade basic skills;
- Upgrade job-related skills;
- Earn a GED;
- Get an associate's degree;
- Earn a 4-year degree;
- Work toward a master's or doctoral degree;
- Gain a vocational or technical certificate; or
- Maintain a certificate or license.

Exploring with consumers why they want to return to school and what their hopes and dreams for the future are is an excellent way to engage them and to begin a trusting working relationship. Most have not had the opportunity to think about what is really important to them and to have another person listen as they dream.

Because of the internalized stigma, they may have given up ever having meaningful work or a career. Being an interested and empathetic listener is particularly important at this time. Using open-ended questions, responsive comments, and other interactive skills will help draw the person out. These initial conversations will help begin to form a new self-image that includes a hopeful future.

Developing an educational goal is a process that continues as students learn more about their academic program and about themselves. Develop long-term, intermediate, and short-term goals. In developing an educational goal, it is important to consider not only what the final outcome will be (such as the degree, certificate program, etc.), but also how long it will take and how much it will cost.

In setting a goal, practical implications must be considered. A final step in the goal-setting process is to continue to evaluate the feasibility of the goal.

Some questions to consider

- How much training or education is required?
- Can I meet the program's admission requirements?
- How long will it take to get the degree or certificate that I want?
- Is the program (and timeline for completion) flexible?
- How much will it cost?
- Am I willing to go into debt?
- Do I have the support of family and other supporters?
- Will I be able to work in the job given the particular disability I have or the accommodations I would need?
- Do job opportunities exist in my geographical area for this work?

Although this list may seem overwhelming, the questions can be answered over time. Most students spend from 2 to 6 years completing their educational requirements. This allows time to consider the final occupational goal and to have a clear picture of what is necessary to reach it. Each occupation has many jobs within it. Fully explore the options within each field. Changes may be needed to accommodate timelines, resources, or other factors.

Modifications can include working part time or changing timelines. The sooner the goal-setting process is started, the better. It is important for students to have an idea of where they are going and why. It helps to keep their motivation going and their “eyes on the prize.”

Excellent resources are available on many campuses to help students determine an educational goal that leads to a career path. Career development classes, career seminars, career fairs, and the campus Career Center are all good resources. For more information, see Module 4 in this workbook.

The final goal that the student chooses should be formally stated, including an intermediate goal, short-term action steps, and target completion dates. Here is an example of a series of goals for a student who wants to be a career counselor.

I will graduate with a B.A. degree in career counseling in 6 years. (Long-term goal.)

In 3 years, I will have my Associate’s degree in Liberal Arts. (Intermediate goal.)

Over the next 3 months, I will complete basic math requirements. (Short-term goal.)

Selecting an education program

Before applying for an educational program, the student must select an institution. Seven criteria generally determine the choice:

- Type;
- Student body;
- Course of study;
- Location;
- Cost;
- Qualifications; and
- Support.

Type

Many types of education institutions or programs are available. Choices include the following:

- Enrichment courses;
- Adult basic education;
- General Educational Development (GED);
- Technical/trade or liberal arts school;
- College (2- or 4-year); and
- Public or private school.

Student body

The characteristics of the student body may be a factor in student comfort on campus. Consider the following:

- The number of students attending (small, medium, or large campus);
- Whether most are enrolled full or part time;
- Living on or off campus;
- Co-ed or single sex;
- Average age; and
- Ethnic or religious breakdown.

Course of study

Through the process of choosing an educational goal, prospective students will have a tentative course of study in mind. College catalogues at the local library and information on the Internet can provide detailed information about the courses of study available at different academic institutions.

Location

The location of the educational program can be a critical factor in deciding to enroll. Returning to college, particularly the first semester, can be stressful. Students must seriously consider the effects of moving away from the familiar, including the support of family and friends and the services of their mental health agency. College catalogues at the local library and information on the Internet can provide information about alternate locations including satellite campuses and Internet programs.

Cost

The cost of the program is also an important selection criterion. Incurring large student loans can be a risk until students have firmly established themselves in the academic environment. Most students return to school with Pell Grants, funding which need not be repaid. They are often able to complete their goals with minimum debt. However, Pell Grants do not cover graduate studies. Loans or internal college grants may be the only available resources. For more information see Module 3 of this workbook.

Qualifications

Most programs have some requirements for admittance. They may require a high school diploma or GED, a certain grade point average, or test scores from placement or standardized tests. Others, including adult education, GED programs, and some community colleges have open enrollment.

Support

Many students choose a school based on the services available on campus. Considerations in choosing a school may include the availability of the following types of supports:

- A learning or computer center;
- Tutoring or assistive technology;
- A well-staffed Office for Students with Disabilities;
- Supportive housing;
- A counseling center that includes practitioners who can prescribe medications; and
- Flexible medical leave policy.

Although the law requires that all students who are eligible for accommodations receive them, educational institutions vary in the quality of their response to the law. Examining the recruitment brochures and speaking with staff at the Office for Students with Disabilities should indicate their receptivity.

Other supports to look for are programs for non-traditional students, remedial courses, tutoring services, career centers, and other services that indicate a supportive environment for students. For more information, see Module 4 of this workbook.

Develop an educational plan

The *Educational Goal Plan* outlines a long-term educational goal, a goal for the next 3 months and short-term action steps. For each action step, specify who is responsible for completing the described activities and the date the activities should be completed. The purpose of the plan is to help consumers and education specialists maintain focus on their educational goals.

Mark's educational plan

Recall Mark's story. As Mark and his education specialist worked together, they developed an *Educational Goal Plan* that helped Mark feel comfortable and ready to begin classes. It included all the tasks that were necessary for Mark to enroll and complete the first semester. The plan included the following tasks:

- Apply for financial aid;
- Apply for admission;
- Meet with a representative from the Office for Students with Disabilities to plan for accommodations (if necessary);

- Complete placement tests in math, reading, and writing;
- Meet with an academic advisor to complete a plan of study for the associate's General Studies degree;
- Register for classes online;
- Find classrooms before the first day of school;
- Attend classes and receive syllabi;
- Buy required textbooks;
- Attend weekly tutoring sessions at the college learning center; and
- Attend bi-weekly Supported Education support group.

For each action step, Mark and his education specialist discussed how they could accomplish the task and by when it needed to be completed. Mark and his education specialist met frequently to review his progress.

Exercise: **Identify Supported Education Consumers**

How will consumers be referred to your Supported Education program?

Review your agency's referral form.



Exercise: **Introduce Supported Education**

- Review your agency's Supported Education brochure. Role-play how you would use it to describe your program and engage consumers, families, and other practitioners.

- Role-play presenting the Supported Education model using the *Introductory PowerPoint Presentation* slides.



Module 3:

The Getting Phase—Beyond the Application

Notes to the facilitator and program leader

Prepare for Module 3:

- Make copies of Module 3. Your copy is in this workbook; print additional copies from the CD-ROM in the KIT.
- Distribute the material to those who are participating in your group training. Ask them to read it before meeting as a group.
- Make copies of the following exercises:
 - Complete an Educational Assessment*
 - Reinforce Your Learning*



Do not distribute the exercise until the group training. Your copies are in this workbook; print additional copies from the CD-ROM.

- Make copies of your agency's Educational Assessment.
- Do not distribute the exercises and Educational Assessment until the group training. For a sample form, see *Building Your Program* in this KIT. You may also print the sample form from the CD-ROM.



Conduct your third training session:

- Distribute the exercises and Educational Assessment for this module.
- Review the distributed materials and complete the exercise as a group.

Training Frontline Staff

The Getting Phase — Beyond the Application

The Getting Phase of Supported Education is designed to help consumers secure admission to an educational environment of their choice. Module 3 introduces activities of the Getting Phase including applications for admission and financial aid, registration, and campus orientation.

Applying for admission

After choosing an educational goal and selecting an educational program, students prepare an application for admission. Choosing an educational institution is a major life decision, involving valuable time and resources. A careful and thoughtful decisionmaking process is important before submitting an application. The application process must be done in a timely manner with all documents accurately and fully completed.

Application processes vary depending on the program. For adult education or GED, a simple registration may be all that is required. For postsecondary education, the process is more complex. Postsecondary education application materials are available from the college admissions office.

Many students who are beginning undergraduate studies apply only to the school located in their area. Others apply to several schools. Acceptance criteria vary based on the institution's criteria and mission.

Many consumers choose to begin their studies at a community college. The mission statement of community colleges often includes a mandate to serve all citizens of the community. Therefore, they are more likely to have a range of introductory and remedial courses, as well as services to help returning students make the transition back to school more easily.

For application materials and eligibility criteria, consult the college catalogue available through the admissions office of the institution. For a sample generic application that some colleges and universities use, see the Common Application at <http://www.commonapp.org>.

Transcripts and test scores

The college or individual program may need copies of students' transcripts. If they have not previously attended college, high school transcripts will suffice. If they have attended one or more colleges, they will need to supply all transcripts. In some cases, the accepting program will consolidate and evaluate the transcripts. Students may also have to supply standardized test scores, depending on when they took them. If standardized tests are required for admission, students must take them before they apply.

Letters of recommendation

Many applications for admission require letters of recommendations. Teachers, counselors, employers, or volunteer supervisors with whom students have a good relationship are all good candidates for writing letters of recommendation. They should already know the students and their plans for an education.

The letter format is usually included in the application packet. When asking someone to write a letter of recommendation, include a stamped, self-addressed envelope with the request for recommendation form, whether it must be sent to the student or to the school. Follow with a thank-you note, letting them know their help is appreciated.

Personal essay

Some applications also require students to write essays or personal statements. The purpose is to assess writing skills, determine the seriousness of the application, and learn more about the applicants. Topics for the essay are often suggested, with the intent of discovering the uniqueness of each applicant.

Checklist for the Application Process

- Obtain application forms online from the institution or use the Common Application, if appropriate.
- Complete the essays or personal statements.
- Check the application for accuracy and completeness.
- Contact other institutions for transcripts.
- Contact teachers or others for letters of recommendation.
- Mail recommendation forms to teachers or others with stamped, self-addressed envelopes.
- Make copies of all application materials and keep in a separate file in a safe place.
- Mail completed application forms before the deadline.
- Contact the people who are writing letters of recommendation to verify that they have completed and mailed the letters by the deadline.
- Send thank-you notes to those who wrote letters of recommendation.
- Contact the admissions office to verify that they have received all of the information including the application, transcripts, and letters of recommendations.

Applying for financial aid

Financial aid is available for students whose resources are inadequate to meet their educational expenses. Aid is based on a partnership between the student, the postsecondary educational institution, the states and federal government, and available private resources.

The need for aid is determined by the difference between the costs of education (such as tuition, books, living expenses, etc.) and the amount of money the student has. The larger the difference between these two, the more financial aid may be available.

Although funds for consumers to attend adult basic education classes or to study for the GED may be available through community resources that are unique to each locale, the emphasis of this section is on obtaining financial aid for postsecondary education.

Financial aid includes the following:

- Grants;
- Scholarships;
- Work programs; and
- Loans.

While these funding sources are the same as those available for all students, some resources are earmarked for students with exceptional need. For example, students with mental illnesses may apply for resources through the Social Security Administration and Department of Vocational Rehabilitation.

Free Application for Federal Student Aid

Most students applying to a postsecondary education program will apply for financial aid. Almost without exception this will require completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

Applying for aid through the FAFSA costs students nothing. It is critical that students apply for financial aid as soon as they decide to return to school. Awards are often based on availability, and students who apply later run the risk of decreased funding.

To establish the need for aid, colleges use a formula established by the U.S. Congress, called the Expected Family Contribution (EFC) that is the amount students and their families are expected to contribute. The FAFSA form requests information on students' assets including income and savings. If students are under 24 years old, dependent, and living with parents, then the parents must disclose their assets. If students are emancipated minors, they must complete a special form. The FAFSA application is available from institutions' financial aid office and at <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/>. Online applications are encouraged and speed the process.

Disability-related expenses covered by other assisting agencies cannot also be covered by financial aid from schools. For example, if students receive vocational rehabilitation services and the agency funds the costs of tuition and books, schools will not consider those expenses in determining financial aid.

Students must provide documentation to verify the disability. Depending on the institution, documentation may be a written statement from a qualified professional such as a psychiatrist or Vocational Rehabilitation counselor. To be certain what is required, students should check with the financial aid office.

On the FAFSA Web site, students' personal financial aid information will be accessible by using a personal identification number (PIN) or a 4-digit number in combination with the students' Social Security number, name, and date of birth to identify users who have the right to access personal information. The security of the PIN is important because it can be used to do the following:

- Electronically sign federal student aid documents;
- Access the personal records; and
- Make binding legal obligations.

After completing a FAFSA application online, students and parents (if students are classified as dependent students) must sign it. The FAFSA cannot be processed until it is signed. Using a PIN to sign the FAFSA electronically is the fastest and most reliable way. However, you can also print the form, sign it on the signature page, and mail it, or you can provide a signature on the paper Student Aid Report (SAR). See the Federal Student Aid PIN Web site at <http://www.pin.ed.gov> to apply for the PIN.

Students must reapply for financial aid each year through the Renewal FAFSA. This form may include preprinted information from the initial application, spaces to correct that information, and other specific questions that must be answered each year.

Resources for graduate school

After students complete an undergraduate degree, they are no longer eligible for certain sources of federal and state funds. For example, departments of vocational rehabilitation are particularly reluctant to provide funds because employment is expected after undergraduate graduation. However, students who wish to attend graduate school can use the traditional routes of institutional scholarships in their field of study: loans, part-time or alternate semester employment, and family contributions as financial support. The graduate school or academic department can provide information about funding.

Federal grants

Federal grants are the primary source of funding available for disabled or disadvantaged students. They include Pell Grants and Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants.

Pell Grants are awarded to undergraduates who have not earned a bachelor's or professional degree. They do not have to be repaid.

To qualify, students must complete a financial aid application (FAFSA) and demonstrate that the cost of the education exceeds their ability to pay. The amount received will depend on the cost of going to school, students' resources, whether they are full-time or part-time students, and whether they attend school for a full academic year. The maximum award varies from year to year. Contact the financial aid office to determine the amount available to individual students.

Federal Supplemental Education Opportunity Grants (FSEOG) are another federal gift-aid program for undergraduates with exceptional financial need. Pell Grant recipients with the lowest Expected Family Contribution will be the first students to get FSEOG.

A student may receive from \$100 to \$4,000 a year. Amounts may vary by year depending on when they apply, their financial need, and the funding level of the school. Money from a FSEOG is dispersed in the same manner as Pell Grants and also does not need to be repaid.

Students should know that if they leave school during the term or drop one or more classes, they may have to repay the grant money in part or in full.

Financial aid for part-time students

Sometimes part-time students have been denied financial aid because they do not carry the requisite number of classes. According to a ruling by the U.S. Department of Education, Southwest ADA Office of Civil Rights, Complaint #04-95-2114, regarding the State University System of Florida (1997), the University System may not, on the basis of disability, provide less assistance to people with disabilities than is provided to those without disabilities. Therefore, the University System had to award grant assistance to students who are carrying fewer than 12 credit hours as an accommodation for a disability and who otherwise met the eligibility criteria for the grant, regardless of whether the students are enrolled as full-time or part-time.

The Federal Work Study Program (FWS) provides part-time jobs for undergraduate and graduate students with financial need, so they may earn money to help pay educational expenses. The program encourages on-campus or community service work and work related to students' course of study.

FWS students are paid by the hour. Their wages must be at least the current federal minimum wage but may be higher depending on the type of work done and the skills required. When assigning work hours, employers or financial aid administrators will consider students' total award amount, their class schedule, and their academic progress.

If students work on campus, they will usually work for the school. If they work off campus, employers may be private, nonprofit organizations or public agencies. The work performed must be in the public interest.

A Federal Perkins Loan is a low-interest loan for both undergraduates and graduate students with exceptional financial need. Federal Perkins Loans are made through schools' financial aid offices and must be repaid.

Students can borrow up to \$3,000 for each year of undergraduate study. Amounts vary by year. The total amount they can borrow as an undergraduate is \$15,000.

If they miss a payment or make less than a full payment, a late fee and collection costs may be charged. Repayment must begin 9 months after students graduate or after they leave school or drop below half-time status. Students have up to 10 years to repay the loans in full.

Direct and Federal Family Education Stafford Loans (FFESL) are the U.S. Department of Education's major form of self-help aid. They may be subsidized or unsubsidized. These loans provide substantial amounts of money for students who are fully matriculated in a program of study that is at least 1 full academic year. The financial aid administrator of the educational institution will have details for application, disbursement, and repayment.

Unless students have been successful in college and maintained a good grade-point average and strong full-time or part-time status, loans are not recommended. It takes some students several semesters to develop the endurance and work habits necessary to complete a degree program. Consider this developmental process when applying for a financial aid package.

Defaulted student loan

Some consumers had student loans before the onset of their illness and are currently in default. This often means that they are unable to receive additional aid. However, options exist to enable students to continue to be eligible for some financial aid.

Each lender is required to have a repayment procedure to allow borrowers to bring a loan out of default by establishing a process to repay it. By doing so, borrowers renew their eligibility for federal financial assistance. The lender is also required to set a "reasonable and affordable" monthly payment amount. Contact the individual lender to pursue this option or search <http://www.studentaid.ed.gov>.

Deferment and forbearance

When students choose to secure a loan and find they are temporarily unable to repay the loan, they may request a *deferment* or *forbearance*. A deferment allows students to temporarily postpone payments on a loan.

Depending on the type of loan, students may have to continue paying interest on the loan while it is deferred. Students who are ineligible for a deferment but who are temporarily unable to continue paying on the loan may qualify for forbearance. With this option, payments may be postponed, reduced, or the time to repay may be extended. For additional information, go to <http://www.studentaid.gov>. Search for *deferment* or *forbearance*.

Loan consolidation plan

Students with multiple loans can apply to consolidate the loans to group them together into a single payment. This may be a good option for students with older loans or loans that have been in default. Setting up a loan consolidation plan will remove any outstanding default. The repayment amount in this option can be advantageous for low-income borrowers. If the person falls at or below the poverty level, the monthly payment will be very low or \$0. For detailed information about the process, go to <http://www.studentaid.ed.gov>. Search for *loan consolidation plan*.

Loan discharge

Students can apply to have their loan discharged or cancelled based on a physician's certification that they are totally and permanently disabled. For more information about qualifying for this loan discharge, review the loan promissory note and Borrower's Rights and Responsibilities Statement or contact the loan holder. Information is also available at <http://www.studentaid.ed.gov> and at other Internet sources. Search for *student loan cancellation*.

Temporary loans

Some education institutions give students short-term loans in case of financial emergencies. Consult with the financial aid office to determine if loans are available and under what circumstances students may apply for them.

Scholarships

Scholarships are part of the financial aid package that may be offered to undergraduate students through the FAFSA application process. Most postsecondary institutions have their own scholarship programs in addition to those available through state and federal funding. Some states may also grant tuition waivers for students who qualify as low-income students.

Libraries often have resource books with detailed information about scholarships. You can find additional sources of scholarships through Scholarship Search Services on the Internet. Three are Fastweb, GoCollege, and FastAid. Consult <http://www.heath.gwu.edu> (HEATH at George Washington University) for disability-related scholarships.

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Web site also lists scholarships specifically for people with psychiatric disabilities. Look on the homepage <http://www.nami.org> for *NAMI on Campus*.

Eli Lilly and Company offers scholarships to help people diagnosed with "schizophrenia, related schizophrenia-spectrum disorders or bipolar disorders to acquire educational and vocational skills necessary to reintegrate into society, secure jobs, regain their lives, and realize their full potential." You can download applications at <http://www.reintegration.com>.

Finding eligibility programs

Eligibility programs are programs that people must qualify for based on need. Two sources for eligibility programs that are available to consumers are the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Social Security Administration. To receive services, students must meet eligibility requirements that include verifying disability and need. Each agency has different requirements.

Vocational rehabilitation

Consumers who are qualified to receive Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services must prepare an Individualized Employment Plan (IEP) with the VR counselor. The IEP includes developing an employment goal, identifying the services and resources needed to meet the goal, and identifying the service providers. If it is determined in the goal-setting process that returning to school is a necessary step to reaching the employment goal, VR may assist consumers with their education by providing assistance for tuition, transportation, books, or other aids that have been included in the IEP. Services may differ from state to state.

Postsecondary educational institutions' Office of Financial Aid and VR work closely together to determine the aid that will be available to individual students. Because both VR and the colleges receive federal money, service dollars cannot overlap. Contact the VR office in the local area for more information.

Social Security

The Social Security Administration provides benefits to people if they have a verifiable disability. Those who qualify receive both cash benefits, Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), and federal health insurance (Medicare).

While Social Security benefits are typically reduced by other income, the Plan for Achieving Self-Support (PASS) allows consumers who are eligible for SSI and, in some cases SSDI, to set aside money from work or savings to help them achieve a work goal.

If consumers want to return to school, they may use the plan to pay for tuition, fees, books, and supplies that are needed for school or training. The money set-aside will not reduce the SSI benefit and does not count against the resource limit.

The PASS program is designed to help students acquire the items, skills, or services needed to compete in a professional, business, or trade environment. Therefore, the goal of the PASS program must be to have a job that will produce sufficient earning to reduce dependency on SSI payments. Contact the Social Security office in the local area for more information or go to: <http://www.ssa.gov/disabilityresearch/wi/pass.htm>.

Other sources of student aid

- Students who are veterans or are the spouse or dependent of veterans may be eligible for educational benefits. For details, go to: <http://www.gbill.va.gov>.
- Although the federal government is the largest source of student financial aid, other sources are available. The higher education agency of each state has information about state aid, including aid from the State Student Incentive Grant (SSIG). It is jointly funded by individual states and the U.S. Department of Education. Contact the college financial aid office for information.
- The AmeriCorps program provides full-time educational grants in return for work in community service. Students can work before, during, or after they complete their education. Students can use the funds to either pay current educational expenses or repay federal student loans. Go to: <http://www.americorps.org>.

Reviewing consumers' options

Various funding opportunities are available for consumers who want to return to school. Use the checklist below as a part of the enrollment process to review these options with consumers.

Checklist for applying for financial aid

- Obtain application form from the financial aid office of the institution, or print out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) online.
- Apply for FAFSA personal identification number (PIN).
- Review income tax returns.
- Review benefits.
- List other assets or income.
- Explain special financial considerations such as funding from the state department of vocational rehabilitation.
- Read repayment responsibilities.
- Check FAFSA application for accuracy and completeness.
- Make copies of all financial aid application materials and keep them in a separate file in a safe place.
- Before the deadline, mail or send by email completed application forms. (Check with the academic institution).
- Keep track of the date on which each form was mailed. A Student Aid Report (SAR) should be mailed to you within 4 weeks.
- When the SAR arrives, contact the financial aid office of the colleges to which you have applied to see if they need a copy.
- Review other funding options.
- If you are working with Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), make sure your VR counselor is in touch with the Financial Aid Office.

Registering for classes

After students have been accepted, they must matriculate or enroll as a member of a college, pay the necessary fees, and register for classes. Most postsecondary educational institutions assign an academic advisor to students to provide academic counseling before or during registration. The advisor is available to help students identify required courses and sequences of courses they must complete before graduating or completing a certificate program.

Most academic institutions require placement tests to determine where the students might begin a math or English sequence. Consult the college catalogue for the schedule of tests. You may request accommodations for placement tests but arrangements must be made beforehand. For more information about accommodations, see Module 4 in this workbook.

Some schools may have online registration or pre-registration for all students or, in some cases, only for special needs or returning students. For a schedule for the registration process, see the college catalogue.

Financial aid is often dispensed at registration. All fees are paid at this time, often directly to the school, unless special arrangements have been made. If the financial aid has been delayed for some reason, some academic institutions provide temporary loans or may make special arrangements until the financial aid is dispersed.

Registration checklist

- Matriculate
- Pay fees
- Take placement test
- Identify advisor
- Select classes
- Complete all forms
- Receive student identification
- Get parking permit, bus pass, or shuttle service pass

Campus orientation

College campuses can be very confusing. As an education specialist, you must be familiar with the campus and campus policies. We recommend that you conduct an orientation with consumers who are new to the campus.

A good campus map, usually available in the college catalogue, will help you to navigate the campus. In addition to noting where all the different buildings are located, it is helpful to find the student's classrooms. Making a plan that lays out a path from the campus point of entry to the classroom and other destinations may be necessary for some students. It will also be helpful to notice restrooms and drinking fountains.

Campus health center

Students who have paid the health services fee will be eligible for health services. Typical services that most campus health centers provide include the following:

- Activities to promote wellness;
- Health education;
- Primary care; and
- Emergency care.

Some may have dental services as well. Become familiar with the campus health center and include it on your orientation tour.

Learning center

Some colleges have learning centers or computer resource centers with computers and other assistive technology for student use. Many centers are staffed with people who can help students use the equipment.

Centers may also include tutors and remedial or enhancement classes. Adult Learning Centers or GED classes may also be co-located there.

Services vary widely across campuses. Some may have assistive technology that can help students with psychiatric disabilities address specific learning problems. Consult the college catalogue or website for more information and include this on your orientation tour.

Career Center

Another important resource to help students choose or refine their educational goal is the campus career center. Career centers may offer the following:

- Classes or workshops on career planning;
- Career counseling;
- Interest inventories;
- Career-related information; and
- Job searches.

Become familiar with resources in the career center and include it on your orientation tour.

Library

The library is a vital part of the educational experience and knowing its resources is vital to a successful student experience. Taking a scheduled library tour with library staff or a credit course on basic library skills will help students become more knowledgeable and comfortable using the library.

Skilled librarians are available to help students with research from printed sources and online databases using the library resource computers. Most libraries have study kiosks, with and without Internet access, that provide a quiet place to work and study.

Student union

The social hub of a campus is often the student union. Cafeterias, food courts, bookstore, some recreation facilities, and student services may be found in the student union. Students who are enrolled and have a student identification card have access to all the resources of the student union. Include the student union on your orientation tour.

Orientation checklist

- College catalogue
- College map
- Student handbook
- Class schedule
- Student newspaper

Campus policies

Another tool for orientation is the student handbook which describes the recreational facilities and services available. It details the rules for adding and dropping classes, attendance requirements, a student code of conduct, and other information to help students learn the college's resources and requirements.

It may also contain information about students' rights and legal protections. Although the details may be overwhelming to the students as they begin their program, it is very important that the education specialist be familiar with the rules that govern students' participation on campus.

Student code of conduct

Most campuses have a student code of conduct that states the rights and responsibilities of students on campus. It usually includes a process for working with a student who violates the code of conduct and a grievance procedure to challenge the institution's decisions about the violation.

The code of conduct applies equally to all students regardless of disability and includes students whose disability may be the cause of the violation. If you believe that the institution has violated students' rights, follow the college's grievance process or contact the Regional Office of Civil Rights for a hearing.

Checklist for reviewing policies and procedures

- Grading system
- Academic standing
- Attendance
- Add/drop procedures
- Computer lab and printing policies
- Tutoring center
- School e-mail account
- Student insurance
- Student health center
- Student counseling center
- Medical leave policy
- Parking
- Library policies and hours
- Contacting instructors and office hours
- Code of conduct
- Inclement weather

Services for students with disabilities

The college catalogue will list and describe programs for students with diverse needs. Many have programs for returning students, disadvantaged students, or students with special learning needs that may prevent them from fully participating in the academic programs. As an education specialist, you should be familiar with all the resources that might help students with mental illnesses.

Establish contacts with staff from the campus' Office of Services for Students with Disabilities and counseling centers. If students determine that they will benefit from services and accommodations available through this office, the time to contact the staff is at registration or before registration. For complete information about disability services and accommodations, see Module 4 in this workbook.

The following vignette describes the story of Sarah who was referred to the Supported Education program. Read the vignette and consider how you would support Sarah's effort to complete her degree.

Sarah's story

Sarah is a 35-year-old female who is diagnosed with borderline disorder and major depression. She has been hospitalized seven times, her latest for suicide ideation and attempts. She self-referred to the Supported Education program after attending an information session sponsored by her mental health agency.

Sarah attended college 15 years ago and has 65 transferable credit hours. She needs an additional 25 credits to receive her associate's degree from the local community college. Her major is graphic arts design and she has worked as a graphic designer for two corporations.

Sarah is anxious, has self-defeating thoughts, has paranoia, and portrays herself as a victim. She has an unstable self-image, shifts her education and vocational goals often, and has trouble managing her money. In the past, she has overused local and state resources. However, she is motivated and came to the education specialist having already chosen a college and an academic major and completed the college application.

She is currently working 10 hours per week in the stockroom at a local bookstore. She has an employment specialist with whom she speaks monthly. She is also connected to vocational rehabilitation services.

Tackling the issues

Q: **If you were Sarah's education specialist, how would you help Sarah return to college?**

While there is no single correct answer, here are a few ideas.

Following referral and assessment, Sarah and her education specialist scheduled a meeting with her vocational rehabilitation counselor. The purpose was to affirm Sarah's vocational goal and to secure funding for school.

In addition to needing money for school, Sarah said she had difficulty with math and needed a tutor. She requested help applying for financial aid and registering for the appropriate classes. Sarah, her education specialist, and her vocational rehabilitation counselor developed an educational goal plan and an Individualized Employment Plan (IEP) that outlined her goals and major tasks including who would do what and when.

Next, Sarah and the education specialist conducted a campus orientation and met on campus to talk with her academic advisor and determine the classes Sarah would need to complete her associate's degree. During the next several sessions, Sarah and the education specialist completed the FAFSA online, but found that she was ineligible for financial aid because her expected family contribution was too high. They returned to the vocational rehabilitation counselor who agreed to pay for Sarah's tuition and textbooks.

For Sarah to continue to receive vocational rehabilitation funding, she would have to receive a passing grade for the seven credits for which she registered. The final steps in preparing to attend classes were to buy the books needed for class, locate Sarah's classrooms, and obtain a parking permit.

Exercise: **Complete an Educational Assessment**

- **Distribute a copy of the forms that you will use for Educational Assessment.**
Use one of the vignettes—or others based on your experience—to complete and discuss the forms.



Exercise: **Reinforce Your Learning**

- Review the process for obtaining financial aid. Where might problems arise? Discuss how you would address those problems.



Module 4:

The Keeping Phase — Promoting Student Success

Notes to the facilitator and program leader

Prepare for Module 4:

- Make copies of Module 4. Your copy is in this workbook; print additional copies from the CD-ROM in the KIT.
- Distribute the material to those who are participating in your group training. Ask them to read it before meeting as a group.
- Make copies of these exercises:
 - Strengthen Your Interactive Skills*
 - Reinforce Your Learning*



Do not distribute the exercise until the group training. Your copies are in this workbook; print additional copies from the CD-ROM.

Conduct your fourth training session:

- Distribute the exercises for this module.
- Review the distributed materials and complete the exercises as a group.

Training Frontline Staff

The Keeping Phase — Promoting Student Success

“It takes a village” applies to all students who are resuming their education. Students with mental illnesses are no exception. In Supported Education, consumers learn to work together with education specialists, college staff, staff from the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities, and other mental health practitioners and community providers as they pursue their educational goals. This module introduces the types of supports that help consumers sustain educational activities.

Most campuses have a variety of services that will support and help students in their academic careers. This section describes the importance of working together with these stakeholders including staff from the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (or Disability Services) regarding accommodations, the counseling center for academic and psychological supports, and Student Affairs to monitor academic progress.

Collaborating with campus disability services

Consumers who are returning to school may experience problems with anxiety, concentration, memory, or other functional limitations caused by their illness. To level the playing field with their peers without disabilities, some accommodations are available to help consumers perform more effectively.

Accommodations are changes in educational tasks, requirements, or environmental access, which allow people with disabilities to have the same chance of success as people without disabilities. Accommodations must be made available to those who qualify for them because of the following two landmark pieces of legislation:

- The Rehabilitation Act of 1973; and
- Americans with Disabilities Act.

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, specifically Section 504, made it illegal for institutions who received federal funds to discriminate against people and deny them equal access because of their disability. In 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was passed to extend the coverage to both public and private institutions. The ADA goes further than Section 504 by stating that those who can verify a disability that limits their functioning are entitled to reasonable accommodations.

ADA definition of *Otherwise Qualified Individual with a Disability*

“An individual with a disability who with or without reasonable modifications to rules, policies, or practices, the removal of architectural, communication or transportation barriers, the provision of auxiliary aids and services, meets the essential eligibility requirements for the receipt of services or the participation in programs or activities provided by a public entity.”

A student must meet both the academic and technical standards of an institution for admission (34C.F.R. Part 104, Appendix A, paragraph 5). Technical standards are “all nonacademic admission criteria that are essential to participation in the program in question.” Depending on the program, these standards might include physical or mental health requirements. Although students may meet the academic standards, Title II and III of the ADA refer to the rights of an institution to exclude an individual from participation in its program of activities for health and safety reasons.

All campuses, by law, must have an office or designated person who is responsible for implementing Section 504 and the ADA. This individual or office, usually called the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities or “Disability Services” has the ongoing responsibility of ensuring that policies and procedures developed and employed by the academic institution do not discriminate against students with disabilities.

A grievance procedure must also be in place for resolving complaints. If students believe that they have been unlawfully discriminated against, they should contact this office for information about the institution’s grievance procedures. They may also file a complaint with the regional Office of Civil Rights.

Disability Services also provides accommodations for qualified students. Information about these and other services should be readily available in the student handbook.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a federal law originally enacted in 1975 to ensure that children with disabilities have the opportunity to receive a free appropriate public education. The law has been revised many times with the most recent amendments passed in December 2004. IDEA is divided into the following four parts:

- Part A - General Provisions
- Part B - Assistance for Education of All Children with Disabilities
- Part C - Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities
- Part D - National Activities to Improve Education of Children with Disabilities

Part B includes special education services and procedural safeguards for youth from ages 3 to 21. The law includes transitions plans and support for youth with disabilities leaving high school and entering into postsecondary education or vocational training, employment, independent living, and community participation. For more information see <http://idea.ed.gov/>

Eligibility for accommodations

You must establish eligibility before you can arrange any accommodations. Contact Disability Services before enrolling to determine the kinds of services available. If students choose to disclose their psychiatric disability and register with Disability Services, the staff will determine their eligibility for accommodations. Registering early facilitates the process so that students' needs are addressed before classes begin.

Definitions of disabled or handicapped

- (1) a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of an individual,
- (2) a record of such an impairment, or
- (3) to be regarded as having such an impairment.

To be defined as a disability, the impairment must result in a substantial limitation of one or more life activities such as caring for one's self, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, and working. The ADA defines mental impairment as "a physiological disorder or condition... affecting one or more of the following body systems neurological, musculoskeletal, and/or...special sense organs."

Types of accommodations

Accommodations are made based on students' *functional limitations*, which is a legal term for issues related to performance. For example, if consumers have difficulty concentrating, (the functional limitation), the accommodation might be to use a tape recorder in class. Such an accommodation would allow consumers to review the class lectures and take notes at their own pace. However, accommodations cannot be given to consumers unless they disclose and verify their disability.

Here are some common examples of accommodations for students with mental illnesses:

- Using tape recorders in the classrooms;
- Using books on tape;
- Modifying testing formats or time parameters;
- Changing where tests are given;
- Changing timelines for assignments;
- Changing format or method of completing assignments;
- Using cubicles, headphones, or individual rooms during tests;
- Taking beverages to class;
- Changing seating; and
- Issuing special parking permits.

Changes in program requirements or policy

Some students with disabilities require changes in program requirements so they can complete their course of study and graduate. Examples of a modified program requirement might include a course substitution such as logic for math or a sociology or anthropology class for language.

To receive this type of accommodation, students must verify a functional limitation that warrants the program change. The change cannot substantially lower the standards for or fundamentally change the program or curriculum. There is no guarantee that institutions will agree with students' need and grant the substitution. A program administrator may believe the program requirements are necessary to maintain the academic standards of the college.

Other students might require accommodations related to policy. These changes might include granting students part-time status and extending that status as necessary or allowing incomplete rather than failing grades if students require a medical withdrawal due to hospitalization.

Accommodations are made and services given on an individual basis. Each student's needs are unique and what might solve a problem for one student may not suffice for another. Because one consumer gets a certain accommodation does not necessarily mean that others will get that same accommodation. Work together with the Disability Services counselor to assess and determine consumers' needs.

Below is a list of academic problems students might identify and possible accommodations. For more information on accommodations, see Boston University Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation (2009). *Higher Education Support Toolkit: Assisting Students with Psychiatric Disabilities* available through <http://www.bu.edu/cprl/resources/supportstudents/hes-toolkit.pdf>

Academic Problems and Accommodations	
Problem	Accommodation
■ Concentration	■ Tape recorder
■ Note taking	■ Tape recorder, note taker
■ Test anxiety	■ Individually proctored test in a quiet location, ■ Extra time to complete test
■ Unable to express thoughts	■ Change test format on essay tests
■ Easily distracted	■ Tape record class, books on tape
■ Performance anxiety	■ Written assignments rather than spoken
■ Anniversary dates that cause problems	■ Flexible time for assignments, ■ Assignments given in advance
■ Short attention span	■ Tape recorder, books on tape
■ Extreme restlessness	■ Leaving class for breaks
■ Anxiety about parking	■ Special parking permit
■ Dry mouth	■ Having beverages in class

Disclosure

For consumers to receive accommodations, they must be willing to disclose their mental illness to Disability Services staff. Some consumers are reluctant to tell anyone on campus that they have a disability. Even though they may have trouble in their classes, they are afraid they will experience discrimination if they disclose the diagnosis. Such fears are based in reality. While some campuses and campus personnel are open and welcoming to students with psychiatric disabilities, others still have reservations about them.

Students who choose to disclose, report that the accommodations and services that become available make a big difference in their comfort and success on campus. Many campuses, particularly community colleges, see their mission as providing educational opportunities to the whole community. They welcome diversity.

The culture of the campus may be assessed in several ways to determine how open it is to students with psychiatric disabilities. First, examine how well-publicized Disability Services are, particularly those for students with psychiatric disabilities. Although all postsecondary educational institutions are required to have and to advertise Disability Services, some do so more openly than others. Second, talk to other students who are enrolled or have been enrolled in the school to determine the degree of openness.

In addition to disclosing to Disability Services staff, education specialists and consumers should discuss and weigh the advantages and disadvantages of disclosing to individual instructors or classmates, as needed. While decisions about disclosure are a personal choice, education specialists should provide consumers with a safe environment to explore their options and make their own decisions.

When weighing the options, inform consumers that if they choose to disclose a disability, the law guarantees that the information will be kept confidential. All information related to disabilities must be kept in a locked file and only be accessible to Disability Services staff. Although some instructors may request information about a particular student in their class, they do not have a right to the information. The only information that can be disclosed is that a student has a verifiable disability and is entitled to the specified accommodation.

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (Buckley Amendment) provides faculty members with the right to see educational information in institutional files for students with whom they work, but exempts disability records.

Some Disability Services staff request that students sign a release of information form so they can obtain treatment records. In most cases, this information is unnecessary. Advise consumers to use discretion and care in signing papers to release information.

If needed, advocate on students' behalf. Students who have had a brain injury or who are visually impaired are not required to disclose their treatment. Neither are students with psychiatric disabilities. For more information on disclosure, see Hyman, I., *Self-Disclosure and Its Impact on Individuals Who Receive Mental Health Services*. HHS Pub. No. SMA-08-4337 Rockville, MD. Center for Mental Health Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2008 or go to: http://download.ncadi.samhsa.gov/ken/pdf/SMA08-4337/SelfDisclosure_50p.pdf

Documenting psychiatric disability

A disability must be documented for consumers to receive accommodations or other disability services. Documentation can be obtained from a licensed professional or a previous record from a vocational rehabilitation office, a mental health center, or high school.

According to the Association for Higher Education and Disability Best Practices, documentation serves the following two purposes:

- To determine accommodations; and
- To protect against discrimination.

Documentation needed only for protection from discrimination may be quite brief. A diagnosis statement, past history of recognition as a person with a disability, or even self-identification that indicated how others might regard the individual as having a disability could suffice as the basis for protection from discrimination.

Documenting disability for the purpose of providing accommodations must both establish disability and provide adequate information about the functional impact of the disability so that effective accommodations can be identified.

In the context of postsecondary education, documentation should give a decisionmaker a basic understanding of a consumer's disability and enough information to anticipate how the current impact of the disability is expected to interact with the institution's structure of courses, testing methods, program requirements, etc.

For more information, see the following two resources:

- Best Practice Resources on Disability Documentation from the Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD) at <http://www.ahead.org>
- Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP)'s Job Accommodation Network's Searchable Online Accommodations Resource (SOAR) system at <http://www.jan.wvu.edu/>

The ADA states that documentation required for receiving accommodations "must be reasonable and must be limited to the need for the modification or aid requested."

It should not go beyond what is needed to establish the existence of a disability. The request for extensive case files is a violation of confidentiality.

Accommodations for General Educational Development (GED) testing

The process for receiving accommodations for GED testing is similar to the process for receiving accommodations at the postsecondary level. An application called a *Request for Testing Accommodations (Emotional/Mental Health)* must be completed and approved for accommodations to be granted.

The application has three parts:

- *Section 1*: Completed by GED candidate;
- *Section 2*: Completed by the GED Chief Examiner; and
- *Section 3*: Completed by Professional Diagnostician or Advocate.

Section 3 contains three subsections that include a verification of the emotional/mental health impairment, the requested accommodations and other information, and supporting documents.

This section requires the professional diagnostician to provide a clear diagnosis and information about current functional limitations that might affect students' abilities to take the tests under standard conditions, so that the rationale for the requested accommodations might be properly evaluated. The documentation is considered current if it has been completed in the last 6 months.

The chief examiner must sign off on the application and send it to the GED administrator before a request will be granted. Most frequent accommodations received include the following:

- Extended time;
- Use of a calculator;
- Use of a scribe;
- Large-print edition;
- Supervised frequent breaks; and
- Use of a private room for testing.

Contact the GED administrator if other accommodations are required.

Tell consumers that the information provided to the GED Testing Services is confidential and will be used solely to determine their eligibility for accommodations. Testing staff only receives information about testing accommodations. For further information, contact the American Council on Education, National GED Testing Services. The Web site is <http://www.acenet.edu>. Click on *GED testing*.

Disability Services checklist

- Registered with Disability Services or GED Testing Services
- Documented disability
- Requested accommodations
- Received accommodations

Collaborating with campus counseling services

Another important source of support available to students is the services offered through the campus counseling center. Services usually include the following:

- Prevention;
- Skill-development training;
- Short-term therapy;
- Problem-solving;
- Adjustment issues; and
- Other issues that interfere with academic success.

Generally long-term therapy, crisis intervention, or hospitalization is referred to community providers.

Become familiar with the types of services offered by reviewing the Student Handbook and contacting the counseling center for detailed information. Contact key staff to inform them in general terms of your role in working with students with psychiatric disabilities. Explore possible ways of working together to effectively meet consumers' needs.

If consumers choose to disclose their mental illness to staff at the campus counseling center, ask them to sign a release of information form to allow you to communicate with their on-campus counselor. Set up some mechanisms to facilitate routine collaboration.

Communicating with Student Affairs or other administrative offices

Most education programs have standards for student academic progress, particularly for degree, certificate, or diploma programs. This information is often found in a student handbook or is available through the Office of Student Affairs. The standards generally include the following:

- Minimum grade point average (GPA); and
- Minimum credits completed.

The programs may also notify students through an academic alert if they have not achieved satisfactory progress. This may be followed by academic probation or academic suspension. Standards vary across programs.

Be aware of academic standards and work with students to closely monitor their academic progress. When issues are detected early, supports may be put in place. For example, the campus Learning Center may have study groups or tutors available that can work individually with students. Occasionally, mental health agencies may also have resources for tutoring.

Peer support groups offered through the academic institution or mental health agency may be available to help students share study skills. Education specialists can help students identify these resources or develop skills such as time management. See resources under *Monitor student progress* in this module.

Withdrawal

In the course of their postsecondary education experience, students may experience a reoccurrence or worsening of their psychiatric symptoms. They may need to lighten their academic load or withdraw from school altogether for a period of time. Research has shown that policies related to medical leave are a key factor in the success rate for a significant number of students.

Inappropriate withdrawals, particularly when students simply stop going to class, can result in failing grades and grants or loans coming due. When students are ready to re-enroll, the failing grades will affect their academic standing and they may be ineligible for financial aid.

It is very important to understand the appropriate process for withdrawal from a course or requesting a leave of absence from an academic institution. Most colleges and universities have a medical leave policy that will minimize the impact on students' academic progress. It is also critically important that the financial aid office be contacted to determine the impact of reducing academic credits or withdrawing on grants or loans.

Policies may vary greatly across academic institutions. You can generally find information about withdrawal and medical leave policies in the campus catalogue or Web site. Information about grants and loans may be stated in the award documents.

If there is any doubt about the implications of the policy, it is critical that students or the education specialist consult with responsible administrators. Having the knowledge before the need will smooth the process should it happen.

Supports may be found off campus as well. The next section describes the importance of working with consumers to monitor progress towards goals and ongoing assessments to address evolving consumer needs by offering appropriate supports and resources both on and off campus.

Monitoring student progress

To determine how consumers are doing over time, you can formally monitor their progress in a variety of ways. Keep a log that tracks the classes and credits students register for, complete, drop, add and audit, and their grades.

Watershed or critical incidences may occur with students and create important changes in their lives. A brief description of the event in their case record and how it affects the student will be helpful to all who work with the student in the present and in the future. Students may wish to log their attendance, work status, or hours and salary.

Changes in residences, the beginning or ending of a relationship, a disagreement with a teacher, an excellent paper or grade may all provide insight into students' behavior and attitude over time. You must also keep notes of student "stop outs" if they choose to leave school for a period of time.

Conduct ongoing assessments

Traditionally assessments focused solely on identifying and resolving problems. In the Supported Education model, education specialists focus on consumers' strengths. Each semester, conduct assessments that summarize student progress and achievements.

Keeping a record of students' strengths can be useful when they need encouragement or feel overwhelmed. Their strengths can be used to resolve issues and move forward with hope.

The following list provides some examples of strengths and potential problems that are commonly reported during ongoing assessments. Mark those identified as strengths with a plus (+) and potential problems with a negative (-) sign.

Examples of Strengths and Potential Problems

Academic

<input type="checkbox"/>	Concentration	<input type="checkbox"/>	Motivated
<input type="checkbox"/>	Study skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	Inspires others
<input type="checkbox"/>	Meeting deadlines	<input type="checkbox"/>	Asking questions in class
<input type="checkbox"/>	Time management	<input type="checkbox"/>	Answering questions in class
<input type="checkbox"/>	Getting to class on time	<input type="checkbox"/>	Taking notes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Stamina	<input type="checkbox"/>	Getting along with instructors
<input type="checkbox"/>	Parking	<input type="checkbox"/>	Clarifying assignments
<input type="checkbox"/>	Oral reports	<input type="checkbox"/>	Completing reading assignments
<input type="checkbox"/>	Taking tests	<input type="checkbox"/>	Completing homework
<input type="checkbox"/>	Exam preparation	<input type="checkbox"/>	Memorizing
<input type="checkbox"/>	Writing papers	<input type="checkbox"/>	Reading comprehension
<input type="checkbox"/>	Self advocacy	<input type="checkbox"/>	Listening
<input type="checkbox"/>	Attention span	<input type="checkbox"/>	Remembering instructions
		<input type="checkbox"/>	Other _____

Coping issues

<input type="checkbox"/>	General anxiety	<input type="checkbox"/>	Medication management
<input type="checkbox"/>	Restlessness	<input type="checkbox"/>	Symptom management
<input type="checkbox"/>	Easily overwhelmed	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sleep patterns
<input type="checkbox"/>	Life style	<input type="checkbox"/>	Stress management
<input type="checkbox"/>	Food management	<input type="checkbox"/>	Physical health
<input type="checkbox"/>	Making friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	Energetic
<input type="checkbox"/>	Racing thoughts	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unexpected changes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Easily distracted	<input type="checkbox"/>	Perfectionism
		<input type="checkbox"/>	Other _____

After identifying strengths and potential problems, consider available on and off campus supports. Start by reviewing the supports that the consumer currently has in place to determine their appropriateness.

Keeping a list of resources that students can rely on can also be useful as new ones emerge. For example, create a chart that students can keep with them or put on a refrigerator or mirror to help remember the resources that are available to them.

Use the same method as above, identify which of the following supports are in place (+) and which are missing and needed (-).

Examples of On-Campus and Off-Campus Supports	
Academic	
<input type="checkbox"/> Supplemental Security Income (SSI)/	<input type="checkbox"/> Financial issues
<input type="checkbox"/> Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)	<input type="checkbox"/> Therapist
<input type="checkbox"/> Study space	<input type="checkbox"/> Support group
<input type="checkbox"/> Case manager	<input type="checkbox"/> Employment opportunities
<input type="checkbox"/> Support network	<input type="checkbox"/> Living environment
<input type="checkbox"/> Prescriber	<input type="checkbox"/> Psychiatrist
<input type="checkbox"/> Family support	<input type="checkbox"/> Friends or partner
<input type="checkbox"/> Social network	<input type="checkbox"/> Community Involvement
<input type="checkbox"/> Hobbies and other interests	<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____

Support from treatment team members

Many coping skill issues make excellent material for working with a therapist. Others directly related to the school environment can be addressed by changing how students manage their behavior. Examples include stress management, symptom management, physical health, and diet.

Students experiencing an increase in symptoms may need an adjustment or change in medication. Share this information with their treating prescriber.

Changing medications in the middle of a semester is not recommended unless it promotes functioning and academic success. The change could affect students' ability to function (and do schoolwork).

Many solutions to coping problems can be worked through with the education specialist and the student. Talking through issues and understanding how they may affect personal success and accomplishing the educational goal are strong motivators to make changes. Developing a simple schedule or program is a concrete way to facilitate change and monitor progress.

Support from substance abuse counselors

Substance use is a part of the campus experience for many students. Whether consumers have an active substance use disorder, had substance abuse problems in the past, or have no history, assessing substance use as a part of the ongoing assessment is recommended. If the assessment reveals a need for substance abuse treatment, be prepared to work with consumers' treatment team to meet that need.

Support from family and other supporters

Students often cite members of their support network as an important factor in their school success. Great power lies in a relationship that helps you meet an important goal. Help students develop strong support networks.

Update Educational Goal Plans

Monitor students' progress by reviewing short- and long-term goals outlined in their Educational Goal Plan. As students begin their new schedule of going to school, they may require individualized services. Wakeup calls, accompanying to class, help writing papers, or studying for tests may be very helpful. Advocacy with instructors or Disability Services staff may also be necessary.

Often, personal contact while they are on campus helps students feel supported and alleviates the isolation that many may experience. Meeting for coffee on campus or a nearby restaurant before or after a test may help them do their best. Working together at the library, tutoring at the mental health center, and arranging for study buddies with other students may also help them stay motivated and committed to their goals.

Some students do best with a Personal Success Plan. The plan might include a weekly class and study schedule, time out for exercise and recreation, money management, symptom management, or food shopping and preparation. Contact with the education specialist, the therapist, and case manager may also be included.

Personal Success Plan							
Activity	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thru	Fri	Sat	Sun
Classes	2-4	10-11	9-12 2-4	10-11	2-4		
Study	10-12 1-2	1-3 7-9		1-2	9-12	1-4	6-8
Meetings			1-2	3-4	7-10		
Recreation	7-9	4-6	7-9	5-7	5-6	5-9	1-5
Chores				7-9		9-1	
Other							10-12

Offer ongoing support

Education specialists are not therapists or caseworkers. They are coaches, cheerleaders, mentors, and guides. Although they must know the mental health system and the education community, their primary relationship is with the students with whom they are working. They are teachers, advocates, problem-solvers, monitors, and support people.

Education specialists also provide hope and inspiration and are committed to education as a road to recovery. The standards often cited for a “professional relationship” are less stringent because the role is so diverse. Much of the contact will occur outside the usual office workspace and occasionally outside the standard 9 to 5 workweek. However, all rules of professional conduct and confidentiality still apply.

Interactive skills

Supported Education is derived from the following theoretical constructs:

- Psychosocial rehabilitation that emphasizes the importance of teaching skills and providing support to consumers.
- Counseling theory that emphasizes the worth and significance of each individual expressed as unconditional positive regard.
- Behavior theory that emphasizes the belief that people change by learning from experience and interacting with individuals within a meaningful environment.
- Motivational interviewing that emphasizes a consumer-centered, directive method of enhancing intrinsic motivation to change.
- Recovery that emphasizes the belief that people can recover from mental illnesses and lead meaningful and productive lives.

These theories are demonstrated by a number of techniques. It is important that education specialists understand and use the skills associated with the following four tenets:

Tenet: Assistance provided to students should validate their frame of reference and respect their preferences.

Skills:

- Asking open-ended questions
- Reflective listening with repetition, rephrasing, or paraphrasing
- Reflective listening responding to feeling and meaning
- Asking for ideas from the student to develop options
- Weighing the pros and cons of ideas and options
- Developing discrepancies
- Offering solutions with permission from the student
- Developing a collaborative plan

Tenet: All communication should express unconditional positive regard for the student.

Skills:

- Acknowledging individual differences
- Expressing empathy
- Expressing interest and caring
- Collaborating rather than confronting
- Avoiding argumentation
- Acknowledging small gains
- Building self-efficacy through encouragement
- Maintaining hope by anticipating positive outcomes over time
- Understanding and expressing that setbacks create learning opportunities

Tenet: All students can learn new skills through teaching or observation.

Skills:

- Developing skill lessons
- Helping students practice new skills
- Monitoring new behavior
- Reinforcing new behaviors
- Modeling appropriate behavior
- Developing next steps
- Summarizing

Tenet: Students need a range of support and resources that continues as long as they are needed.

Skills:

- Assessing skill, support and resource needs
- Determining when a student needs support rather than a skill
- Determining the nature of support or the kind of resource wanted
- Identifying the resources available to the student
- Connecting rather than referring the student to a resource
- Following up to determine if the support or resource is right for the student

As students continue in classes, the services they require will lessen, and a schedule for contact can be planned. At the beginning of their return to school, a daily check-in with frequent face-to-face meetings may be necessary. As they get more comfortable, weekly or even monthly check-ins by telephone, e-mail, or text messages are easy ways to stay in touch.

Weekly or monthly group meetings with discussion of common problems and successes can help students returning to school feel more connected. Occasional inspirational speakers may provide additional motivation. Friday night pizza dinners after a week of classes will provide social contact and help students build a social network. It is also a way for students to reward themselves for their achievements.

Stephanie's story

Stephanie is a 17-year-old woman who has a history of depression and self-harm. She is an A student and wants to become a veterinarian.

She works in a veterinarian's office part time and had also worked on a local farm, so she has extensive experience in working with all sizes and types of animals.

She is a high achiever, is strongly motivated, and wants to attend a 4-year university that will prepare her for a veterinarian program.

Tackling the issues

Q: If you were Stephanie's education specialist, how would you help her realize her dream of becoming a veterinarian?

While there is no single correct answer, here are a few ideas.

Stephanie and her education specialist began by applying for financial aid, which would be required regardless of what school she attended. Next, they discussed applying for college and the requirements of a pre-vet program. They explored colleges and universities online to compare programs and college environments. Stephanie was planning to live on campus and the environment and culture of the school was as important to her as the education it would provide.

Three colleges were chosen because of their proximity to Stephanie's home and their highly respected pre-vet programs. She and her education specialist contacted the schools and made plans to visit each.

They developed a schedule for each campus visit and determined the places and people it would be important for Stephanie to see. It included meeting with faculty members and the Disability Services staff, and visiting the dorms, barns, and stables.

Stephanie planned to ask questions about the post-graduate acceptance rate to veterinary programs, employment opportunities, internships, and the kinds of hands-on experiences she would receive in the pre-vet program.

After visiting the three campuses, Stephanie decided she would apply to all three. Stephanie and her education specialist met every other week to work thorough through her college applications and essays, gather pertinent information, and review financial aid options. Stephanie maintained a high level of motivation and her education specialist often acted as a cheerleader when doubts surfaced.

By April, Stephanie had been accepted into all the schools to which she had applied. Her parents, major supporters throughout the process, were waiting for the financial aid packages to arrive to help them decide which school was financially viable. Stephanie received multiple scholarships and federal funds. Her final decision, made with her parents, was to accept the school that offered the most financial aid.

Stephanie and her education specialist visited the university one more time before she moved in and started her classes. Stephanie visited her classrooms and met with the Disability Services officer to discuss accommodations. She was assigned a counselor who would coordinate the academic supports she might need and be available to help with any emotional difficulties that surface in college life. Stephanie decided to manage her medication on her own as she had shown that she was responsible in taking it independently. A nurse practitioner who could prescribe medications and an onsite therapist completed her support team.

Stephanie began the semester with a full course load filled with lab sciences and intense mathematics. She chose not to sign up for a reduced course load (an academic accommodation that allows students with disabilities full-time status).

Stephanie and her counselor spoke throughout the semester discussing her academic progress and her social transition to a new peer group. Stephanie's transition was not as smooth as she had anticipated. Her course load proved to be challenging and she found for the first time that she was not as academically versed as her peers. But Stephanie reached out for help. She used the campus tutors daily and met with her advisors and counselor regularly. She created structure by organizing certain times and days to study and specific times to socialize. She decided not to take on more responsibilities such as work or other social clubs.

Stephanie completed her first semester and finished with high marks. She continued with her classes second semester and stayed connected to her support team on campus. Stephanie talks with her education specialist every several weeks for support and coaching.

HHS Publication No. SMA-11-4654
Printed 2011

28855.1210.8712010402

