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**Cumberland/Perry Counties' MH&MR Office**

16 W. High Street, Suite 301, Carlisle, PA 17013

717.240.6320

Fax: 717.240.6415

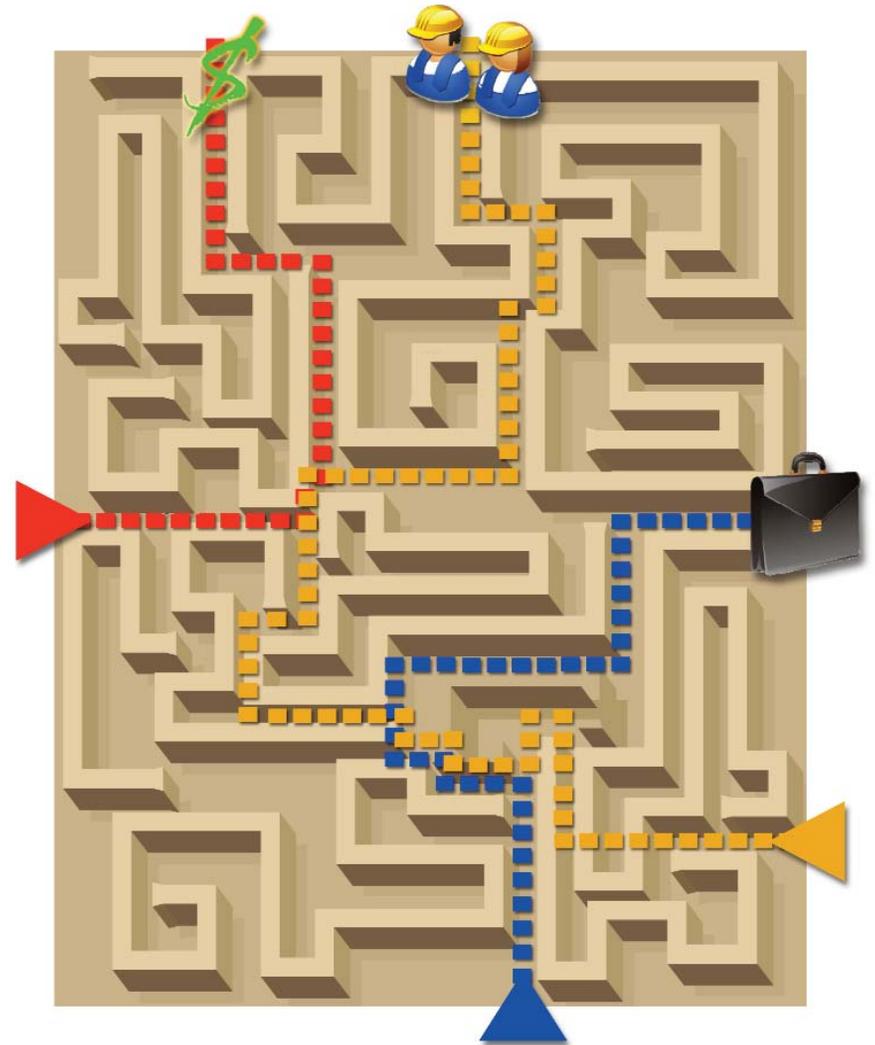
E-Mail: [mhmr@ccpa.net](mailto:mhmr@ccpa.net)

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Adapted from the Self-Determination Series:

**University of Illinois at Chicago**  
**National Research and Training Center on Psychiatric Disability**  
104 S Michigan Ave, Suite 900, Chicago, IL 60603

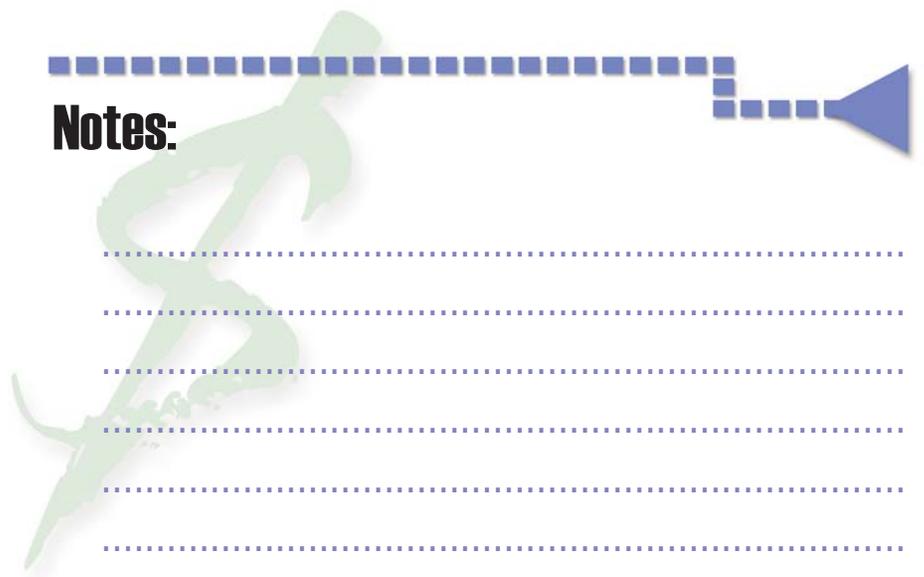
# Choosing Your Path to Employment



**Deciding whether you want to work  
is an important life decision.**

This booklet is designed to help you consider  
different things related to that decision.

**Notes:**



A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing notes, spanning the width of the page.





## Optional:

### Write additional questions to ask below

1. ....  
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2. ....  
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3. ....  
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4. ....  
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5. ....  
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6. ....  
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## Getting Started

First, you'll need to answer the next several questions. Read each question and write your answer on the line provided:

1. Is working what you want to do at this point in your life, given other things that are going on?  
.....
2. What kind of work would you like to do?  
.....
3. Where do you want to work?  
.....
4. How many hours a week do you want to work at first, and later on?  
.....
5. How much money would you like to make and how might this affect your social security benefits, if you receive them?  
.....
6. Do you already have the skills and qualifications you need?  
.....

7. If you're not ready for your ideal job right now, do you want to work at another job while you get ready? If so, what kind of job would that be?

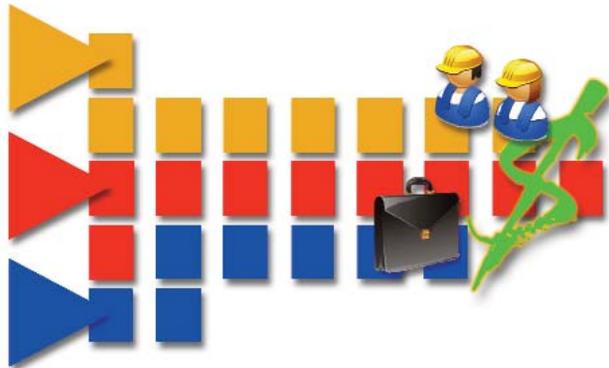
.....

8. Would you like to do volunteer work instead of paid work?

.....

The answers to these questions will help you decide which path to take to employment. All paths discussed in this booklet start with your decision to get a job as soon as possible. Other options, such as going to school to get a degree, job skills training, and volunteering also are good choices that you should discuss with family, friends, and service providers you trust.

The different paths to finding employment are briefly described on the following pages. Read each description carefully, and think about whether it matches your needs and preferences. Then choose the option that best fits what you'd like to do right now.



## What to Do Next?

- ▶ If you found your supported employment program - **CONGRATULATIONS!** Although your journey has just begun, at least you know you are on the right path. Plus, you know that you will receive high quality services that research has shown to be effective.
- ▶ If you haven't found your supported employment program - try not to be too discouraged. Good programs are hard to find, but you should continue to search. After looking for a while, if you still cannot find a good program, decide if you want to settle for the best one you can find. Talk this over with people you trust and who you know well. Or go back to the beginning of this booklet and consider other options, such as searching for a job on your own, volunteering, going to college, or enrolling in a vocational/technical school.
- ▶ The important thing is to keep moving forward toward your goal of getting a job. Remember that most people who have had mental health difficulties can work and want to work. You are smart and creative enough to figure out a way to make that happen.





## How to Interpret the Score

### ▶ **16 - 19**

This is an excellent program and you definitely should consider getting your supported employment services here.

### ▶ **11 - 15**

This is a good program. If you think it matches your current needs and preferences, you should consider getting your supported employment services here.

### ▶ **6 - 10**

This program is missing some of the things that make supported employment successful for people in recovery from mental health challenges. If staff will work with you to add some of the ingredients that are missing, you might want to consider getting your services here.

### ▶ **0 - 5**

This program has a few of the basic ingredients of supported employment, but is missing many of the elements that make it effective for consumers of mental health services. If you have other choices for Supported Employment services, contact them. If not, see whether staff will work with you to add some of the ingredients that are missing. If not, you may be better off seeking employment on your own.



## Different Paths to Work

### ▶ **Path #1: *Doing It On Your Own***

This path to employment involves competing with other people to get and keep a job. This may sound scary, but it's how most people get their jobs, including your family and service providers. Being employed competitively means that you are working in a regular work setting, alongside coworkers who aren't mental health consumers, and you're working for an hourly wage, usually at or above minimum wage.

Doing it on your own means that you conduct your own job search using newspaper Want Ads, asking people you know if there are openings where they work, or looking for Help Wanted signs at local businesses. You handle problems at your job on your own, or by discussing them later with your friends, family, or service providers. Your boss judges how good of a job you are doing, and tells you what you are doing right and wrong. Both you and your boss decide how long you keep your job.

### ▶ **Path #2: *Supported Employment***

This path to employment also involves getting competitive employment (a job that is open to any applicant). But you don't do it entirely on your own. Supported employment helps individuals with any type or degree of mental health disability look for, get, and keep a job. A service provider (also called an employment specialist) assists you in deciding what you like to do and then supports you in finding that job. The job you get is a competitive job, as described above. You work in places and positions that match your preferences and abilities.

Supported employment will support you every step of the way in deciding what you want to do, how to deal with any problems you encounter, and whether to tell your boss and coworkers about your mental health difficulties. You also receive help deciding how to coordinate working with receiving social security disability benefits. This is especially important if you decide you want to work, but you still want to continue to receive your benefits. Also, with supported employment, the assistance you receive has no time limit. You can continue to have help available after you've been on the job for a while, or if you decide to look for a better job while still holding your old one.

► **Path #3: Transitional Employment**

On this path, you get the assistance of an employment specialist and you work in a real job setting for minimum wage or above. But the job you hold is temporary and does not belong to you. It is called a transitional placement, and it belongs to the service delivery agency that helps you. You work at this job for a period of time (usually 6 months) and then move on to another transitional placement or perhaps to competitive employment. You usually have fewer choices about what kinds of work you do in transitional placements since they are designed to give you experience, not to be your permanent job. If you want to choose the kind of work that you do in a job that you can keep as long as you want, transitional employment is not for you.

Does your service terminate consumers from services even though the consumers still want to continue receiving services?	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
What is the average amount of time people take to get a job with your service? 6 months or less or more than 6 months?	6 Months or Less <input type="checkbox"/>	More than 6 Months <input type="checkbox"/>
Do staff at your agency provider benefits counseling for people on SSI/SSDI?	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
Will your service accept consumers who want to work AND keep their SSI/SSDI benefits at the same time?	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
Does your service offer peer support from people who have had mental health problems?	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
Does your service allow family or friends to be involved in the process of finding and keeping a job?	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
How many of your consumers are also clients of our state (OVR) Vocational Rehabilitation agency? At least 50% or less than 50%?	At Least 50% <input type="checkbox"/>	Less Than 50% <input type="checkbox"/>
Does your service help consumers keep their jobs if they go in the hospital or need to take some time off for mental health reasons?	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
Will your staff talk frequently with my case manager or psychiatrist if I ask them to?	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
How many of your consumers have a psychiatric disability? At least 25% or less than 25%?	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>TOTAL SCORE: FIRST COLUMN (# of ✓)</b>		

## Check One Box For Each Question

How many of your consumers work in competitive jobs that are open to anyone who applies?	At Least 80% <input type="checkbox"/>	Less Than 80% <input type="checkbox"/>
How many of your consumers work in settings where none of the coworkers is disabled?	At Least 80% <input type="checkbox"/>	Less Than 80% <input type="checkbox"/>
Can people who are working continue to receive support from program staff for as long as they want?	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
Does your service assist consumers in getting jobs that are permanent?	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
How many of your consumers earn minimum wage or above?	At Least 80% <input type="checkbox"/>	Less Than 80% <input type="checkbox"/>
How many of your consumers earn \$10 an hour or more?	At Least 10% <input type="checkbox"/>	Less Than 10% <input type="checkbox"/>
How many of your consumers get a job in the field they want?	At Least 50% <input type="checkbox"/>	Less Than 50% <input type="checkbox"/>
Does your service work with anyone interested in working, regardless of her/his abilities?	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
Does your service have in-person vocational support after 5 pm?	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>

## Which Employment Path Do You Want To Take?

### ▶ **Competitive:**

If you want to seek competitive work on your own, you might start by looking in the newspaper or talking to employed people about job openings where they work.

### ▶ **Transitional:**

If you want transitional employment, you should ask your service provider to help you see whether there is a program that offers it in your local area.

### ▶ **Supported:**

If supported employment seems to be what you are looking for, contact your local mental health base service unit and ask them to recommend some agencies that offer it. As you find and then visit those agencies, this booklet will help you judge the quality of the services they offer.

***IF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT IS WHAT YOU WANT, TURN TO THE NEXT PAGE .....***

## How Do You Get Started?

1. Schedule an appointment with a staff member at an agency that offers supported employment. Let her or him know that this appointment is just to learn about the agency, not to join it.
2. Because this is a time to get all of your questions answered in an unhurried manner, ask if the appointment can last an hour. If not, tell the person you will need at least a half hour.
3. Don't forget to bring this booklet, a notebook, and a pen or pencil with you.
4. When you arrive, thank the staff member for taking the time to meet with you.
5. Near the beginning of the interview, let the staff member know that you have nineteen questions that you'd like to ask about supported employment. Explain that the questions are just to help you get clearer information about the supported employment services the agency offers. Emphasize that the questions are about the agency's supported employment program, not other types of employment programs it offers.
6. Slowly read each question out loud and check off each answer.

7. If you feel uncomfortable reading the questions to the staff member, practice asking them to a friend or read them out loud to yourself a few times.
8. Be sure to ask your own questions as they occur to you. You may want to write down your own questions before the interview. There is space in this booklet for these questions.
9. It may be difficult to get all of your questions answered in one session. So at the end of the interview, thank the staff member and let her or him know that you may call back with a few more questions. Be sure to put all of the contact information that you have in a safe place for future reference.
10. Do not add up the answers until after you have left the interview.

As you can see, using this booklet means that you will be interviewing the staff member. If this makes you feel uncomfortable, it's understandable. It might help to think about this situation in a new way. What you're really doing is just talking, one person asking another person questions. Asking questions is a natural part of what happens during a visit. So relax, breathe, and take your time.

