

The Power of Innovation

A health care system to meet our needs
NSW Health
 Symposium Oct 2012

Access to meaningful work: changing attitudes and practices Building the Health Workforce

Introduction

Access to meaningful work is a significant factor in recovery for people with mental illness, yet unemployment rates for this group far exceed those of the general population. In order to support consumers to engage in the workforce, mental health services needed to revise traditional theory and practice.

Aim

To facilitate a change in beliefs and practices amongst mental health clinicians that would increase the rates of vocational interventions provided to support people with mental health problems in obtaining competitive employment, in line with current international best practice and recovery principles.

Method

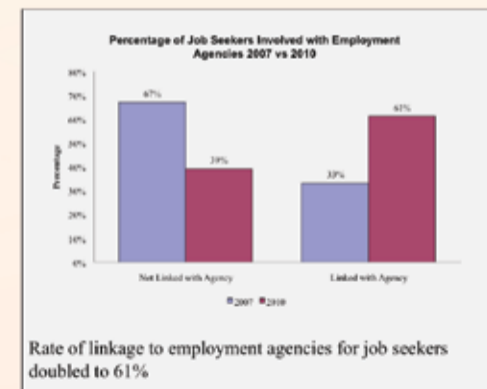
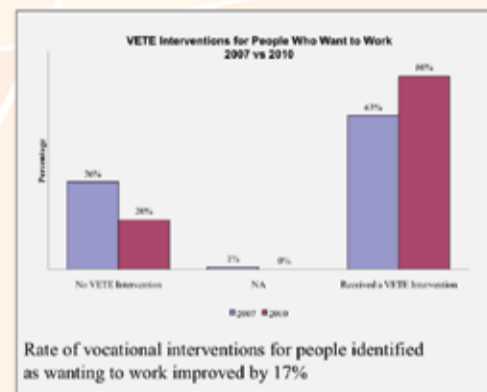
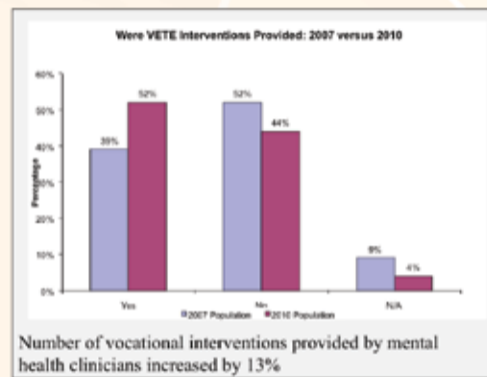
Vocational, Education, Training and Employment (VETE) Coordinators were established to build capacity by providing guidance and education to mental health service teams and local employment and educational organisations to improve knowledge and skills and build service pathways.

To assess the impact of the project a 'snapshot' was conducted surveying community mental health clinicians regarding every consumer on their caseload in 2007. This was repeated in 2010 and the results compared.



Results

The program resulted in improved awareness of the importance of addressing vocational and educational issues, better follow up when a desire for work or study was expressed, and higher expectations with regard to consumers' capabilities. Five key positive outcomes demonstrated statistically significant results ($p < .01$):



A higher proportion of people were rated as capable of full time and open employment with less considered only capable of sheltered work.

Clinicians with consistent access to a VETE Coordinator were more likely to explore work aspirations and act on consumer preferences.

Conclusion

This project was a collaborative process of capacity building and teamwork which educated mental health staff to address employment issues with their consumers in line with current international best practice and recovery principles. The establishment of VETE Coordination positions in the mental health service was successful in raising awareness of vocational issues and improving vocational service provision. It is anticipated that this will flow on to improved rates of competitive employment for mental health consumers.

- DIGNITY
- RESPECT
- EQUITY
- SOCIAL INCLUSION



Acknowledgements

Jo Sommer, Asha Singham, Roslyn Poole, Bronwyn Lunt, Jeff Rogers, Lachlan Best, Sarah Mahoney, Jennifer Valdivia