



Supported Education

3.7.7 Information for policy makers: Management of mental health organizations

What is Supported Education?

Supported Education is the provision of individualized, practical support and instruction to assist people with psychiatric disabilities to achieve their educational goals

What are the principles of Supported Education?

Supported Education is based on the following principles:

- Improvement of the educational outcome for persons with psychiatric disabilities
- Hope is an essential ingredient of the Supported Education process
- Self-determination: a focus on students making choices (setting their own educational goals) and accepting responsibility for their educational process
- Students are actively involved in all phases of their Supported Education process, determining the criteria for success and satisfaction, as well as evaluating their progress toward meeting their goals
- Partnership between participant and Supported Education professional
- Services match participant's preferences
- Equal/fair access for everybody
- Development of participant skills and of environmental support
- Bridging with mental health services
- Support as long as needed

What are the essential components of Supported Education?

Supported Education is based on the choose-get-keep model of the Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation of Boston University.

- *Choose*: to select an educational or training course compatible with the participant's values, skills, aptitudes, career interests, finances and learning objectives.
- *Get*: to secure enrollment in a preferred course.
- *Keep*: to sustain enrollment and maintain an acceptable level of success and satisfaction until completion, through skills and support development.

Why is it important to support consumers to return to and/or to remain at school?

The onset of psychiatric disability generally occurs between the ages of 17 and 25—the years in which young adults follow higher education (including advanced vocational education), which is a major channel in our society to prepare for a career and enhance life goals. But for people with a psychiatric disability, this resource is largely unavailable.

Although people with psychiatric disabilities often attempt higher education, they are frequently unable to complete their studies because of the nature of their illness and its treatment. They often meet with overwhelming obstacles, including stigmatization and discrimination. In an economy that requires (higher) education for upward occupational mobility, people who are unable to succeed in postsecondary/higher education or training may find themselves ultimately underemployed or unemployed.

What can you do to support consumers to return to and/or to remain at school?

In collaboration with other stakeholders (education, disability organizations, family, student and consumer advocacy organizations and funding resources), a mental health organization can initiate, develop, perform and evaluate a Supported Education program to help (young) people with psychiatric disabilities to obtain regular education.

The role of student is one of the most valued roles in our society and by helping (young) people with psychiatric disabilities to choose, get and keep regular education, you help them to become integrated in the community as part of their recovery process.

Is Supported Education successful?

Supported Education is a promising practice (SAMHSA, 2011). A promising practice has strong quantitative and qualitative data showing positive outcomes, but does not yet have enough research or replication to support generalizable positive educational and mental health outcomes.

What does Supported Education cost?

The invested time varies enormously for each student/consumer. The frequency and duration of support contact can vary over time, from a ten minute phone call once in two weeks to twice weekly face-to-face meetings between the student/consumer and the professional in exam periods. In practice, elements of the Supported Education intervention program are used in short trajectories of four or five sessions.

The professional backgrounds of Supported Education specialists also vary. Most Supported Education specialists have a Bachelor or Master's degree in rehabilitation counseling, social work, psychiatric nursing, occupational therapy or psychology. Because of this, the personnel costs also vary.

Next to the personnel costs there are extra costs for training, coaching and organizational adjustments.

How is Supported Education funded?

The financing of Supported Education services varies from country to country, and within a country, and from organization to organization. Mental health and education have their own financial support structures. In most countries, it is possible to get the extra supported education support financed through a disability grant; in other countries, that is not possible. Sometimes it is possible to get the extra support financed through vocational /reintegration/rehabilitation funding. In some countries, it is possible to get an extra year's study loan when you have a disability. Most educational institutions have a disability service in place to provide extra support to students with a disability. It is recommended to consult organizations who have been successful in getting the necessary extra support financed and who can provide useful ideas and strategies.

Which resources are available regarding Supported Education?

A Supported Education toolkit is available for free on the website www.supportededucation.eu. The toolkit includes materials such as information brochures, intervention workbooks, workshops for education and mental health professionals, good practice descriptions and an implementation manual. On the website, you will also find a list of Supported Education publications, an annotated bibliography and links to relevant websites.

How to train mental health staff in Supported Education?

Training is available to educate staff in the philosophy, mission, principles and activities of Supported Education. Consultation is available to support staff with the implementation of a Supported Education program within their own organization.

For more information

Information about Supported Education can be found at www.supportededucation.eu