

Re-Procurement of Community Based Flexible Services (CBFS) in MA.

The time for feedback to the MA. Department of Mental Health about the proposal to remove Supported Employment from the CBFS model is now. After a decade of training for and developing Supported Employment, the Dept. of Mental Health proposes to eliminate the most effective aspects of employment service (job placement and follow-along support) from the CBFS teams. Extensive research throughout the U.S. has demonstrated that Individual Placement and Support (IPS) Supported Employment, as part of the community team, has better outcomes than other approaches. It was because of this that IPS was touted by the Dept. of Mental Health in its 2009 services redesign. Recently, the Department has reported that in its proposed service redesign, participants who currently have access to an Employment Specialist through CBFS will be left without the team-based support for getting and keeping employment that is known to work most effectively.

The value of employment has become obvious to those in recovery who have chosen to work. It increases socialization and self-esteem; it provides meaning, structure and a route to escaping the extreme poverty of disability income as a sole source of income. Work also shapes our identity in positive ways; it reduces the frequency and intensity of mental health crises, and results in lower dependency on services over time. Unemployment, on the other hand (especially long term unemployment), is associated with increased depression, social isolation, poorer physical health, increased substance abuse and poverty.

This is the second time in recent history that the Dept. of Mental Health has planned to eliminate Supported Employment. The first time 23 programs were closed and later CBFS was intended to help put employment back into the community. Now it appears that it will be lost again.

We at MassPRA need to hear from a variety of stakeholders about their view of this proposal and whether this is what the participants in CBFS want, what families want and what providers believe would be in the best interests of their clients. Please let us know your thoughts as soon as possible as the clock is ticking.

Joan Rapp, President on behalf of the MASSPRA BOARD OF DIRECTORS