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**CCSM Issues Development Committee Second Draft 1/12/2022**  
**Barriers to Career Advancement for People with Mental Health Challenges**

**The Issue:**

In discussions with peers in the Maine community we are discovering some systems issues involving employment that need to be addressed. These issues go across multiple State agencies/programs. They include Vocational Rehabilitation Services and Clubhouses. For example, people can often be discouraged from employment totally or find themselves under employed. We know that with the right supports and resources many can be successful in building careers of the individuals' choosing.

**Recommendations:**

For clubhouses, vocational rehab and other employment programs supported by DHHS we offer the following suggestions:

1. Vocational providers should make every effort to get to know the person that they are working with and learn about the individual's strengths and goals.
2. Form support groups/social events so that people can come together and share their different struggles, hopes and dreams as well as accomplishments on their career journeys.
3. Inform people of educational opportunities as well as financial support that align with the work that they are seeking.
  - Offer mileage reimbursement to people in volunteer positions.
  - Find jobs that are flexible regarding mental health days.
  - Work with Maine's Community Work Incentive Coordinators (CWICS) to make sure you are connected to an applicable health insurance plan. If people do not have access to MaineCare, we need to make sure we have exhausted every resource to get them affordable and adequate health insurance.



- As a first step to employment, many individuals could benefit from volunteering. Offering a stipend or financial support is an incentive to work.
- Provide learning opportunities for self-growth such as career development courses/career interest assessments.
- Develop a career ladder, job professional development (promotions).
- Teach workforce etiquette to lessen terminations from a job. (learning to refrain from complaining, asking too many questions and not treating the job as group therapy.)
- Encourage mainstream work including trade jobs and small business/entrepreneurship opportunities.

### **Expected Outcomes:**

Organizations that offer opportunities in career/job development will focus more of their resources on assisting a more diverse workforce. This would support individuals in attaining the skills needed to achieve their desired employment goals.

### **We would like to hear from you:**

To submit feedback, ideas or a personal story relating to this issue statement, please send to the CCSM either by mail at: 219 Capitol St. Suite 7 Augusta, ME 04330 or email at [vmccarty@maineccsm.org](mailto:vmccarty@maineccsm.org)

**DEADLINE TO RESPOND: February 14, 2022**

**Thank you.**