

## **Employer Tips: Using the Enhancing Workplace Inclusion Technical Assistance Guide**

The Enhancing Workplace Inclusion Technical Assistance Guide was developed for consultants who are assisting employees to create a more inclusive work environment for people with psychiatric disabilities. This addendum is intended to enable employers who are motivated to use the guide without requiring technical assistance from “outside.” Developing and maintaining an inclusive work setting involves preventing discriminatory behavior and developing a welcoming atmosphere for all people who seek or get a job in a workplace. As the executive director of a large social service agency said, “My employees are both my biggest assets and my largest expense, so I do everything I can to protect that investment.” This statement reflects the situation but not always the sentiment for many employers. Increased productivity, less time spent resolving distracting employee conflicts, and decreased employee use of sick time are among the possible benefits of a workplace that is non-discriminatory and inclusive.

Much of the guide, including most of the principles and technical assistance steps apply as written, regardless of whether a consultant or the employer uses the guide. In some instances, use of the guide by an employer entails substituting the first person perspective of the employer for the third person perspective of a consultant, e.g., changing “the employer” to “I,” “my,” “me,” etc. In other instances, substituting the term “employer” with “employee” will provide a more accurate application of the guide. In essence, the employer is assuming the role of involving her/his workers in the steps of enhancing workplace inclusion for employees with psychiatric disabilities rather than a consultant involving the employer and her/his employees in the steps of the process. The process steps and the outcomes for each step illustrated in the example, although developed for consultants, should be useful to employees, at a minimum providing an “image” of the process to follow or approximate. It may be useful to share the example and/or other sections of the guide with the work group of employees selectively or throughout the process.

Presentation of the example, tables, descriptions of each step, and other content of the guide should be tailored so that the information is accessible to employees, e.g., some employees may prefer reading material and discussing afterwards; and for others, a straightforward verbal presentation may be more effective. Also revising the wording or example, so long as the purpose and meaning of the guide isn’t altered should be considered. The guide is intended as a tool to facilitate developing a more inclusive and welcoming workplace environment for people with psychiatric disabilities, not as a “cookbook;” so some steps of the process may not need to be performed, e.g., there already may be a team of people who are committed to making the workplace more inclusive or a team that could include workplace inclusion as a new focus, so forming a work group would not be needed.

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The following are a series of “tips” (√) for each section, to facilitate an employer’s-use of the guide. Read each section of the guide before reviewing the tips for that section.

### **Orientation to the Technical Assistance Guide**

√ The points under the heading “How Do I Effectively Use the Guide?” are recommended for anyone who is using the guide with minor revisions to reflect the perspective of an employer who is taking a lead role, e.g., substituting the term “technical assistance process” with “process” and “employer” with “employee.”

### **Overview of the Technical Assistance Principles and Process**

√ Periodically self-assessing whether you are adhering to the principles will help assure that the process is effective.

### **Step 1. Engaging the Employer**

√ Apply this step to engaging key employees vs. being engaged by a consultant.

√ Rather than focus on engaging “senior management” and then formulating a project work group, consider focusing on engaging employees as work group members as the initial step of the process.

### **Step 2. Targeting Stigmatizing Behaviors**

√ As mentioned earlier, it may be useful to revise the table that depicts stigmatizing behaviors before presenting to the work group, e.g., simplifying the language, or to present the table in segments during a series of shorter meetings.

### **Step 3. Developing Policies**

√ Note that the term “policy” is used to describe any written statement that articulates an expected standard of behavior, e.g., mission statement, program description, etc.

√ In addition to written statements, develop a written list of what employees are routinely told explicitly during orientation, the hiring process, training sessions, performance review, or other situations that communicates how employees are expected to behave or interact with people

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with disabilities.

#### **Step 4. Establishing Benchmarks**

√ Show examples of benchmarks to the work group to facilitate their participation on establishing benchmarks for your workplace.

√ Measurement for benchmarks could be a specific number if the frequency of the behavior being measured is predictable. For example, if it is predictable that there will be 11 supervisory performance evaluations scheduled during the time period that the benchmark will be assessed, the benchmark might be:

“At least 9 supervisory performance evaluations include references to lowered performance expectations due to considerations of a person’s disability.”

√ Measurement for benchmarks should be a percentage if the frequency of the behavior being measured is not predictable. For example, if some supervisory performance evaluations occur based on when an employee requests an evaluation during the time period that the benchmark will be assessed, the benchmark might be:

“Less than 5% of supervisory performance evaluations include references to lowered performance expectations due to considerations of a person’s disability.”

√ If you lack experience in designing surveys and decide on this method of evaluating benchmarks, note that there is an example of survey questions included in the guide, and/or consider accessing a free online services, e.g., Question Pro for assistance. ([questionpro.com/survey-design.html](http://questionpro.com/survey-design.html)) for assistance with developing a survey.

#### **Step 5. Designing Benchmark Evaluation**

√ Using or adapting existing methods may be adequate for evaluating benchmarks, e.g., incident reports, employee satisfaction surveys.

#### **Step 6. Educating Employees**

√ It is important to consider a variety of educational methods that take into account the learning needs and preferences of employees, e.g., posters, videos, brief presentations, providing written materials.

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√ Rather than a one-time event, integrate education about the policies into the day-to-day operations of the work place.

√ Providing educational opportunities for employees to interact about the policies, e.g., a brief discussion during a weekly job station meeting.

### **Step 7. Addressing Problems**

√ Consider providing the work group with a written list of the possible reasons for the problem, e.g., on an eraser board, flipchart, typed sheet, etc., and facilitate a discussion of each possibility.

√ If more than one reason is identified as the root cause of the problem, develop a plan of action for each.

√ Developing a written plan of action that specifies what the perceived cause of the problem is, what action(s) the work group will take to address the problem, who will take the action(s), and a target date for completing the action will increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the problem solving effort.

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