

**U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs**  
**New York Harbor Healthcare System**  
**Compensated Work Therapy Program**

**1. CWT Supported Employment (CWT-SE)**

Program Mission: To assist veterans with severe mental illness find competitive employment in the community. The program is designed to focus on the veteran's choices, and rapid job search, that is, seeking employment directly without pre-employment training. It conforms to the principles developed through Evidence Based Practice Research. It stresses continuous assessment based on work experience rather than in artificial or sheltered settings. There are no time limitations. Enrolled Veterans will receive continuous support as he/she adjusts to the world of competitive employment. Veterans are assessed for discharge only if they persistently refuse services or conditions change, such that Supported Employment services are not practical.

Rehabilitation is considered an integral component of mental health treatment. This initiative will require that supported employment staff work closely with the treatment team. Supported employment staff will coordinate with teams and document their interactions with clients through the CPRS medical records system. The veteran's struggles and successes will become one aspect of the mental health treatment.

The supported employment staff will also work with family, friends or any support system identified by the veteran. Release of information forms will be obtained so that the employer can be informed of the veteran's status and be supportive and sensitive to the veteran's needs.

The goal of the program is to find competitive employment that assists the veteran increase the level of functioning, decrease symptoms and improve their life style. Benefits counseling will take place to insure veteran's income is not jeopardized.

Criteria for Admission: Eligibility criteria have been simplified to ensure a no exclusion philosophy. Any veterans who has an interest in working and has a primary diagnosis of Psychosis, that is schizophrenia, bi-polar, schizoaffective disorder etc., can be referred. Vets must be referred by CWT-SE consult in CPRS, signed by veteran's psychiatrist.

Referrals accepted from all NYHHS sites.

Contact/location: Normajean Dellapina, LCSW: NYHHS CWT Coordinator, SA (718) 526-1000, X 2650; Evelyn Oudjehane, LCSW SE worker, BK Rm. 14-223 & SA (718) 836-6600, X 1389; SE worker, Carmen Nieves, NY Rm. 15-15091S, (212) 686-7500, X 7987.

## **2. CWT Transitional Worker Experience (CWT-TWE)**

Program mission: Compensated Work therapy/Transitional Work Experience (CWT/TWE) provides rehabilitation for veterans through a combination of work experience and therapy focused on that work experience. CWT/TWE participants are screened by the program staff and matched to a work assignment in the VA medical center or in the community for a limited time as is clinically appropriate.

The Program gives participants the opportunity to practice and acquire workplace skills they will need as/when they move on to competitive employment.

CWT/TWE functions like a “real” job, is supervised by work site staff, and places the same job expectations and demands on the veteran that are experienced by other non-CWT workers in the workplace. Concurrently, every CWT/TWE participant receives clinical support from program staff and attendance at weekly groups.

Program participants are paid VA Therapeutic Benefits at an hourly rate equal to New York State minimum wage. No VA benefits are affected by participation in CWT-TWE., but disclosure and coordination are required with Social Security and NYC Public Assistance.

Each participating veteran must be physician-referred as part of their overall treatment plan. The veteran will require medical clearance. Referring staff from VA programs can use the formal CPRS CWT consult. Veterans enrolled in CWT-TWE programs are not considered employees of VA or any participating company and receive none of the traditional employee benefits. In most cases, CWT-TWE participants actively engage in job search while in the program with the support of our Community Employment Specialists, with the goal of securing competitive employment at discharge.

The CWT-TWE Program is often a good fit for the needs of veterans recovering from homelessness, substance abuse and/or mild-moderate psychiatric disorders but can tend to be overwhelming for clients with significant psychiatric conditions. Veterans with significant mental health conditions should be considered for our Supportive Employment Program.

Programs offered at NY, Brooklyn and St Albans campuses.

Contact information: Normajeane Dellapina, LCSW, NYHHS CWT Coordinator, SA Rm 221; (718) 526-1000, X2650; Albert Robinson, LCSW, SA/BVAMC, (718) 526-1000, X 8317/1389; Pamela Parker, MS, NY (212) 686-7500, X 3943, Rm 15-15091S.

## **3. Community Employment Coordinators (CEC).**

Program mission/goal: Securing Permanent Employment for Veterans Within the Community. The CECs are located at NY, SA and the BVAMC campuses. The CEC connects Veterans to the most appropriate and least restrictive VA and/or community-based employment services. The CEC works with the CWT Coordinator in orchestrating clinical and administrative staff, within the Medical Center and without, into a cohesive platform with which homeless Veterans can obtain competitive employment with appropriate supports. The CEC provides pre-employment

assessments and workforce re-entry planning services, linkage, and coordination for VA and non-VA services, and community-based follow up services to integrate Veterans into the community through competitive employment. The types of employment services available for homeless Veterans should include but is not limited to: access to job listings, resume preparation, counseling regarding the impact of employment income on both VA and non-VA benefits and entitlements, negotiations with employers for reasonable accommodations, assistance with completion and submission of job applications, coordination of and transportation to job interviews, interview skills training, job development, job placement and ongoing support for job retention including job coaching.

Contact: Normajean Dellapina, LCSW/CWT Coordinator SA (718) 526-1000 X 2650; Sam Innocent, CEC SA/BVAMC (718) 526-1000 X 2090 and (718) 836-6600 X 1389 and Eli Mercedes, CEC NY (347) 237-7478.