

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

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 is **no time limitation.** 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 the supported employment staff work very 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 veterans needs.

The goal of the program is to **find competitive employment** that assists the veteran increase their 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.

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2. CWT Transitional Work 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 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.

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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 is 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 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.

Criteria for Admission: 1. Referral on consult in CPRS signed by MD, usually veteran's psychiatrist. 2. Thirty days abstinence if vet has history of substance abuse. 3. Psychiatrically stable and compliant with treatment regime if history of psychiatric illness. 4. Patient assessed as motivated for and capable of vocational improvement – vets usually are using program as a learning tool and stepping-stone toward competitive employment. 5. Will be medically cleared as part of CWT intake.

Programs Offered at NY Campus, Brooklyn Campus, St. Albans Community Living Center and Chapel St. CBOC

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3. Homeless Veterans Supported Employment Program (CWT-HVSEP)

Through the **CWT Homeless Initiative**, community integration and economic well being of program participants will be improved through the efforts of Veterans who were formerly homeless or at-risk of homelessness hired as vocational rehabilitation specialists, trained to provide community based supported employment services as part of the CWT program. HVSE VRS staff will provide vocational assistance, job development, job placement and ongoing employment supports to improve the employment outcomes of Veterans who are homeless or who are at-risk-of homelessness.

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