

## New Hope for Providers and Consumers of Mental Health Services



LENORE A. KOLA + ROBERT J. RONIS + DAVID E. BIEGEL

Mental health and chemical dependency providers, administrators, policy makers, and advocates have become increasingly aware of the complex challenges related to the psychological, medical, social, and employment needs of people with severe mental illness, including those with a co-occurring substance use disorder. Accordingly, the Ohio Department of Mental Health approved the utilization of federal funding to establish the Ohio Substance Abuse & Mental Illness Coordinating Center of Excellence (SAMI CCOE), a partnership of the Substance Abuse and Mental Illness Center of Case's Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences and the Department of Psychiatry at the Case School of Medicine. SAMI CCOE is co-directed by **Lenore A. Kola, Ph.D.**, associate professor of social work, and **Robert J. Ronis, M.D., M.P.H.**, professor of psychiatry, of these schools.

The SAMI CCOE provides technical assistance for the evidence-based Integrated Dual Disorder Treatment model, which improves the quality of life for people with co-occurring mental and substance use disorders by integrating substance abuse services with mental health services. The model combines pharmacological, psychological, educational, and social interventions to promote recovery and improve outcomes. Through training and consultation services, SAMI CCOE helps organizations and providers implement and sustain the model, as well as develop strategies to collect, analyze, report, and utilize outcomes for quality improvement.

Consumers of mental health services rank employment as their top unmet need. Accordingly, the SAMI CCOE recently created an additional coordinating center to provide technical assistance for the implementation of the evidence-based Supported Employment model. The model is different from the typical vocational rehabilitation programs, because it provides rapid job-search and placement services to people with mental illness who express the desire to work in competitive jobs in the community.

The current rate of employment among persons with severe and persistent mental illness in Ohio is approximately 14 percent, while implementation of the Supported Employment model in other states has generated competitive employment rates of 50 to 60 percent. The Mandel School's **David E. Biegel, Ph.D.**, the Henry L. Zucker Professor of Social Work Practice, is leading a research team that will help Ohio agencies develop strategies to collect, analyze, report, and utilize outcomes data to achieve and maintain fidelity to the model to continually enhance the effectiveness of their services.

The SAMI CCOE has recently created a new umbrella organization, the Center for Evidence-Based Practices at Case. "Research has not only demonstrated that evidence-based practices generate improved results, but that organizations that maintain fidelity to the original design of each practice achieve and sustain the best outcomes," notes Dr. Kola.

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