

Real JOBS NY Lives Up to its Name

For Jill Shepherd, who has battled depression and alcoholism, overcoming the barriers that stood in her way to finding a job seemed like an impossible task. When conventional methods of obtaining employment did not work, Shepherd enrolled in the Real JOBS NY program, which she credits with changing her outlook on life.

“Before starting the program, I was in serious trouble – in a state of panic, without a job and nearly broke,” explains Shepherd, who now works as a retail cashier. “The program gave me the skills and encouragement to land on my feet again. Working has helped with my self-esteem and quality of life.”

Shepherd is one of approximately 75 people with psychiatric disabilities who have been placed in jobs after rolling in Real JOBS NY – a collaboration of the Burton Blatt Institute (BBI) at Syracuse University, Workforce Development

Institute (WDI) and the New York Association of Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services (NYAPRS).

Based out of Schenectady County Community College and SUNY Adirondack, Real JOBS NY vocational counselors provide recovery-oriented and person-centered planning, individualized case management, and referrals to the services and supports that can help clients achieve short-term employment goals as well as career aspirations as part of a long-term recovery.

Participants have access to a broad array of services, including those at local community colleges.



“Location matters,” notes Stephen Traver, WDI Director of Vocational Services. “They [persons with psychiatric disabilities] are more likely to come to a program that is not housed in a mental health setting.”

Recent employment figures is one of the clearest measures of the program’s success, according to Traver. Among those enrolled in Real JOBS NY during 2009-2010, 64% were employed at least three months after being placed in a job. The national average for similar programs is only 9%.

“More than two-thirds of people with psychiatric disabilities want to work, and only 12% are afforded that opportunity,” notes Oscar Jimenez, Director of Community and Economic Development with NYAPRS. “Programs like Real JOBS NY are vital to change this unjustifiable disparity.”

Real JOBS NY is funded by the U.S. Rehabilitation Services Administration “Projects with Industry” grant. ■

In the News

APSE Announces Partnership

APSE (formerly the Association for Persons in Supported Employment) has recently partnered with GettingHired.com, a private sector initiative helping to lead the effort in closing the employment gap for people with disabilities while helping employers meet the challenge

of finding qualified workers.

Through this collaboration, APSE members have the opportunity to offer the people with disabilities they serve with an easy to use, free resource in finding employment located at <http://www.GettingHired.com/apse>.

APSE members will have access

to all of the career tools and informational resources and 24/7 connection to the job listings offered by GettingHired.com.

APSE member organizations will also have the ability to post job openings and to search the database of talented people with disabilities at GettingHired.com. ■