

IMPROVING EMPLOYMENT
FOR PEOPLE WITH MENTAL ILLNESS

A Report from the May 31 and June 1, 2010
Employment Supports Forum

September 15, 2010

PROCEEDINGS FROM CMHA ONTARIO'S EMPLOYMENT FORUM 2010

1) Event Summary

CMHA Ontario hosted a two day employment forum on May 31st and June 1, 2010. The forum brought together employment service providers, and Ontario ministries that fund them, to exchange information and identify issues and options that can be acted upon to strengthen the Ontario employment support system for job seekers living with mental health disabilities.

Service providers who attended are members of the Mental Health Employment Support Network convened by CMHA Ontario. The Network is comprised of employment specialists from community and hospital employment programs, offering employment support services to persons with mental health disabilities. Forty-two service providers represented 22 employment programs across Ontario. Six representatives from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, the Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities, and the Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities also took part in this two day event.

The forum engaged participants in mapping "pathways to employment" which illustrate the way job seekers typically access and move through programs on their way to a job. Four pathways to employment were mapped for employment programs funded by the three Ontario ministries specified above, as well as the Routes to Work Program, funded by Service Canada. These maps were the basis for much discussion, including identifying common challenges that service providers experience in delivering employment supports. Recommendations for further action were also identified.

The forum also included a panel presentation consisting of providers from three unique employment programs, who shared their lessons learned. This was followed by an update on the Mental Health Commission of Canada's Aspiring Workforce project, and one on the research agenda currently being developed by the Ontario Mental Health and Addictions Knowledge Exchange Network.

2) Current State of Employment Supports in Ontario

The Ministry of Health and Long Term Care (MOHLTC), The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU), and the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS), through the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), are the three main funders of employment supports for persons with mental health disabilities in Ontario. In recent years, employment has begun to receive more attention on government agendas. This has been most evident in the work Ontario ministries have undertaken to improve employment outcomes for persons with disabilities.

MOHLTC is in the process of developing a mental health and addiction strategy that stakeholders hope will acknowledge the importance of employment for persons with mental health disabilities. MTCU has been undergoing a transformation process to create a new employment network, inclusive of services for persons with disabilities. MCSS has, over the last few years, made changes to their ODSP employment program funding model to remove disincentives to employment. Their modernization initiative currently underway is intended to continue building on improvements to their employment program. The activities across the various ministries are a reflection of a system that has acknowledged the importance of employment in people's lives and is responding to the need to create more effective systems of support.

With the amount of change currently taking place, service providers have come together to identify and address common concerns in the interest of strengthening service delivery outcomes for job seekers with disabilities. Job Opportunity Information Network (JOIN), The Ontario Disability Employment Network (ODEN) and the Mental Health Employment Supports Network (MHESN) are reflective of this desire to create a unified voice for specialized providers.

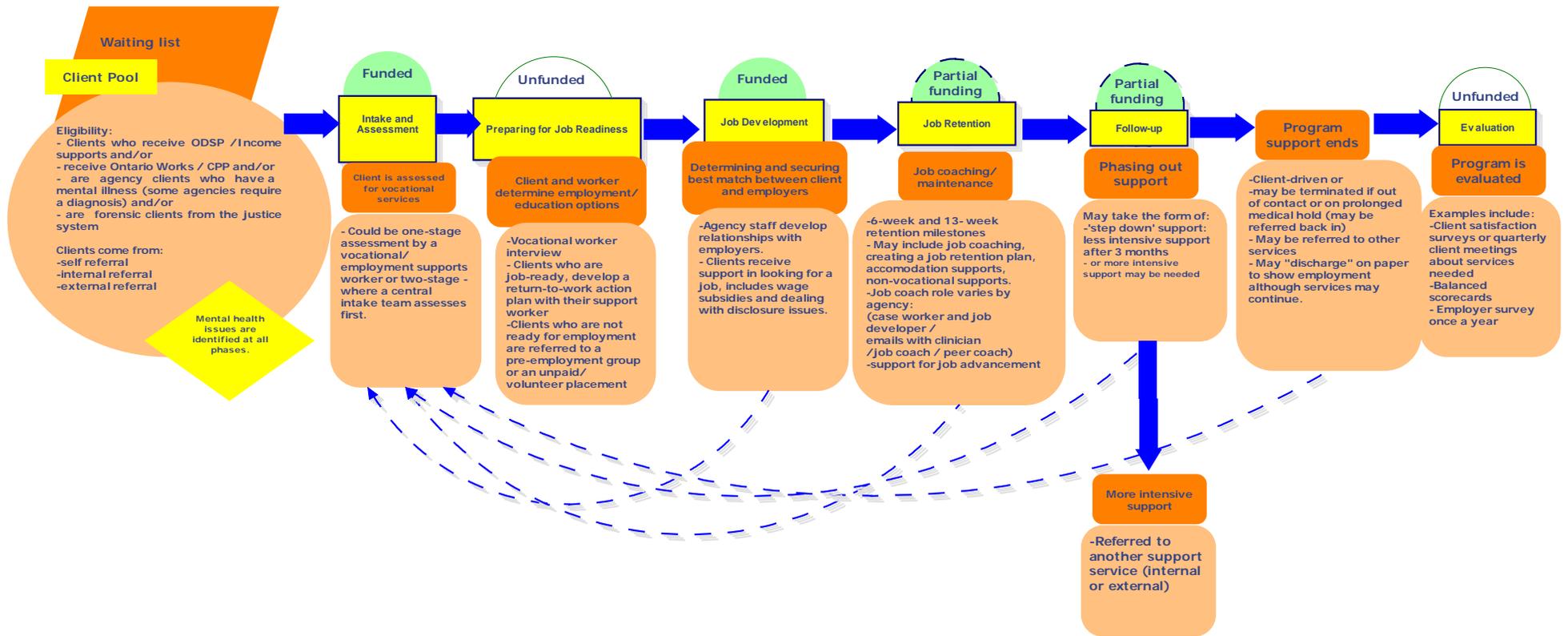
The employment forum was an opportunity to build on the discussions that are taking place within the service provider community, within Ministries, and identified in research.

3) Pathways to Employment Maps

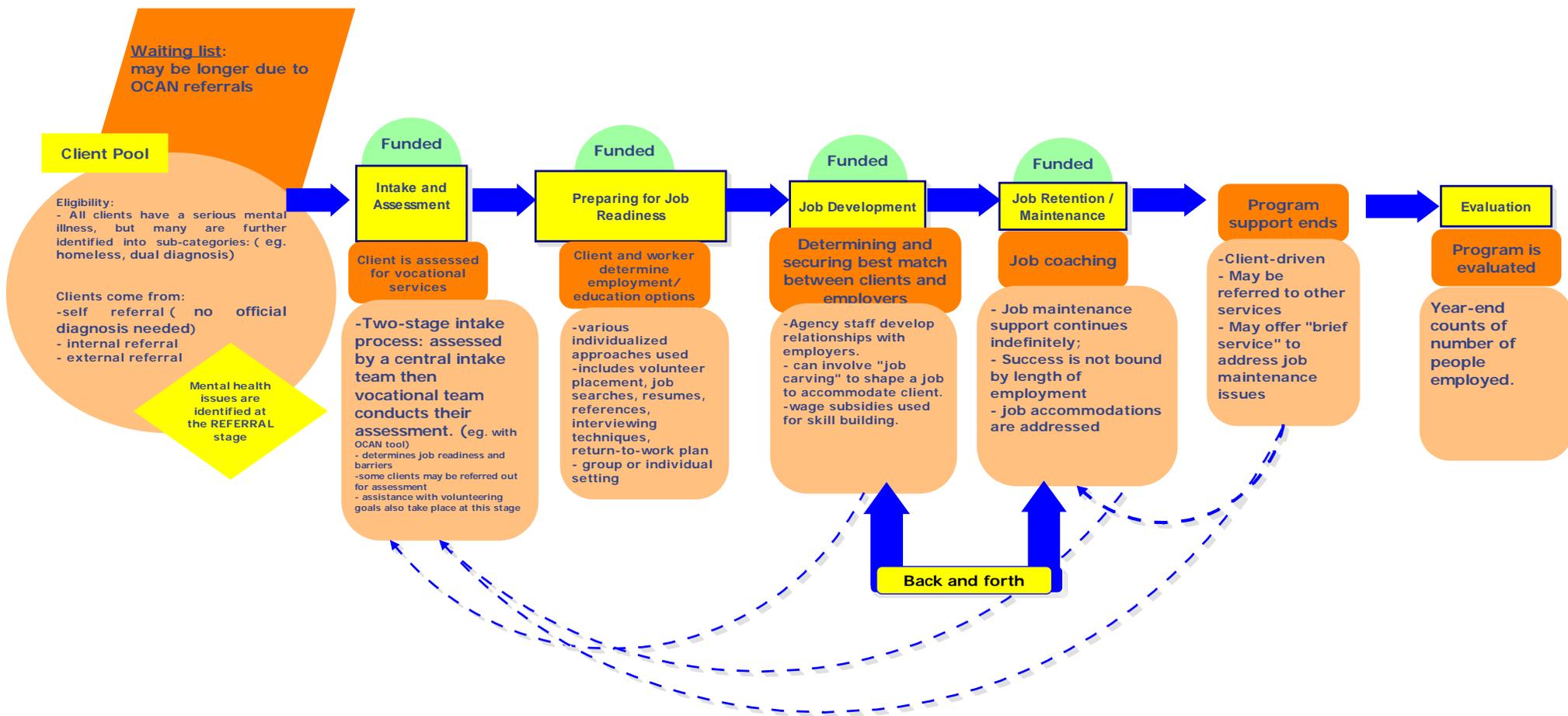
Those attending the forum were divided into small groups based on their primary program funder; and asked to come together to document via a facilitated mapping exercise the typical route a job seeker would take in accessing and moving through available employment support services. Four maps to employment were created.ⁱ

One of the differences that set MOH funded programs apart from MCSS and MTCU is a broader array of activities. While MTCU and MCC are employment focused, MOH programs offer a social recreation component to clients. This is reflected in the map.

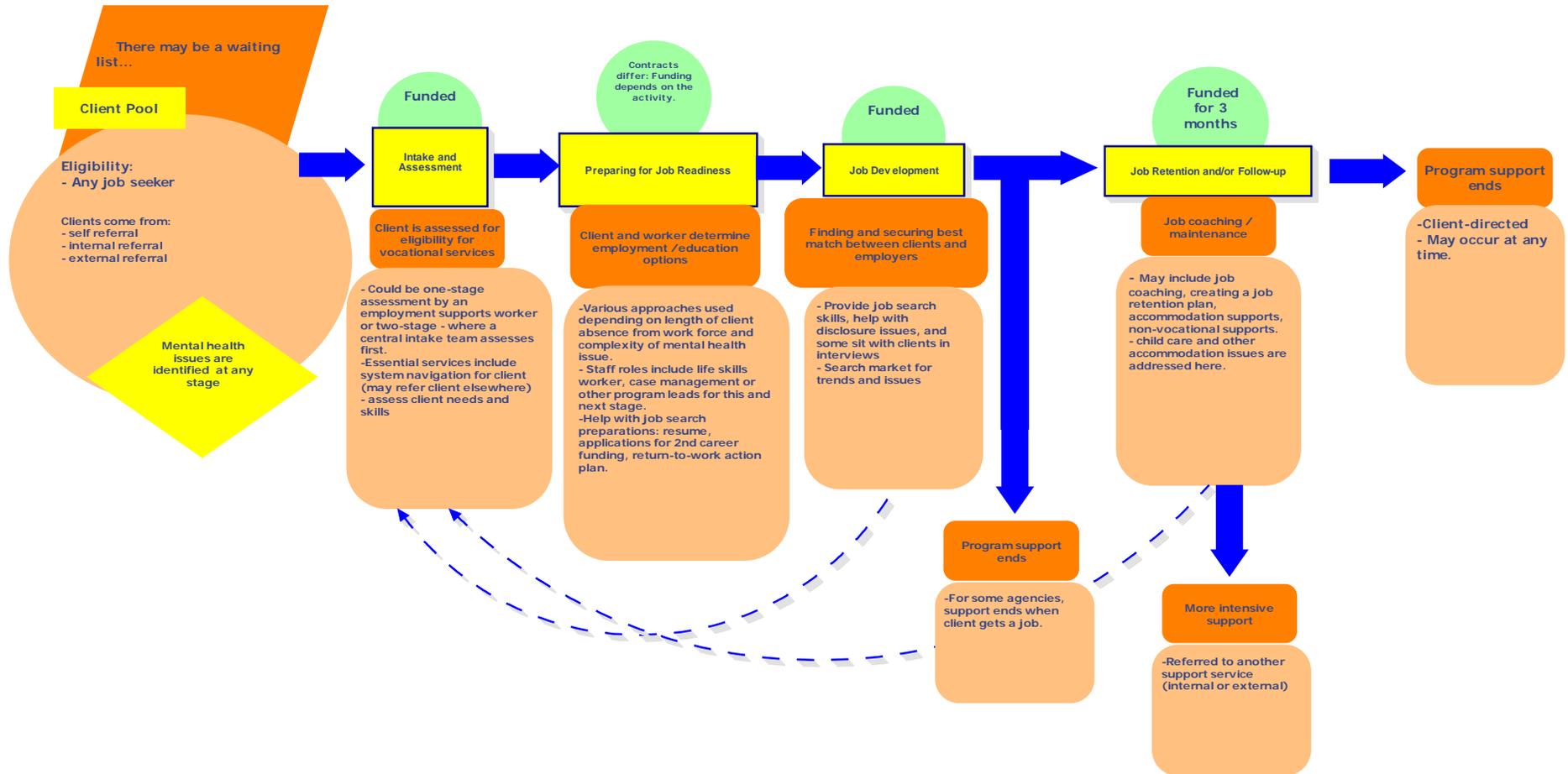
Pathways to Employment: Ministry of Community and Social Services Funded Programs



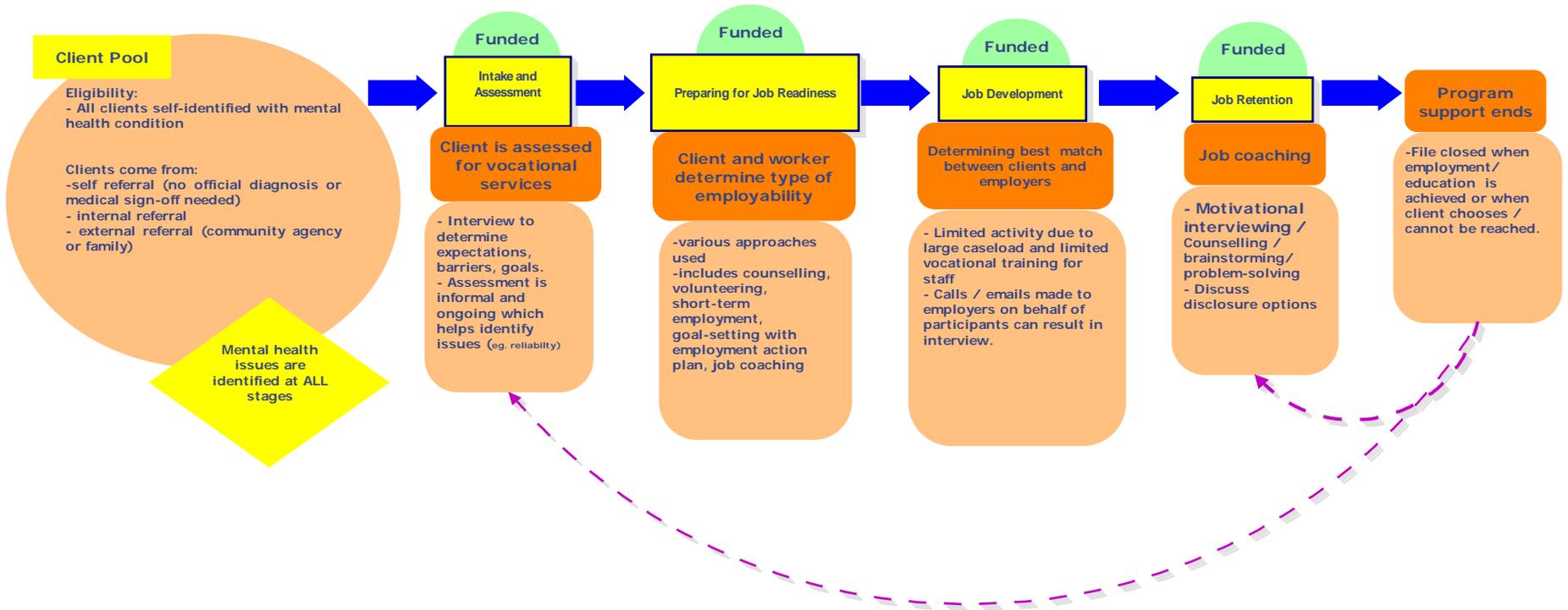
Pathways to Employment: Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Funded Programs



Pathways to Employment: Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Funded Programs



Pathways to Employment: Service Canada-funded "Routes to Work" Program



4) Issues Identified Through the Mapping

a) The Path to Employment is not Linear

The pathways illustrated in this report are intended to represent the stages that job seekers will typically pass through as they use employment support services. It is important to note, however, that not every individual coming into an employment program will follow a linear route from program referral to program discharge. The path taken depends largely on individual need, and this can change multiple times before the best employment option is identified. For this reason, the stages tend to be more fluid as the job seeker moves back and forth along the path. One participant explained the fluidity of the process:

“At times a job may not last the three month follow-up period and the client may fall back into a previous stage, such as “Preparation for Job Readiness” and the activity resumes toward a successful placement. The client may have developed goals that were appropriate for an initial stage that at another and subsequent stage do not seem appropriate to the client. At this time, the more initial stage of goal identification is revisited and revised with the process, from there, resumed.” [service provider]

Participants indicated that there are many factors that affect the individual’s [re]entry process in the workforce. The number of phases along the pathway to employment may differ depending on the model of employment support being used. In addition, the variation in services due to regional differences impact not only availability of service but how the programs get delivered. Organizational capacity and funding criteria can also have an effect on service delivery and, by extension, affect a job seeker’s route to employment.

b) Employment is an Important Part of Recovery

One of the main convictions held by participants was that employment is essential to recovery. The recovery philosophy necessitates that programs and policies provide a flexible system of support that respects consumer choice and the need for individualized service options. Despite this reality, the point was made repeatedly that existing funding models, specifically those based on rigid outcome measures, are ill-suited to support a recovery approach to employment.

c) Funding Challenges

Providers experience dealing with outcome-based funding is that it creates disincentives for job seekers who already experience significant barriers to employment. Program funding that is

contingent on quick entry into the labour market will not support individuals with high levels of need . This concern was repeatedly identified by participants during the forum.

“Outcome-based funding can lead to creaming and excluding clients who have a right to service. There is a need to evaluate the effectiveness of this outcome-based approach.” [service provider]

The short-term nature of provider contracts was also viewed as a barrier as it creates challenges to long-term service planning, which in turn stymies innovation in program delivery, and risks destabilizing services to clients.

d) Variation Across Programs

There is significant variation in the types of program activities funded by each of the three ministries, as well as amongst agencies funded by the same ministry. Participants noted that this inconsistency seems to be a result of regional variance in funding, and local interpretation of ministry directives. Such variance translates into differing levels of service being provided to job seekers in Ontario. Providers recommended that a standardized basket of services for employment support be identified and funded– which should include allocating additional monies for job development and retention activities.

Given that program components and activities differ sometimes widely between employment programs means that program indicators and performance monitoring cannot be standardized. Without this information, it is not possible to accurately monitor progress. This was identified by forum participants as a significant issue that needs to be addressed.

e) Education and Skills Training Belong in Employment Programs

Education and skills training for those seeking jobs are needed in employment programs because they can support individuals finding and keeping long-term, competitive employment. A significant observation among participants was that there was little funding and/or capacity within employment programs to provide education and skills training. In particular, service providers felt supported education opportunities needed to be improved.

f) Partnering Increases Program Success

Many participants expressed the value of partnering. Partnering with other agencies provides an opportunity to share staff skills, thus enhancing service delivery to clients. Building relationships with employers to increase job placement options is another type of partnering. In spite of the value that these types of partnerships bring, participants felt that many did not have the staff resources to invest in fostering formal partnerships. For this reason, service providers often engage in informal partnering to accomplish what needs to get done.

g) Access to Vocational Training for Staff is Needed

Forum participants stressed the importance that trained vocational staff bring in providing effective support to job seekers. Without the combined and unique skill set of mental health expertise and vocational skills, assistance to job seekers is said to be “not as good as it could be.” There was a desire to see an increase in training opportunities; but an acknowledgement that access to vocational-specific training is limited. In addition, suitable opportunities that do exist are often restricted due to costs. Consequently, professional development among member organizations is usually limited to on-the-job training.

The need for certification was a related topic of interest. Participants suggested that if their positions required certification, employment supports would be recognized as a valued activity in a client’s recovery, and, in turn, the service provider would be seen as having a therapeutic role within their organization.

5) System Barriers Identified by Forum Participants

There were a number of system level issues identified by service providers at the forum which they indicated significantly impact the delivery and effectiveness of employment services.

a) Year-to Year-Funding Interrupts Service Delivery

Year-to-year contracts, and the preparation of new funding agreements on an annual basis is a drain on staff resources, as it is administratively time consuming, taking away valuable vocational work hours. Annual funding envelopes also creates insecurity for clients. In addition, and not insignificant, is that funding uncertainty makes staff retention difficult.

b) Lack of Standardized Set of Indicators to Inform Service Enhancements

Data collection and reporting requirements differ between funders and even among employment programs funded by the same ministry. Without relevant and standardized data, opportunities to identify emerging and promising practices, as well as evaluate effectiveness are significantly restricted. The significant level of indicator variation also means there is limited opportunities to aggregate and review data at the provincial level, to make the business case and to foster new developments.

c) Lack of Standardized Vocational Tools

There is also no standardized set of vocational tools to use to assess client needs and develop service plans within employment support programs. For example, while many vocational programs

funded by MOHLTC are using the Ontario Common Assessment of Need (OCAN) tool for intake and assessment, this tool was not intended to assess vocational needs.

d) Guidelines for Measuring Program Success are Lacking

There are currently no common guidelines among ministry funded employment programs that for measuring successful program outcomes. Service providers funded through a results-based system defined success as paid employment in the competitive workforce, and tended to focus more on acquisition of the skills needed to perform their jobs. Their client demographic was also more varied.

In contrast, service providers with a more flexible funding structure, their need to meet the same outcome-based targets within a stringent timeline does not exist. For example, long-term retention numbers are not necessarily the focus, or the measure of success. In this environment any placement or job, regardless of tenure, may be considered a success. Program evaluation was another opportunity for measuring program success; however, for the majority of service providers, evaluation consisted of consumer satisfaction surveys. With the exception of providers using the IPS model, a shared and comprehensive approach to program evaluation is not done.

Participants expressed the need for guidelines that included common indicators for all client services regardless of funder. They believed that established common guidelines amongst all ministry funded programs would promote consistency (of service delivery) for clients.

e) Lack of Comprehensive Provincial Strategy or Directions for Employment Support

Each Ministry is leading its employment support programs for people with mental health disabilities in isolation, rather than working collaboratively to create a coordinated 'system'. The need for comprehensive provincial directions, as prescribed through a framework, guidelines and standards was seen as crucial.

6) Opportunities for Action

Discussions on both days culminated in dialogue about further actions that are needed.

a) Policy Framework

An employment policy framework for Ontario, *Making It Work*, was published in 2000. It was the first provincial policy framework for employment supports in Ontario. However, it was never officially implemented across the province.

The goal of this document was to set three-year policy directions that would improve employment services and supports to persons with serious mental illness. Participants agreed that implementing policy directions for employment support in Ontario would ideally address the need for a common vision, shared language, and a consistent menu of services, while still allowing for local innovation and flexibility.

Despite the fact that “Making it Work” was never fully implemented, it has been used informally by some service providers as guiding principles. Participants emphasized the need for Ontario to develop and implement a provincial framework that establishes clear directives.

At the centre of such directions should be a recovery oriented approach that acknowledges that persons with mental health disabilities have more barriers to employment and therefore require more support for a longer period of time than is currently available under the existing constraints. This policy framework would ensure that extra time spent in pre-employment, job development and job retention activities recognized.

b) Commit Resources to Implement Directions

New policy directions would also provide for consistency of funded activities across and between ministry-funded employment programs to ensure that the same program statistics are being captured. Consistency would also ensure that clients are receiving the same level of service across the province. An increase in investments for job development and job retention activities is also required. Participants suggested that funders convene to look at best funding models to help service providers meet the needs of their clients.

c) System Navigator

The current myriad of employment supports is complex and poorly coordinated between and within ministry-funded programs. There are multiple points of access, as well as a job seekers with varying levels of disabilities and a range of needs. Participants recommended that a system navigator function be established to create more direct access to the appropriate services. The participants

felt that the addition of such a resource will encourage more participation in the workforce. In addition, a system navigator can provide assistance with other client needs, such as calculating yearly income allowable for job seekers who are ODSP recipients. Forum participants also suggested that a website be established to provide information on a range of topics from all funding possibilities available to job seekers, as well as a place to list exceptional disability related needs. This proposed website could also provide a guide that would calculate yearly income allowable to show how employment income affects disability payments.

7) Follow up Actions by CMHA Ontario

Systemic change in the employment support system is needed and this report is intended to foster that dialogue.

Employment is increasingly being recognized as an essential activity in a person's mental health recovery that influences positive outcomes in other areas of their life. The employment system for persons with mental health disabilities in Ontario is in transition. The forum was an opportunity to share the experience of employment service providers, who collaborated in mapping current pathways to employment, and identifying important issues that arise. We believe the knowledge shared and lessons learned can contribute to employment evolving policy directions currently under consideration among Ministries. In addition, forum findings can be used to influence Ontario's mental health strategy by providing a more prominent focus on employment.

CMHA Ontario is committed to strengthening the employment system for persons with mental health disabilities in Ontario. We will continue to do this through convening the Mental Health Employment Support Network, fostering the abilities of the Mental Health Employment Network to identify and work for improvements that have a direct impact on service delivery. To this end, CMHA Ontario will work with the Network to advance the Opportunities for Action that participants identified at the forum, and which are contained in this report.

CMHA Ontario further commits to supporting systemic change in the employment support system; sharing tools and research; and recommending policy solutions to government which will strengthen employment supports for persons with mental health disabilities.

For further information, please contact:

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Appendix A: CMHA Ontario's Employment Forum 2010 Participants

Employment Service Providers		
Kim Bance	Employment Worker	Canadian Mental Health Association Peel
Bob Barkman	Program Manager	CMHA Niagara
Tania Barrie	Program Manager, Employment and Social Support Services	Canadian Mental Health Association, Toronto Branch
Anna Beach	Employment Support Worker	Mental Health Centre, Penetanguishene
Marnie Bell	Team Leader, Employment	CMHA Durham
Mike Blackwood	Job Developer	March of Dimes, Thunder Bay
Randy Burke	Manager, PAR North Clubhouse	Canadian Mental Health Association Peel
Glenda Carter	Manager, Vocational Services	Frontenac Mental Health Services, Kingston
Lisa Dejong	Employment Worker	Mental Health Centre, Penetanguishene
Deb Deon	Employment Worker	Mental Health Centre, Penetanguishene
Susan Forrest	Community Support Team Leader	Canadian Mental Health Association Chatham Kent
Sue Gadbois	Manager, Community Employment Services and Bridging Employment Supports	Canadian Mental Health Association, Grand River
Christine Gagne	Vocational Support Specialist	Canadian Mental Health Association Ottawa
Jennifer Gardner	Clinical Manager, Vocational Rehabilitation Department and Therapeutic Recreation	Ontario Shores Centre for Mental Health Science, Whitby

Clarice Gervais	Employment Support Worker, Routes to Work Program	Canadian Mental Health Association Hastings-Prince Edward
Jessica Kwik	Knowledge Exchange Associate	Canadian Mental Health Association Ontario
Michelle Gold	Senior Director, Policy and Programs	Canadian Mental Health Association Ontario
Pam Lahey	Policy Analyst	Canadian Mental Health Association Ontario

Joanne Lavoie	Employment Worker	Horizons-Renaissance
Karyn Mathewson	Program Manager	Canadian Mental Health Association, Sudbury
Leni Mazzuca	Mental Health Worker	Canadian Mental Health Association, Sue Saint Marie
Diana Musson	Manager, Vocational Services	Centre for Addiction and Mental Health
Wendy Nailer	Manager, Community Support and Research Unit (CSRU), Employment Support and Development & Homes for Special Care Teams, Discipline Chief, Vocational Services	Centre for Addiction and Mental Health
Grace Parker	Manager, Rehabilitation Services	Mental Health Centre, Penetanguishene
Zarsanga Popal	Policy Analysts	Canadian Mental Health Association Ontario
Sally Mitchener-Potts	Referral Coordinator/Team Leader: Bridging Employments Supports and Links to Work	Canadian Mental Health Association Grand River
Tennille Payne	Employment Support Specialist	Canadian Mental Health Association Windsor-Essex County
Melanie Pirainen	Employment Worker	Canadian Mental Health Association Sudbury
Alexandre Pirsch	Manager	Horizons Renaissance, Ottawa
Ken Porter	Manager, BUILT Network	North Bay
Sheila Robertson	Vocational Support Worker, Sustainable Employment Initiative	Canadian Mental Health Association Brant
Barney Savage	Director of Public Policy	Centre for Addiction and Mental Health

Iman Shenouda	Employment Worker	Canadian Mental Health Association York
Marc Simard	Employment Worker	Mental Health Centre, Penetanguishene
Dennis Spencer	Manager, Disability Employment Opportunity Centre	North Bay
Robert Stitch	Mental Health Worker	Canadian Mental Health Association Thunder Bay
Jackie Stoneman	Employment Worker	Frontenac Mental Health Services, Kingston
Bev Theakston	Employment Worker	Canadian Mental Health Association York
Eileen Travis-Hamilton	Employment Worker	Canadian Mental Health Association Chatham-Kent
Lori White	Employment Worker	Frontenac Mental Health Services, Kingston
Laura Wickson	Employment Worker	Canadian Mental Health Association Brant
Ministry		
Christine Johnson	Senior Policy Analyst, Employment and Income Support Policy Unit	Ministry of Community and Social Services
John Liu	Employment Program Consultant, French Language Services & Regional Coordination Unit, Service Delivery Branch	Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities
Priscilla McKenzie	Employment Program Consultant, French Language Services & Regional Coordination Unit, Service Delivery Branch	Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities
Marian Shull	Manager, Employment and Income Support, Ontario Disability Support	Ministry of Community and Social Services

	Program	
John Van Damme	Senior Policy Advisor	Ministry of Health and Long Term Care
Kathy Zora	Senior Policy Analyst, Employment and Income Support Policy Unit	Ministry of Community and Social Services

Appendix B: Presentations

a) Aspiring Workforce Project

Dr. Bonnie Kirsh, a University of Toronto researcher and co-investigator on the study team, updated the forum participants on the progress of the Mental Health Commission's Aspiring Workforce Project. The project is focused on the advancement of mental health in the workplace and, specifically, improving employment for persons with mental health disabilities. The presentation provided information on the literature review of evidence based supported employment practices conducted to date, and a summarization of international research on what works and where the gaps in research exist. Bonnie also explained the costs and benefits of supported employment and what is needed to ensure this best practice approach to employment is successful in the Canadian context.

b) OMHAKEN research agenda

Heather Bullock, Manager of Knowledge Exchange with the Health Systems Research and Consulting Unit at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, provided information on the role of knowledge exchange in the mental health system. She described the activities of OMHAKEN and the employment work it has done to date. In addition, Heather introduced the Creating Together project, a research agenda to help guide health systems/services and population/public health research investments and knowledge exchange activity in Ontario.

c) Panel Presentations: Learnings from three employment programs

Sue Gadbois of CMHA Grand River provided an overview of the three services they delivery to persons with a range of disabilities to help them obtain paid, competitive employment. Some of the key learnings to come from their clients were also presented.

Tania Barrie of CMHA Toronto shared her experience with the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) Model . She discussed successful strategies, as well as challenges they have faced.

Karyn Mathewson of CMHA Sudbury Manitoulin branch provided information on their Choose-Get-Keep approach to employment support. Their goal moving forward is to create new outcome measures using this approach.

Clarice Gervais offered a lunch and learn session on the "Routes to Work" program for forum participants on the first day. She explained this national program and shared successes.

Appendix C: Agenda

*IMPROVING EMPLOYMENT for PEOPLE with
MENTAL ILLNESS*

FORUM

MAY 31 – JUNE 1, 2010

19TH FLOOR MEETING ROOM, 180 DUNDAS ST. WEST

TORONTO, ONTARIO

AGENDA – DAY ONE

MAY 31, 2010

12:30 – 1:00	Registration
1:00 – 1:15	Forum Overview
1:15 – 1:30	Introduction to Mapping Exercise
1:30 – 3:15	Small Groups – Map Existing Pathway Exercise & Discussion Group 1: MCSS-funded services Group 2: MOHLTC-funded services Group 3: MTCU-funded services
3:15 – 3:30	Break
3:30 – 4:30	Report Back on Maps <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ similarities and differences in service pathways and client needs
4:30 – 4:45	Closing Remarks

AGENDA – DAY TWO

JUNE 1, 2010

9:00 – 9:05 **Welcome**

9:05 – 10:05 **Panel presentations:** Service delivery approaches currently in use

- Individual Placement & Support *CMHA Toronto*
- Choose, Get, Keep *Frontenac Services*
- Hybrid Models *CMHA Grand River*

10:05 – 10:10: **Coffee and Tea**

10:10 – 10:30 **Panel Q&A**

10:30 – 11:15 **Employment Research**

Bonnie Kirsh, Workforce Advisory Committee, MHCC

Update on Mental Health Commission of Canada’s Aspiring Workforce project

11:15 – 12:00 **Knowledge Creating and Exchange**

Heather Bullock, CAMH

- Ontario Mental Health & Addiction Knowledge Exchange Network – Employment Working Group
- ‘Creating Together’ research agenda-setting consultations

12:00 – 12:45 **Lunch and Networking**

12:45 – 1:00 **Instructions for group discussions**

1:00 – 2:00 **Small Group Discussion**

Identifying common issues that can be addressed

2:00 – 3:00 **Moving Forward** - Reconvene for Large Group Discussion
recommend priorities for the sector and funders

3:00 – 3:05 **Next Steps and Evaluation**

^{i i} A fourth map was also created of the pathways to employment for the “Routes to Work” program. RTW is a national employment program with one Ontario site. Funding comes from Service Canada, through the Opportunities Fund, a Human Resources and Skills Development Canada program. This map represents a pathway for the typical jobseeker at the Kingston Ontario site.