Presentation on: Increasing Treatment Retention and Sustaining Recovery among Individuals with SUDs and AUDs via Competitive Employment

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Abstract: Competitive employment has proven a crucial factor in improving the rates of treatment retention and sustained recovery among individuals with substance and alcohol use disorders. However, rates of unemployment and underemployment remain especially low for this group. Addiction professionals generally identify employment as ancillary and secondary to the work involved in treatment, and as such, are less apt to seek out and use employment services that could very well increase the likelihood of identifying, obtaining, and maintaining a job. Employment is a principal goal in treatment plans; therefore, employment specialist and treatment professionals should work in tandem to assist in the realization of this goal. Employment specialists can provide a number of unique services (i.e., job placement, on-the-job supports, job search assistance), which have been shown to increase rates of employment among this group. This presentation will 1) discuss the primary and secondary benefits associated with competitive employment; 2) review barriers to employment and consequences of unemployment; 3) discuss the research behind the identification of services that predict the obtainment and sustainment of employment (X^2 and regression analyses); and 4) operationally define these services and provide examples of how they might be implemented throughout the course of treatment and recovery.

Bibliography: Stephanie Lusk, Ph.D., CRC, is an Associate Professor at the University of Arkansas where she teaches courses in the master's and doctoral Counseling program. She earned a doctorate in Rehabilitation Education and Research and a BA in Psychology from the University of Arkansas and a Master's in Rehabilitation Counseling from Arkansas State University. Dr. Lusk is the recipient of over $4 million in grant funding and has presented at numerous local, national, and international conferences. She has published in the *Alcoholism Treatment Quarterly*, *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling*; *Journal of Applied Rehabilitation Counseling*; and *Rehabilitation Policy, Education, and Research*. She is also the editor of the book *Counseling the Addicted Family: Implications for Practitioners.* In 2015 Dr. Lusk received the Rehabilitation Educator of the Year Award from the National Council on Rehabilitation Education.

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