

# CSAT TA Package

## *Using Employment and Education Data to Enhance Services and Outcomes*

Substance abuse providers are concerned about many aspects of your clients' health and recovery. Employment is an important measure of your clients' ability to maintain independence. Participating in a traditional vocational program, such as in engineering or industrial technologies, is an important step in your clients' ability to obtain a future job.

Employment prior to entering substance abuse treatment is associated with reduction in drug use and treatment success (Hser et al., 2007). Participating in vocational rehabilitation activities is associated with an increase in the probability of abstinence for clients in substance abuse treatment (Shepard and Reif, 2004). Even if your program does not focus on fostering employment or school participation, these outcomes are important indicators of your clients' risk of relapse and the impact of your program.

At intake, you collect client information that can help you to evaluate your clients' education or employment status. For example, all Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT) grantees collect Government Performance Results Act (GPRA) data. Other programs may collect performance data for other funding agencies or as part of other ongoing continuous quality improvement initiatives. This information can be used to support your clients' need to find or sustain employment and can also be used to promote clients' participation in school or a training program. Information you collect at 6-month follow-up can show how clients' employment or education status has changed.

**About This Guide.** CSAT has prepared this guide to help addiction treatment program staff and management understand employment and education outcome measures and to illustrate ways in which data on employment and education can be used to identify opportunities for program changes, to implement program changes, and to evaluate the effectiveness of these changes.

**What's in This Guide?** This Technical Assistance (TA) Package is organized around three questions that may help guide your decisions regarding support for your clients' employment and education outcomes.

- Why is employment and education status a useful measure?
- How can we use CSAT-GPRA reports to assess our clients' education and employment status?
- How can we improve employment and education outcomes?

We will use a hypothetical grantee called Shoreline Center to explore these questions. Shoreline Center is a comprehensive outpatient center located in a metropolitan area. It provides counseling, outreach, case management, and recovery support services but does not offer specialized occupational programs. The center targets clients with co-occurring substance abuse and mental disorders.

The next section of this TA Package will illustrate ways in which the staff at the Shoreline Center used CSAT-GPRA online reports to improve the treatment plan and understand the performance of the center as a whole. Like Shoreline, you are able to access these reports on your program from the CSAT-GPRA Web site if you are a CSAT grantee. If you are not a CSAT grantee and do not collect CSAT-GPRA data, you likely collect the same types of data and can run similar reports as described.



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### Why Is Employment and Education Status a Useful Measure?

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) developed 10 national outcome measures (NOMs). These NOMs represent meaningful and attainable outcomes for individuals working to attain and sustain recovery. One of these outcomes is getting and keeping a job or enrolling and staying in school.

### Benefits of Education and Employment

Employment is among the best predictors of successful substance abuse treatment (SAMHSA, 2007). Education and employment are also associated with other outcomes that indicate how well clients are doing in their recovery. For example:

- Clients who do well in treatment show reductions in criminal activity, decreased use of healthcare, and higher employment and earnings (Brecht et al., 2006).
- Employment is associated with lower levels of depression, improved life satisfaction, and higher self-esteem (Aneshensel, Frerichs, and Clark, 1981; Kessler, House, and Turner, 1987; Zabkiewicz, 2009). Reemployment may reverse the negative effects of a period of unemployment and restore mental health functioning to the level that existed prior to job loss.
- Employment enhances offenders' compliance with parole or probation requirements; quality jobs paying higher wages have been linked to decreases in criminal behavior and recidivism (Uggen, 1999; Visher, Debus, and Yahner, 2008; Tripodi, Kim, and Bender, 2009).

### The Education/Employment Status Measure

The CSAT-GPRA interview asks about clients' current employment and education status. At intake, this measure may give a good baseline indication of how well your clients are doing in terms of employment or school status. At the 6-month follow-up, it may indicate positive changes that have occurred for your clients during treatment. It also tells you how many clients were employed or in school at intake and were able to sustain that involvement.

The overall employment/education status measure is composed of two questions on employment and education:

- Are you currently enrolled in school or a job training program?
- Are you currently employed?

DOMAIN	OUTCOME	MEASURES		
		Mental Health	Substance Abuse Treatment	Substance Abuse Prevention
Reduced Morbidity	Abstinence from Drug/Alcohol Use	NOT APPLICABLE	Reduction in change in frequency of use at date of last service compared to date of first service >	30-day substance use (non-regularization in use) > Perceived risk/harm of use >
	Decreased Mental Illness Symptomatology	UNDER DEVELOPMENT	NOT APPLICABLE	Age of first use > Perception of disorder/struggle >
Employment/Education	Increase/Return Employment or Return to School	Profile of adult clients by employment status and of children by increased school attendance >	Increase into change in number of employed or in school at date of last service compared to first service >	Perception of workplace safety, PTSD-related symptoms, and equipping, attendance and enrollment >
Crime and	Decreased Criminal Justice Involvement	UNDER DEVELOPMENT	Reduction into change in number of arrests in past 30 days from date	Alcohol-related car crashes and injuries, arrests and convictions >

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### How Can Tracking Employment or Education Status Help Your Program?

Shoreline Center staff wanted to examine how clients improved in employment and education outcomes.

To do so, the director of the center logged in to the CSAT-GPRA Web site at [www.samhsa-gpra.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa-gpra.samhsa.gov), selected "Reports," and navigated to the Discretionary Services Report Menu. He then selected the *6-Month Follow-up Change Report* and ran that report.

After the director ran the report, he discovered that while only 25% of the center's clients were employed or in school at intake, 40% were employed or in school at 6-month follow-up. Table 1 provides a summary of the data.



**Table 1: 6-Month Follow-up Change Report**

Outcome Measures	Percent at Intake	Percent at 6-Month Follow-up	Rate of Improvement
Employment/Education: Were currently employed or attending school	25%	40%	60%

Although the director of Shoreline Center was pleased there was improvement for some clients, he was also concerned that many clients had not improved on this measure after 6 months. He wanted to address two broad strategies:

- Changes in services the program offers clients
- Performance management

### Next Steps

The director gathered his management and clinical teams to discuss possible uses of the employment/education measure to address these strategies. The team developed a plan that involved three steps:

**First**—Assess the workforce or education needs of the clients when they enter treatment

**Second**—Decide whether the program needed to improve or expand services that might improve employment or education outcomes

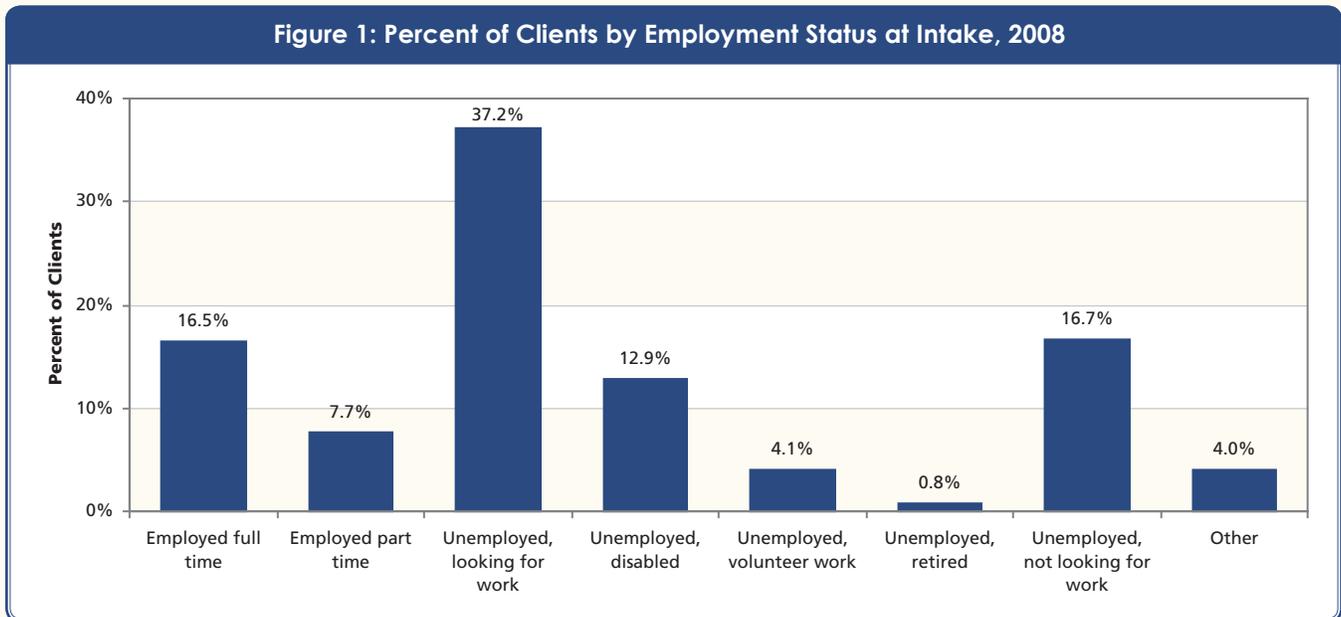
**Third**—Determine whether the new initiatives improved employment or education outcomes

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### How Can the Employment or Education Needs of Clients Be Assessed at Intake?

The Shoreline Center director decided that the first step to assess the employment or education needs of clients was to learn how many clients are either employed or enrolled in school or in a job training program when they enter treatment. This information is available in the *Frequency Report*. To learn more, the Shoreline Center staff ran the report for the question, "Are you currently employed?"



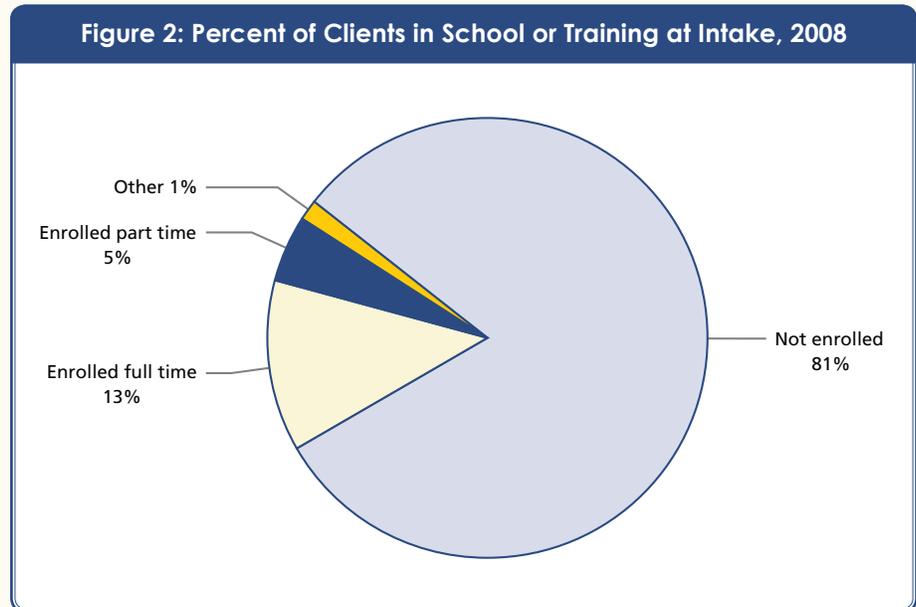
As shown in Figure 1, the Shoreline Center team noticed that when clients enter treatment at their outpatient center, only a small percentage are employed either full time (16.5%) or part time (7.7%). The staff realized that for clients in their program, active addiction is often accompanied by physical ailments, impaired cognition, inadequate social skills, and emotional instability. Any of these can lead to job loss. However, the staff also knew that, with the proper treatment, individuals with substance use disorders can recover and maintain a healthy life.

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The Shoreline Center staff also wanted to know how many clients were enrolled in school. This might account for some of the clients who said they were unemployed. To learn more, the team ran the *Frequency Report* for the question, "Are you currently enrolled in school or a job training program?"

As shown in Figure 2, after running the *Frequency Report*, Shoreline Center staff discovered that only a few clients were enrolled in school or a training program full time (13%) or part time (5%).



### What Are Some Reasons Clients May Not Be Employed at Intake?

Knowing that employed clients better sustain their recovery, Shoreline Center staff wanted to focus on clients who are unemployed and not in school. The team thought that perhaps clients did not score high on employment or education at intake because many came from residential treatment facilities, jails, or prisons.

Residential programs often have restrictions on the amount of time clients are able to engage in outside activities. In addition, clients often have to travel out of the area to attend a residential program. Once they are home, however, they are better able to find work or training programs.

Homelessness also can be a barrier to employment. People who are homeless may lack appropriate work clothes, forms of identification, or phones to return calls from employers. Thus, the Shoreline Center staff wanted to know how many of their clients were homeless.

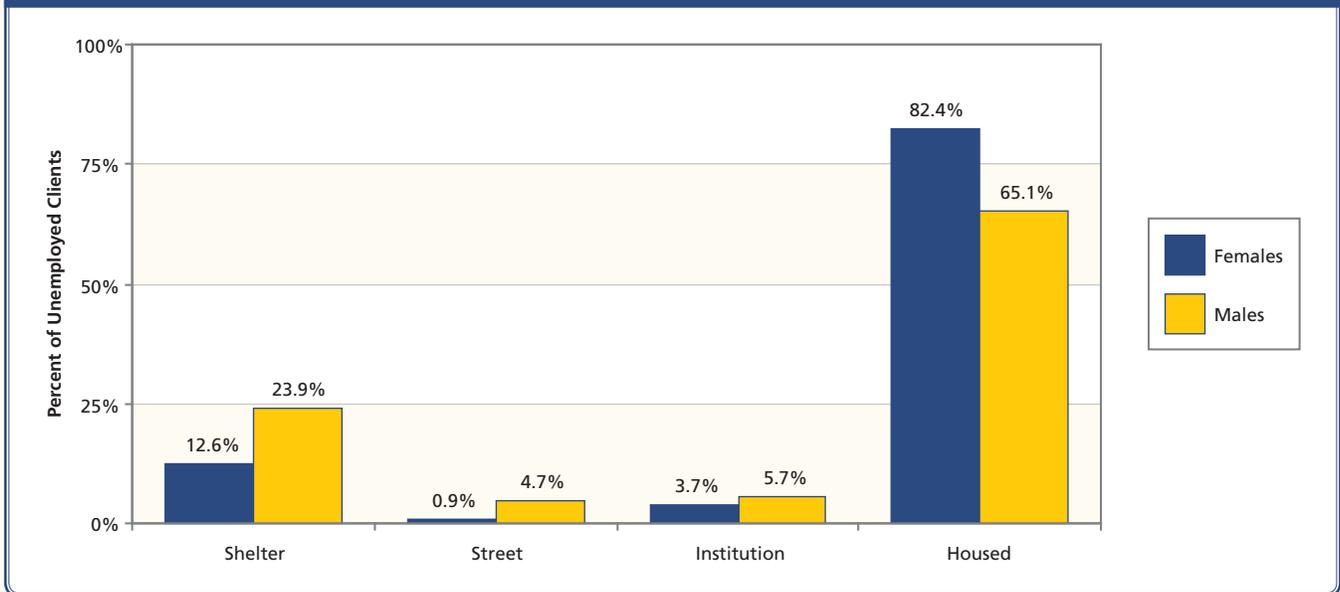
To do so, the team ran a report on the demographic characteristics of this population. From the main report menu, they located the *Crosstabulations Report*. From the selection of demographic characteristics, they chose the question, "In the past 30 days, where have you been living?" Next, they chose "employment" and "gender" options to crosstabulate.

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The Shoreline Center team discovered that although some clients come from residential treatment (described as “institution” in Figure 3) and from prison, the majority of the center’s clients who are unemployed have permanent housing. The team discussed other difficulties their clients face when seeking employment, such as criminal justice involvement, an irregular work history, an unstable job market, and the lack of real full-time employment opportunities.

**Figure 3: Percent of Unemployed Clients in Permanent Housing at Intake, 2008**



### Criminal Justice Involvement

Shoreline Center receives many referrals from the criminal justice system. The Shoreline staff recognize that the criminal justice population faces unique barriers. For example, many offenders lack sufficient work histories and education backgrounds to acquire and maintain financially sustaining employment (Lundgren et al., 2003; Meulenbeek, 2000; and Suffet, 1999). Also, employers are often reluctant to hire individuals with a history of substance use and/or criminal justice involvement (Albright and Denq, 1996).

The director ran the *Crosstabulations Report* for the question, “Are you currently on parole or probation?” As shown in Table 2, the director discovered that 26.4% of his clients on parole or probation were also unemployed. This information suggested that the Shoreline Center needs to learn more about reentry initiatives and to enhance its support of clients who are referred from the criminal justice system.

**Table 2: “Are You Currently on Parole or Probation” With “Are You Currently Employed”?**

Parole or Probation	Employed	Unemployed
Yes	29.8%	26.4%
No	69.1%	73.3%

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### How Can Programs Enhance Services That Improve Employment or Education Outcomes?

Employment services associated with successful rehabilitation include thorough assessments, skills training, and case management. Shoreline Center staff noted that many clients move in and out of employment while in their program. The Shoreline staff wanted to know ways in which they could help clients sustain their employment.

Shoreline Center's team knew there were ways to support clients seeking jobs. These support strategies include developing a work placement program, hiring staff to work with clients on work readiness, and forming alliances with community services to find volunteer and work opportunities. Many of these initiatives, however, were beyond the scope of the Shoreline Center's resources. The staff decided on two broad strategies. One involved making changes within the center, and the other involved a better use of community resources.

**Changes Within the Shoreline Center.** First, Shoreline Center staff implemented changes in their clinical assessment procedures. In addition to administering the CSAT-GPRA tool, they asked their clients additional questions about employment and education. These questions addressed clients' interests in passing a high school equivalency exam, or general educational development (GED) tests; clients' history of employment; drug use related to unemployment; employment goals; and interest in volunteer opportunities. For some clients, volunteer work can be a stepping stone to paid employment.

Second, because many clients at the Shoreline Center have co-occurring substance abuse and mental health disorders, the clinical staff suggested that this population may need more specialized services. Clients with serious mental illness may be on medications and need monitoring. Others may have difficulties being in certain kinds of social environments.

The clinical team worried that stressful situations could be a trigger for relapse for some of their clients. The team thus suggested that individuals with co-occurring disorders may need options for part-time employment. The team consulted the SAMHSA toolkit on supported employment at [www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov](http://www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov). The clinical team used the toolkit to help tailor planned interventions and improve employment outcomes for clients with co-occurring disorders.

The screenshot shows the SAMHSA National Mental Health Information Center website. The header includes the SAMHSA logo and the text 'SAMHSA's National Mental Health Information Center Center for Mental Health Services'. Below the header is a navigation menu with links for Home, Programs, Mental Health Topics, Newsroom, Publications, and Resources. A search bar is located on the left side. The main content area features a featured article titled 'Evidence-Based Practices: Shaping Mental Health Services Toward Recovery' with a sub-heading 'Supported Employment'. Below the article title is a 'Table of Contents' with a list of sections: Acknowledgments, Foreword, Introduction, Background, Project Philosophy and Values, Components of the Supported Employment Implementation Resource Kit, How to Use the Resource Kit Materials—An Implementation Plan, A Word About Terminology, Phases of the Implementing Evidence-Based Practices Project, Annotated Bibliography for Supported Employment, and Special Populations Appendix. There are also sections for 'IN THIS SECTION' and 'PAGE OPTIONS'.

Additional potential improvements in clinical approaches to the employment outcome include the following:

- Providing evening recovery-oriented groups for individuals who are employed full time and are in early recovery
- Maintaining contact with parole officers to help monitor clients' compliance with terms of probation that include entering a job training or employment program
- Training staff on motivational interviewing techniques that are helpful in engaging clients to seek healthier behaviors

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**Better Use of Community Resources.** The director and staff of the Shoreline Center knew there were many community resources that offer help for individuals looking for work or vocational opportunities. Rather than hiring additional staff, the Shoreline Center team identified community resources that could help engage clients in training and employment.

The Shoreline Center designated a staff member to be the vocational coach to work with clients and refer them to appropriate community services. The vocational coach identified community resources that provided assistance for clients to obtain work, receive vocational training, or complete their GED tests.

The vocational coach also worked with clients to understand the nature and consequences of drug testing in the workplace. The coach identified organizations with databases of volunteer and job opportunities. The coach also identified community organizations and resources that have informal networks of mutual support, including the following:

- Faith-based organizations
- Web sites such as Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities, the Center for Mental Health Services' National GAINS Center, and SAMHSA
- Job fairs
- Community rehabilitation programs
- Federal work programs

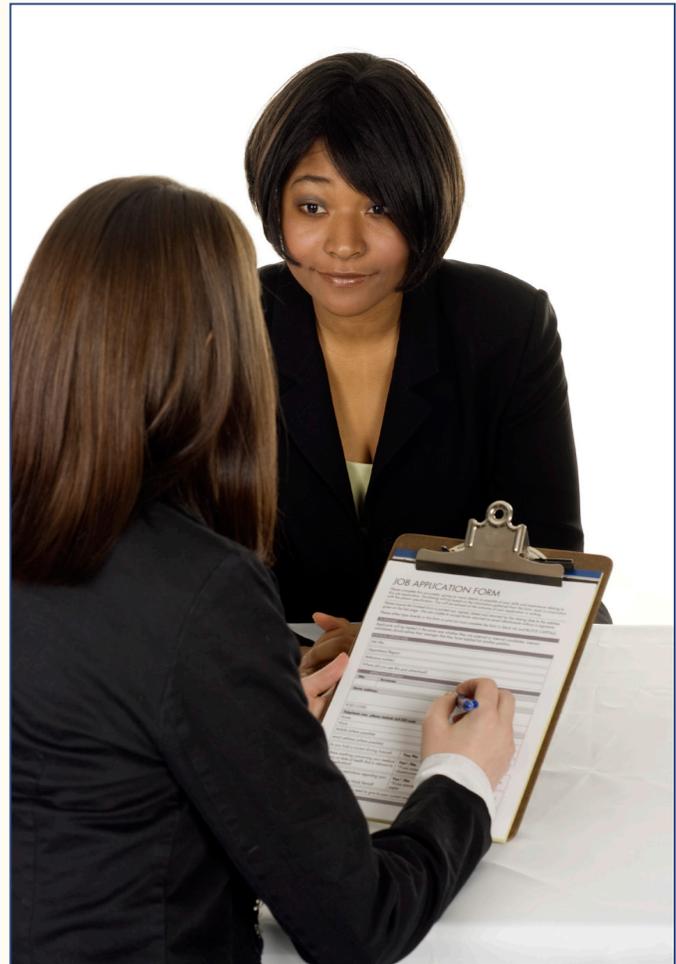
Shoreline Center staff identified a nearby vocational program that offered specialized skills in job coaching, role-play interviews, and résumé preparation.

Clients were referred to this program early in their recovery to start the process of job preparation.

The Shoreline Center vocational coach maintained contact with staff in the vocational program to monitor the clients' progress.

In summary, the Shoreline Center was able to make changes in three areas to address employment options for its clients:

- Intake procedures
- Clinical interventions
- Access to community-based support



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### How to Determine if a Program Improves Employment or Education Outcomes

After making program changes, the Shoreline Center director wanted to know the effect of these changes on clients. He asked two questions:

- Have changes at the Shoreline Center increased the percentage of clients who are employed or in school?
- Are certain populations improving more than others?

To answer the first question, the director ran the *6-Month Follow-up Change Report* beginning 8 months after the implementation of the new approaches. By this time, the CSAT-GPRA data had been tracking the number of clients that were now enrolled in education and employment programs.

The director identified the improvement. As shown in the Table 3, just 8 months after implementing program changes, the rate of improvement in the employment/education outcome was nearly 80%, a higher rate of improvement than the Shoreline Center had seen in previous years.

**Table 3: Change in Employment/Education Outcome From Intake to 6-Month Follow-up, Quarter 4, 2008**

Number of Valid Cases	Percent at Intake	Percent at 6-Month Follow-up	Rate of Improvement
501	29.3%	52.5%	78.9%

Next, the director wanted to know if the outcome differs among client groups. Most CSAT-GPRA reports allow users to select and examine subpopulations. For example, users can run the *6-Month Follow-up Change Report* and select client characteristics, such as race, ethnicity, age, or gender. (When examining other outcomes, such as abstinence, it also is possible to run this report for the subpopulations of employed and unemployed.) The director was interested in the impact of the new programming by race.

As shown in Table 4, the director discovered that the changes were least effective for White clients, more effective for Black or African American clients, and had no effect on American Indian clients. To improve employment among these groups, the director knew that the Shoreline Center would have to develop more intense networking relationships with supportive employment agencies.

**Table 4: Change in Employment/Education Outcome From Intake to 6-Month Follow-up by Race, Quarter 4, 2008**

Race	Percent at Intake	Percent at 6-Month Follow-Up	Rate of Improvement
Black or African American	21.8%	39.5%	80.8%
White	49.0%	63.1%	28.6%
American Indian	45.2%	45.2%	0.0%

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### Summary

Program staff and management can use employment and education status data to:

- Identify opportunities for program changes
- Implement program changes
- Evaluate the effectiveness of these changes

The Shoreline Center director was able to use CSAT-GPRA reports and outcome data in a strategic manner to make targeted, consumer-driven changes. He recognized the need to examine more closely the employment status of the clients, and he gathered his team to address employment issues.

Program staff located important data about client characteristics from different reports. They made changes in the clinical program, and they evaluated whether the changes made a difference in client outcomes.



### Keys to Success

Consider the following keys to success in using employment outcomes to improve clinical treatment and enhance organizational performance:

- **Examine Employment Status.** Recognize that your clients' employment status is a good indicator of recovery and risk for relapse. Use the information provided through the CSAT-GPRA tool, but also consider adding additional questions related to employment.
- **Provide Assessments.** There are many reasons why clients may not be employed. Thus, it is important to assess clients' job skills, readiness for employment, and perceived barriers to obtaining a job.
- **Consider Volunteerism.** Volunteer work can be a stepping stone to paid employment for clients who need additional training. For selected clients, consider suggesting volunteer opportunities to help them reenter the workforce.
- **Use Data for Funding.** Intake and discharge data can help position your organization for supplemental funding streams that specifically foster training and educational enhancement. Develop graphs and PowerPoint presentations to illustrate your program's outcome data.
- **Consider Local Resources.** Look for community resources to foster job skills and employment placement services. Develop active relationships with these agencies in order to make effective referrals.

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