Employment transitions for Clubhouse members

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Abstract. Using a longitudinal dataset which followed 2195 individuals employed in 3379 separate job placements over a four-year period, this paper explores movement between the employment supports, [Transitional (TE), Supported (SE), and Independent Employment (IE)], offered by clubhouses. Sixty-four percent of employed members held only one job (\(N = 1395\)) and 36\% held multiple jobs during the study (\(N = 791\)). Patterns of movement were consistent for transitions between the first and second job and subsequent transitions. Forty-six percent of individuals holding multiple jobs moved from one employment type to another. When movement occurred clubhouse members were significantly more likely to move from employment types offering more supports to those that offer less supports.

1. Introduction

Despite changes (the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 and the Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999) implemented to remove barriers to employment for people with disabilities, employment remains challenging for many individuals with mental illness in the United States. Between five and six million people between the ages of 16 and 54 lose, do not seek, or cannot find employment because of psychiatric disabilities [24]. Rates of competitive employment for people with severe mental illness are less than 15\% [1]. Flexible on-going employment supports and services are necessary as this population re-enters the workforce, explores available employment opportunities, and gains work experience [5]. Many recent employment studies for this population emphasize job attainment/placement rates and/or job terminations [3,8,10,12,14,27].

However, despite the maturity and dissemination of one model serving this population, the clubhouse model, few studies have examined the utilization of clubhouse employment services or the extent of transitions in Transitional, Supported, and Independent Employment [4,15,23,26,27] offered by clubhouses. In this paper, we examine employment transitions made by clubhouse members that held multiple jobs during a four-year period, building upon findings reported in an article that examined outcomes for individuals participating in clubhouse employment [27].

The first clubhouse was established in 1948, and currently over 300 clubhouses in 28 countries are recognized by the International Center for Clubhouse Development (ICCD). The ICCD supports and coordinates the development and training of clubhouses, maintains a set of International Standards for Clubhouse Programs (ICCD Standards) [17], has an international certification process, and a fidelity measure.

Thirty ICCD clubhouses were members of a non-profit organization, the Massachusetts Clubhouse Coalition (MCC) during the study period (July 1998–
June 2002). Since their inception, MCC clubhouses have coordinated the services to over 14,000 individuals, expanding opportunities in employment, education, housing, and leadership of all people who have psychiatric disabilities [26]. In a given year, MCC clubhouses serve approximately 7000 individuals.

Clubhouses are founded on the belief that recovery from serious mental illness should involve the whole person in a vital community. ICCD clubhouses strive to offer the supports necessary to help individuals with psychiatric disabilities lead vocationally productive and socially satisfying lives [2], including opportunities for meaningful work and relationships based on friendship and mutual support [13,28]. Clubhouses offer a wide range of services including employment and vocational supports, education, housing, outreach, advocacy, assistance with accessing health care, substance abuse services, and social support. Clubhouse membership is available for life and participants are referred to as members [24]. Each clubhouse is organized in such a way that it cannot work without member assistance [2]. Members are encouraged to contribute in the operation of the clubhouse working side-by-side with staff in a rehabilitative environment, the Work-ordered Day [18,29].

Employment is conceptualized as a basic right of clubhouse membership [9,21,22]. Assistance with career development, job search, and job choice is available to all members. ICCD-certified clubhouses provide additional employment services such as rapid job searches, job development, on-site job training, and ongoing job support [21]. Within ICCD clubhouses, members can move between various employment supports, choosing the employment support most appropriate to meet their needs at any point in time [4,17].

Historically clubhouses have been criticized for their reliance on Transitional Employment (TE). Critics fear that program participants will remain in TE, becoming comfortable with the arrangement, and will not be motivated to acquire independent employment [4]. Others have misconceived the range of employment opportunities offered by ICCD clubhouses, stating that clubhouses rely exclusively or primarily on TE [7] or assumed that participation in TE is required before moving to other types of employment [6,11]. Today, ICCD clubhouses provide members with a continuum of employment services including Transitional (TE), Supported (SE), and Independent Employment (IE) [15,19–21,27,28].

1.1. Definitions of TE, SE, and IE (as defined by the Massachusetts Clubhouse Coalition and ICCD)

We examined employment transitions made by clubhouse members that held multiple jobs during the study. We are particularly interested in whether and how members move between Transitional, Supported, and Independent Employment. We use the following definitions of TE, SE, and IE in this study.

TE positions are conceptualized as “belonging” to the clubhouse. The clubhouse develops and maintains a relationship with the employer and provides onsite training and support to the worker. Clubhouse placement managers determine who will fill TE positions. The clubhouse guarantees job coverage in TE by providing coverage by a staff or member in the case of worker absences. TE’s are time-limited, usually 6–9 months in duration and are part-time by design.

SE positions are not necessarily time-limited and “belong” to the members employed in them. Jobs may be full or part-time and there typically is a competitive element, including an interview process. The clubhouse does not provide absence coverage in SE, but provides other supports. The clubhouse may have a relationship with the employer although the employer selects the employee in SE.

In Independent Employment, typically members participate in a fully competitive interview. IE is distinguished from SE by the lack of a relationship between the employer and the clubhouse and the absence of onsite supports. IE positions may be full or part-time and “belong” to the members employed in them.

Despite the maturity and dissemination of the model, few studies have examined the utilization of clubhouse employment services or the extent of transitions between TE, SE, and IE [4,23,26,27]. Given these three types of employment, interesting questions involve developing a clearer understanding of the ways in which people utilize these employment services. Do people move between TE, SE, and IE? Do people move through a progression of employment supports from TE to SE to IE? Is movement as likely in one direction as the other? Is the transition pattern similar across multiple transitions?

2. Methods

2.1. Study sites and data collection procedures

Each year the MCC conducts an employment survey to assist with job development, internal quality im-
provement, advocacy, and to reduce stigma. Data collection instruments were designed and distributed by the MCC. To ensure common classifications of employment, definitions of each employment type were included in the instruments, clubhouse staff and members were trained in data collection procedures in a series of training events, and questions related to data collection were addressed. Each clubhouse’s data was collected, entered independently, and checked for accuracy each year before it was merged into a central dataset.

A variety of additional information was collected including clubhouse characteristics such as the clubhouse’s current ICCD certification status, length of operation, budget, average daily attendance (ADA), number of staff, and number of members served. The name and location of each employer and information related to each position/job was collected including job type (TE, SE, or IE), start and end dates of each job, number of days employed, rate of pay (hourly), and average hours worked (weekly). Number of days between jobs was calculated for members who held multiple jobs within the study period. Member information included age, gender, and length of clubhouse membership. Individual employment information before clubhouse membership and the study period were not available. It should be noted that members who joined a clubhouse during the study period differ from those that joined before the study as they were younger (39.1 vs. 42.8 years, \( p < 0.0001 \)) and had shorter memberships (2.7 vs. 7.8 years, \( p < 0.0001 \)).

Employment data for TE, SE, and IE for 17 of the 30 MCC clubhouses are presented here. Three of the 30 clubhouses did not join the MCC until the final year of the study. The remaining ten clubhouses participated in the survey at least one year but did not provide data for members employed in TE, SE, and IE across all four years, as would be necessary to examine all job transitions that occurred during the study period. Data from these 13 clubhouses were excluded, thus, our analyses included only the 17 clubhouses that provided data for four consecutive years. This decision may introduce some sample bias, however, as previously reported \[27\], there were no significant differences between clubhouses included in the four-year dataset and those that were not across a wide range of clubhouse characteristics (average daily attendance, active members, total membership, number of staff, and annual budget).

Members who were employed exclusively in job types other than TE, SE, and IE (i.e. group placements) were excluded from the analyses in this study \( (N = 131) \). Placements in job types other than TE, SE, and IE such as group placements or one-day jobs \( (N = 301) \) were also excluded from the analyses as not all clubhouses surveyed provide these types of employment. Data on individual employment experiences that concluded before the 48-month period were unavailable.

Data on all TE, SE, and IE jobs held by members during the 48-month period between July 1, 1998 and June 30, 2002 were analyzed. Aggregate data were converted into a SAS dataset for accuracy and consistency checks, statistical analyses, and preparation of reports by the authors and staff.

The authors coded jobs with sequential job numbers based on the start dates of each job held by each member within the four-year period. To address issues of right and left censorship, the weekly work schedule, pay rate, length of employment (tenure) and job earnings were examined within the study period rather than reporting these figures over the entire length of the job as some jobs started before the study period and/or continued after the study period.

We constructed transition tables to assess the extent of movement between employment types (TE, SE, and IE) and whether movement was more likely in one direction than another \[16\] (Fig. 1). Tables were constructed for individuals transitioning between job1 and job2 and more generally for individuals transitioning between jobn and jobn+1. Using transition tables, we were able to determine whether people stayed in the same job types (diagonal a). Conceptually, movement towards the upper right portion of the table (b) (from TE to either SE or IE) would reflect greater independence, and movement towards the lower left (c) would reflect additional supports and less independence. We assessed whether movement was likely and in which directions movement occurred by observing the symmetry of the matrix. The ratio of \( b/c \) indicates movement in either direction: if the ratio \( = 1 \), the symmetry is equal and participants are just as likely to move in one direction as the other, if the ratio is greater than 1, movement is towards greater independence; and if the
ratio is less than 1, movement is towards less independence.

2.2. Data analysis

The analyses will involve a series of contrasts to understand the ways that people move between TE, SE, and IE. Job transitions between the first and second jobs (job1 to job2) held by members during the four-year period were examined using Proc Freq in SAS. Differences in length of time between jobs were examined using Proc Npar1way in SAS. Whether the patterns that emerged held across multiple transitions from the first to the fourth job (job1 to job2 to job3 to job4) was also examined. Transitions beyond the fourth job were not examined due to the small sample size (n = 39).

3. Results

3.1. Job types and job placements

Between 1998–2002, 2195 members were employed in 3379 separate TE, SE, and IE job placements (Table 1). Employed members had been clubhouse members for a mean of 7.1 years (range 0.2 to 15.0, sd = 3.7). More males were employed (59.8%) than females (40.2%). Members held an average of 1.6 jobs (range 1–14, SD = 1.05) during this period: 1244 placements were in TE, 869 in SE, 1266 in IE. Sixty-seven percent (66.7%) of employed members held exactly one job (N = 1465), 21% held exactly two jobs (N = 457) and 7.2% held exactly three jobs (N = 160). Five percent (5.2%) of members had four or more jobs during the study (N = 113). Sixty percent of members with more than one job (N = 730) participated in at least one TE (N = 438).

3.2. Job overlaps, transition time, and job characteristics

A number of members held at least two jobs simultaneously in the four-year period: 126 members started their second job while still employed in their first job. The mean number of days of overlap for the two jobs was 280. Forty-eight members began a third job while still employed in their second job and the mean days of overlap for the two jobs was 201. Sixteen members began a fourth job while still employed in the third job and the mean calendar days of overlap for the two jobs was 146.

Outcomes including income earned and job tenure by participants in TE, SE, and IE were presented in a previous paper that examined the first three years of the dataset used in this paper. However, to address issues of right and left censorship we examined the weekly work schedule and pay rate, length of employment (tenure) and job earnings for the study period rather than reporting these figures over the entire length of the job (Table 2).

3.3. Job transitions (transition from job1 to job2)

There were 730 transitions from first to second jobs (job1 to job2). Fifty-four percent (n = 395) of the individuals holding a second job remained in the same type of employment (diagonal a). Over half (56.0%) of these individuals were employed in SE or IE. When we examined the ratio of b:c (212:125) we found that members moved between job types. Forty-six percent (46.2%) of the individuals who held a second job moved between employment types. While movement was not limited to one employment type or in one direction, movement was 1.7 times more likely in the direction of independent employment. The direction of movement was also more likely than if it occurred by chance (test of symmetry statistic (S) 31.9392, df = 3, p < 0.0001).

For the individuals in TE in their first job (job1), 54.1% remained in TE in job2 (Table 3). Almost half (45.9%) of the individuals in TE in their first job (job1)
Table 2

| Employment outcomes of job placements by employment types within the study period |
|---------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
|                                | TE            | SE            | IE            |
|                                | N  Mean  sd    | N  Mean  sd    | N  Mean  sd    |
| Wage (hourly)                  | 1135 $6.51 0.9 | 799 $7.06 1.5 | 970 $7.89 3.2 |
| Days per week                  | 597 3.7 1.3   | 409 4.0 1.2   | 494 4.0 1.2   |
| Hours per week                 | 1153 13.8 6.2 | 807 18.2 8.4  | 981 21.3 11.0 |
| Days employed                  | 1241 185.3 233.1 | 848 514.2 522.8 | 1169 625.4 518.2 |
| Weekly earnings                | 1134 $2282.2 42.9 | 779 $1311.2 76.1 | 914 $1733.5 134.9 |
| Job earnings                   | 1133 $90.36 3.9 | 779 $1311.2 76.1 | 914 $1733.5 134.9 |

Note: N’s vary due to missing data for some variables.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentages of members in employment types in Job2 compared to Job1</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Job Type of First Job (Job1) &amp; Job Type of Second Job (Job2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Staying in Same Job Type as Job1 &amp; % Moving Towards Independent Employment &amp; % Moving Away from Independent Employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TE (N = 320)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE (N = 191)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IE (N = 219)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N/A = Not Applicable.

moved to SE or IE in their second job in the study period (job2). Of the individuals who moved to job types that offer less supports over two thirds (68.7%) moved to an SE in their second job in the study period (job2).

Two-fifths (42.4%) of the members whose first job (job1) during the study was an SE moved to another SE in their second job. Out of the remaining members whose first job was in SE, the movement to their second job was in both directions with 3/5’s (59.1%) employed in IE and 2/5’s (40.9%) employed in TE.

Sixty-three percent of members employed in an IE in their first job (job1) were employed in an IE in job2. Almost 3/5’s (58.1%) of the members in IE changing employment types moved to TE in their second job (job2) (n = 47).

3.4. Job transitions (transition from jobn to jobn+1)

We examined the transitions between the first four jobs during the study (job1 to job4) (Table 4). There were 1110 transitions with 53.9% remaining in the same type of employment as the previous job (on the diagonal a). Over half (57.0%) of these members were employed in SE or IE. We examined the ratio of b/c (316:196) across transitions from job1 to job4 and found that for the individuals that moved between job types movement was 1.61 times more likely in the direction of independent employment. While the pattern of movement continued to remain the same for each subsequent transition, the level of significance diminished with each subsequent sampling constraint, ranging from p < 0.0001 (test of symmetry statistic (S) = 31.9392, df = 3) (N = 730) for the transitions from job1 to job2 to p = 0.0595 (test of symmetry statistic (S) 7.4238, df = 3) (N = 270) for the transitions from job2 to job3 and for the transitions from job3 to job4 p = 0.0734 (test of symmetry statistic (S) 6.9524, df = 3) (N = 110).

Similar to the transition pattern from first (job1) to second job (job2), 68.4% of the members who moved from TE moved into SE. Members who transitioned from SE (58.5%) were more likely to move to IE than TE (58.1% vs. 41.9%). The transition pattern across multiple transitions in IE was similar to the transitions from job1 to job2 with 64.2% of members moving between IE’s. Fifty-eight (57.9) percent of the members that transitioned out of IE moved to TE.

4. Discussion

While the provision of TE as an employment approach may distinguish ICCD clubhouses from other employment programs, transitions between employment types (Transitional, Supported, and Independent) in clubhouses has not been previously well-documented. Within this sample, TE, SE, and IE hold importance within clubhouse employment as indicated by the distribution of placements among first jobs within the period.

Within this study, clubhouse members utilized and moved between all three types of employment (TE, SE,
and IE) in both directions. Approximately half (53.8%) of the members remained in the same type of job as their first job. Over half of these individuals (57.8%) transitioned between SE’s or between IE’s. However, members who did not remain in the same job type were about 1.7 times more likely to move in the direction of employment that is less supported. Interestingly, members who began in SE were slightly less likely to transition to TE as they were to IE. Individuals who have had a more independent employment experience may find the additional supports and variety of opportunities useful in developing positive work skills, work histories, and job references.

Individuals who are interested in career exploration, or are not “work interested” or “job ready” or are unwilling to make a long-term commitment to a particular job may find the opportunities for employment experiences through a variety of positions and supports particularly appealing. Some individuals may find it more difficult to maintain employment than to obtain a job on their own. The range of flexible supports provided in ICCD clubhouses through a three-pronged approach that includes TE, SE, and IE may appeal to a population that has an illness that is cyclical in nature, as individuals may require different levels of supports at different points in time.

We note that 126 members worked two or more jobs simultaneously. It may be easier for members to secure a combination of part time jobs rather than working one full-time job to increase hours and earnings. This combination of multiple jobs may reflect a natural occurrence within today’s workforce.

4.1. Limitations

The available data provides a valuable perspective on job transitions that occurred among program participants within a window of time. However, this study is not without limitations. This study involves the use of a self-report survey methodology. There are no independent checks on the validity of the information reported by clubhouses about their members. However, to the extent that our data rely on information over a four-year period, and many individuals worked across several years, matching information across years provided some validation of consistency. We were able to ascertain whether individuals held more than one job during the period and the extent of movement between job types during the period.

There also was no data available for individual employment histories before the study period. This information may be beneficial, as prior work histories may predict future work successes. An earlier study of clubhouse employment [15] found that members who had more TE jobs, worked more hours, and more cumulative days on TE were more likely to obtain supported or independent employment.

This paper set out to examine how clubhouse members use employment supports and move between employment opportunities available in ICCD-certified clubhouses within one state. However, clubhouse characteristics of clubhouses in this sample also closely approximate characteristics of ICCD-certified clubhouse within the United States [27]. To some extent, these findings may generalize to ICCD-certified clubhouses within the United States,

Employment outcomes across a number of variables (Table 2) were examined within the study period rather than over the duration of each job. While this limits the outcomes to a four-year window of time, it addresses some of the issues of right censorship by limiting the undue influence of jobs held for a very long time to only the 4-year period.

5. Implications for services

By recognizing that members do move between employment supports (TE, SE, and IE) offered by clubhouses, policy makers and service providers may want to consider how the availability of a variety of employment supports impacts employment outcomes. Studies
have shown the importance of maintaining contact with individuals over time [5]. The flexibility and availability of a variety of employment supports including TE and SE may lead to independent employment. This may be particularly true within service programs that do not impose time limits on services and offer individuals as many opportunities as necessary. Our findings suggest that clubhouse members use these supports in a variety of ways and move between the various employment supports. When movement occurs individuals are more likely to move towards employment that offers less supports. A multi-tiered approach may facilitate the transition to independent employment.

Research is also needed to determine whether clubhouse employment constitutes a best practice for this population. Should mental health service programs offer a variety of flexible employment supports and services? Does the availability of a variety of supports lead to enhanced employment, particularly for individuals may not be considered “work ready”? Do individuals transition between the various employment supports (TE, SE, and IE) rather than returning to unemployment? Studies that examine the outcomes of existing service programs like clubhouses that have not been researched extensively may prove beneficial to policy makers and service providers.

6. Conclusion

MCC clubhouses provide a balanced approach to employment services including TE, SE, and IE in addition to the other services clubhouses provide. TE continues to be a major component of clubhouse employment with 47% of employed members participating in at least one TE during the four-year period. However, it appears that members utilize these three approaches in a variety of ways.

Clubhouse members move between the various types of employment offered by clubhouses. When they do move they are about twice as likely to move from employment types that offer more supports (TE or SE) to those that offer less supports (SE or IE). This pattern is similar between the transitions in job1 and job2 and subsequent transitions.

Despite criticisms or concerns related to the Transitional Employment approach adopted within the clubhouse model, there are no requirements that members participate in TE. Within clubhouses, there is no penalty for moving from a less supported position into an employment type that offers additional supports. This flexibility may create an environment where individuals move between various levels of employment supports or explore different types of jobs rather than remaining unemployed. This flexibility may be advantageous for individuals requiring on-going employment supports. Findings from this study suggest that within this sample, rather than remaining in TE, clubhouse members move between TE, SE, and IE jobs and this movement is more likely in the direction of “independent employment”.

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References


