

# **Bundled Job Placement Case Study: Ralph**

## **Background and Referral**

Ralph is a middle-aged man with eleven years of experience as a machine and electrical technician. Although he has some college credits, he has not finished a college or technical degree. His job at a chemical plant came to an end after 15 years with the onset of major depressive disorder, resulting in a 3-month hospitalization, continued therapy and ongoing medication management which has occurred over a five year period and continues.

During his treatment, Ralph applied for Social Security Disability Benefits. He is a SSDI beneficiary based on his previous earnings. He knows that going back to work will impact his benefits and is unclear how much he can earn and retain his benefits. He is especially concerned about losing medical insurance (he is currently on Medicare). The VRC obtained a SSA benefits query and referred Ralph to a CWIC to obtain more detailed information on his return to work benefits.

Ralph is now expressing an interest and need to go back to work. The community center therapist, Ms. Wonderful, recommended that Ralph apply with DARS to help with his job search.

## **After DARS Eligibility Determined**

During the Diagnostic Interview and throughout the VR Process the VR counselor completed a review of his records and interviewed Ralph and his MH providers. The VR Counselor identified that Ralph was motivated to get a job, but he has a lot of apprehension due to his disability and the loss of 5-years of work history. He was also aware that the job market has changed and seemed unclear if his job skills would be adequate for current business technology. Ralph had a history of attendance problems, along with difficulties associated with continuous changes in his work environment. He was unable to manage his time effectively and became disorganized when he felt overwhelmed or fell behind in his tasks.

The Assessment and Planning process included researching with Ralph to determine if he has the skills, abilities, values required to pursue employment related to the occupations Electronics Engineering Technicians and Mechanical Engineering Technicians. Ralph with the assistance of his counselor and other DARS staff researched the ONET to determine what tasks, skills, knowledge, experience, education, work style and work values are required for both positions. Ralph completed several activities provided by his DARS Counselor with “hands on” assistance and guidance to identify if his abilities and values match the requirements of his potential employment goal. Ralph disability accommodation needs were researched with Ralph using the JAN website. He demonstrates the ability to verbalize his disability and support needs, but he will need assistance (instruction with examples) to identify any accommodation needs at the employment site and monitoring to ensure his

accommodations needs are met. It was determined that Ralph would benefit of Vocational Adjustment Training (VAT) and Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) prior to pursuing job placement.

Ralph required “hands” on instruction through peer support, counseling to recognize his personal needs related to his disability including identification of potential barriers to employment, and strategies to use to manage his disability if and when he has increased stressors or increased signs of and management of his disability. Ralph was able to tolerate VAT and WRAP classes attending as scheduled. Ralph did need hands on instruction to learn new skills and guidance to ensure tasks completed accurately. Ralph completed his WRAP plan and states he plans to use it to assist him to return to work. Depending on Ralph’s mood he required monitoring to ensure active engagement in activities. Ralph was able to give the Counselor his employment history by listing the employer and years that he worked at each place when provided with questions and examples. Ralph will need instruction and assistance to identify start dates and end dates of employment, as well as to describe his work responsibilities at each employer. He will also need to learn how to address his 5 years break in employment. Ralph has never used a computer or the internet and only has a high school education with only basic academic classes. He participated in technical vocational training classes while in high school. While Ralph can learn skills, he requires monitoring and guidance to assist with task completion to ensure accuracy and timeliness when it relates completing job applications, resumes and employer written communications. Job searching via the computer will be difficult for Ralph; he will need assistance in locating job leads and review of all applications by the Job Placement Specialist for accuracy and completeness. Ralph will benefit from mock interviews and information about pre-employment testing and accommodations.

Although additional education or technical courses were discussed, Ralph stated his preference for going back to work to begin earning wages as he did in the past. He feels the Social Security has helped, but that he is basically in poverty and wants to work his way back to the standard of living he had previously achieved. His family situation has also changed, he became divorced and he needs to make child support payments for his two minor children.

With guidance and questions, Ralph can identify his abilities, challenges related to his disability, interpersonal skills and workforce readiness. Ralph identified his preference of going back into the electrical and mechanical technician field as his best opportunity for job placement. Ralph has demonstrated Job Readiness and Work Readiness by verbalizing information he learned in VAT, WRAP, research and exercises he completed preparing himself for employment. These activities have also assist Ralph in identifying potential employment conditions he needs to consider as he begins the job search process.

Ralph was referred to a CWIC who determined Ralph has the full 9 month Trial Work Period (TWP) available to use. During the TWP, Ralph can earn any amount of income and continue to receive his SSDI cash benefit. If Ralph makes over \$770 (in calendar year 2014) gross in a month he will use one TWP month. If he uses nine TWP months

in a rolling sixty month period he will have used an entire TWP. He will then enter “The Extended Period of Eligibility (EPE)”. During the continuous 36 months of the EPE anytime Ralph makes over Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA) gross in a month (A dollar amount SSA uses as a benchmark that changes each January 1<sup>st</sup>) he will not receive his SSDI cash benefit. If he makes under SGA he will receive his SSDI cash benefit. After the end of the EPE the first month that Ralph makes above SGA gross in a month he will be terminated from SSDI. However, his Medicare will continue for at least 93 months after the end of his TWP. This is known as Extended Medicare/ExM. Keep in mind that as long as Ralph is eligible for an SSDI cash benefit he will receive Medicare. However, if Ralph continues to work above SGA and loses his ExM he will have the option to buy into the work incentive, Medicare for People with Disabilities that Work.

Ralph’s Vocational goal is to gain full-time employment earning \$30,000 per year. Ralph wants to work as an electrical and mechanical technician with a company that offers opportunity for training and advancement. Ralph was open to where he could work, although his preference was to be more facility based rather than working for a company where he would do house calls. Ralph has identified he works best during an afternoon/evening hours between 2 and 10 or 3 to 11, but is willing as early as 11 AM if necessary. He does not want to travel more than 45 minutes to/from work He owes a reliable car. His preference for the later shifts is that there tends to be fewer co-workers and the assignments are typically more routine and predictable. Ralph verbalized he does not want to work in a customer-service type job.

Ralph shared his Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP), which is a list of tools he uses to maintain his wellness. Along with his therapist, he covered several considerations, starting with a daily maintenance plan and a watch list for relapse. The therapist committed to be available for support as needed through the work process. Ralph has a monthly medication management appointment and meets with the therapist twice a month.

After the VRC and Ralph completed the Assessing and Planning activities it has been determined that Ralph needs more individualized assistance in his job search than the counselor can provide at this time. The VRC and Ralph jointly developed Ralph’s IPE listing Job Placement Services. The VRC made a referral to a Job Placement provider for assistance after viewing the list of available providers with Ralph.