



## **NATIONAL COALITION *for* HOMELESS VETERANS**

### *“The Impact of Enhanced Incentives on Vocational Rehabilitation Outcomes for Dually Diagnosed Veterans”*

Charles E. Drebing, E. Alice Van Ormer, Christopher Krebs, Robert Rosenheck, Bruce Rounsaville, Lawrence Herz, and Walter Penk / [Link to Article](#)

#### Quick Takeaways:

- Adding contingency management techniques to existing Compensated Work Therapy (CWT) programs may improve employment outcomes for dually diagnosed veterans.
- Increased program compliance and reduced substance abuse are other potential benefits of the CWT plus contingency management approach.

#### Study:

This study examined the employment outcomes for nineteen veterans who participated in the CWT program at the Bedford VA Medical Center. All participants were dually diagnosed with a psychiatric disorder and drug or alcohol dependence. Upon entry into the program the veterans were randomly assigned into two groups 1) CWT only and 2) CWT with contingency management techniques. Participants in the second group received cash incentives for achieving increases in the intermediate goals of abstinence, job-search tasks, and retention in the CWT program.

#### Findings:

Researchers found that participants who received cash incentives engaged in more job-search activities and were more likely to meet the intermediate goals than those in the CWT-only group. The compensated participants had higher rates of competitive employment and earned an average of 68 percent more in wages. They were also more likely to remain abstinent from drugs and alcohol. Additional differences, including earlier transition to competitive employment for the incentive group, were not significant and diminished over time. Retention rates in CWT were similar for both groups.

Based on the results for the CWT program, the researchers suggest a natural synergy between contingency management intervention and VR programs in general. The short-term benefits of contingency management, including retention and abstinence, complement VR's long-term benefits of competitive employment and self-efficacy.

#### Conclusion:

Incorporating financial incentives into VR programs has the potential to improve outcomes for dually diagnosed veterans. Further research is required to determine the most effective program parameters, feasibility, and cost-effectiveness. With limited resources available to serve a population with significant needs, a selective approach to implementation may be warranted.

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