



REACHING ALL JOB-SEEKERS:  
EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS  
FOR HARD-TO-EMPLOY  
POPULATIONS

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**MATHEMATICA**

Policy Research, Inc.

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October 1999

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At the program level, many agency and program staff gave generously of their time in discussion, sending us materials, reviewing our program descriptions and agreeing to be listed as contacts for those interested in additional information. Many program administrators also took time to provide recommendations for adapting their programs to other locations and contexts. Without the assistance and contributions of program staff, this guide would not have been possible.

Staff at MPR also played an important role in the completion of this resource guide. Jacquie Anderson interviewed program staff, gathered information for this guide and wrote early drafts of numerous program descriptions. Michelle Derr drafted introductory sections presenting key background information on each segment of the hard-to-serve population for which we profile programs. Robin Dion wrote the first chapter, made revisions and additions to early drafts, organized the document, and incorporated feedback from program staff and reviewers. Jon Jacobson conducted a careful review of the document and gave constructive feedback and suggestions. Editing suggestions were provided by Daryl Hall. LaDonna Pavetti, the project director, provided invaluable guidance and support throughout all phases of this work.

We gratefully acknowledge these many contributions and accept sole responsibility for any errors that may remain.

# Introduction

Record numbers of unemployed Americans have found jobs in the past few years. Yet despite a strong national economy, certain groups of individuals still find it difficult to enter the labor market. In particular, adults with learning disabilities, mental health problems, or addictions to alcohol or drugs are typically in need of a combination of specialized and coordinated services, treatment, or workplace accommodations in order to make a successful transition to employment. Similarly, individuals with a past felony conviction who are seeking a fresh start in society face special challenges in finding work, often requiring help in overcoming attitudes and social stigma. Finally, people who speak little or no English, many of whom are immigrants, tend to require services that increase their employability by improving their language skills and helping them to understand and cope with unexpected cultural differences. In the language of welfare reform, these subgroups and others of the low-income population who face specific challenges (another subgroup, for example, is victims of domestic violence) are often referred to as the "hard-to-serve" or the "hard-to-employ" since their needs typically go beyond the scope of assistance available at traditional employment agencies and welfare offices.

Given the current strong economic conditions and low unemployment, many employers are finding it difficult to attract and retain good employees. The hard-to-employ represent a potential source of filling this gap in the labor supply. Yet in order to meet the challenge of placing hard-to-serve job-seekers, employment programs must recognize that adjustments may need to be made not only by the potential employee, but also by the employer. For example, immigrants may need help in learning about American culture, but it is also in the best interests of employers to learn about cultural differences among their employees.

## WHO ARE THE HARD-TO-SERVE?

## PURPOSE OF THIS RESOURCE GUIDE

This resource guide provides examples of program strategies and approaches being used to help people who face difficult challenges in making the transition into employment. We briefly discuss each of the barriers to work referred to above, and profile several programs that have been designed to address the specific employment needs of the people facing these barriers. We also include a category of programs that are more general in nature but that target a range of hard-to-serve populations. It is important to note that our use of the term "hard-to-serve" does not imply that we focus on welfare recipients in this guide. We go beyond welfare mothers to include all adults, men or women, with children or without, who have special challenges to overcome in the transition to stable employment.

The intent of this resource guide, and the impetus for creating it, was to inform and help guide the work of the Annie E. Casey Foundation Jobs Initiative, an eight-year, six-site demonstration designed to improve access to family-supporting jobs for disadvantaged young adults living in inner-city communities. In operation since 1995, the Jobs Initiative sites have been developing approaches for connecting job-seekers and employers by creating services for both. Because of the recent widespread movement to work of more job-ready individuals, the Jobs Initiative sites are turning their attention to harder-to-serve job-seekers. This guide has been prepared to assist the sites in identifying, assessing, and adapting program strategies for the hard-to-serve that are currently in use in other localities. Yet the guide is also likely to be of interest to a wider audience, including state and local policymakers, program administrators, and program designers and advocates who are interested in resources that may help them think about ways to address the employment needs of hard-to-serve residents in their own communities.

## WHY FOCUS ON EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS FOR THE HARD-TO-EMPLOY?

A number of societal forces have been leading to increased acceptance of hard-to-serve populations in the workplace. A greater awareness of the needs and capabilities of disabled people led to the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act, for example, which has promoted acceptance of disabled individuals, including those with emotional or information-processing disorders, in a vast range of employment positions. A greater emphasis on personal responsibility for self-sufficiency contributed to Congress enacting the 1996 welfare reform legislation, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunities Reconciliation Act (PRWORA). PRWORA is rooted in the fundamental assumption that regardless of background or circumstance, all able-bodied adults are capable of engaging in gainful employment. Finally, eligibility rules for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) have become stricter, resulting in the need for all but the very severely disabled to become self-sufficient.

The sharp decline in welfare rolls across the nation since the passage of PRWORA has been attributed in part to the movement to work of less disadvantaged and more job-ready individuals. As more and more job-ready welfare recipients become employed and leave welfare, the pro-

portion of remaining recipients with significant barriers to employment will grow. Yet states are required to meet strict employment participation rates in their welfare programs under the new federal legislation. As they seek to increase the labor force participation of remaining individuals on welfare, state and local policymakers must search for innovative approaches to meeting the needs of the harder-to-serve population.

The hard-to-serve population comprises groups of individuals with very diverse needs, which affects the type, intensity, and duration of specific services they require. Employment services for ex-offenders, for example, should emphasize strategies for *obtaining* employment because of the stigma of hiring a person with a felony conviction, while employment services for those with a mental health condition should involve *treatment and job retention services*. Nevertheless, the profiles in this guide indicate that programs for the hard-to-serve share a set of strategies.

## COMMON THEMES AND LESSONS LEARNED

### • Creating a Positive Context

Programs for the hard-to-serve are frequently characterized by a respect for the difficulties faced by the client. This respect is most often expressed by approaching clients from a strengths-based perspective. For example, program staff are trained to view clients with mental health problems as prospective employees with particular strengths, rather than as patients. Staff at programs for clients with learning disabilities often take steps to ensure that clients avoid focusing on their low test scores during assessment and instead work on developing successful compensatory strategies. Programs serving parents with chemical addictions work to keep families together during substance abuse treatment and job search to prevent the depression that may occur when families are separated. Even clients who must participate in unpaid work as a condition of welfare receipt are encouraged by the staff at voluntary programs to see their experience as a developmental activity from which they may grow and learn, rather than as a form of punishment for not finding work within the time limit.

### • Coordination of Services

The importance of coordinating services for the hard-to-serve is becoming more apparent, particularly for those who require some form of treatment in order to be employable (e.g., for mental health problems or substance abuse). For some programs, this has meant co-locating diagnostic and treatment professionals within the welfare office. Other programs described in this resource guide report the coordination of services in private treatment facilities, where an emphasis is placed not only on treatment but also on job readiness training, placement, and job retention services. Thus, the concept of service coordination at the welfare agency can be extended beyond the welfare agency to private sector programs that take major responsibility for meeting the employment needs of the hard-to-serve.

- Recognizing the Need for More Up-Front Services

Many programs are responding to a greater need for "up-front" services among the hard-to-serve. Newly emerging program components emphasize building client confidence and self-esteem, and addressing client fears prior to permanent job placement. For example, program services may include temporary employment in a highly supportive environment. In other programs, pre-employment attitudes and behaviors that would likely make it difficult for clients to retain employment are evaluated and addressed prior to job search.

- Staff Training

Finally, many programs are emphasizing the extra importance of specific, intensive, and ongoing training for the program staff who serve these more challenging populations. In addition to training, programs are finding that employment specialists with a background in mental health, learning disabilities, or substance abuse treatment can be extremely helpful in recognizing, and coordinating services for, the various needs of the hard-to-serve client.

The programs we profile in this guide are not necessarily model designs, and many have not been rigorously evaluated for effectiveness. Rather than endorsing the programs, we seek to provide information that will encourage readers to consider the range of potential approaches and to stimulate new and innovative ideas and strategies for addressing the challenging needs of this population. Although institutional structures may differ from one locality to another, concepts and processes embedded in these program approaches can be adapted for use in other policy or organizational environments.

We have categorized program descriptions by employment challenges. Each section begins with a brief overview of a particular employment challenge, followed by profiles of several programs that aim to address clients with that challenge. Within each profile, we present *background information* on the program, which may include organizational history, client characteristics, or other key features. We then describe the various *services* the program provides, for example, job readiness classes, job training, treatment services, job placement, and post-employment services. Where available, *program outcomes* are presented. Each profile concludes with *recommendations* and insights from program staff with respect to adapting the program approach to other sites, organizations, programs, or policy contexts.

We believe that many of the program approaches profiled in this guide can be adapted to suit different local needs and requirements. Furthermore, we hope that this resource guide will facilitate communication and information exchange among program administrators, and provide program developers and policymakers with ideas for structuring their own approaches to meeting the needs of hard-to-serve clients. To this end, we include contact information for each program discussed in this resource guide.

# Employment Programs for the Learning Disabled

Some barriers to employment, such as physical ailments and problems with child care or transportation are easy to identify. Other barriers are less visible, but equally problematic. A learning disability can be one such barrier. Only recently has attention focused on the relationship between learning disabilities and employment. And yet, thousands of unemployed adults suffer from this hidden barrier to work. Studies suggest that as many as 40 percent of non-working adults have a diagnosable learning disability (Giovengo 1998). Evidence is building to show that the employability of these adults can substantially improve with minor workplace accommodations. Consequently, education and work programs are beginning to emerge to help the learning disabled find and sustain employment.

A learning disability is a neurobiological disorder affecting the function or structure of the brain (Learning Disabilities Association 1998). There are various types of learning disabilities that can affect a person's ability to speak, listen, read, write, spell, reason, recall, organize information, and do mathematics. People with a learning disability are generally intellectually capable individuals who are limited in some performance areas. With the proper intervention and learning techniques, people with a learning disability can be functional in the workplace.

Families in which the primary wage earner is learning disabled (LD) are more likely to live in poverty. Approximately 43 percent of such families live at or below the poverty level (Young 1998). A number of factors contribute to the economic conditions of these families. Adults with a learning disability are less likely to be employed, and those who are employed tend to work in low-wage positions. Their average income is about \$14,000—almost \$10,000 less than the average for the general population. In the absence of workplace accommodations, a learning disability typically restricts an individual's earning power.

DEFINITION OF  
LEARNING  
DISABILITIES

RELATIONSHIP  
BETWEEN LEARNING  
DISABILITIES AND  
POVERTY

## LIMITATIONS ASSOCIATED WITH A LEARNING DISABILITY

The living conditions associated with poverty create an environment where children are “at risk” for becoming learning disabled. According to the Children’s Defense Fund, living in poverty increases by 30 percent the likelihood that children will have a learning disability (1995). Another study found that 65 percent of households with a child who is learning disabled have annual incomes of less than \$25,000, as compared to 39 percent for households with a child who is not learned disabled (Learning Disabilities Association 1995). Some of the known causes of learning disabilities include lack of prenatal care, prenatal malnutrition, maternal substance abuse, birth trauma, chronic illness, and lead poisoning (as cited in Young 1998).

***Those with a learning disability have a number of social and functional limitations.*** Functional limitations of the learning disabled can include: a limited attention span; extreme emotional expression; impulsiveness; poor math, reading, and writing skills; difficulty staying organized; and problems with speaking and listening (Learning Disabilities Association 1998). Many of these limitations can present serious challenges, but frequently go untreated. As a result, those with learning disabilities typically develop poor peer relationships, low self-concept, and poor post-school adjustment (Lyon 1993). Social and functional impairments can be difficult to manage in a work environment. Employers may not have the ability or knowledge to help those with a learning disability. In addition, the types of challenges that those with a learning disability may present can go beyond what an employer is willing to manage. Employers are often inclined to replace the worker rather than accommodate.

***Those with a learning disability have limited educational training.*** One study found that the learning disabled are one-third less likely to earn a high school diploma or GED compared to those without a learning disability (Giovengo 1998). In addition, few individuals with a learning disability continue their education past high school. Approximately 14 percent of the LD population enroll in a post-secondary education program within two years of leaving high school, compared with 53 percent of the general population (LDA of America 1995). Employment options are narrow for a person without a high school diploma or GED. Even if a job is found, they typically do not come with benefits such as health insurance, sick leave, or retirement programs. Rarely do these positions offer a wage that will lift a family out of poverty.

***Learning disabilities often go undetected and untreated.*** It is estimated that less than 16 percent of adults with LD report receiving services for learning disabilities (Health Resource Center 1995). Learning disabilities are manageable and in many cases require only minimal accommodations. However, these conditions frequently go untreated because both the employment community and affected workers lack an awareness of learning disabilities.

Diagnosing a learning disability can be a difficult task, but it is crucial because the behaviors associated with undetected learning disabili-

ties can be misinterpreted as poor working habits. Furthermore, learning style differences can interfere with effective communication between a learning disabled person and his or her supervisor. Many times the person with LD is unaware of his or her condition. Once the disability is diagnosed, accommodations can be made in the workplace to help the individual manage the disability. In addition, once the individual's learning style is known, workplace skills can be taught in ways that are more comprehensible to that person.

Important issues in addressing the employment needs of learning disabled adults include identification and assessment, pre-employment training that takes into account the individual's learning style, and workplace accommodation. We feature three innovative programs designed to help those with learning disabilities find and keep a job. Each program has a unique combination of approaches to screening, assessment, training, and case management. These programs include the TANF Special Learning Needs Employment/Vocational Training Project (Illinois); the Life Skills, Employment, Accommodations, and Development program (L.E.A.D., Washington); and the Learning Disabilities Project (Washington).

## EMPLOYMENT STRATEGIES FOR THE LEARNING DISABLED

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# TANF Special Learning Needs Employment/Vocational Training Project

The Illinois State Board of Education funds the TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) Special Learning Needs Employment/Vocational Training Project, a program that provides screening, testing, training, and job placement to welfare recipients with special learning needs. Main features of the program include a comprehensive learning needs assessment and instructors who are well-trained in teaching to a broad array of learning styles. The program has been in place for close to a year in three pilot sites in and around the Chicago area.

## BACKGROUND

**The Adult Learning Resource Center.** The Adult Learning Resource Center (ALRC), located in Des Plaines, Illinois, provides training for testers and instructors working in adult education programs. Although the ALRC is not a direct service provider, it played a major role in developing the program structure and curriculum for the TANF Special Learning Needs Project. ALRC continues to be involved in coordinating services for the program and in providing training for intake workers, employment and training specialists, testers, and instructors.

## SERVICES

The TANF Special Learning Needs Project has developed a comprehensive system for identifying people with a special learning need,<sup>1</sup> assessing the employment and training barriers facing those identified, and following up with pre-employment instruction that is appropriate for students' different learning styles. The welfare office has responsibility for the initial intake and screening process, and the remaining services are provided by the adult education program.

**Initial Intake/Screening.** Because resources are not available to screen all TANF applicants, intake workers are trained to identify characteristics that may indicate a learning disability or special need. If the worker observes any of these characteristics, the applicant is referred to an employment and training specialist who administers a 13-question screening tool.<sup>2</sup> If the score indicates a potential learning disability, the individual is referred to the adult education provider for further assistance.

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<sup>1</sup>The program does not pursue a formal LD diagnosis unless there is evidence of a severe learning disability.

<sup>2</sup>The Learning Needs Screening Tool was developed by the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) in conjunction with Payne and Associates as part of a pilot project in eight sites across Washington. The tool has been validated and is in use by other state welfare-to-work programs. A copy of the tool can be obtained by contacting DSHS in Washington at (206) 760-2393.

**Orientation/Further Assessment.** Adult education staff give participants a brief program orientation and conduct a further assessment to determine whether the program is appropriate for them. Staff administer the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE), and participants are eligible for services if they score between the third and eighth grade level. Participants scoring below the third grade level on the TABE are admitted if they score above 85 on the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test. Ineligible participants are referred back to the welfare office to receive more appropriate services. Adult education staff work with the welfare office to ensure that ineligible participants with a TABE score below third grade level are placed in the appropriate basic literacy programs. Eligible clients are also given hearing and vision screening, and are referred for services if a problem is identified. A large proportion of eligible participants needs some kind of vision or hearing correction.

**Learning Needs Testing.** In order to get a better picture of their needs, program staff give participants four tests: (1) the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, (2) the Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT), (3) the Scholastic Achievement Test for Adults (SATA), and (4) the Payne and Associates Learning Needs Inventory.<sup>3</sup> Administering and analyzing the set of tests takes approximately five hours per person. Although the tests do not result in an actual diagnosis, they are analyzed to determine the learning style, and special employment and training needs of each participant. Testers share the results with instructors who are then responsible for meeting individually with participants. During this meeting, the instructor reviews the participant's strengths and weaknesses, and discusses possible learning strategies for coping with a classroom or employment situation.

**Employability Program.** The four-month employability program is a combination of classroom training and work-based experience. Students must achieve 35 competencies in five areas: (1) self awareness, (2) communication, (3) social and interpersonal skills, (4) career awareness and developmental exploration, and (5) workplace culture. Instructors are trained to incorporate teaching strategies for memory, visual, auditory, organization, and attention disabilities. Exercises are presented in a highly structured manner requiring student participation. Instructors also use a meta-cognition approach in which students are told beforehand how the material will be presented. For example, the instructor will inform the class that a competency will be taught visually and then verbally. Students who learn better visually can focus on the visual instruction and be prepared to use individual coping strategies when the information is presented verbally.

Work-based training is integrated from the very beginning of the program. In the first week, students go into the field to observe jobs. During the third or fourth week, they start job shadowing \_ day to two days per

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<sup>3</sup>This measure is a comprehensive instrument with 72 questions. It can be obtained by contacting Payne and Associates at (360) 491-7600.

week to learn more about their skills and interests, and in the fourth month, students participate in an unpaid internship. Each field experience requires pre- and post-activity homework to help clients evaluate their skills and interests, and to determine whether a particular job would be a good match for them. Clients then work with a job developer on job placement.

PROGRAM  
RECOMMENDATIONS  
FOR ADAPTING  
THE APPROACH

Program staff believe that the Special Learning Needs Project demonstrates how a program can maximize its resources to serve clients with learning disabilities. Administrators strongly recommend that if screening is provided, it should be followed up with some kind of service—at a minimum, training should be provided to case managers to facilitate better communication with learning disabled clients. This program's staff maintain that training case managers and classroom instructors to consider the needs of individuals with learning disabilities is central to serving this population.

**Contact**

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## The L.E.A.D. Program

L.E.A.D., which stands for Life Skills, Employment, Accommodations, and Development, is a unique life skills program designed to help welfare recipients with learning disabilities or low literacy levels develop workplace coping strategies specific to their needs. Workplace communication, problem-solving, and anger management skills are taught using methods that are tailored to each individual's learning style. The program is administered in Redmond, Washington, by the Learning Disabilities Association (LDA) of Washington. While the LDA office is located in Redmond, classes are administered at sites throughout Washington state.

**The Learning Disabilities Association of Washington.** The LDA of Washington has been providing services to the learning disabled population since the 1970s. Services include information and referral, social skills groups, individual tutoring, and community training and education. Through the development and administration of the Choices Program, LDA has been involved in social skills training for the learning disabled since 1989. The Choices Program teaches communication and problem-solving skills to people with learning disabilities using group work and training techniques appropriate to the students' particular learning style, but the program does not have an employment focus. Many of the referrals to Choices are individuals who are convicted of misdemeanor offenses and court-ordered to participate in the program. The Choices model was modified in coordination with the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to create an additional program, L.E.A.D., which does have an employment focus and is targeted to welfare recipients.

**Case Flow.** A standard and validated instrument is used to screen welfare recipients for learning disabilities at the welfare office.<sup>4</sup> Those who are found to be at risk of having a learning disability are referred to L.E.A.D. Clients do not receive further assessment to confirm the presence of a learning disability but instead complete a learning styles questionnaire. They then begin a 27-hour training period that is designed to be consistent with their individual learning style. Classes are generally small, with between 6 to 10 participants and two trainers. The class size in L.E.A.D. is kept small in order to provide as much individualized instruction as possible. Most L.E.A.D. students participate as part of their overall self-suffi-

## BACKGROUND

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<sup>4</sup>The Learning Needs Screening Tool was developed by the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) in conjunction with Payne and Associates as part of a pilot project in eight sites across Washington. The tool has been validated and is in use by other state welfare-to-work programs. A copy of the tool can be obtained by contacting DSHS in Washington at (206) 760-2393.

ciency plan developed with the welfare office, along with job search or other employment activities, and some are already employed.

## SERVICES

L.E.A.D.'s key program strategy is an individualized approach to skills training. At the beginning of the program, each student completes a learning style questionnaire that will guide the teaching methods used for that student. The L.E.A.D. curriculum focuses on four primary life skill areas in which people with learning disabilities often have difficulty: (1) communication, (2) anger management, (3) problem-solving, and (4) decision-making. Each skill area is taught with the participant's learning style in mind. For example, trainers may teach participants to use "picture notes" as an anger management tool, particularly for those who have verbal or auditory learning impairments. People with these impairments often lose their ability to communicate verbally when they get angry, resorting instead to a physical response. To demonstrate appropriate responses to anger, trainers help clients to identify the physical cues for anger and associate that feeling with a mental picture—for example, a person taking a big breath—helping the client to remember to breathe deeply when experiencing rising anger. This can both relax the client and give him or her time to respond more appropriately to the stimulus, hopefully regaining control over language ability and judgment. Role playing is another example of an important teaching tool that the L.E.A.D. program uses to teach life skills according to different learning styles. Trainers take students through a variety of situations, role playing problems that they are likely to encounter when they become employed.

L.E.A.D. trainers also identify appropriate workplace accommodations for students to help them function efficiently on the job. Given the results of the learning style inventory, the trainer will write up a set of these accommodations appropriate to the participant. For example, someone with an auditory processing problem may not understand verbal instructions only given once. A reasonable accommodation would be for the participant to use a tape recorder in order to replay instructions. Alternatively, the instructions could be given over email or in another written form. In contrast, those who have visual perception problems typically find it more useful to communicate orally. Students role play appropriate ways to ask for these or other accommodations from their employer and learn how to advocate for themselves in the work environment.

## PROGRAM OUTCOMES

Program staff consider a participant to have met program expectations if the participant has improved upon his or her initial status in the following five areas: (1) financial independence, (2) attitude about employment, (3) jobs/education, (4) social skills, and (5) stress/anger management. To evaluate success, participants are measured along these dimensions when they begin and complete the program. Participants who achieve a high level of success are those who go beyond "a step" toward improvement. For example, participants are considered to have met program expectations if they had no personal/job training plan ini-

tially but developed one over the course of the program. If they also begin implementing the plan or become employed, they are considered to have achieved a high level of success, or more than expected. Most students meet or exceed expectations. Moreover, LDA trainers have received significant positive feedback from case managers and clients about the program. Many clients express relief that someone has actually taught them skills in a way that they can understand, and welfare caseworkers comment that the L.E.A.D. participants are better able to interact with them.

Program staff note that social skills or job training tailored to individual learning styles can be a valuable component to any employment program—but they believe this strategy is especially important for participants with learning disabilities who may be otherwise unable to learn these skills. The LDA offers its specialized curriculum to anyone outside of Washington for a fee of \$250. They also offer technical assistance and training in facilitating program adaptation either at their location in Washington or on site at other locations. The fee for the complete 4-day training program for facilitators (trainers) varies depending on location and group size.

**Contact**

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PROGRAM  
RECOMMENDATIONS  
FOR ADAPTING  
THE APPROACH

## The Learning Disabilities Project

In 1996, the Seattle-King County Private Industry Council (PIC) created the Learning Disabilities Project, a program that provides screening, testing, and case management as well as workplace and training accommodations for learning disabled individuals. The PIC operates within a One-Stop Employment and Training system created by the Department of Labor and intended to consolidate formerly fragmented employment and training services. Clients of the PIC Learning Disabilities Project are identified through this one-stop system. The program serves approximately 130 people per year and costs about \$1,700 for each client; this cost includes screening, testing, and up to 18 hours of case management. The one-stop system spends about \$220,000 annually on the Learning Disabilities Project.

### BACKGROUND

**Caseload Characteristics.** The PIC serves many different populations: out-of-school youth, the homeless, public housing residents, dislocated workers, and welfare recipients. The PIC Learning Disabilities Project targets adults and youth (age 16 and older and out of school), who may have undiagnosed learning disabilities. Studies have shown that 35-50% of adults in employment and training programs may have unaddressed or undiagnosed learning disabilities which tend to lead to under-employment and unemployment.

One-stop caseworkers are trained to identify adults who show signs of learning disability. These clients often received special services in public school or were diagnosed with some kind of learning disability. Clients with learning disabilities can face many other barriers to employment such as mental health problems, substance abuse, depression, or anxiety. They tend to cycle through many different public support systems.

### SERVICES

There are four main components to the program: (1) screening one-stop participants suspected of having a learning disability, (2) formally testing for learning disabilities and any emotional problems that would impede employment or training, (3) identifying the appropriate accommodations to aid the individual's job or training situation, and (4) following up with the client to make sure accommodations are being implemented. One-stop caseworkers are given learning disability sensitivity training, while LD caseworkers with further training in serving the learning disabled specialize in serving clients identified as having a learning disability.

**Caseworker training for sensitivity to learning disabilities.** The PIC trains agency caseworkers to screen participants for learning disabilities. Through this training, caseworkers are instructed in how to recognize signs that may indicate that a client has a learning disability prior to administration of the instrument. Such signs may show up on clients' written application or during interviews. Examples include reversing letters or words, an inability to keep words inside of boxes or lines, poor short-term memory, difficulty in multi-tasking and problem solving, and requests for directions to be repeated. Sensitivity training sessions also focus on how to give people with LD instructions that are easier for them to follow. For example, writing down instructions in numbered boxes helps people with auditory learning disabilities as well as those with sequencing problems. All caseworkers are required to attend quarterly training sessions at least once and are encouraged to retake them periodically to refresh and update their skills.

**Screening.** If a one-stop case worker notices signs of a learning disability, short screening tools are administered to determine whether the client is actually at-risk of having a learning disability. The caseworkers use primarily use the 13-question Learning Needs Screening Tool developed by the State of Washington.<sup>5</sup>

**Assessment.** If the screening tool identifies a client to be at high risk of having a learning disability, the caseworker recommends a comprehensive assessment to confirm the presence of a learning disability and to learn more about its extent and any emotional problems that could be impede success in employment or training. The test battery includes the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale - Third Edition (WAIS-III), the Woodcock Johnson Psychoeducational Battery - Revised (WJ-R), and some additional tests of cognitive processing.

**Developing a set of accommodations.** Once the assessment is completed, the diagnostician, the client, the primary case manager, and an LD case manager meet to explain the results to the client and to determine what training or workplace accommodations can help the client function more efficiently. Accommodations range from the very simple to the complex. Sometimes a client will need a supervisor or teacher to spend more time explaining tasks, presenting instructions visually rather than verbally. Helping clients use tape recorders and organizers also may improve the efficiency and accuracy of the client's work. Other times, accommodations may include reassigning the tasks or responsibilities of the job.

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<sup>5</sup>The Learning Needs Screening Tool was developed by the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) in conjunction with Payne and Associates as part of a pilot project in eight sites across Washington. The tool has been validated and is in use by other state welfare-to-work programs. A copy of the tool can be obtained by contacting DSHS in Washington at (206) 760-2393.

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**Follow-up.** Because the client is usually not able to fully process the information they get at the first meeting, their LD case manager meets with them again to review the diagnosis and accommodations, and to help them build a strategy for incorporating these accommodations into their lives. If the client decides to disclose their disability to their employer or an instructor, the LD case manager can be an advocate in implementing accommodations at work or in the classroom. After clients are tested and determined to have a learning disability, they are protected under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which requires employers to make “reasonable” accommodations for employees with learning disabilities. If accommodations are too expensive to be considered reasonable, the client may be eligible for vocational rehabilitation funding that could cover the cost of the particular accommodation.

The administrators of this program note that there are many different issues to consider when implementing a program similar to the Learning Disabilities Project. Most importantly, if a screening tool is developed and implemented, a system needs to be in place to address the learning disability after it is identified. Program administrators believe that identifying a learning disability without addressing it may demoralize a client. In addition, staff indicate that care should be taken in selecting the learning disabilities assessment tool. Learning disabilities are defined by a significant discrepancy between intelligence and achievement scores. Yet some intelligence measures that have been normed for white, middle-class adults may be inappropriate for certain minorities, immigrants, and low-income persons.

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# Employment Services for Individuals with a Mental Health Condition

In the wake of welfare reform and the Americans with Disabilities Act, the national mind set is shifting toward supporting employment for those with mental health conditions. Some states are beginning to develop innovative programs and strategies to address the mental health needs of the unemployed whose conditions may affect the ability to work.

Many Americans have mental health problems that interfere with or limit their daily lives. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, more than one in five American adults has a diagnosable mental disorder in a given year (as cited in Behney et al. 1998). It is estimated that over 8 million people have a mental health problem or disorder that seriously interferes with their ability to work, attend school, or manage day-to-day activities (as cited in Mental Health United States 1998). The challenges associated with a mental health condition often make it difficult to maintain employment. One researcher estimated that between 70 and 90 percent of those with a serious mental illness are unemployed (Anthony et al. 1984).

While those with a mental health disability are less likely to be employed, mental health conditions may also develop as a result of unemployment. Depression, lack of self-esteem, and other related mental health conditions may emerge from the economic, social, and emotional stress of not working. However, it is not always clear whether a mental health condition may have preceded unemployment or whether it is a function of the stressful circumstances associated with unemployment.

***Mental health conditions limit or prevent employment.*** Mental health problems result not only in lower rates of labor force participation, but also in reduced work hours and lower earnings (Bland et al. 1988; Benham and Benham 1982; and Ettner et al. 1996). Attendance at work may also be affected. For example, researchers have documented that individuals with depression use as many as four times as many sick days compared to individuals who are not depressed (Broadhead et al.

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MENTAL HEALTH  
PROBLEMS AMONG  
LOW-INCOME FAMILIES

EFFECTS OF MENTAL  
HEALTH CONDITIONS  
ON EMPLOYMENT

1990; Wells et al. 1989). Symptoms of the disorder itself and the side-effects of medications used to treat the disorder can affect employment.

***Some behaviors associated with a mental illness are not conducive to working.*** Individuals with a mental illness are more likely to have problems with social functioning and coping with day-to-day stress. They may be irritable and have difficulty concentrating (Goldman et al. 1981; Schless et al. 1974; Tweed 1993). Furthermore, even the normal stressors tolerated by others in a typical work environment can exacerbate a mental health condition. In addition to symptoms of the disorder, the side effects of medication, such as dry mouth, constipation, blurred vision, memory difficulties, restlessness, tremors, and sedation can also affect job performance (as cited Behney et al. 1997). However, informed treatment providers can consider the trade-offs associated with the need for medication and the need to work, and can sometimes adjust the type and amount of medication accordingly.

***The stigma associated with mental health conditions may discourage employers from hiring and/or accommodating those so affected.*** Mental health disorders commonly elicit negative attitudes and reactions from others. Many employees attempt to keep their current or past mental health problems a secret because of the stigma associated with these disorders and the possibility of discrimination (Behney et al. 1997). Despite the protection provided by the ADA, employees may fear that employers will be reluctant to accommodate their needs. Uninformed employers may misinterpret symptoms of the disorder, attributing them to poor work skills or attitudinal problems, which could lead to probation or job loss. Thus, managing a mental illness in the workplace can be a difficult task without the support of the employer.

***Lack of access to treatment may limit employment for low-income individuals with mental health conditions.*** Mental health problems are considered to be prevalent among the low-income and welfare populations. Jayakody and Pollack (1997), for example, found that having a psychiatric disorder significantly increases the probability of receiving welfare by 38 percentage points. A National Institute of Mental Health analysis of epidemiologic catchment area data on psychiatric disorders in welfare populations indicated that welfare recipients are twice as likely as nonrecipients to meet diagnostic criteria for an affective disorder (Leon & Weissman, 1993).

Symptoms of major depressive disorder are reported more frequently by individuals receiving welfare than those in the general population. Olson and Pavetti (1996) estimated that welfare recipients are three times as likely as nonrecipients to suffer from depressive symptomatology. Yet many welfare recipients with mental health conditions do not have access to health insurance that provides coverage for mental health problems. The rate of participation in the Medicaid program has decreased substantially since the implementation of welfare reform (PRWORA), especially for individuals who have left the welfare rolls, and many managed care organizations cover only limited mental health services. Lack

of treatment for significant mental health conditions likely contributes significantly to employment difficulties for this population.

Several states are developing supported employment programs to assist individuals with mental health conditions who have a desire to work. In general, programs encourage disabled clients to participate in employment services, but client participation is voluntary. Programs offer pre-employment services, job matching and development, and post-employment services that take into account the special needs of the mentally ill. Employment is not seen as a replacement for treatment, and the programs often strongly emphasize continued mental health treatment for affected individuals. Important issues for the employment of this population are medication side effects and SSI eligibility. We briefly describe how two state programs, the New Jersey Supported Employment Program and Rhode Island's Individual Placement and Support Program, address these problems and others.

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## The Supported Employment Program

The New Jersey Department of Human Services, Division of Mental Health Services, and the Department of Labor, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, have collaborated to provide supported employment to clients with severe and persistent mental health problems. The New Jersey Supported Work Program has been in place for 10 years and is administered by a separate contractor in each county. Program strategies include finding a good job match for the client, developing appropriate accommodations on the job, and providing intensive job coaching/case management. The cost of administering the program is about \$2.6 million annually.

**Caseload Characteristics.** The New Jersey Supported Work Program serves approximately 500 new people each year and has an active caseload of about 750 to 1000. The program serves clients with severe and chronic mental illness—primarily schizophrenia, major depression, and bipolar disorder. All of the clients are 18 years or older, many receive SSI benefits, and a few are TANF recipients. Participants who show an interest in employment are referred to the program by their case manager at a community mental health center, a rehabilitation counselor at a vocational rehabilitation local office, or a welfare caseworker. Some cases enter the program through self-referral.

Program services include individualized job search, job coaching, and education for employers about workplace accommodations. Employment specialists coordinate with the client’s case manager, physician or psychiatrist on an ongoing basis to ensure that clients are receiving necessary mental health treatment. Program staff strive to develop and maintain close coordination between employment and mental health services.

**Pre-employment Services.** Upon entering the program, a client is matched with an employment specialist who conducts an initial assessment to determine skills, interests, and past work experience. Based on the assessment, the case manager determines whether a client is ready to immediately move into work and the types of jobs that may be appropriate given the client’s skills and abilities. The employment specialist provides job leads and helps with the job search or may do individual job development. Clients who are not sure of what kind of work they prefer are encouraged to do some “job sampling” to identify job interests. Finding an appropriate job—one that matches both the client’s skills and interests, and that provides a supportive environment—significantly increases the likelihood the client will be successful in the job. Along

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with helping a client find a job, the case manager provides individual counseling to address any fears or problems that the client may face in moving into employment. If necessary, employment specialists address any interpersonal or life management skills related to the client's mental health problem that may affect job performance.

**Job Matching and Development.** According to program staff, the work environment is one of the most important predictors of client success. Specifically, program staff have found that people with mental health problems are more successful in flexible work environments where there is clear supervision and instruction. Generally, small to medium-sized companies are more likely to offer this kind of environment. To determine which jobs have good human resources practices and supportive environments, and to help employment specialists to expand opportunities for their clients, staff work to build networks of potential employers. To avoid the stigma associated with mental illness, supported employment providers in each of the counties market themselves as an employment service, rather than a mental health treatment program.

**Post-employment Services.** Before the client is placed in a job, the case manager provides individual counseling and develops an employment support plan with the client. The plan includes workplace accommodations if needed, off-site employment support such as strategies for dealing with the day-to-day aspects of working, and mental health and social services such as appropriate medication and treatment. Support groups are available to participants after they are placed. These groups focus on practical solutions to a wide variety of problems in the workplace, such as negotiating a problem with a co-worker, greeting people at work, and avoiding inappropriate talk about their feelings. For example, support groups discuss how and why sharing feelings of paranoia with co-workers is inappropriate on the job. If the client needs extra help, a job coach will visit the job site to help the client solve workplace problems or to identify appropriate accommodations.

Workplace accommodations can make a substantial difference in job performance. Accommodations are often common-sense solutions and typically are not difficult for the employer or employee to implement. Some examples include clear supervision and instruction, more training on a particular aspect of the job, headphones or a quieter office to avoid distractions, and a flexible schedule. Flexible schedules are important to people with mental health problems because they may need to work around their medication schedule and visits to the doctor.

## PROGRAM OUTCOMES

Program staff estimate that about 60 percent of the people who have been served have been placed in jobs. About one-third leave their job almost as soon as they begin working, often because the job was not a good match with their skills and needs. Another third retain their jobs for about the same length of time that is typical for low-end service sector jobs. The remaining third are able to retain their jobs longer than the

average turnover time. This last outcome appears to be a result of the fact that the job match was appropriate and the necessary supports and accommodations were in place.

Program staff are guided by the principle that the key components of supported work—client choice, individualized job matching, job coaching, and workplace accommodations—are useful for many hard-to-serve populations but take on extra importance for people with mental health conditions who are interested in working. In the New Jersey Supported Work Program, clients are approached as prospective employees rather than as mental health patients. Program staff believe that this strategy leads to more positive attitudes on the part of the client and the employer. Furthermore, based on their experience, staff believe that viewing clients in terms of their strengths rather than their problems has, in general, cultivated greater confidence on the part of the client. Additional strategies found to be important in this program include ongoing treatment and coordination of services, access to post-employment support groups, and supportive work environments.

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## The Individual Placement and Support Program

The Individual Placement and Support (IPS) Program is being piloted by the Rhode Island Department of Mental Health. The program operates in two of eight catchment areas in the state for people with severe and persistent mental health problems. The research sites are located in East Bay, a suburb of Providence, and Pawtucket, a blue-collar, industrial area. IPS offers pre-employment services, job placement, and job retention services in place of the full day treatment that a patient would normally receive from the local community mental health center (CMHC). Rhode Island launched the program in October 1995 and would like to expand it to the remaining six catchment areas after completing the pilot.

### BACKGROUND

**Caseload Characteristics.** Clients are referred to IPS through the Community Support Program (CSP), a program for people with severe and persistent mental health problems. CSP operates through the local CMHC in each catchment area and provides clients with outpatient medical treatment, medication, and psycho-social support. CSP case-workers encourage clients to participate in IPS, but participation is entirely voluntary. Although space in the IPS program is limited by the availability of employment specialists, the program's philosophy is that all clients have skills that could be applicable to a job, so no one is screened out of the program. Currently, about one-third of CSP clients (about 250 for both sites) participate in IPS. Most IPS clients are SSI or SSDI recipients; a small minority receive welfare, usually while they are waiting for their application for disability benefits to be processed.

### SERVICES

The goal of IPS is to place and retain clients in competitive-wage jobs by providing employment support along with mental health treatment. IPS uses a team of mental health and employment specialists to provide intensive, individualized services to clients.

**The IPS team.** IPS team members coordinate employment services and mental health treatment for clients. Teams consist of case managers, employment specialists, a nurse, and a physician. The case manager acts as the primary contact person for the client and provides support wherever it is needed—for example, when a client is applying for SSI or food stamps, dealing with an impending eviction, seeking counseling, or when it is time to follow up on the client's mental health treatment. Employment specialists provide individualized support to the client in the form of employment-focused case management. With nursing assistance, physicians monitor and prescribe medication and other mental health services.

**Initial assessment.** Fear is one of the most difficult barriers for those with severe mental health problems, many whom have never worked. The employment specialist conducts an informal initial assessment in an environment where the client feels least threatened—e.g., at home, in the client’s favorite restaurant, or in a park—focusing on the client’s strengths, skills, and talents. The employment specialist assesses the client’s vocational skills, employment history, talents, goals, and any obstacles to those goals. Interestingly, program staff have found that just talking about what the client can do often results in a tangible change in the client’s affect.

**Pre-employment services.** After the initial assessment and with support from the employment specialist, the client begins looking for a job. Employment specialists direct clients to jobs that best fit their skills and interests. Employment specialists provide a range of services to help the client obtain a job. Services provided by employment specialists include counseling clients about their fears, making initial employer inquiries, conducting mock interviews, driving the client to an interview, interacting with the treatment team, and any other services that will promote successful community-based employment.

**Post-employment services.** Once a client becomes employed, the employment specialist and the client review the supports and/or workplace accommodations that the client will need to stay employed. The employment specialist works with the client on an individual basis to address such needs—these can range from transportation, on-the-job coaching, or employer mediation. Initially, clients meet with their employment specialist at least once a week and as often as daily. Supports and monthly meetings with the employment specialist continue as long as necessary. After the client is more established on the job, the case manager continues to help the client manage his or her mental health treatment. The client’s relationship with the employment specialist is critical to success in job retention.

Dartmouth College is currently conducting an evaluation of IPS, the results of which should be released around the beginning of the year 2000. Fiscal year 1998 administrative data indicate that of the 255 clients served by IPS in that year, 155 (61 percent) were placed in jobs, 92 (59 percent of those who were placed) stayed employed for three months, and 67 (43 percent of those who were placed) stayed employed for six months. Many employed IPS participants work part-time because working full-time may affect their eligibility for SSI or SSDI benefits. The program anticipates that over time more and more clients will increase their work hours to full-time employment.

## PROGRAM OUTCOMES

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Supported work models such as that used in the IPS program are designed to serve not only the severely mentally ill but also a variety of other populations, including people with developmental disabilities and substance abuse problems. The individualized approach of IPS may be adapted to clients who have more common mental illnesses such as depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and severe anxiety—disorders considered to be disproportionately more prevalent among the welfare and low-income population.

According to IPS program developers, the keys to successful job placement and retention for this population are the use of a strengths-based approach and ongoing support. This means that program administrators and staff must uncover the employment-related strengths and skills of clients instead of focusing on what they are unable to do. In adapting this program to other localities, IPS administrators recommend that employment specialists have a mental health background and be given extensive initial and ongoing training in techniques that promote job development, placement, and retention.

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# Employment Programs for Ex-Offenders

Finding a job can be very difficult for individuals with a past felony conviction. The employment needs of ex-offenders are very different relative to those of other job-seeking adults. For instance, although ex-offenders may face challenges in keeping a job, their primary difficulty is finding one. Some employers are reluctant to hire workers who have a criminal history because of the added behavioral risk they may bring to the workplace. Most employment programs therefore focus on helping the ex-offender obtain a job and on working with prospective employers to overcome fears and concerns about hiring an individual with a criminal background.

At the beginning of 1997, 704,709 adults were on parole under either state or federal jurisdiction. Men represent 87 percent of the parole population, and slightly more than half (51 percent) are members of minority groups. More than a third of the parole population live in the south (35 percent), and about a quarter live in the northeast region of the country. The challenge for the parole population is to successfully make the transition from incarceration into mainstream society. However, the group of people on parole represents only a portion of the population of ex-offenders—all people who have had a felony conviction. Many ex-offenders continue to have problems obtaining and retaining employment long after their parole has been completed.

***Employers are reluctant to hire ex-offenders.*** Most job applications require prospective employees to report criminal convictions. Most employers are cautious about hiring ex-offenders because of the stigma of a criminal record. In the eyes of employers, a criminal background raises the chances that theft, physical endangerment, substance abuse, and other related activities will occur in the workplace. In addition, many ex-offenders have limited or sporadic work histories, particularly those who have been incarcerated for long periods and disconnected from the employment community. Those employers who do hire ex-offenders often believe they require extra supervision, resulting in additional cost to the business.

## NUMBER AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EX-OFFENDER POPULATION

## ECONOMIC AND EMPLOYMENT ISSUES AMONG EX-OFFENDERS

***Ex-offenders may be categorically barred from certain types of work.*** Some states bar individuals with criminal convictions from working in professions with vulnerable populations, for example, in the child care, elder care, and health care industries. Yet others, particularly those in the construction, assembly work, and manufacturing sectors are often willing to hire ex-offenders and do not perform background checks on applicants. When the supply of labor is limited, other employers who are not legally prohibited from hiring ex-offenders may be persuaded to give them a try (Mukamal 1997).

***Ex-offenders may benefit from an awareness of laws protecting them.*** According to both state and federal laws, employers are not permitted to be influenced by an individual's arrest record when making employment decisions. A conviction history may be considered, however, if the offense directly relates to the position for which the individual is applying. Lack of awareness of this law causes some job applicants to unnecessarily reveal every encounter they have had with the justice system (Mukamal 1997).

***A history of drugs or alcohol abuse may limit employment options.*** Ex-offenders may be excluded from certain employment opportunities because of past drug convictions or mandatory drug testing. Of those in the prison population, 57 percent report using drugs on a regular basis prior to incarceration (U.S. Department of Justice 1999). Problems associated with chemical addiction may deter employers from hiring the ex-offender.

***Ex-offenders typically have legal issues beyond the crime(s) for which they were convicted.*** Legal issues such as problems with creditors or child support enforcement may need to be resolved once the ex-offender leaves prison. These issues often take time to resolve and can be dealt with only during standard work hours. Some employers are not flexible enough to allow the employee to take time off work to remedy these situations.

***Ex-offenders often struggle as they make the transition from structured prison life to the mainstream social environment.*** Moving from prison life to mainstream society is not an easy task. It requires a great deal of personal energy to recreate a life after incarceration. Many times, ex-offenders have personal challenges associated with the transition. For example, they may have difficulties with authority or with structuring their days after prison life.

***Employment is critical in reducing the possibility of a return to criminal behavior.*** One study found that offenders with unstable employment patterns are at much greater risk of re-offending than offenders with a stable employment history (Motiuk 1996). Those with a poor work history have significantly higher rates of poor conduct in prison, recidivism, and parole violations compared to those with stable employment record. A steady job can be a determining factor in whether or not the ex-offender is able to reintegrate into mainstream society.

A report developed for the AECF Jobs Initiative sites presents an in-depth assessment of the obstacles to employment that are faced by ex-offenders, and lays out a set of recommendations that sites may find useful (Mukamal 1997). Among other recommendations, the report suggests that employment specialists become familiar with federal and state laws affecting ex-offenders, that they carefully select employers who are not strongly opposed to hiring ex-offenders, and that they conduct their own background checks on clients.

Several states have developed programs aimed at helping ex-offenders make the transition to employment. Strategies include specialized job readiness classes, and job placement and supportive services, such as assistance with legal problems. A key issue in serving ex-offenders includes how to market them to employers who may be reluctant to consider them as potential employees. Programs sometimes act as “free-standing human resources departments,” providing ongoing support and intervention when problems arise after hire. Other programs have arranged “work crews” that allow the ex-offender to begin short-term work immediately after release while seeking permanent employment. We profile three programs for ex-offenders: The Center for Employment Opportunities, Cleveland Works, and The Safer Foundation.

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## The Center for Employment Opportunities

The Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO) administers an employment program for ex-offenders in New York City. Services include life skills/job readiness training, day-labor work-crews, job development and retention, subsidized employment, and supportive services. By immediately delivering services when ex-offenders are released, CEO gives program participants the support they need to successfully re-enter mainstream society.

### BACKGROUND

**Referrals/Recruitment.** CEO receives most of its referrals from New York State's shock incarceration, or boot camp, program, a court-ordered diversion strategy. Other participants are referred from residential substance abuse treatment programs, city probation officers, or work release counselors. CEO does not accept participants convicted of violent crimes.

### SERVICES

Along with job placement services, CEO provides immediate employment through day-labor work crews. This immediate source of income helps ex-offenders to begin re-establishing their lives as soon as possible after institutionalization. Participation in work crews is combined with job search. Following job placement, employment specialists provide follow-up services for six months.

**Job Readiness Training.** In the first week, participants receive a program orientation and participate in four full days of training. The training focuses primarily on preparation for obtaining employment. Interviewing skills are particularly important because participants need to learn how to address their criminal history with potential employers. CEO helps participants arrange transportation if they need it and works with them to apply for other support such as food stamps or Medicaid. At the end of the training, an employment specialist interviews each participant to determine skills, interests, and employment barriers, and to develop an employment plan.

**Work Crews.** Work crews provide immediate income for participants as well as a sense of the responsibilities and employer expectations typical of a full-time job setting. Work crews continue to build on the discipline that is introduced in boot camp. Participants receive about \$35 per day, which can make all the difference for ex-offenders, many of whom are released from prison with little or no money. Work assignments are short term and involve low-skill projects such as painting, roadside clean-up, removing graffiti, and waxing floors. CEO finds customers interested in work crews through competitive bids and state government support. The program has found that work crews require close supervision in order to maintain discipline among the participants.

**Job Development and Placement.** When involved in work crews, participants are also required to come into the CEO office one full day per week for job interviews that are arranged by employment specialists. In addition, employment specialists meet individually with participants to review their progress and address any barriers they may be experiencing in their job search.

Selling the program to employers and cultivating job opportunities for clients is an important part of CEO's program. In marketing the program, CEO can present a number of different incentives to employers. Most important, CEO views itself as a free human resources department. If any problems arise on the job, CEO can intervene. For example, employment specialists can follow up with participants if they are not consistently making it to work on time, discussing strategies for overcoming the problem. Employment specialists monitor employee performance by following up with the employer and the employee for six months after placement. Financially, employers are eligible for the Work Opportunities Tax Credit as well as JTPA-funded wage reimbursements for on-the-job training opportunities.

From 1992 to 1996, CEO placed 70 percent of its program participants in jobs. Those who were not placed either did not show up for services or were terminated for not following work crew rules. The average wage for job placements in 1996 was almost 50 percent above the minimum wage, and two-thirds of the jobs offered benefits. Job retention in 1996 was 75 percent after one month, 60 percent after three months, and 38 percent after six months.

Program staff have observed that work crews play an important role in helping participants become re-established in society, primarily because finding employment takes some time, particularly for ex-offenders. Staff note, however, that organizing work crews can be challenging, and it is important to carefully research and plan before developing such a program component. For example, work crews need to be coordinated so that as people get permanent jobs, there are enough participants entering the program to continue the work crews.

CEO tends to serve first-time offenders. Program administrators caution that serving repeat offenders or those who have been out of prison for a longer period of time may present more challenges. It is likely that repeat offenders would require more individual and intensive services to make the transition to employment.

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PROGRAM OUTCOMES

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## Cleveland Works

Cleveland Works (CW) has been providing training and employment services to the low-income population since 1986, specializing in serving the hard-to-employ, particularly people with long histories of welfare receipt, offenders and ex-offenders. The program's philosophy is to provide a comprehensive set of services necessary for obtaining and retaining employment. CW goes beyond the traditional employment services of job readiness training, placement, and job retention assistance to provide legal services, mental health and substance abuse counseling, and assistance in securing child care, housing, health care, and clothing.

### BACKGROUND

**Referral Process.** Clients are primarily referred to Cleveland Works from the county's welfare- to-work program or through the criminal justice system, by way of the court's probation and parole departments. Some are referred as a part of a pretrial diversion or alternative sentencing program, and others are referred by the prison system after release. Cleveland Works also has a contract with the county to provide specialized services to welfare recipients with a criminal record. About two-thirds of the program's clients have a criminal record.

### SERVICES

Employment training and supportive services are available to all clients of Cleveland Works. A comprehensive approach that addresses all areas that impede employment, particularly legal issues and problems associated with drug abuse and mental health, is one key to the program's success. Cleveland Works has gained considerable respect among employers in the community because it is known to monitor and follow up on its clients, working to prevent situations that might cause the employee to be dismissed or to quit. Clients begin by completing an enrollment form, which covers work history, criminal history, child care and housing needs, and vocational goals. Case workers help clients address many of their barriers to employment, and they are referred to legal services for any civil, criminal, or other legal issues.

**Job Readiness and Training.** Clients participate in full-day training activities each day for 10 to 12 weeks. The first 4 weeks are devoted specifically to a job readiness and life skills workshop, which addresses resume writing, dress, and interviewing skills. An important element of the workshop classes is a focus on attitudes toward work and development of a strong work ethic. During classes, students are encouraged to develop an employment/vocational plan by examining their strengths, weaknesses, interests, and skills. Job placements are made during the first 4 weeks only if the instructor determines that the client is job ready.

After the workshop, students take a variety of classes according to their needs, skills, and interests. Classes can include job survival, GED

preparation, math, computer skills, nurse's aide training, medical terminology, paralegal training, and customer service. Cleveland Works tailors class offerings to match the skills employers are seeking. In fact, employers actively participate in the development and implementation of all training programs through an employer advisory board.

**Job Placement.** Based on the skills and interests of the clients, a CW job marketer locates potential job opportunities. The program receives job orders on a daily basis from employers in the community, and the marketer locates two or three candidates for each job, meeting with them to determine the likelihood of a good match. The clients are then interviewed by the prospective employer. Clients continue to be matched until they find a job that is suitable and are hired. Clients with a criminal record have a more difficult time finding employment and generally require about two or three more interviews than an average job-seeker to land a job. However, the program has observed that clients who are determined to prove through work that they are rehabilitated stand an excellent chance of finding and keeping a job.

Cleveland Works places a high priority on job quality. The program refers clients strictly to full-time jobs that pay living wages and have health insurance benefits.

**Legal Services.** Legal services are key to helping this population of clients find and keep jobs. About 75 percent of clients have some kind of pending legal issue. Cleveland Works has a team of four to five attorneys who address a range of legal issues, including financial, child custody, civil, or criminal cases. For example, creditors often expect to be paid immediately after the ex-offender's release. Lawyers at Cleveland Works can advocate on behalf of the client and work out a repayment plan with the creditor. The legal team also typically works to expunge the criminal records of program participants. Clients with only one offense can have their record expunged, making it easier for them to find employment.

CW also benefits from a volunteer legal advisory board composed of 45 local attorneys. The board and legal team work together on public policy actions that affect CW clients. Recently, for example, they successfully intervened when the state legislature raised the contribution level of welfare recipients for child care.

Administrators of the Cleveland Works program believe that their success in terms of moving people into employment has to do with the organization's long-standing presence and good reputation in the community. Program staff believe it is important to develop a solid track record in satisfying employers because this strategy allows the program to be more selective about the jobs it accepts. Cleveland Works' staff also highlight the importance of wrap-around services, which address all the aspects of a client's life. They suggest that many of the extra services required by clients can be provided by establishing relationships with other agencies in the community.

## PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADAPTING THE APPROACH

Finally, CW administrators emphasize taking a broader proactive approach to the employment needs of clients and future clients. CW recently formed an alliance with five other social welfare organizations in the Greater Ohio area (for example, the Salvation Army and the Urban League). In preparation for when the welfare caseload in their state begins to reach the time limit for benefits (about a year from now), the alliance is developing strategies for working together to expedite the transition to work for welfare recipients.

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## The Safer Foundation

The Safer Foundation of Chicago has been helping ex-offenders find jobs since 1972. The program's core employment services include intake/assessment, job readiness training, placement, and job retention. The program serves approximately 3,000 clients per year.

**Referrals and Funding.** Approximately 350 clients are referred through a community correctional center (a facility where inmates complete state sentences after confinement to a higher security prison). The remainder are referred through a parole or probation officer, or are self-referred. The Safer Foundation receives funding from the Illinois Department of Corrections, the Illinois Department of Human Services, the State Board of Education, and the Chicago Department of Public Schools.

**Client Characteristics.** Clients of the Safer Foundation face many of the same problems as the general harder-to-employ population. Many have drug use/dependence issues and/or mental health problems. Ex-offenders, however, have the additional problem of having been estranged from mainstream society because of their past criminal activity.

The Safer Foundation provides a one-week job readiness program as well as subsequent job search and job retention services. Safer's key to success is high-quality customer service for the client and the employer, which means providing individualized services for the client and immediate follow-up when problems arise on the job.

**Intake/Assessment.** When clients first enter the program, a diagnostic interview is conducted to determine whether they are a good candidate for employment services. If substance abuse or mental health problems are identified, the client is determined not to be job ready and is referred to appropriate services. If the client is determined to be a good candidate for the program, the case worker administers a basic communication and written skills assessment along with a more in-depth vocational assessment. Finally, clients are given a series of tests evaluating their attitude and ability to follow directions. If clients are not found to be job ready because of attitudinal or other employment-related issues, they are referred to a week-long job readiness program.

**Pre-Employment Services.** Pre-employment services consist largely of job readiness classes, which include lectures, mock interviews, and group discussion about clients' issues and feelings in general and about being an ex-offender. Through these classes, instructors work to identify attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that may be counterproductive in the workplace. For instance, many ex-offenders continue to communicate, interact, and interpret events in the workplace as they did in prison.

## BACKGROUND

## SERVICES

Their picture of what life will be like upon release tends to be somewhat unrealistic, leading to frustration when reality fails to meet their expectations. Ex-offenders may have difficulty accepting authority or getting along with coworkers, and their body language, about which they often unaware, may send negative signals. These problems and others can affect the client's performance at work. Job readiness classes include role plays and mock interviews that are videotaped so that participants can view their interpersonal communication and posture, increasing their awareness of non-verbal messages.

After a client completes job readiness training, the job search begins. Initially, employment specialists try to get the clients to take as much responsibility as possible for their own job search by identifying job leads or setting up interviews. If needed, the employment specialist will follow up with the employer or refer the client to companies in their job data bank. During this process, clients are in contact with their employment specialist on a weekly basis—usually through a face-to-face interview.

**Job Development.** A key obstacle to employment for ex-offenders is that they are seen as a stereotype. That is, in hiring an ex-offender, employers are often concerned about theft or putting their other employees in harm's way. The Safer Foundation has found, however, that employers are generally more open to hiring ex-offenders after a job interview. Clients are marketed as individuals who are more likely to appreciate their job because they want to prove that they can succeed in society if given a fresh start. Because job retention is a problem in most low-wage jobs, employers are very interested in committed employees with a good attitude.

Another key to this program's success is customer service—both for the employer and the employee. For many employers, the Safer Foundation functions as a free human resources department—e.g., they follow up with employees who are having difficulty on the job or who are not showing up for work. This feature is an added benefit for the employer, since other employment agencies do not offer this kind of intensive follow-up work. Finally, the Safer Foundation strongly emphasizes the importance of building its relationship and its clients' relationships with employers. For example, the foundation periodically holds employer appreciation luncheons, where employees share their success stories.

**Post-Employment Services.** Once the client is placed in a job, he or she meets with an employment specialist to talk about the challenges faced in the workplace; the meeting also lets the employment specialist continue to follow the client's progress on the job. Employment specialists may involve key family members as an additional means of monitoring the client's progress. For example, a client's mother may know that the client is leaving for work 15 minutes late every day and can advise the employment specialist of this problem. The employment specialist can then follow up with the client to address time management issues. Another reason for involving family members is that clients sometimes make a greater effort to keep their job if they are aware that this is important to a family member.

The Safer Foundation maintains a tracking database to help identify critical points at which clients may become discouraged or tempted to leave their job (e.g., after the first paycheck). With this knowledge, employment specialists can be prepared to provide extra intervention during these crucial fall-off points.

The Safer Foundation emphasizes the need to intervene with ex-offenders by providing a brief but intensive and individualized strategy to address pre-employment attitudes and behaviors that could later interfere with employment. Program staff further recommend maintaining this level of effort in post-employment services, monitoring progress, intervening when employees experience difficulty on the job, and even involving families of the ex-offender. However, in adapting this program, organizations should strive to understand the concerns of potential employers in their local job market. Program staff believe such an understanding is critical in successfully marketing clients.

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PROGRAM  
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# Employment Programs for Individuals with a Drug or Alcohol Addiction

Substance abuse appears to be closely linked to problems with finding and keeping a job. Researchers estimate that one in five families on welfare have an adult with an alcohol or drug problem (Young 1996). Not only are there more stressors among low-income families that can lead to drug or alcohol abuse, but neighborhoods with a high concentration of poor families tend to have fewer employment opportunities and high levels of drug activity.

The symptoms associated with chemical addiction frequently interfere with employment. As a result, people with drug problems tend to cycle in and out of jobs. Most individuals with a drug or alcohol addiction require intervention before they can maintain steady employment.

## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND POVERTY

Researchers have found that unemployed adults have substantially higher rates of drug abuse than those who are employed (Olson and Pavetti 1996; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 1994). The association is likely to be bi-directional; i.e., the behaviors associated with addiction may lead to unemployment, while the discouragement associated with unemployment can lead to or exacerbate addictive behavior. Programs are beginning to emerge that attempt to address both areas simultaneously, rather than consecutively.

The relationship between substance abuse and employment difficulties is highlighted in a recent report by the Legal Action Center for the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The report profiles 20 programs aimed at helping women with substance abuse problems move from welfare to work. It also describes the many barriers to treatment faced by welfare mothers with addictions, including fear of losing custody of their children, fear of prosecution, problems getting appropriate child care during treatment, financial concerns, stigma, and past experience with violence.

## EFFECTS OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE ON EMPLOYMENT

***Drug and alcohol use have negative effects on work performance.*** Studies show that people with drug and alcohol addictions are far less productive at work, use three times as many sick days, are more likely to injure themselves or someone else, and have higher-than-average

health care claims compared to those without an addiction (U.S. Department of Labor 1991, National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence 1992). A study focusing exclusively on marijuana and cocaine users reported similar results (Greenblatt and Gfroerer 1994). People using marijuana and cocaine were more likely to report social and psychological problems, poor health status, and absences from work due to illness or injury compared to those who did not use either drug. Other studies have found that people with substance abuse problems have greater difficulty keeping a job (Olson and Pavetti 1996). Clearly, the behaviors associated with an untreated chemical addiction are not conducive to job stability.

**Employment options are limited for those who cannot pass a drug screening test.** Many jobs, especially those typically available to low-income adults, require a drug screening test as a condition of employment. Examples include positions as a laborer, housekeeper, or machine operator. Past drug or alcohol related convictions may restrict employment opportunities. Many people with drug or alcohol addictions have prior criminal convictions such as Driving Under the Influence (DUI) or drug possession. This may deter employers from hiring these individuals. In addition, a criminal record typically restricts licensing possibilities in certain fields such as child care, nursing, and other health-related jobs.

**Substance abuse often masks deeper mental and emotional health problems.** Chemical addictions often mask psychiatric disorders. One study found that alcoholics are 21 times more likely to have antisocial personality disorder, 6.2 times more likely to have manic depressive disorder, and 4 times more likely to have schizophrenia than people who are not alcoholics (Berman 1991). Researchers have also found that a major psychiatric disorder<sup>1</sup> increases the probability of having used crack/cocaine (Jayakody et al. 1998). People with both substance abuse and psychiatric diagnoses are referred to as having a “dual diagnosis.” Employment may be particularly challenging for these individuals because of the need to have both conditions identified and treated.

Emerging state and local programs for addressing the employment needs of individuals with drug or alcohol dependencies are characterized by an approach that requires participants to work *concurrently* at recovery from addiction and improving their employability. Effective programs also take a comprehensive approach that attempts to meet the client’s needs in a broad range of areas. We profile three such programs: The Avery House, The Village, and Jobs for Oregon’s Future, Oregon’s welfare-to-work program that includes alcohol and drug treatment as an integral part of its program. The profiles of the Avery House and the Village have been adapted here with permission from *Steps to Success: Helping Women with Alcohol and Drug Problems Move from Welfare to Work*.

## EMPLOYMENT STRATEGIES FOR THOSE WITH DRUG OR ALCOHOL ADDICTIONS

<sup>1</sup>Major depression, generalized anxiety disorder, agoraphobia, and panic attack.

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## Jobs for Oregon's Future

Oregon has developed an innovative approach to integrating drug and alcohol programs into state and local welfare departments. While the approach was created specifically to link welfare recipients to drug and alcohol services, the principles in this model can be applied to other government programs targeting low-income populations.

**About Oregon's Alcohol and Drug Treatment Program.** Since 1992, Oregon has helped welfare recipients overcome the challenges that alcohol and drug problems pose for employment. Even though the general vision and mission of this program was developed at the state level, local offices have primary responsibility for designing and implementing policies related to service delivery. Local welfare offices in all districts in the state have certified alcohol and drug treatment professionals on site for some scheduled time each week to provide the up-front services that engage a client in treatment, such as drug education classes, screening for alcohol and drug problems, providing referrals for treatment, and helping to develop clients' self-sufficiency plans. Local offices vary in how they deliver these services, as state policymakers wanted to give the offices the flexibility to design their programs specifically for the needs of their communities.

Not only are substance abuse professionals and welfare-to-work caseworkers co-located within the welfare agency, but they also work collaboratively and regularly exchange information about their individual and shared goals. Strong leadership and a clear vision at the state level were critical to a collaborative model for employment and drug and alcohol services. Some of the strategies for enhancing collaboration include formal conferences for staff from both the welfare and the alcohol and drug treatment systems to discuss how and when alcohol or drug treatment could be integrated with work activities. In addition, alcohol and drug professionals train welfare case managers and caseworkers to identify situations in which alcohol or drug problems could be contributing to a welfare recipient's inability to find or keep a job. This collaborative relationship is key to the success of Oregon's program.

**Funding for Treatment.** TANF funds generally support alcohol and drug abuse professionals on site at the welfare offices. Drug and alcohol services are covered under the Oregon Health Plan (the state's Medicaid program). Most treatment services are delivered through a managed care provider.

Because Oregon operates under a "work first" model, all able-bodied clients are required to participate in work-related activities along with treatment for drug and alcohol addictions. Thus, treatment is considered one component of the client's self-sufficiency plan.

## BACKGROUND

## SERVICES

**Screening.** Oregon does not require mandatory alcohol or drug screens for welfare recipients. Local district offices are free to decide whether, when, and how to screen clients for alcohol and drug problems as well as who should conduct screens. In some districts, broad screens occur early in the TANF application process and are administered to all welfare recipients. In other districts, targeted screens are administered only when a case manager suspects a problem. In most districts, the alcohol and drug professional administers the screens.

**Assessment.** In-depth assessments of alcohol and drug abuse are conducted by certified professionals. They use criteria established by the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) to guide decisions about the appropriate level of treatment for clients. Some of the local offices use drug tests as part of in-depth assessments or for clients who deny a problem and refuse a referral for treatment.

**Employment Services.** A range of services are offered through local employment and training service providers who have contracted with the district welfare office.

**Drug and Alcohol Treatment.** Most treatment is offered through a managed care provider who has contracted with the state. Client participation and progress in treatment is monitored by the welfare office through provider reports.

**Supportive Services.** Most welfare recipients, regardless of whether they are in drug and alcohol treatment, are eligible for supportive services such as health care coverage, child care, and food stamps. Child care for those in treatment is typically part of the residential program or is provided on site for out-patient services.

**Other services.** Psychological counseling, family planning counseling, and training in parenting skills are also provided as needed. Interagency agreements have been developed to address the needs of children whose mothers are in correctional facilities and undergoing treatment.

## PROGRAM OUTCOMES

Client outcomes are reported for the entire state welfare caseload, but the state does not specifically track outcomes for all clients with alcohol and drug problems. Nevertheless, a few districts have tracked measures related to drug and alcohol treatment on a local level. One district (Portland) reported that over a 12-month period:

- 15 percent of all TANF clients were referred for a drug and alcohol assessment
- Of those clients referred, 42 percent showed up and were assessed
- Of those assessed, 82 percent were referred for treatment
- Of those referred for treatment, 53 percent completed it

A key aspect of Oregon's program is the co-location of alcohol and drug treatment professionals with welfare administrators in local TANF offices. Issues involved in adapting this program to other states include the level of state support for the program, tools for enforcing and supporting treatment, medical coverage for treatment services, and whether alcohol and drug treatment "counts" toward participation in the state's welfare program. For suggestions on addressing these issues and others, see *"Integrating Alcohol and Drug Treatment into a Work-Oriented Welfare Program: Lessons from Oregon,"* by Gretchen Kirby, LaDonna Pavetti, Jacqueline Kauff, and John Tapogna, available from Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.

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## Avery House<sup>2</sup>

Avery House is a five-year-old halfway house designed to meet the needs of recovering women and their children in a structured, supported, and sober environment. Women enter Avery House after completing a primary alcohol and drug treatment program elsewhere.

### BACKGROUND

**Program Goals.** The Avery House program emphasizes trust, integrity, self-discipline, and self-discovery to help women move toward personal and economic independence and to care for their children. Avery House strives to foster recovery through a home community that cultivates the kinds of personal change that help women to improve the quality of their lives and the lives of their children. In addition to treatment and support services, the program strongly emphasizes work and work preparation.

**Client Characteristics.** Most clients enter Avery House with a limited work history. About 60 percent have worked “odd” jobs, while about 40 percent have not worked at all. Nearly 20 percent have low literacy skills, and only 15 percent have a GED or a high school diploma. Nearly two-thirds (60 percent) have a criminal record, and 10 percent are in treatment as a condition of parole or probation.

**Funding for Treatment.** Treatment at House is funded entirely through the federal Substance Abuse Block Grant.

### SERVICES

Avery House can accommodate a total of 20 women and children at one time. Usually, 10 women and 10 children live at the facility together. The average client stays for 250 days.

**Residential treatment services.** These services include individual, group, and family counseling; parenting and child development classes; addiction education; health and nutrition groups; smoking cessation; nursing and prenatal care; therapeutic recreation and socialization; and life skills groups. Twelve-step programs, like Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Narcotics Anonymous (NA), are also available on-site.

**In-treatment support services.** In-treatment services include transportation, child care, clean and sober housing, and exit planning. Infant and child care is available from 7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. while mothers are at work, school, or group therapy.

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<sup>2</sup>This program profile has been adapted with permission from: *Steps to Success: Helping Women with Alcohol and Drug Problems Move from Welfare to Work*, prepared by the Legal Action Center for the Annie E. Casey Foundation, 1999.

**Parent training and children's services.** Parent training focuses on positive parenting techniques, maternal and child bonding, non-punitive child-rearing practices, anger management, and issues concerning single parenting. A children's counseling program includes creative play and activities to introduce children to positive peer interaction and to give them a nurturing and supportive environment with positive adult role models.

**Aftercare and support services.** Assistance in finding housing in the community and other related support services are available. Program staff also help clients plan for meeting their child care and transportation needs after they leave the program.

**Work and work preparation activities.** Avery House residents are required to work full or part time, or to attend school or work training within the first 30 days of arriving. This requirement is also a condition for graduation from the program. Clients are expected to return home by 6 p.m. during the week, and all treatment activities are planned for the evening to accommodate work and school schedules. Clients are not permitted to quit their job until they find another. Avery House staff help clients develop work skills. Key activities include resume writing, buying appropriate work attire, and learning telephone skills. Clients are referred to vocational training, GED, and literacy programs in the community. Avery House staff are also available to facilitate communication between clients and their employers, and between clients and their welfare and child welfare case workers.

As of April 1998, Avery House had served 70 women and 66 children, with the first resident graduating in June 1995. Outcomes for the program include:

- 85 to 90 percent of clients began full- or part-time work or school within the first 30 days of arriving at Avery House. Clients have secured jobs as dental assistants and receptionists, among other positions.
- Of children who had been removed from their families, 24 were reunited with their mothers while in the program.
- 70 of the women found a job over the course of the program, eight enrolled in GED classes, and three entered college.
- There was successful coordination with the local health department, social services agency, foster care parents, courts, and more than 35 private community programs.
- Avery House established health and prenatal care on site and coordinated care with outside providers.

## PROGRAM OUTCOMES

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Many communities have residential substance abuse treatment programs similar to the one at Avery House. However, few have such a strong emphasis on job training, search, and retention. The Avery House program demonstrates that it is possible to go beyond simply requiring people to work to providing them with specific work-related services. Program staff believe that these services may be coordinated with and become an integral part of treatment programs, especially halfway houses and other programs for clients who have completed more intensive treatment.

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## The Village<sup>3</sup>

The Village, founded in 1973, is a nonprofit organization that provides alcohol and drug treatment to the South Florida community. It offers range of services including rehabilitation and counseling through individual and group therapy, vocational and basic education, outreach, and intervention and prevention for client's families. Services are provided in a comprehensive, holistic, and multi-disciplinary context by culturally competent and professional staff.

The Families in Transition (FIT) program, part of the Village, provides comprehensive residential alcohol and drug prevention and treatment services for women and their children. FIT creates a therapeutic environment where mothers and children can live together and rebuild their lives through physical, emotional, spiritual, educational, vocational, and social recovery. The goal is to live successfully when they return to the community. Pre-employment services are provided, and job placement is required for graduation.

**Referral system.** Clients enter the Village through referrals from a variety of sources, including the child welfare, criminal and juvenile justice, public health, and mental health systems. Clients also self-refer to the Village.

**Client characteristics.** Women who enter treatment at the Village face a range of problems and challenges other than their addiction to alcohol and drugs. Most have been victims of domestic violence (85 percent). Many are chronically underemployed (85 percent), have low literacy skills (25 percent), and have not graduated from high school or obtained a GED (60 percent). Many are affected by other illnesses, such as HIV (25 percent) and mental illness (40 percent), including depression and post-traumatic stress disorder. Many are also involved in the criminal justice system (15 percent) or the child welfare system (70 percent). The children of residents often require specialized assessment, together with developmental and remedial services, which are provided in collaboration with the University of Miami.

**Funding for Treatment.** The Village is funded through four sources: state and local appropriations (88 percent), Medicaid (5 percent), TANF (5 percent), and food stamps (2 percent).

## BACKGROUND

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<sup>3</sup>This program profile has been adapted with permission from: *Steps to Success: Helping Women with Alcohol and Drug Problems Move from Welfare to Work*, prepared by the Legal Action Center for the Annie E. Casey Foundation, 1999.

## SERVICES

The Village can accommodate 60 women in treatment at a time in 20 residential slots, 20 outpatient slots, and 20 day treatment slots. The average client enters treatment with two children after waiting 45 days for beds to open. Families live together while the women are in treatment, which lasts an average of 7 months.

**Screening and assessment.** Staff use several tools to screen and assess clients: the Addiction Severity Index (ASI), Substance Abuse Subtle Screening Inventory (SASSI), Perinatal Stress Index, and Beck Depression Inventory.

**Outpatient services.** Outpatient services, such as individual and group counseling, are available to clients after they have completed the residential portion of their treatment. These services are available during evening hours to accommodate work schedules.

**Residential services.** These services include individual, group, and family therapy. Clients also attend daily AA/NA meetings and receive training and/or education in health, child development, addiction, parenting, relationships, and relapse prevention.

**In-treatment support services.** Child care, transportation, clean and sober housing, parenting training, and exit planning are examples of in-treatment support services. The women also receive psychological and psychiatric services, which are integrated into their individualized treatment plan. Throughout a client's stay, the Village maintains contact with the referring agency.

**Services for children.** Children at the Village receive individualized services, including newborn service at local hospitals, developmental screening, specialized day care and developmental services, and prevention programs for drug and alcohol-exposed infants and children. School-age children attend local schools while they live at the Village.

**Aftercare and support services.** After discharge, the Village continues to maintain relationships with its clients. The staff helps clients and their children adjust to life in the community by offering regularly scheduled counseling and a Co-op "Help" Center, where mothers can volunteer their time in return for child care while they are at work. Clients are also encouraged to stay in recovery by continuing to attend AA/NA meetings.

**Work and work preparation activities.** A principal goal of the Village is to reduce family reliance on public assistance. Clients who have not completed high school attend classes that prepare them for the GED. Graduates from the Village are required to pass the GED or to have graduated high school.

In addition to education assessment and improvement, the Village tests clients for work readiness when they enter treatment and before they leave. Most clients need help preparing for work, and the Village engages them in several job search and retention activities. These activ-

ities include basic skills, such as resume writing, basic computer knowledge, and personal presentation skills. The Village also refers clients to off-site vocational education programs that teach job skills, including more advanced computer, clerical, and industry skills.

Prior to graduation, clients begin the process of finding a job and beginning work. They are encouraged to find jobs that are free of relapse triggers, such as discretionary funds (tips), high stress, and night shifts. Clients also attempt to find jobs near where they will live and where their children will attend schools, and that are accessible through the transportation available to them.

Recent evaluations of the FIT program have found that most clients remain in recovery, find employment, and do not rely on welfare assistance. At one year after discharge:

- 87 percent of graduates were drug-free, and 93 percent had developed the education or vocational skills needed for employment.
- 58.1 percent were employed or in vocational training, compared to 5.8 percent at admission.
- 33 percent were completely independent from welfare, and 56 percent were dependent on some welfare, compared to 100 percent who were completely dependent on welfare at admission.

Almost all former clients who were not working one year after discharge reported facing specific barriers to finding a job (91.3 percent), including lack of child care (26.3 percent), participating in another treatment program or being incarcerated (25 percent), and lack of jobs skills (11.3 percent).

By reuniting families, the FIT program also produced positive results in terms of the child welfare system. Of the children served by the program at the time of the evaluation, 95 percent were reunited with their mothers, generating nearly \$2 million in savings to the foster care system.

Although adapting programs like the Village in other areas may be more complicated than adapting programs in which children are placed in alternative care off site, programs that keep children and mothers together during treatment may be more effective in advancing the mother's recovery and her entry into the workplace. Program staff believe that when parents and children live together during treatment, the parent may be less anxious or depressed about the child's well-being freeing the parent to focus on recovery and self-sufficiency goals.

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## PROGRAM OUTCOMES

## PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADAPTING THE APPROACH

# Employment Programs for Limited English Speakers and Non-English Speakers

In the United States, non-English speaking adults and those with a limited command of the language tend to face a different set of challenges to employment than do adults in the general low-income population. In addition to a language barrier, they may also have to deal with cultural differences. Though relatively few in number, there are programs designed to improve the employability of non-English speaking adults by addressing their unique needs.

Recently, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of legal and undocumented immigrants in this country. Between 1980 and 1990, the foreign-born population doubled from 10 million to 20 million (Urban Institute 1994). Since 1990, the number of immigrants entering this country has decreased slightly, but immigration is still substantially higher now than in any other decade before 1980. Currently, the total number of foreign-born individuals is about 26 million, mostly from Latin America and Asia (U.S. Census Bureau 1997).

As a result of immigration, the number of limited-English and non-English speaking families has continued to climb. Between 1980 and 1990, there was a 37 percent increase in the number of people who speak a language other than English at home (Urban Institute 1994). By 1990, 32 million individuals fell into this category. Along with the increase in the number of people who speak a language other than English at home came an increase in the number of people who speak English "less than very well" growing from 10.3 million to 14.0 million. Between 1986 and 1991, there was a 50 percent increase in this population. Because foreign-born families tend to have higher fertility rates than native-born citizens, the number of limited-English and non-English speakers is likely to grow.

A greater risk for living in poverty is associated with the language difficulty experienced by foreign-born families. Families who are foreign-born are more likely to be poor compared to the native population. A recent report indicated that a much higher proportion of foreign-born families lives in poverty (42 percent) than does the native population (11 percent). In addition, the proportion of foreign-born families living in

## PREVALENCE OF LIMITED OR NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING WORKERS

concentrated poverty (areas where 40 percent or more of the population have incomes below the poverty line) has grown twice as fast as the rate for natives. Illegal immigrants are even more likely to live in poverty; their income is, on average, one-third lower than that of native-born citizens. Overall, foreign-born individuals are less well off than natives on virtually every socioeconomic measure (Urban Institute 1994).

***Non-English speakers have limited educational attainment and test lower on basic reading and math measures.*** Recently, there has been an increase in immigrants with low levels of education and little or no English skills. Many do not have a GED or high school diploma, which limits their employment options. In addition to limited educational attainment, non-English speakers do not perform as well as the native population on basic education measures. One study found that non-English speaking individuals had lower math and reading skills than native-born citizens (Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs 1997). These limitations in educational attainment and abilities affects the types of jobs available to non-English speaking workers.

***Language barriers limit employment opportunities.*** Many limited-English and non-English speaking workers are restricted to jobs that require minimal communication. For instance, the meat-packing and housekeeping industries, as well as agriculture rely heavily on the labor supplied by the foreign-born population. These jobs tend to be low-wage, seasonal, and physically demanding. Especially because of the physical demands of these types of jobs, older workers have difficulty maintaining the level of productivity that younger employees are capable of. People working in these industries tend not to live as long as others because of the physical strain on their bodies.

***Non-English speakers are more likely to have poor health status compared to the native population.*** Studies have found that foreign-born individuals tend to have poorer health compared to the native population. Some attribute this difference to cultural attitudes about treatment, a greater susceptibility to disease, an inadequate diet, and an inability to communicate health care needs. In addition, many of the jobs available to limited-English or non-English speakers do not offer health insurance. The poor health status of these individuals has an effect on their employability, particularly in light of the physical nature of most of the jobs available to them.

***Cultural attitudes about work may restrict work opportunities for foreign-born, low-income women.*** In addition to the language barrier, cultural attitudes and values about women working outside the home affect rates of employment among many women who are limited- or non-English speakers. Women from cultures that tend to discourage women from working often have limited education, no work history, and a belief that they should not seek employment outside of the home. As a result, their employability is limited. At the same time, more work needs to be done to increase the cultural sensitivity of staff at ESL pro-

grams, who may misinterpret the needs, goals, and behavior of foreign-born individuals.

**Many immigrants are not eligible for food stamps and other federal aid.** Finally, the ineligibility of most immigrants for certain federally funded programs (such as food stamps) contributes to their difficulty in providing for their families, making the need for job training and placement all the more critical for this population.

Limited-English and non-English speakers are often referred to English as a second language (ESL) programs by welfare offices or other public programs. The ESL programs focus on improving English skills in order to help their clients become more employable. In addition, some programs offer concurrent vocational training, as many immigrants have few marketable skills. We review two innovative programs for limited- or non-English speaking adults: the Five-Step ESL Curriculum and the Center for Employment Training.

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## EMPLOYMENT STRATEGIES FOR LIMITED-ENGLISH SPEAKING AND NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING FAMILIES

## REFERENCES

## The Five-Step ESL Curriculum

The El Paso Community College Literacy Center teaches English as a second language based on a program model that promotes learning through dialogue and real-world application rather than grammar-focused lectures. Through innovative activities in and out of the classroom, the program supports and encourages students to follow up on the class with further education and vocational training. The program also helps students make the transition into a job-training or education program of their choice.

### BACKGROUND

**Funding/Capacity.** The Literacy Center receives program funding from a variety of sources for vocational training and classroom activities. For example, the Pfizer Corporation provides resources for a health literacy curriculum, while the Fannie Mae Foundation contributes funds that support classes related to home ownership. The Literacy Center serves about 2,000 students per year, offering about 20 to 25 classes each academic session. Initially, the program relied heavily on recruiting to build a "student body", but it is now well-known in the community and most students are referred or self-referred. The Literacy Center does not charge tuition for classes, and the only requirement is that students reside in El Paso.

**Caseload Characteristics.** The students served by the Literacy Center are almost exclusively Mexican immigrants, and close to 95 percent are female. The average ESL student is a homemaker with a 6th grade education level and two children. Experiences of emotional and physical abuse are common among these students. Many were educated in Mexico but dropped out of school because they needed to work or because their families immigrated to the United States. Many are former seamstresses in the El Paso garment industry who were displaced as a result of NAFTA. Women, particularly homemakers, are more likely to seek ESL training because they are not exposed to English on the job and are interested in learning English in order to speak with their children and grandchildren.

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**ESL Curriculum.** The five-step model for ESL instruction is a holistic approach that teaches language in context rather than in lectures on grammar. For instance, students learn English through group discussions and interactive activities on a variety of different topics. At the end of the class, students can receive assistance in applying for and entering an education or job-training program.

**Discussion topics.** At the beginning of each class, the instructor asks students to come up with three or four topics that they would like to discuss. Students may at first express skepticism about the alternative

teaching method but typically grow to enjoy the opportunity to direct their own learning. Discussion topics often include health, finding and buying a home, vocational goals, and applying to college. Current issues in the community are often discussed also. For example, one class wanted to discuss strategies for blocking a school board decision to change zoning for the elementary schools in the neighborhood, a decision that would effectively require many of the children to attend a school further from their homes.

**The Five Steps.** Using the discussion topics as a context, the instructor employs the five-step method, which includes (1) a critical discussion, (2) a reading activity, (3) a writing activity, (4) a group activity, and (5) an outside-the-classroom activity. The critical discussion is intended to introduce the topic, stimulate curiosity, and promote dialogue between students. Students are encouraged to express opposing views, while the instructor acts as a facilitator. The reading activity is directly related to the topic and is intended to reinforce the lesson. The writing activity helps students explore the rules and contexts of written language. For example, if the discussion topic is career exploration, a writing activity could consist of writing a cover letter or resume. In the fourth step, the group activity combines and reinforces the skills taught in the previous steps. Finally, the outside-the-classroom activity encourages students to practice their new language skills in a real-world situation, such as a job interview, shopping, or gathering information about buying a home.

Although students are not formally tested with standardized instruments, the five-step method can be very effective. For instance, the class that discussed the elementary school zoning issue used the final step to develop community support and present their complaints to the school board. Their strategy was successful; the school board modified the proposed zone change so that the children could continue to attend their neighborhood school.

**Vocational Training/Further Education.** The Literacy Center strongly emphasizes further education and/or vocational training. Through the group discussions, instructors help students explore career choices and education or training opportunities. If a student is interested in pursuing further education or training, the instructor will help the student apply for the program and learn more about resources available in the community college. Follow-up tutoring programs are also available for students enrolled in education or training programs who need more help mastering English.

PROGRAM  
RECOMMENDATIONS  
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THE APPROACH

According to program staff, the most important key to successfully implementing the five-step ESL program is persuading instructors and students to try the nontraditional teaching method. Sometimes instructors are unsure of an approach in which performance cannot be measured by a standardized test. However, the Literacy Center focuses on other means to measure performance considered to be real-life results. For example, if a student addresses a health problem or is able to buy a house as a consequence of the program, that is considered a success. The Literacy Center has found it is important both to train instructors very well in the five-step method and to address cultural issues, student expectations, and gender issues. The Literacy Center publishes a brief guide on the five-step method for programs or individuals who may be interested in learning more.

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## The Center for Employment Training

For the past 12 years, the Center for Employment Training (CET) of San Francisco has provided vocational training and basic education primarily to immigrants and non-English speaking populations. Vocational services are combined with basic instruction in English as a Second Language (ESL), math, and a job readiness/life skills component that prepares students for job seeking and addresses the concerns of immigrants. Currently, close to 100 students graduate from the program every year.

**Client Characteristics.** CET's student population is very diverse in terms of ethnicity, skills, and education level. CET first served a primarily Spanish-speaking population but now also serves immigrants from Latin America, Russia, and Asia. Though some of the students already have certain skills, they may have difficulty finding work because they are not proficient in English. For this diverse population, CET's challenge is to develop a curriculum that addresses a wide range of cultures, skills, and abilities.

CET students also face a wide range of social problems, which commonly include homelessness, drug addiction, domestic violence and extensive criminal records. CET does not screen clients out of the program because of substance abuse or mental health problems, but requires such clients to enroll in the appropriate services to address these issues before they are allowed to enter the CET program. Most of the program's students are referred through the local welfare office, unemployment office, or court system, where an employment specialist or probation officer may help them identify their needs before enrolling in CET.

CET has an open-entry model, allowing clients to begin their training at any point in time and to graduate when they achieve all of the core competencies in one of five vocational tracks. Vocational training includes a job placement/life skills component, and students without a GED must attend math and ESL basic education classes in the afternoons.

**Initial Trial Period.** When applicants first enter CET, they are given an overview of the program and are allowed to sample classes for two weeks. This process familiarizes students with the curriculum and help them select which of the five vocational tracks is right for them (see below). During this time, instructors help them solve child care problems and other barriers to participation and employment. Once students decide to enroll, they are given a series of tests to determine their math, grammar, and English skills.

**Vocational Training.** The five vocational tracks currently offered at CET are (1) automated office skills, (2) forklift certification, (3) computerized office administration, (4) shipping and receiving, and warehouse operations, and (5) medical administrative assistant. Vocational instruc-

### BACKGROUND

### SERVICES

tion is driven by the local labor market, and CET changes tracks from time to time in an attempt to be responsive to current employer needs. The vocational training is designed to cover a six-month period, and the final requirement is an 80- to 100-hour unpaid internship in the student's field of training.

**Job Readiness/Life Skills Component.** For approximately one hour each day, the vocational instructor focuses on job preparation as well as general life skills. Students learn how to complete a resume, submit a job application, and successfully interview with an employer. Along with job readiness training, instructors address life skills and personal issues with the students, particularly those areas specific to immigrant and non-English speaking populations. For example, many immigrants come to the United States with unrealistic expectations, which can lead to disappointment and frustration. Instructors may also talk with students about cultural differences and issues that affect them in their daily lives and on the job. Instructors teach students how to communicate professionally in a work setting and to avoid "street slang" while on the job.

**Basic Education/ESL.** To graduate from the program, all students are required to pass the GED. Students learn basic math and English skills in daily afternoon classes and are given practice GED tests. After they have passed two practice tests, they are sent to a testing facility to take the GED. Instructors have found that teaching a class of students with a variety of different education levels is a great challenge. While one student may have trouble understanding a particular concept, another student may not understand the language in which the concept is taught. Classroom teaching, therefore, must be structured with individual needs in mind.

CET staff see the most important aspect of their program as the combination of ESL instruction and training in a viable vocation. In their community, both English and vocational skills are necessary to find jobs with a livable wage and opportunity for advancement. Because many students have to support families, one of the most difficult challenges that CET staff face is convincing potential applicants to delay employment and participate in the program. If they do not do so, the immigrants are usually forced to take low-wage jobs that do not pay enough to support a family. Program staff suggest that those interested in adapting this type of program in other areas should carefully consider the local labor market, particularly when selecting the type of vocational training that could be offered.

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## PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADAPTING THE APPROACH

## Broadly Targeted Programs for the Hard-to-Employ

Many programs serve a range of disadvantaged individuals rather than a specific segment of the population of job-seekers, such as ex-offenders and the learning disabled. In many programs, a disadvantaged person is considered to be any low-income job-seeker who is faced with one or more difficult personal issues such as homelessness, a developmental disability, HIV/AIDS, domestic violence, substance abuse, mental health problems, or a history of welfare dependency. Some programs focus on a particular model of service delivery rather than persons with particular characteristics.

Although clients in these categories have widely varying needs, they share the need for employment. Thus, rather than addressing specific barriers to work by directly assessing the client's psychological condition or providing treatment, for example, some programs focus on creative ways to more directly move individuals into jobs. Traditional support services are provided, such as general life skills training and job readiness, though these are not usually tailored to specific needs. Many of these programs provide transitional and sometimes permanent employment through positions in their own organization or in social enterprises that have been developed specifically for this purpose. Furthermore, these programs typically provide job retention services, many functioning as an independent "human resources department" for the employer in the event that problems arise.

We profile five programs that provide broadly targeted employment services for hard-to-employ persons. Two of these programs place clients in jobs within their own social enterprise businesses. A third program provides transitional employment so that clients can practice appropriate job skills and behaviors in a supportive environment, while the last two programs help prepare, place, and follow up on welfare clients in new jobs.

## Housing Works

Housing Works, a program located in New York City, provides housing, health care, intensive case management, and supportive services for homeless individuals living with HIV/AIDS. The program maintains three licensed adult health care centers, a job training program, and detoxification, drug rehabilitation, and relapse prevention services. All graduates of the job training program are guaranteed a job within Housing Works or within one of the program's two social enterprise subsidiaries. Training is designed specifically for the type of jobs that the program can offer.

### BACKGROUND

All clients receiving health care treatment or case management through Housing Works are eligible to apply for participation in job training. About 40 to 80 individuals apply per quarter, and about 20 are selected for enrollment. Applicants who are not selected are encouraged to reapply and are given instructions on how to improve their qualifications.

### SERVICES

**Job Training and Placement.** The job training program at Housing Works includes two components: the Weaving Project and Second-Life. Participants are required to complete the Weaving Project before they can move to Second-Life, and graduates of Second-Life are placed in jobs within the Housing Works program or one of its social enterprise subsidiaries.

**The Weaving Project.** The Weaving Project lasts a total of 90 days, which includes about 26 to 40 hours per week of training and classroom time. Participants spend approximately 12 hours per week learning to weave on a hand loom and 6 to 12 hours per week in classroom activities. Participants must take a basic career guidance class and a second class on communication and self-esteem.

**Second-Life Job Training.** About 50 percent of the Weaving Project participants graduate and move on to Second-Life. Second-Life consists of 15 hours of field placement per week and 15 hours of core and vocational classes. Core classes include GED preparation for participants who have not yet passed the test, and a language art series. Participants also must pass at least four vocational courses in one of five tracks: clerical, case management, retail, food service, and building maintenance.

**Social Enterprises.** Housing Works has two subsidiary organizations that carry out their social enterprise endeavors—Housing Works Thriftshop, Inc. and Housing Works Food Services, Inc.—both incorporated as not-for-profit organizations.

**Housing Works Thriftshop, Inc.** Housing Works Thriftshop, Inc. currently operates three thriftshops and a used bookstore that adjoins a cafe

(run by Housing Works Food Services, Inc.). The first thriftshop, which opened in July 1993, is small—the donor fully capitalized the first venture with about \$125,000 for the building and fixtures, together with \$25,000 for start-up and working capital. For a full year before opening the store, Housing Works hired a half-time director and a full-time manager to plan the venture. The thriftshop was profitable within the first several weeks. The following two thriftshops (as well as two relocations) required about \$300,000 for build-out and working capital. For a fee, Community Development Corporations helped them find a suitable location and arrange financing. Housing Works financed 50 percent of the second thriftshop with a term loan, and 50 percent of the financing necessary for the third store was carried by the contractor who completed the work.

**Housing Works Food Services, Inc.** Housing Works Food Services, Inc., which began operations in the fall of 1997, operates the cafe side of the used bookstore/cafe and has contracts to provide commercial catering and food services to institutions, residential treatment facilities, and AIDS medical treatment facilities. Because the cafe was already equipped with the facilities to provide food services, the start-up process for this venture was somewhat simpler than for the thriftshops and required a lower initial capital investment. Two individuals were hired full time for two months prior to opening the store. A major donor provided Housing Works Food Services, Inc. with \$25,000 in working capital. The subsidiary is now in the process of raising \$100,000 to start a bakery.

**Marketing and Ongoing Financial Viability.** Good marketing contributes to Housing Works' success. Marketing strategies include press coverage from community newspapers and magazines, donor preview nights for new merchandise, and silent auctions. Both the retail and the food service ventures provide high quality goods and services, and make customer satisfaction a priority. For the thriftshops, this means newer closing donation times and knowing how frequently to turn over merchandise to maintain customer interest. Both subsidiaries of Housing Works are currently profitable.

Approximately 95 percent of the participants in Second-Life graduate and begin working for Housing Works. Graduates from job training earn a minimum salary of \$20,000 with full benefits plus educational incentives. After a person is employed for three years, Housing Works will pay off student loans, up to \$100 per month. The job retention rate for these positions is 90 percent after six months and 84 percent after a year. There is no limit on how long a graduate can remain employed by Housing Works. In fact, the focus of the job training program is to provide permanent employment for participants and well-trained employees for Housing Works.

## PROGRAM OUTCOMES

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The Housing Works program has provided needed services and permanent jobs for homeless individuals with HIV/AIDS, enabling them to rebuild their lives and become self-sufficient. Program staff note that the success of their employment services for clients depends on its success in social enterprise development. Program administrators emphasize that it is important to understand that success in social enterprise development involves a considerable commitment, staff support, and hard work. The effort includes not only obtaining capital but also having a thorough knowledge of marketing and differentiation of the product or service. Housing Works administrators believe that non-profit businesses often do not focus enough on the bottom line; yet, if the commitment to the bottom line is not firm enough, the business will likely fail, and opportunities for clients will be lost.

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## Rubicon, Inc.

Rubicon, Inc., located in Richmond, California, provides jobs, housing, employment training, independent living, and counseling to the low-income population in the community, particularly the homeless and mentally disabled. The program serves approximately 2,500 people through the operation of several non-profit enterprises.

**Social Enterprises.** Rubicon operates three separate not-for-profit businesses: (1) a landscaping business called Building and Grounds, (2) a bakery/catering service, and (3) a home health service. Rubicon's first venture was a nursery created in the late 1970s to provide business-based training, or "work therapy", for the severely mentally disabled. When the program lost its funding from the Contra Costa County Department of Mental Health Services in 1984, the nursery was no longer viable, and the program moved instead into landscaping. Rubicon's food service venture also took considerable time and effort to become financially viable. Rubicon started a small cafe in the Richmond YMCA in 1985, and in 1988, it was able to secure two contracts to run cafeterias in the area. However, the revenue generated from the business did not cover expenses, and the activity was not creating good training or long-term employment opportunities for clients. After conducting extensive market research and reevaluating its goals for generating revenue and serving its clients, Rubicon decided to start a bakery to produce high-end dessert items. Rubicon's newest venture is a home health care service that trains and places welfare recipients.

**Initial Funding and Ongoing Financial Viability.** Rubicon's landscaping/nursery venture was originally funded by the Contra Costa County Department of Mental Health (DMH). When DMH discontinued its funding, Rubicon closed the nursery and obtained a contract with Scagg's Island Naval Base for grounds maintenance under the National Industries for the Severely Handicapped (NISH), a federal set-aside program for businesses employing the severely handicapped. Rubicon received additional support from foundation grants and the Department of Rehabilitation for training. Since the early 1990s, Rubicon Building and Grounds has been profitable, bringing in approximately \$4 million of revenue annually.

Start-up funding for the bakery and home health care ventures came from charitable foundations, the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), Office of Children's Services (OCS), and the Roberts Foundation. The home health care venture also received funding from the California Endowment Grant and Welfare-to-Work funds. The bakery is in its break-even year and brings in about \$1 million per year in revenues. The home health care venture has only been in operation for about three months, but is well capitalized from a variety of sources.

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**Job Training and Placement.** Rubicon's enterprises are used as training vehicles for clients. In 1998, the bakery/catering venture started a new bakery and training facility, and now operates a three-month bakery training program primarily targeting homeless individuals from the surrounding community. Rubicon's bakery, however, provides only one to three jobs per quarter, not enough for the number of people in the training program. The organization, therefore, provides job placement services to move trainees into competitive employment. Last year, Rubicon trained and placed 541 people through its bakery. This year, the program expects to place about 600 training graduates.

Cal Works, California's welfare-to-work program, refers welfare recipients to Rubicon's nurse's training program. Recipients must first complete an initial six-week Certified Nurse's Assistant training course at a local community college (funded by Cal Works). Participants who complete classes are then hired by Rubicon in a variety of home health care settings. The home health care services are coordinated and supervised by registered nurses. Currently, Rubicon employs about 15 welfare recipients at an average wage of \$8 per hour. The program is continuing to expand by developing relationships with employers who can support further training costs, thus creating advancement opportunities for participants.

Rubicon Building and Grounds provides on-the-job training opportunities for clients. Rubicon Building and Grounds has over 100 employment/training slots. The mix of trainees and permanent employees on a particular crew will depend on the contract. For example, if Rubicon has a considerable amount of work to finish in a short period of time, they may use more experienced, work-ready employees. When the work is less rushed, there is more time to take on trainees who need more supervision and guidance. Clients who complete training at Building and Grounds may either move into permanent employment with the organization, or Rubicon may try to place them in another landscaping/ground maintenance job.

## PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADAPTING THE APPROACH

Rubicon's program developers emphasize that enterprise development can provide numerous benefits to non-profit organizations and their clients. In particular, Rubicon has found that one of the advantages of developing a social enterprise is the ability to control the quality of employment offered to clients. Besides offering on-the-job training in a supportive environment, the program's jobs can generally provide higher wages and more benefits than the average job the hard-to-employ population would generally have to accept.

However, Rubicon's program developers also caution that there are many key considerations involved in starting a social enterprise. Most important, the program developers have found that businesses are capital intensive—they require long-term planning and a commitment of at least three to five years to be solvent. According to program developers, a minimum ten-year commitment should be made to the project. In addition, program administrators have learned that staff must have sharp business skills—skills that individuals working in social service settings may often

lack. Thus, program administrators believe that a special effort should be made to hire individuals with background in both areas. Finally, Rubicon points out that market surveys suggest the social value of a good or service is less important to consumers than quality, price, and customer service. This means that an enterprise must deliver a quality product that can compete in a traditional business environment while providing for the training and employment needs of hard-to-serve individuals.

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## The Apprenticeship Program

Goodwill Industries of the Greater East Bay, located in Oakland, California, provides transitional employment, life skills workshops, job search training, and job retention services to disadvantaged workers through its Apprenticeship Program. The nine-month program is funded entirely through Goodwill's general budget.

### BACKGROUND

**Caseload Characteristics.** Because the strong economy and the work-first focus of welfare reform has enabled many disadvantaged people to find jobs, Apprenticeship Program staff are finding that their current participants have far more serious barriers to employment than those served two to three years ago. These barriers include substance abuse, mental health problems, undiagnosed learning disabilities, illiteracy, domestic violence, and little or no work history. Many participants are homeless, receive welfare, or have a criminal record. Most participants self-refer to the Apprenticeship Program.

### SERVICES

The Apprenticeship Program provides life skills and job search training along with transitional employment. After participants are placed in jobs, a community employment coordinator stays in contact with them to provide ongoing support for at least six months and up to one year if needed.

**Transitional employment.** When a participant first enters the program, an apprenticeship services coordinator helps the individual address logistical work barriers such as a lack of child care, transportation, or impending homelessness. The individual is then immediately placed in a custodial or retail sales position at one of Goodwill's 25 businesses in Oakland. Goodwill has about 125 total transitional employment slots, and participants are paid minimum wage for their work.

The program's transitional jobs are designed to allow participants to practice skills and behaviors that would be required in a regular job. Participants are expected to be on time, to be properly dressed and groomed, and to call their supervisor if they are late. The transitional job gives participants a chance to practice what they learn in life skills training, particularly interpersonal skills such as getting along with coworkers and taking the initiative to get help when they do not understand instructions. Supervisors are trained to help participants work on these skills. Topics covered in the supervisor training include management techniques, diversity issues, and how to teach to different learning styles.

**Life skills training.** The life skills training at the Apprenticeship Program has three primary components: an orientation, "Welcoming Change," and "Doing the Right Thing." The orientation gives participants an overview of the program and works on building self-esteem. In "Welcoming Change" participants discuss their fears and resistance to change, and explore the positive outcomes that change could have in

their lives. In “Doing the Right Thing”, participants explore strategies for maintaining long-term employment through honesty, on-the-job initiative, and a good attitude. Life skills training, which is about nine hours in duration, involves lecture, interactive discussion, small group problem-solving, and role-playing. Staff frequently must modify their teaching methods to be suitable for an adult audience. Goodwill also offers classes in customer service, goal setting, and career development. Staff have found that a step-by-step approach is effective in facilitating long-term change in participants. In particular, the goal setting and career development classes tend to be more effective after participants have some work experience and have received the initial life skills training classes.

**Job search training and retention services.** After participants spend about five months in transitional employment, they work with a community employment specialist to develop a resume, fill out applications, and find a job. Employers conduct mock interviews at the program site, which can sometimes lead to a job offer. After participants find a job, retention services are provided on an ongoing, as-needed basis for at least three months and sometimes up to a year. Community employment specialists help participants address problems that are affecting their job performance or conduct another job search if needed. If a participant is succeeding in a position, he or she explores job advancement options with an employment specialist.

Of the 1,236 participants who enrolled in the Apprenticeship Program last year, about 250 were placed in jobs. Those who were not placed in jobs were often those who enrolled but did not return to receive services. Staff attribute this phenomenon to the fragile and transient life structures of this population. Of those who were placed, 50 percent retained employment for 90 days or more.

According to program staff, transitional employment is the key component of the Apprentice Program. This service gives participants a chance to become comfortable in a work environment and practice the skills they learn in life skills training. As a result, staff believe that transitional employment should be as realistic as possible in order to adequately prepare participants for jobs outside the program. Thus, program developers emphasize that it is important to give participants a regular workload, and that supervisors interact with them as if they were regular employees. Finally, program staff believe that encouraging participants to delay career development plans and permanent employment until they have increased their confidence by working for a few months in a supportive environment is an important strategy for working with disadvantaged populations.

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PROGRAM OUTCOMES

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## The Voluntary Action Center

The Voluntary Action Center (VAC) of the Prince William Area, Inc., located in Manassas, Virginia, places welfare recipients and others in unpaid “work experience” slots throughout Prince William County. VAC approaches work experience as a developmental activity, identifying positions that will allow welfare recipients to learn the skills they need to obtain and retain a paid position.

### BACKGROUND

**Organizational history.** VAC has been promoting volunteerism in greater Prince William County for 17 years. It started coordinating unpaid work experience slots through the court system and was awarded a contract in November 1996 to arrange similar placements for welfare recipients in Prince William County who had reached the 90-day welfare time limit. According to Virginia state policy, welfare recipients must participate in unpaid work if they have not found a paying position within the first 90 days of receiving benefits. VAC receives referrals from the welfare office, handles around 15 to 30 welfare clients at any point in time, and serves over 100 clients per year.

**Client Characteristics.** As evidenced by their inability to obtain paid work in the first 90 days of collecting welfare benefits, VAC participants generally have more barriers to employment than the average welfare recipient in Virginia. VAC staff see many clients with substance abuse and mental health problems, domestic violence issues, criminal backgrounds, and what appear to be undiagnosed learning problems. In addition, many have had little or no exposure to work and thus are unaccustomed to fundamental employer expectations. For example, participants may fail to notify their employer when sick or late, and they often have no back-up plans for transportation or child care.

### SERVICES

VAC focuses on finding placements that fit their clients’ skills and interests and that provide a nurturing environment in which clients can learn the hard and soft skills needed to succeed in a paid position.

**Preliminary Interview.** When clients are first referred to VAC, a case worker conducts an initial interview to collect information on their education and skill levels, physical limitations, family situation, interests, and goals. It is not uncommon for clients to have a negative attitude about participating in unpaid work. Consequently, case workers make an explicit effort to convey a positive message about the program—explaining that unpaid placements can help them broaden their skills and eventually find paid positions. Given the interests, skills, and personal situation of the client, the case worker chooses two or three work experience slots that appear to be a good fit and asks the client to choose one. Staff believe that giving clients a choice is important; yet, they have found that too much

choice is overwhelming to clients whose lives may be in disarray to begin with. Prior to placement, clients usually participate in an interview with staff at the potential placement site, a step that is intended primarily to give clients an opportunity to experience this important aspect of job-seeking.

**Placement Strategy.** VAC currently has about 40 to 45 available work experience slots. The majority of the positions are clerical, but several are in food service and elder care. Staff avoid placing clients in jobs that usually pay low wages, looking instead for positions that may lead to a livable-wage job. VAC staff look for two qualities in a work experience site: (1) a nurturing environment and (2) sufficient volume of work for the client. A nurturing environment helps clients address soft skill issues, and enough work can give them the hard skills that may lead to a paid job.

**Follow-up.** On the first day of a client's voluntary placement, the VAC case manager contacts the site to make sure the client has reported for work and to intervene if there are any problems. As the placement continues, the supervisor assesses the client's attendance and performance on a regular basis, and communicates these evaluations to the case worker. This coordination allows the case worker to monitor the client's progress and especially the development of soft skills such as attitude, punctuality, initiative, grooming, and accepting supervision. Welfare clients are required to participate in eight hours of job search along with their work experience, and many clients find a job within a month. Although VAC does not provide any direct job search assistance, staff sometimes direct clients to suitable job openings in the community. Clients are only allowed to stay at a site for six months. When clients are unable to find a job within the six-month time limit at a particular worksite, the caseworker and DSS staff generally reevaluate and place the client in a different worksite.

The VAC program is a strategy that welfare agencies in other states could adapt as one means of helping their hard-to-serve clients. VAC strongly urge that individuals or organizations wishing to develop a voluntary work program approach unpaid work as a developmental rather than a punitive experience for clients. In addition, program staff believe it is crucial to identify potential employers that will allow clients to develop both their hard and soft skills. Likewise, they recommend that case workers regularly work with site supervisors to ensure that clients are receiving the guidance and support they need to succeed. Finally, program staff have observed that the failure to find a job within the first 90 days of welfare receipt is often very demoralizing to client. Therefore, they urge welfare case workers to identify, as soon as possible after recipients enter the system, those recipients who will be likely to benefit from voluntary work experience.

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## MARC, Inc. of Manchester

MARC, Inc., located in Manchester, Connecticut, has been providing employment services to people with disabilities for almost 50 years. The organization recently began to serve welfare recipients, providing job search, placement, and retention services for the AFDC/TANF population since 1992. MARC, Inc.'s philosophy is that everyone can find and retain a job if the appropriate support is provided.

### BACKGROUND

**Organization history.** MARC, Inc. began serving the disabled through sheltered employment until it realized that the people they serve would benefit from working in the community. In the early 1980s, MARC, Inc. received funding from the Department of Mental Retardation to provide job search, placement, and retention services, and it now serves 180 people with disabilities. Aside from employment services, MARC, Inc. provides supported living services, operates two group homes, and a senior center. MARC, Inc. is an advocacy agency, and as such also advocates for persons with disabilities and their families. The employment services component costs about \$9,000 to \$11,000, depending on the disabled person's needs.

MARC, Inc. began serving people on public assistance in 1992 in response to a request from the town of Manchester. It was asked to administer a pilot program to employ welfare recipients in full-time jobs that provide benefits. The program has served over 700 welfare recipients to date. In 1998, MARC, Inc. of Manchester received the Gold Award for Connecticut Innovation from the Connecticut Quality Improvement Award Partnership. The program's intensive, individualized employment services component costs approximately \$1,400 per person for welfare clients.

### SERVICES

MARC's employment services include job search skills development, placement, on-the-job coaching, and employer mediation. According to employment program staff, intensive, individualized services are the key to job placement and retention. Job developers learn from the client what may be affecting their ability to obtain a job or remain employed.

**Career plan.** When a client enters the employment services component of the program, a job developer spends about an hour helping that client develop a career plan. The career plan helps clients determine their skills, interests, and availability, and assists them in setting employment goals. The initial contact with a job developer also serves to welcome and orient clients to the array of employment services.

**Job search skills training.** Clients receive up to 12 weeks of job search skills training. They are required to participate in classes each weekday until they find a job. Job developers work with clients individually and in groups

to overcome logistical barriers such as transportation problems. They also encourage clients to get to know and support each other. The program has computers to help clients improve or learn keyboarding during the job search phase. Job training is only encouraged for welfare recipients to the extent that they will have time to complete training prior to reaching their time limit at MARC, Inc., and to the extent that the training required for a specific job placement. During these 12 weeks, MARC, Inc. works with clients to find the best job match, taking into account child care and transportation issues, client skills and interests, and market availability.

**Job development.** Because the program has been providing job development services for 15 years, staff have an extensive network of employers with whom they can place their clients. In fact, employers often approach the program when they have positions they need to fill. When program staff are seeking a specific type of job for a client, the job developer contacts appropriate employers, sets up interviews, and may sit in on interviews if the client requests this. Staff market the program's success in placement and retention when interacting with employers. MARC has been very successful in placing its participants. Of the 154 welfare recipients served by the program, 105 have been placed. In fact, in placing welfare recipients, MARC has expanded the pool of employers who may be willing to hire its clients with disabilities.

**Job retention services.** MARC provides substantial support to clients as they begin work. For the first few days, the job developer takes clients to work, helps them complete initial paperwork, and stays with them until they are oriented. At the end of the client's work shift, the job developer takes the client home and discusses any problems the client may have faced during the day. Furthermore, the job developer acts as a mediator if problems arise on the job. After the first few days, the job developer makes weekly contact with the client and the employer. If it appears that the job is not a suitable match, the job developer helps the client look for a new position.

MARC, Inc. employment services staff believe their model for serving people with disabilities has worked well in moving welfare recipients into employment. Staff have found that while clients people with disabilities need more assistance on the job, welfare recipients need more up-front services to build self-esteem, address fears, and overcome barriers such as a lack of child care. Most important, staff have found that providing employment services for hard-to-serve populations requires a positive attitude and a belief that everyone deserves an opportunity to work and be successful.

#### **Contact**

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## PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADAPTING THE APPROACH

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