

# ***Work In Progress:***

**Connecting Hard to  
Serve Homeless Job  
Seekers with  
Employment**

**John Rio, MA CRC  
June 25, 2009**

“Could we be dealing with the homeless problem in a way that is less effective by focusing on housing and could we do be doing a better job on focusing in on helping them get jobs, so they have an income for a place to live and they have better self esteem. That is what I am wrestling with...” *Chris Shay (R-CT) December, 2007*

# The Need for Employment

It's easy to get into a catch-22 position when you're homeless. You can't get a job without a home, but you can't get a home without money." *Malcolm Ricks, formerly homeless self-employed gardner*

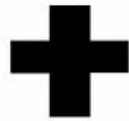


## 3 chief obstacles to employing people who are homeless:

- Nobody cares
- There is widespread belief that they can't work, despite the facts
- People with fewer barriers are more likely to work and more deserving of assistance.

# Are You Good at Math!

A home



A job



Income



A Support  
Network



Ends  
Homelessness

# Employment as a public health concern

Poverty, inactivity, unemployment and isolation are bad for everyone, and are associated with chronic “lifestyle” related diseases and unhealthy habits.

**“Success is not final,  
failure is not fatal: it is the  
courage to continue that  
counts.”**



# What questions are on your mind...

- How do I engage my client who doesn't want to work?
- Getting jobs in this economy?
- Motivational interviewing?
- Best practices & case studies?
- Role of Workforce Solutions and DARS?
- How best to help people keep jobs?



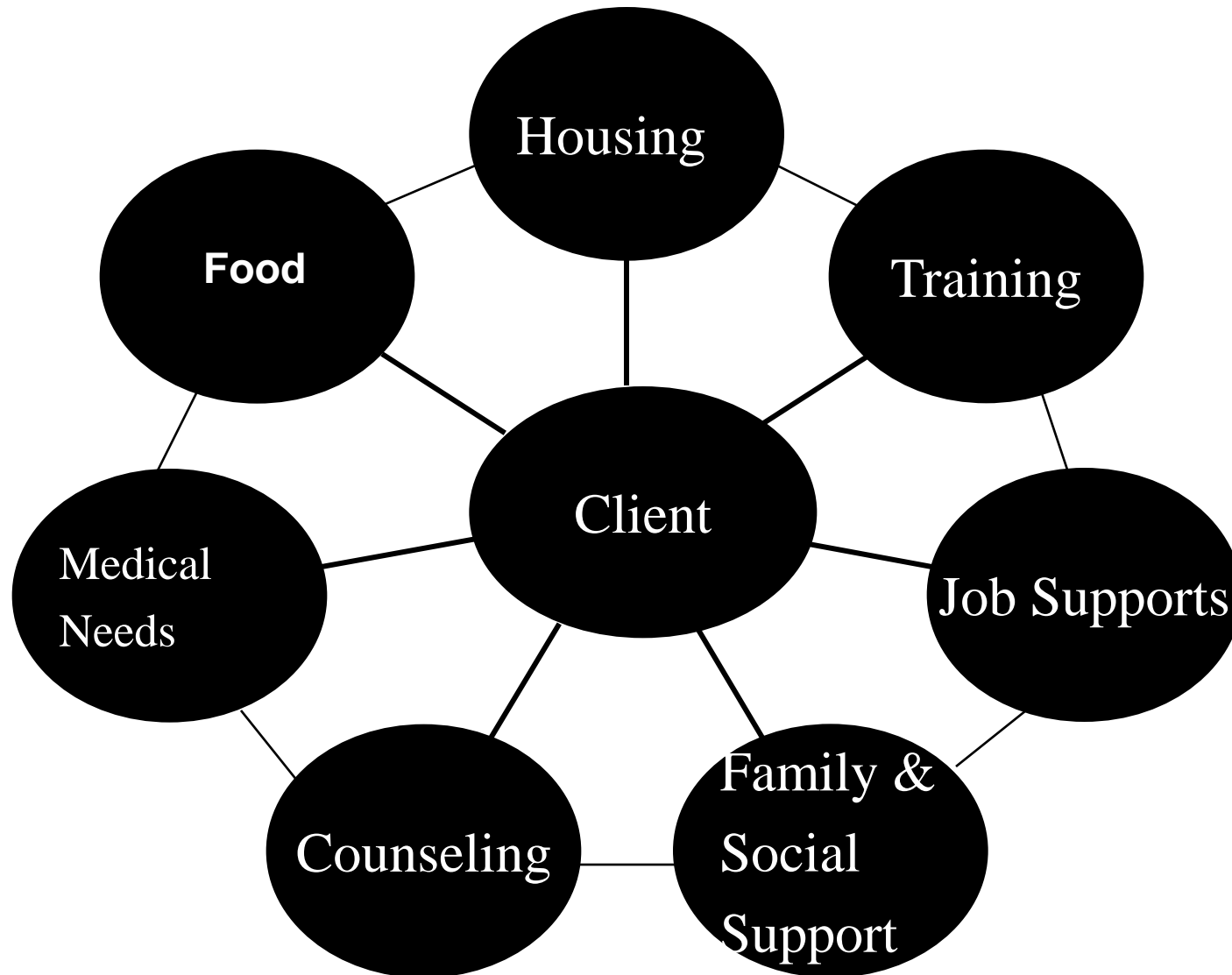
# Entering Employment: How do our participants stack up?

ODEP Grantees	People with Disabilities in Pilot Projects	19%
Access to Community Care & Effective Services and Supports (ACCESS)	Homeless Mentally Ill	22%
Job Training for the Homeless Demo Program (JTHDP)	Broad Spectrum of Homeless	36%
Ending Chronic Homelessness (ECH)	Chronic Homeless	47%
Employment Intervention Demo Project (EIDP)	Serious Mental Illness 3% Homeless	55%
Supported Employment	Mentally Ill, Not Homeless	58%
Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP)	Homeless Veterans	61%

# Lessons Learned About Employment...

- Homeless people can & want to work
- Can't do it alone; Person centered integrated team approach
- Linking employment with housing & comprehensive services
- Work activity & income increase over time
- Customized strategies with employer partners are helpful

# Person Centered Approach



# Employment wise, are we trying to....

Get somebody to do something that they don't want to do?

**OR**

Offer something that they want & that we can deliver on?



# Connecting and Motivating

- Early talking about work
- Understanding a person's experiences with work
- Acknowledging capabilities
- Staging Change

# Integrated Services Team

- Employment Specialist; Behavioral Healthcare counselor; Case manager; Housing specialist
- Co-location helpful
- Common documents
- Communication



# Common Team Interventions

- Identifying client work preferences
- List chronology of education, training, work history
- Solicit client likes/dislikes about jobs
- Staff document assessment findings
- Help clients match their skills with jobs
- Assessment is done by staff trained in vocational assessment
- Identify current/needed supports
- Assessment is tailored to each individual
- Identify obstacles to obtaining a job
- Assessment is done by staff trained in interviewing skills

# Strategies Embedded in the Team

- Readiness Determination
- Discovery
- Vocational Profile
- Job Development
- Job Retention
- Measuring Results

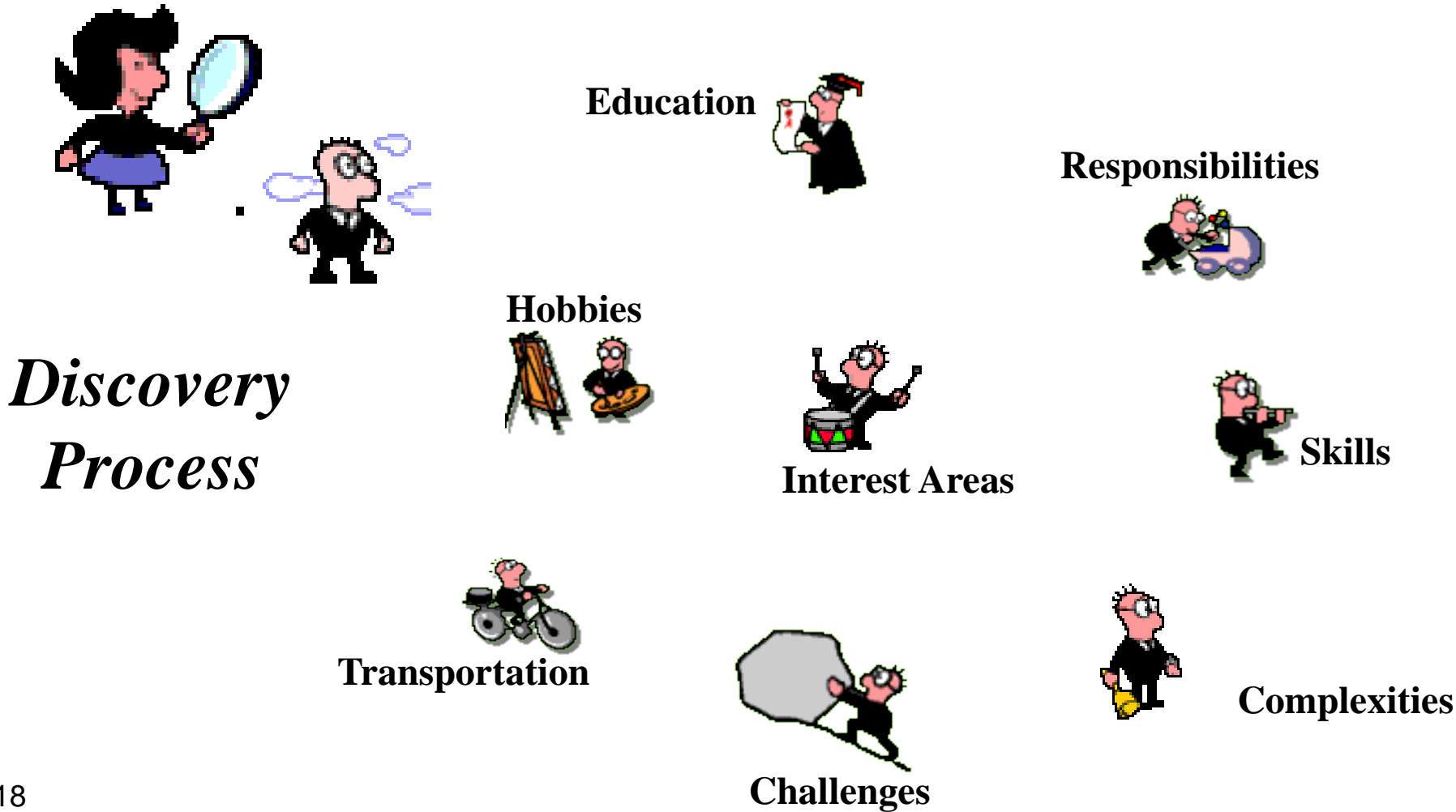




# How prepared is the job seeker?

- Need for change
- Commitment to change
- Self-awareness
- Work awareness
- Connecting with helpers

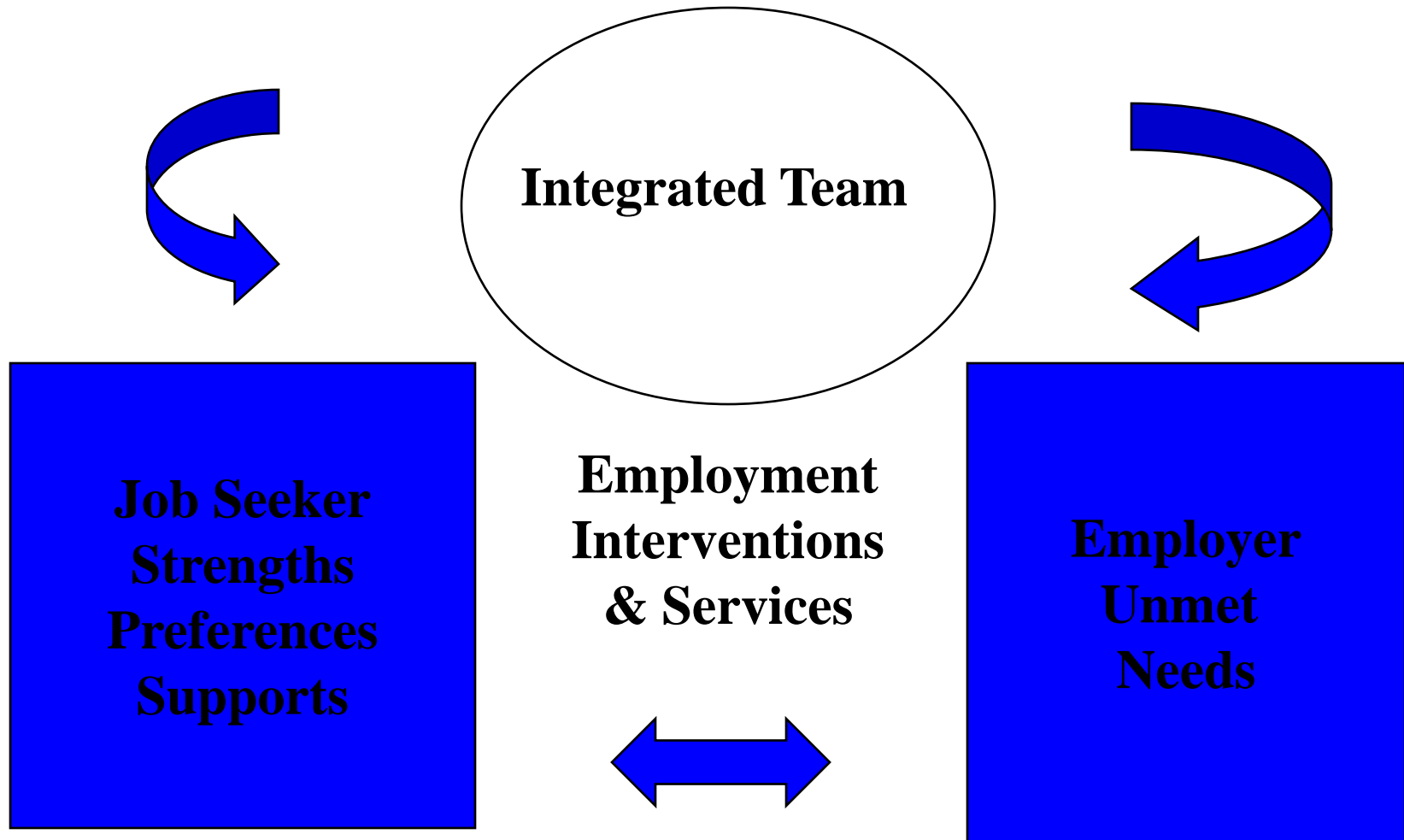
# DISCOVERY = Who is this Person? complexities & potential job contributions



# Vocational Profile

- Profile is the written summary of the individual's Discovery; shared with team members-valuable information that could point to success and supports on the job.
- From the Profile a visual resume showing interest, work skills and personal characteristics can be developed and shown to prospective employers.

# Job Development – The Needs of Two Customers...



# How would you describe the current state of your plans to help people get jobs?

- A. We have an action plan & we are actively executing it
- B. We have an action plan, but we are facing challenges or getting stuck
- C. We have a partial action plan, but gaps are keeping us from moving forward
- D. We do not have an action plan
- E. We're waiting until things get better

# How would you describe your “future vision” of employment for homeless people?

- A. Our team has articulated a clear vision that is understood & shared throughout the workforce system
- B. Our team has articulated a vision, but it is not clearly understood or shared
- C. Our team is still in the process of developing the vision
- D. Our team’s vision is shifting as a result of current economic pressures or other factors

# Job Development Plan

- Who does what with whom when and where?
- Specifies job preference & circumstances
- Identifying potential employers
- Marketing strategy

# Assessing Employer Concerns

- Listen first !!!
- Ask @ current & future employment needs
- Ask @ previous experience with various groups of new or potential employees
- Ask @ previous experience with agencies
- Describe ideal/troublesome employee
- Get info from managers, line staff, & human resources department
- Present information in business terms
- Help ID & solve specific employment needs





# Addressing issues when marketing homeless job seekers to employers?

- Stigmatized job seekers as a group
- Personal problems -MI, SA, PHYS, DENTAL
- Gaps in work history
- Appearance may not match other employees
- Lack of understanding employers
- Low self-esteem among job seekers
- Job developers have limited resources
- Our own agency does not hire these job seekers

# Making employer connections

- What you are not
  - A provider of a specific program
  - A vendor of “second chance” job seekers
  - A social service agency looking for charity
- What you are
  - A consultant with solutions; representing the job seeker
  - An expert at matching job seekers and employer needs
  - Results-driven and solutions-oriented
  - Easy to use

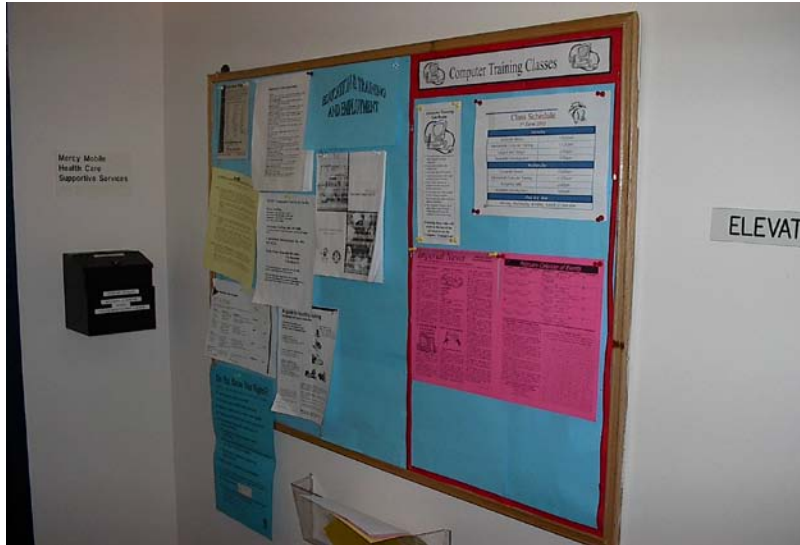
## “Job Customization” :

- **Carved Jobs:** Job descriptions based on tasks derived from a single traditional job
- **Negotiated Jobs:** Job descriptions based on tasks derived from a variety of jobs
- **Created Jobs:** Job descriptions based on heretofore unmet needs of a work setting
- **Contract Jobs:** Carved, negotiated or created job descriptions performed under a contract
- **Micro-enterprises:** Small businesses based on the unmet needs of a local market

# Job Retention

- Creating a work supporting culture
- Follow along services
- Measures of job keeping

# Vocationalizing



- Creating a culture that expects work.
- Everyone can help with marketing to employers.
- Arranging things, activities and resources to include and/or support employment.
- Assign accountability for employment outcomes to staff.
- Begin tracking employment outcomes.

**Are you paying  
attention?**



**Exercises**

# Getting and Keeping “BJ” Employed?



- I have been homeless for five years.
- I have mental health and substance use problems; I have a GED.
- I don't know where I'm going to sleep tonight.
- Some days I make \$50.
- Shelters are bad place where they rob you and beat you up. The staff looks the other way.
- Sometimes I help cook at the Rescue Kitchen.
- The city does not spend enough money on us . They should spend more and do more to help us get jobs.
- I don't want to be in treatment unless I can get a job.

# Promising Models

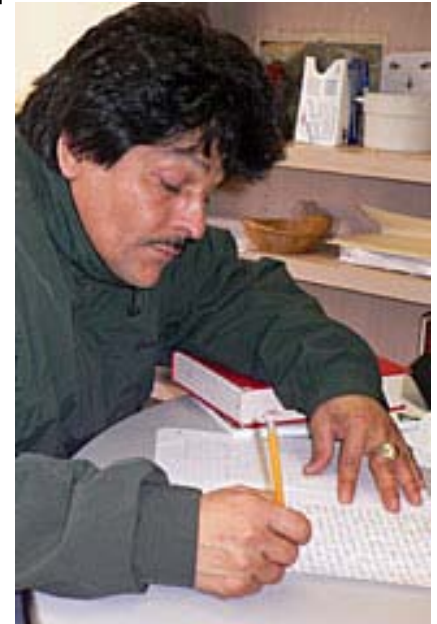
- Supportive Housing Based Employment
  - Transitional Jobs Program
  - Social Purpose Business Ventures
  - Supported Employment





# SHEM: Episcopal Community

- 48 units of supportive housing for families (Cannon Barcus)
- Case management & supportive services
- Employment Skills Center co-located at the housing site with after school services for children on site



<http://www.ecs-sf.org/programs/skills.html>

# Transitional Jobs Program: *Ready, Willing & Able, New York City*

- The Doe Fund's workforce development program
- Residential paid transitional employment and training program for homeless men
- Began on January 2, 1990 with HPD contracts and funding to purchase and renovate the Gates Avenue facility

# Men in Blue

- Clients earn a training stipend of \$7.40 hourly for the first 6 months and \$8.15 thereafter
- \$105 weekly is automatically deducted for Room & Board
- \$54 weekly is automatically deducted for mandatory savings program
- \$1,000 incentive provided to program graduates to promote employment retention. Given over 5 months in installments of \$200



# Foundation for *RW&A*

1. Work Works
2. Drug Testing
3. Make Program Facilities Beautiful
4. Hold Trainees and Staff Accountable
5. Money Talks
6. Financial Accountability
7. A hand up, not a handout
8. Partner-don't reinvent the wheel
9. Hire from within
10. Work must be real, funded and community appropriate

# Social Purpose Business Venture:

<http://www.rubiconprograms.org/>



# Microenterprise: St. Patrick Center

- Project BEGIN
- Serve low-income entrepreneurs
- Business skills or product for which there is a need
- Accessing capital
- Business incubation support



<http://justinepetersen.org/content/partners.php>

[www.stpatrickcenter.org](http://www.stpatrickcenter.org)

# Supported Employment

- Employment Specialist locates job for individual or supports independent search
- Match employer need with job-seeker skills and preferences (and sometimes vice-versa)
- Indefinite term supports to employee & employer
- Part/full-time work at competitive wages
- Integrated setting/worker “owns the job”
- Disadvantages:
  - Clash between short-term funding and long-term support needs
  - “Place and forget”

# The Village ISA

456 Elm Ave, Long Beach, CA 90802 (562)437-6717



- “No wrong door/menu-driven approach”
- Emphasizes Employment vs. Vocational Services
- *Security, Retail Sales, Fast Food, Maintenance, Hotel Front Desk, Street Cleaning, Grocery Clerk, Public Library*



# Partnerships - What's the Point?

- We can't do this alone ...
- Others have expertise & responsibilities
- While you can get someone a job, you can't get people out of poverty without partnering

“There is a new wind blowing in Texas. No one sector of society, no single level of government will end homelessness on their own”. *Ft. Worth Mayor Mike Moncrief at the meeting of the Texas Big City Mayors August 29, 2008.*

# An Organization is highly vocationalized when...

- Employment staff are aware of employment training resources in their area
- The homeless assistance agency has partnerships with employment and training including One Stop career center providers which result in increased vocational or educational outcomes for tenants because of better coordinated or integrated services
- The organization receives government funding for their employment services

## (continued)

- Clients are referred to a variety of occupational skills training programs, literacy programs, education programs, GED programs
- Eligible clients are referred to the State Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agency
- The organization works with the VR agency to coordinate the use of VR services  
Tenants regularly use work incentives such as the Earned Income Tax Credit and Social Security Administration work incentives (i.e. PASS, IRWE, Subsidy)

# Workforce Partnerships

- Customer needs is the common ground
- Understand the services your partner provides
- Consider innovative approaches
- Establish ways to assess your collaboration
- Advance your partnership based on experience

# Establish & Grow Relationships with Mainstream Workforce Programs

- WorkSource Centers
- DVR
- FSET
- TANF
- Community Colleges
- SSI – Ticket to Work

What is your current relationship with these other systems?

# Working the Intersection

Housing

Health



Employment

Education

# Results Worth Tracking

- Entered employment rate
- Job retention
- Rate of pay
- Credentials earned
- Hours worked per week
- Housing stability
- Decreased reliance on housing assistance
- Decreased use of public entitlements
- Demographic data



# Improving Employment Outcomes Among Homeless People Relies Upon...

- Champions leading cross-system partnerships;
- Public and political will to do something and pay for it;
- Use of the best practices by a talented staff; and
- Measuring the results of our efforts.