

Employment Navigator Model

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- Pairs workforce and homeless housing services to jointly meet the housing and income needs of homeless families
- Relies on an Employment Navigator to work one-on-one with homeless households to access workforce services and employment
- Cross System Team approach built around coordination; collaboration and communication

Why Employment Navigation

- Homeless families present a challenging profile to workforce providers
- Housing providers can be consumed by the complexities of solving a families housing crisis
- Low rates of employment for homeless families

Why Should the Housing System Pay Attention to Employment?

- *When parents of homeless families are asked to name one thing that would most help get their family back on its feet, their most common answer is “employment,” more than even housing or financial assistance*

Westat, Washington Youth & Families Fund Systems Initiative Evaluation, responses from Family Impact Study Baseline interviews, 467 respondents. Findings presented March 2015.

- *“Unemployment is much worse for your mental health than the stress of employment”*

Joe Marrone; U MASS Institute for Community Inclusion

Why Employment and Earned Income?

HUD Priorities –

- Performance Measures

HUD is paying closer attention to employment and earned income outcomes across Continuums of Care (CoC)

- Rapid Re-housing

HUD is prioritizing Rapid Re-housing which assumes that households will have the income to fully support housing costs when rental assistance ends

Why Should Workforce Pay Attention to Housing and Homelessness?

WIOA Legislation

- Mandates increased access and services for individuals with barriers to employment
- Priority populations include –
 - Homeless; Low income; Single parents within 2 years of exhausting TANF; Ex-offenders; People with disabilities; English language learners/cultural barriers*

Navigator Role

- Convenes **cross-sector team** – navigator, housing staff, participant and other key project partners; TANF, emergency shelter
- Integrates services, goals and resources; concurrent focus on stable housing and employment
- Enhance & supplement participation in mainstream workforce services
- Accesses available support services & training funds for family
- Navigates and supports employment, training and career pathways
- Develops self navigation capabilities with customer

Employment Navigator – King County Pilot

- Rapid Re-housing & Employment Navigator for Homeless Families 2013/15

Partners:

- Rapid Re-housing providers - homeless families; 5 agencies
- Community Based workforce programs; 3 agencies
- Homeless shelters for families; 11 agencies

Workforce programs –

- *Capacity to serve people with barriers to employment*
- *Diverse workforce funding*

Learning Circle participation

Rapid Re-housing

- Housing Search and Identification

Landlord recruitment and outreach

- Rent and Move-in Assistance

Time limited financial assistance

- Case Management

Housing focused; barrier resolution & connection to mainstream systems/resources

Results

- HMIS showed –

Participants to increase income at exit = 29%

Average increase in income = 57%

Participants to maintain income at exit = 64%

- Workforce provider reported –

Participants who either became newly employed; hired in a new job earning higher income = 49%

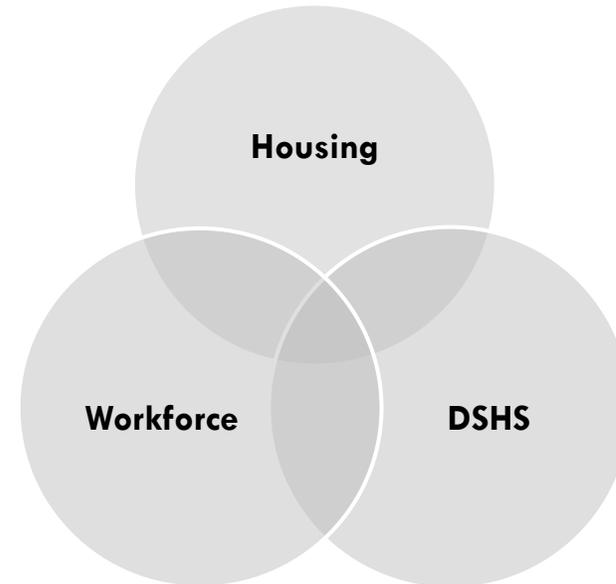
Participants to retain or increase earned income = 58%

Additional Results – Provider Reported

- Average hourly wage = \$12.02 per hour
- Participants averaged 1.5 placements
- 13% of participants engaged in training broadly defined

Key Elements of Cross-Sector Team

- **Coordination**
 - Common plans and goals
 - Leveraged resources
 - Coordinated services
- **Collaboration**
 - Problem-solving focus
 - Varied expertise, **role clarity**
 - flexible and mobile
- **Communication**
 - Joint client staffings
 - Releases of information
 - If possible, MOUs



Vocationalize Your Housing Services

- Begin the conversation around income and employment at the very beginning
- Build this into all housing services/programs starting with Coordinated Entry

Do you need to increase your income to secure and retain housing?

Do you have a plan to do this? Do you need help with this?

I can connect you with some programs that have been helpful to other people in your situation – would that be helpful?

Flex Funds

- Flexible financial assistance available for immediate access is key
 - *Quickly remove a range of barriers to housing and employment*
 - *Even small amounts can make a significant difference*
 - *Reduce worry & anxiety; create options and hopefulness*
- Staff training issue – clear parameters and trust; staff ability to say “no”; ability to be creative and resourceful

Staff Qualities

- Hopeful, passionate and high level of outcome expectancy
- Creative problem solver; strong advocate and resourceful
- Focus in skills and abilities rather than barriers
- Belief that families are resilient, capable of solving their own problems when provided tailored assistance
- Comfortable working across systems and outside of systems

Employment Navigator – Washington State Pilot

- Department of Labor Workforce Innovation Fund pilot – 2012 to 2016

Partners:

- Three Regional Workforce Councils
- Local housing programs serving families across 5 counties (23)
- Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS)

Employment Navigator was employed through local Workforce Council Team meetings to coordinate services; leverage resources & expertise
Research project including random assignment

Early Results

- Participants who either became newly employed; hired in a new job earning higher income = 58%
- Participants to retain employment for at least 6 months = 67%

Full evaluation of the pilot is scheduled for release in summer of 2017

Lessons Learned

- Begin income & employment conversation as early as possible
Housing staff “vocalionalized”; Workforce – “zero exclusion”
- Develop and engage key partners
*Workforce providers with capacity to serve the hard to employ
“Stay in your lane” and “broaden your lane” to maximize benefit
of both systems*

More Lessons Learned

- Acknowledge inherent tension with RRH approach; *need to obtain a job quickly and time to invest in training and wage progression*
- Availability of flexible financial assistance is key
- Data coordination across systems is essential but complex
- Make Benefit Planning and Financial counseling an essential component of services

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