

Employment Task Force Meeting Minutes
Friday, February 10, 2017 at 9:30am
Michael Barlow Center
2120 W Warren Blvd

In attendance: Nancy Phillips, Allen Placek, Gwendolyn Turner, Consuella Brown, Jeri Linas, Angela Morrison, Nakia Moore, Jennifer Miller-Rehfoldt, Michelle Rafferty, Carrie Thomas, Chris O'Hara, Otha Gaston, Jeremy Miller, Rochelle Morgan, Danny Nicholson, Margaret Smith

- I. Welcome & Introductions:** There were brief introductions. Everyone responded to the "What's been keeping you cool" prompt requested by Nancy. Jeri shared that DFSS is in the process of hiring a youth-focused staff person to work specifically on youth homelessness. Consuella shared that the CoC has raised its score.
- II. Approval of January 2017 Minutes:** Gwen moved to approve the January 2017 minutes, and Chris seconded. The minutes were approved unanimously.
- III. Workforce training for Housing Providers: Update and Speakers Brainstorming:** Carrie provided a brief background of the Workforce Training for Housing Providers. Through the Chicago Jobs Council's successful Connections Project RFP submission, Destination: Jobs, the CJC is exploring ways to educate the homelessness response system on workforce services. This Workforce Training for Housing Providers aims to do this, and bridge the gap between housing providers/homeless services and workforce development services. Carrie explained that she had spoken with Chris Warland and Carl Wiley of Heartland Alliance's National Initiatives on Poverty & Economic Opportunity, and they worked together to come up with an outline for the training. Carrie also provided handouts of the outline, and let the group know that she was seeking further suggestions for organizations/guest speakers to invite.

Carrie explained that the training would be split into two half-day sessions, with the first one being at the end of February and the second being two weeks later. Audience would be executive directors, program managers, and frontline workers of the housing/homelessness services field. The goals of the sessions are the following:

1. Mythbusting about people experiencing homelessness and seeking employment;
2. Providing basic information about workforce development services for jobseekers experiencing homelessness;
3. Laying the groundwork for successful referrals to workforce development services by housing/homeless service providers.

Please see Carrie's handout for the outline for the training, with detailed annotations. Here is a basic outline of what was provided and explained regarding this training:

Day 1:

- A. Introductions, icebreaker, learning goal
- B. Why Employment? (benefits of employment, what does "Work Ready" mean?)
- C. What is "workforce development" and how do people "get in" to workforce services?
- D. Program Models and Services Part 1: best practices for job seekers experiencing homelessness (TJ model and IPS model)
- E. Reflection and assignment for next session

Day 2:

- F. Program Models and Services Part 2: Interaction of Housing and Workforce Models (opportunity to think about how workforce programs interact with the housing programs they work in)
- G. Program Models and Services Part 3: Workforce Opportunities Within Housing Programs (ideas for how to provide work experience to their program participants)
- H. Program Models and Services Part 4: Barriers that the Workforce System deals with all the time (understanding that most workforce programs have services to assist people with barriers)
- I. Challenges housing providers are likely to encounter (gaps in workforce services system, where workforce performance outcomes create challenges, lack of data)
- J. Best practices for partnering with workforce organizations and system (understanding how to approach a workforce organization and set up a working relationship)
- K. Wrap up and Resources/Handouts

There would also be an evaluation at the end of each session, as well as a 4-5 week follow up evaluation.

Carrie posed the question of whether F and G could be combined. An idea was posed that a provider who works in both areas could talk about what works best. Nancy asked whether there was someone who was enrolled as a participant in both Transitional Housing and a Transitional Jobs Program and could talk about how they did both. Michelle wondered if G could even be a stand-alone training. Carrie suggested a panel with a provider and a participant and it could be facilitated in such a way to bring about the lessons from both F and G.

There was also some conversation around the topic of addressing SSI/SSDI recipients' potential employment needs. Rochelle wondered if there should be a speaker about Ticket to Work. Chris suggested talking about the steps to implement when people are on SSI, and suggested that someone be on the panel who understands the specific eligibility requirements of someone receiving SSI/SSDI for employment. Carrie acknowledged that the interaction with public benefits has arisen multiple times, and that somebody with expertise should present.

Consuella brought up the question of location. She stated that it could be held in the Learning Center, but if there was greater demand than capacity, All Chicago could look for another spot.

Jennifer suggested that there may be a point at which housing providers could reflect on what they bring to the table in providing workforce services for jobseekers experiencing homelessness. Carrie identified this as a possibility for a homework assignment between the sessions.

There was a brief conversation on the youth population and its unique characteristics in the context of employment services, prompted by Jeri. She explained that youth in particular could benefit from providers bridging the gap between these services, particularly the 18-24 year old subset. Many have criminal backgrounds and do not have a lot of benefits (disabilities are often undiagnosed). Nancy agreed that workforce

services can offer this population assistance in employment retention and referrals to expungement/sealing services. Nancy also pointed out that youth are more likely to face an expectation to work, and are less likely to be expected to rely on public benefits alone. Chris also stated that youth also face the possibility of “aging out” of benefits at age 18. Nancy asked Nakia whether UCAN provides programs that work with this population, and Nakia stated that they do.

Consuella expressed general amazement at being able to offer this training for free. Carrie explained that the funding for this training comes from the CJC’s Connections Project award. Consuella then impressed upon the group that we haven’t really been talking about employment in this way yet, and it is a significant step.

Carrie stated that it would be great if there could be information in the packet about all of the organization involved in the Employment Task Force and what they are doing related to workforce or homeless services. It was decided that employment task force members would send profiles to Margaret Smith at All Chicago. (Later, though, this was switched to Angela Morrison at CJC.)

Finally, there was some quick conversation about providing a training on supports that people experiencing homelessness receive, like a CoC 101. Consuella explained that this training is offered quarterly, but could potentially offer a customized one for employment services providers.

IV. Data Needs: What do we not know that we would like to know? Consuella explained that although new questions were added to the PIT Count this year regarding employment, it sparked a question of whether there are additional data questions that the Employment Task Force would like more or any data on.

Nancy expressed a desire to learn more about how we’re doing with connecting people experiencing homelessness to their employment goals? Are we improving at all, overall? Also, what is the need/demand for IPS and other program models? Once that is known, we could start advocating informatively for the demand to be met. Also, we could use data from the Cook County Workforce Partnership describing the numbers or success rates of people already receiving employment services who are unstably housed.

Carrie wondered if it would be possible to learn what the successful next steps are in work. While acknowledging that obtaining this data might not be possible now with current data collection methods, and might be more of a qualitative question, she stated that it would be useful to know what the employment dynamic really looks like for people after they have been able to access initial employment. Do people move from a sporadic job to better hours, or to a better location? Information about next steps for people seeking employment stability would be helpful. Nancy agreed, saying that she would like to see how the process of moving into positions that would be more sustainable works. It is often risky to leave current income in order to invest in a new opportunity. What are the elements/dynamics that are present in this process?

Finally, Nancy stated that we need data on how to better match employment services to specific housing programs. Rapid Re-Housing is being prioritized by HUD, so we should be thinking about how we can be matching employment services thoughtfully to programs, and how employment services can be correspondingly prioritized.

- V. **Committee Member Roster Update:** Consuella explained to the group that although there must be a committee roster of 12 voting members, there are also the rest of the committee, and it doesn't diminish the importance of the rest of the committee not mentioned on the roster. With that said, the time has come for a revisiting of the roster and co-chairs. Technically, should there be a need to vote on something, these are the people who can vote.

Roster:

3 Service Providers: Lynne, Alexis, Jeri

1 ESG Recipient: Allen

3 Lived Experience Commission members: Gwen, Chris, Otha

Other: Nancy, Katrina, Jennifer, Michelle, Carrie

Alternates: Jeremy, Danny

Co-Chairs: Alexis, Shannon, Carrie, and Nancy

Lynne moved to approve co-chairs, and Gwen seconded. The Co-Chairs were unanimously approved.

Rochelle moved to approve the slate. Chris seconded. The slate was unanimously approved.

- VI. **Data from Homeless Service Providers Survey (may be moved to March):** Consuella explained that Gail, Director of Innovation and Impact at All Chicago, will be present during March meeting to present on this.
- VII. **Changes to Expect Due to New Administration:** Consuella presented on what we can expect from HUD due to the new administration. She stated that it is expected that it could be a year before anyone at HUD "figures it out" and another year before anything happens. Some people at the top are changing, but those who were the key architects of the CoC Competition and homelessness prevention will stay. Consuella emphasized that homelessness has always been a bipartisan issue. However, Carson has stated that he is interested in fair housing, not homelessness and prevention. The president's threat to withhold federal funds from sanctuary cities could impact us, but legal challenges will likely delay that. Due to state budget concerns, lack of federal funds could present a serious problem for service providers. HUD is also notoriously slow in finalizing grant agreements. There is certainly an element of unpredictability. Consuella emphasized the importance of remaining vigilant and of one voice.

Carrie presented on what we can expect from the workforce side. Carrie also stated that the workforce community has done a good job of making workforce development a bipartisan issue, and making it collaborative across federal agencies, such as the Dept. of Education, the Dept. of Labor, etc., so we have heard from government agencies that cross-federal agencies work has not stopped, and will not stop until somebody says to stop. WIOA will also continue, and it is a priority to keep abreast of WIOA implementation. It is not looking like there will be an attack on workforce funding at this point. Moreover, there has been a lot of attention on apprenticeship and work-based learning, and this seems to be moving forward with lots of bipartisan support.

There are some areas of concern in the safety net/antipoverty arena, including repealing the ACA or block granting the SNAP program. SNAP is a federally funded entitlement program that has an economic stimulus effect. If it is made into block grants, the stimulus effect is removed and gives the states too much flexibility. There is also a possibility for Medicaid to become a block grant program. Additionally, Paul Ryan's A Better Way agenda puts work requirements on any program that someone depends on. Carrie also alerted the group to a letter to sign that demands that no sequestration occur on non-defense spending supports the continuation of relief from "sequestration," which puts a cap on federal spending that would result in cuts to federal funding for all domestic programs, like education, workforce, housing, transportation, environment, etc. Finally, Carrie also spoke about a letter making the rounds that support the federal nutrition safety net, including the SNAP program. Carrie stated that she would send these letters out to the group via email.

There was general agreement within the group about need to keep informed about potential advocacy opportunities. Protecting SNAP will be a particularly important fight.

- VIII. Other Announcements:** Carrie shared that CJC will be posting an opening for a Director of Policy. Consuella shared that All Chicago will be hiring for 6 new positions. Rochelle stated that AmericaWorks is looking for a new Administrative Assistant, and the position starts at 45K. DFSS has a Homelessness Program Coordinator position open. There is a Job Developer position open at Michael Barlow Center.

Otha announced a sleep-in fundraiser on February 24th that will occur at Second Presbyterian Church at 1936 S Michigan, from 6pm to 7am. There will be speakers from 7pm to 10pm. This will raise funds to address youth homelessness with 13 different nonprofits.

Nancy announced another webinar on March 20th, 21st, or 22nd on Enhancing Coordinated Entry with Employment in Houston, Seattle, and Chicago.

- IX. Next meeting:** This will be a data-heavy meeting. Gail will attend to present on the Homeless Service Provider survey data. We will also likely have the first session of the Workforce Development for Housing Providers training to report on.

- X. Adjournment**