

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

In attendance: Shannon Stewart, Carrie Thomas, Lynne Cunningham, Gwen Turner, Chris O'Hara, Jerry Miller, Lizzie Harrington, Nakia Moore, Otha Gaston, Gail Schechter, Katrina Van Valkenbergh, Jennifer Miller Rehfoldt, Angela Morrison, Margaret Smith, Pamela Izvanariu, Oswaldo Alvarez

- I. **Welcome & Introductions:** There were brief introductions and everyone shared their favorite spring rituals. There was much approval of the longer days.
- II. **Approval of October 2016 and February 2017 Minutes:** Jennifer moved to approve both October 2016 and February 2017 minutes, and Lynne seconded. Both sets of minutes were approved unanimously. The groups is now caught up with monthly minutes approvals.
- III. **Workforce Training for Housing Providers: Session 1 Report Back, Looking toward Session 2:** Carrie provided a recap of Session 1 of the Workforce Training for Housing Providers that has been developed as a result of CJC's Destination: Jobs award from the Connections Project. The session took place on February 28th in the Learning Center at All Chicago and was a full house with 25 people in attendance. Everyone who registered for this session attended. This session was facilitated by Carrie, as well as Carl Wiley and Chris Warland of the National Initiatives Connections team from Heartland Alliance. In brief, the session focused on the following topics: why employment matters and positive effects of employment, analysis of "work readiness" terminology and what that actually means, a basic overview of what the workforce development system is (a network of providers), best practices with evidence based models (Transitional Jobs (TJ) and Individual Placement and Support (IPS)).

Feedback was generally positive and helped with thinking about structuring the next session. Some people mentioned wanting to go really deep into the material about bridging housing and employment, while others wanted information and resources for individual jobseekers.

Chris shared that he liked the staging of the tables in the Learning Center into small groups. Otha expressed appreciation for the information on TJ, and the emphasis on employment models that stress actual jobs with actual wages. Angela said that evaluation surveys indicated that some attendees wanted tangible information on how to connect people with services. Nakia thought there were good resources presented, and also was looking forward to getting the documents on the flash drive (each participant will be receiving a flash drive with all the training materials at the second session). Chris said that he liked that there was information on customizing employment information for people who were receiving public disability benefits. In general, there was an emphasis on customizing employment services to a person's specific needs/desires.

Carrie then explained a bit more about the plans for the second session. It will streamline the 3-4 different sections, and some service providers (Lynne, Alexis, and one other), will be on a panel to provide information on best practices and what works, and also the topic of creating partnerships between housing providers and employment service providers.

Carrie also reported that she had plugged the Employment Task Force at the training. It had seemed like there was interest. This led Carrie to wonder if the ETF might be a good opportunity for providing external presentations to the CoC at large. This segued into Agenda Item VI: ETF Meeting Structure & Outreach, so it was discussed here. There was general agreement that more outreach for ETF meetings would be useful. There might be an opportunity to reach interested parties through the CoC e-Newsletter. Margaret also confirmed that the meeting times have been posted on the ETF page on All Chicago's website. Carrie suggested that perhaps outreach could really be focused on during any external presentations that the ETF provides. At a minimum, it could be advertised on the newsletter and website, and RSVPs could be collected so Lynne knows how to set up the room. Carrie and the other members will think more about specific presentations that might be good for this group to host and advertise for.

IV. Homelessness/Housing Service Providers Survey Results, Analysis, & Discussion:

Gail Schechter, Director of Innovation and Impact at All Chicago, presented on the survey that had been administered on August 26, 2016 that posed questions about employment services to housing service providers. Gail provided a PowerPoint presentation and a handout with the slides. 29 programs participated in the survey. 4 programs responded "yes" that they do ask all participants if they are seeking employment, but then omitted the rest of the survey.

The top-line findings were the following: **Most agencies were dissatisfied with referrals** to employment services providers, **Lack of Skills and Health Supports was the top barrier to securing jobs**, **Life Skills Training was the top in-house service**, **high school diploma/GED/literacy was the top referral** (to City Colleges), **Key Employment Partners tend to vary by agency**, and **each agency has a customized approach to employment Services**.

Things the survey did not tell us:

What kinds of jobs are participants being prepared for? Do they vary by age/gender?

What kinds of jobs do participants get?

What salaries and benefits are they earning?

The survey found that 90% of agencies ask people if they are seeking employment upon entry. In reference to the finding that agencies defined one of the top barriers to employment as lack of health supports, Carrie requested clarification on whether "health supports" refers to mental health and substance use support. Gail confirmed this. Gail also clarified that criminal background was not indicated as a choice on the survey.

Regarding on-site Employment Services provided by housing providers, the top services were Life Skills Training, then Job Placement, then Employment Assessments. The top referrals to employment services were high school/GED/Literacy and Vocational (TJ and Subsidized Employment).

In general, there was a finding that the more employment services were referred out, the less is provided in-house, and vice versa. Oswaldo mentioned that it was interesting that there were so many referrals to HS/GED/literacy, but only 22% listed it as a barrier. Lizzie

stated that it may be more credential-associated; often a GED is needed to get a first job or as entry into an employment program.

Gail also drew attention to the low referrals and in-house numbers for on-the-job training and TJ. Carrie was unsurprised by this and stated that there is an information disconnect between the two systems.

Gail also pointed to the finding that most agencies use only 2-3 referral agencies, and all seem to refer to different agencies, but go to the same agencies for different reasons. In response to this, Carrie pointed out that this may be due to the presence of several different funding streams. Also, once agencies have a referral system that works, they tend to stick with it. There are also geographical factors; agencies may be more likely to refer participants to nearby agencies.

Chris mentioned that there didn't seem to be a lot of feedback regarding Internships and Job training, and wondered if perhaps that has something to do with the state budget issue. He suggested that we compare with the survey from couple years ago, and there was general agreement that such a comparison might be useful.

Importantly, virtually no agency cited specific employers as partners.

Next, Gail discussed the question of where agencies turn for workforce development info: the top resources were DFSS, CJC, City Colleges, Ill Job Link, and Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership.

The survey also provided space for agencies to indicate the top funding sources for employment services to homeless service providers, and several agencies pointed out that selections were not all inclusive.

Gail explained that the survey had shown that direct placements are more effective than referrals, as well as easier to track. Also, relationships matter (employers, between agencies, among participants themselves – Job Clubs). Finally, employment services should focus on a heightened awareness and increased confidence level.

A contemporary challenge is that only 10% of workforce employed in factories and farms, as opposed to 60% a hundred years ago. Gail discussed some organizations and initiatives that are providing high barrier jobseekers with skills-building employment: Chicago CRED started by the Emerson Foundation.

As next steps, Gail suggested that some questions receive a deeper look. What jobs are participants securing and how much do they pay? What's working and which are the key referral relationships? A stronger referral system is also needed, and stronger partnerships between housing and workforce development providers. Finally, the CoC should think about strongly advocating for higher pay.

Carrie affirmed the importance of these finding and next steps, adding that the presentation reinforces what CJC has been working on with Destination: Jobs and with the Coordinated Entry Navigator position.

Shannon stated that All Chicago should have the first employment survey for workforce & housing providers – results were from Oct 2013 – in case that proves to be helpful.

Carrie added that this information will help inform whatever conversations CJC and the Employment Task Force can have with DFSS once they look at their RFP again, particularly regarding their program models and the issues about flexibility.

Shannon wondered whether characteristics or demographics might be informing what is being considered a successful referral. Lynne stated that another missing piece might be supportive services, and cited transportation to employment services as a huge barrier to referrals. Organizations might really need bus cards.

V. Matching Housing Models with Employment Models: Rapid Re-Housing

A decision was made to move this item to the following week when Alexis could be present to also discuss this. Margaret provided some basic data on Emergency Solutions Grant RRH programs, as well as a brief explanation of Rapid Re-Housing and the ESG program structure. RRH has three core components: Housing Location, Rental Assistance, and Case Management. Employment support is part of the case management component. Despite being a core component of the housing model, housing location and rental assistance tend to be more heavily emphasized, and case management can tend to be reactive rather than proactive. RRH partners have stated that they could use more support with employment resources. Margaret also explained that there are other RRH programs that are CoC funded rather than ESG funded, and these programs have a more flexible structure. Jennifer proposed that it might also be helpful to have data for CoC programs. Margaret said that she would see what she could get in preparation for the next meeting.

VI. ETF Meeting Structure & Outreach: Was discussed earlier in meeting.

VII. Other Announcements: Chris notified the ETF that the Advocacy Committee had proposed that the two committees come together to discuss common goals and what they should be advocating for regarding employment. The next meeting will be on April 5th at the Ounce of Prevention. There was general agreement that it might be helpful to communicate, but there was confusion about how that should happen and what was actually being proposed. Carrie said that she would look into attending the next Advocacy Committee meeting to help coordinate.

Chris also provided information on the upcoming homelessness event at the Weinberg Gallery on March 16th, 6-7:30pm.

Gail shared that SPARCC and other entities have just won national funding to do redevelopment to prevent gentrification and promote jobs/equity. The grant requires the use of a “catalytic moment” and it is the Obama Library. The grant provides the use of \$100 million over 3 years to invest in disinvested neighborhoods. This might be an opportunity to keep in mind.

Carrie shared that 4-5 leaders from workforce organizations have created an event called “Step into your Future.” It’s targeted towards young African-American men, and will be March 16th 11am-3pm. They will have a program (set of speakers on career readiness and planning), activities, and resource tables. Lunch will be provided. Anyone can come, and attendees will get transit pass to get wherever they need to go afterwards.

Carrie also shared that CJC's next workforce development working group will next be meeting April 12th, ICNC, 320 N Damen, 9-11. They are planning the next meeting to be youth related, and LAF will be presenting about expungement changes.

VIII. Adjournment