

# HOMES FOR FAMILIES HOUSING FIRST CAMPAIGN:

## WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

April 28, 2008



# INTRODUCTION

Homes for Families is a statewide advocacy organization committed to ending family homelessness through permanent and emergency solutions. We are a collaborative of families who have experienced homelessness, service providers, and advocates. Together we educate, organize, and advocate for improved public policies to address the root causes of family homelessness with holistic and community-based solutions. Homes for Families believes that family homelessness is caused by the high cost of housing and incomes that do not keep up with housing costs. We also believe that family homelessness is solvable.

The Housing First Campaign is a collaborative effort among Homes for Families, Family to Family, One Family, and the United Way of Massachusetts to find permanent solutions to family homelessness. The campaign addresses all factors contributing to family homelessness, hoping to make formerly *reactive* solutions *proactive* to ensure that more families are able to create stable lives for themselves – and enjoy stable housing.

Workforce Development Strategies is the second in a series of three forums designed to look intently at different issues surrounding family homelessness. The Workforce Development Strategies forum focuses on the crucial need for education, training, and employment as a means of reducing and preventing family homelessness. The forum examines different employment models for traditionally hard to employ populations; strategies to building a workforce development program; collaborations between workforce development programs and existing companies; and the correlation between workforce development and homelessness in the commonwealth of Massachusetts. Workforce development is a strategy that necessarily changes with the condition and needs of the economy and existing populations – therefore, the models and systems examined in this forum should be treated as exemplary, not prescriptive. Even the best models are more effective if they are flexible, tailored to suit the needs of the specific area or population in crisis.

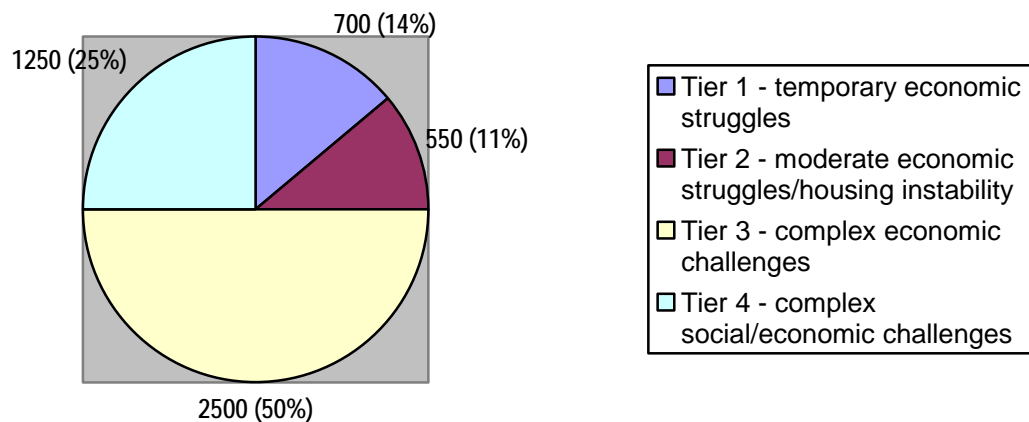
## Opening Address

*"Workforce Development is complicated. The cost of living, low wages, and homelessness trauma makes it difficult for many people to 'just get a job'." -Libby Hayes*

Libby Hayes is the Executive Director of Homes for Families. Before joining Homes for Families, Libby was the director of Crossroads Family Shelter in East Boston.

Libby presents **housing and economic stability** as the ultimate goal for homeless families. The housing portion of that goal is addressed through assessment, stemming from public awareness, outreach, referrals, and individual/family shelter applications. After the assessment stage, prevention, diversion, rapid rehousing, and intensive supports are employed to best serve the needs of the families. Assessment can lead to housing – but families can not achieve housing stability until they are economically stable. **Workforce development promotes housing and economic stability** for families who would otherwise find themselves moving from one temporary housing solution to another. The key is to identify the types and depths of need each family faces.

The following chart illustrates a **family tiered approach estimation** of 5,000 homeless families. Each tier represents a number of families with varying degrees of need, skills, and available supports.



## TIER 1

### FAMILIES WITH TEMPORARY ECONOMIC STRUGGLES (14%)

#### Head of Household Profile

- High school diploma or GED
- Some college or college graduate
- Employed or work experience

#### Workforce Support Strategies

- Connection to income maximization resources
- Public work support
- Flexible cash assistance
- Asset development

## TIER 2

### FAMILIES WITH MODERATE ECONOMIC STRUGGLES AND HOUSING INSTABILITY (11%)

#### Head of Household Profile

- High school diploma or GED
- Employed, but earning below a living wage
- Some work experience

#### Workforce Support Strategies

- Connection to income maximization resources
- Public work support
- Flexible cash assistance
- Connection to mainstream support services
- Connection to economic development programs
- Asset development

## TIER 3

### FAMILIES WITH COMPLEX ECONOMIC CHALLENGES (50%)

#### Head of Household Profile

- May have high school diploma or GED
- Minimal work experience
- Has barriers to employments including housing instability

#### Workforce Support Strategies

- Connection to income maximization resources
- Public work support
- Flexible cash assistance
- Connection to mainstream supportive services
- Connection to economic development programs

## TIER 4

### FAMILIES WITH COMPLEX SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHALLENGES (25%)

#### Head of Household Profile

- No high school diploma or GED
- Minimal to no work experience
- Has multiple barriers to employment including housing instability and often one or some of the following: CORI, limited English, substance abuse, mental health issues, trauma, etc.

#### Workforce Support Strategies

- Crisis intervention
- Intensive case management
- Long-term or permanent housing assistance with support
- ESOL, GED, ABE, vocational training, supported work, gradual steps which recognize success
- Benefit maximization



**The following asset development priorities can be used as part of any workforce/economic development program. Families in each tier of the support approach estimation will benefit from these strategies, which necessarily intertwine economic independence and housing stability.**

- Income maximization – include asset-building opportunities as part of the assessment process
- Link economic supports to housing stabilization
- Maximize use of workforce development programs and target them to families based on need
- Increase financial literacy among low-income households

## EMPLOYMENT AND EDUCATION MODELS FOR THE HARD TO EMPLOY

Joseph Antolin is the Executive Director of Heartland Human Care Services, a \$30 million Heartland Alliance company devoted to promoting and protecting human rights in Illinois and Michigan. Joseph is also Vice President of Heartland Alliance for Human Needs and Human Rights, and a Steering Committee Member of the National Transitional Jobs Network.

Joseph oversees Heartland's service-based advocacy, as well as programs including: **transitional jobs** (scattered site, public housing, reentry and refugee services); **vocational literacy/ESL** for chronically unemployed populations (including reentry); **homeless prevention and supportive housing; residential services** for homeless and unaccompanied youth; **resettlement for immigrants and refugees; substance abuse counseling; immigration legal assistance; and counseling, safety planning, and legal services** for survivors of trafficking, domestic violence, or sexual assault.

Before joining Heartland, Joseph was Director of the Division of Early Childhood and Self-Sufficiency for Catholic Charities, where he developed the initial Transitional Community Jobs programs for the hard to employ. He has served with several legal aid organizations, and oversaw TANF implementation for the Illinois Department of Public Aid. He serves on the Board of Directors for the following organizations: National Transitional Jobs Network; Chicago Jobs Council; Travelers Aid International; RealBenefits, Inc.; Illinois Asset Building Group; Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities Action Council; Illinois Public Health Institute.



**By focusing on a wide array of services, Heartland can get to the root of unemployment issues for the hard to employ. Even if an agency's main goal is to combat and prevent unemployment in target populations, it must also consider the risk factors contributing to, and additional challenges resulting from, chronic unemployment.**

## EMPLOYMENT MODELS FOR TANF PARTICIPANTS

There are five solid employment models for TANF participants, each with programs designed to serve different hard to employ populations:

- I. **Transitional Jobs**
- II. **Alternative Staffing**
- III. **Bridge Programs**
- IV. **Community-Based Employment**
- V. **Integrated Vocational Adult Education**

## I. Transitional Jobs (TJ) Programs

TJ programs combine wage-paid real work, skill development, and supportive services. These programs rapidly help people with barriers to employment rapidly transition into the labor market through work experience. They are encouraged to learn how to manage their employment barriers while working. TJ programs serve people who are employable but lack skills or a network. A transitional job is a tool, not a goal; it should be a short-term job that leads to permanent employment. Target TJ populations include: **people who are homeless, people with criminal records, refugees, long-term welfare recipients, and youth.**



**These populations are targeted because while they may have employment barriers, they have the potential to secure long-term or permanent employment. Target populations should always be considered in terms of their employment history, their current employment barriers, and their potential for long-term employment.**

There are three types of TJ Programs

- **Scattered Site** – Participants work in for-profit, non-profit, or government sites with 1-2 workers per site. Participants can be hired full time.
- **Work Crew\*** – Crews of 5-7 people work on a project together, often within maintenance, parks, and community renewal projects funded with government money.
- **Social Enterprise** – Participants work as employees of the organization; the organization is created to hire the hard to employ. Wage aid provided by the government. Ex: Goodwill

\*WORK CREW MODEL EXAMPLE:

## Alpha Project: Supportive Transitional Employment Program for Un-Housed Persons (STEP-UP)

- Work crew model with service-enriched context
- Participants earn \$6.75 - \$7.50/hr
- Participants work 24 – 30 hours/week
- 2 – 4 hours/day are spent on personal enrichment, including education, treatments, and other services
- Types of work include: cleaning neighborhoods and vacant lots, graffiti removal, property maintenance for low-income homeowners and renters



**More than 50% of people who have never worked long-term lose their new jobs within 30 days. This phenomenon is related to the way programs focus on employment barriers. Instead of trying to remove barriers before employment begins, successful programs work on helping people manage these barriers while they are in the workforce. People are more likely to succeed in overcoming setbacks if they know how to handle various issues while working, instead of expecting (unrealistically) that, once removed, their employment barriers will never return.**

## II. Alternative Staffing Models

Alternative staffing is a temp-to-hire model with a focus on three types of customers. The first customer is the worker, and alternative staffing aims to help workers succeed in the workplace. A second customer is the business subscriber, who should be receiving qualified, motivated employees from the alternative staffing program. Finally, community-based and public sector organizations benefit from alternative staffing models by being able to produce positive outcomes for target populations, from which employees are drawn.

### ALTERNATIVE STAFFING MODEL EXAMPLES: CHRYSLIS ENTERPRISES AND HARBORQUEST

#### CHRYSLIS ENTERPRISES

- Full service staffing agency
- Offers individuals the opportunity to re-enter the job market
- Assignments include: light industrial work, landscaping, warehousing, delivery construction, janitorial work, assembly, maintenance, event staffing

## HARBORQUEST

- Combined social enterprise and employer-focused TJ to perm service
- Trains low-skilled workers
- Provides reliable workers in various trades: light industrial, hospitality, janitorial, back-office clerical, direct marketing



**Alternative staffing models are universally beneficial – they help businesses remain productive and stay within their hiring budgets, and they afford low-skilled employees the chance to learn a trade that they can use again in the future. Having a skill set and/or a trade increases the chances that these people will be able to find long-term or permanent employment, which contributes to economic and housing stability.**

### III. Bridge Programs

The goal of bridge programs is to prepare adults who lack basic skills to enter and succeed in postsecondary education and training. Eventually, this leads to career-path employment coupled with education. Bridge programs typically work with students who have been unsuccessful in traditional educational settings, or low-wage/unemployed workers. Employers and colleges/training programs must be cooperative to facilitate time off from work for additional training to improve basic skills.

#### BRIDGE PROGRAM MODEL EXAMPLES:

#### THE GREATER CINCINNATI HEALTH PROFESSIONS ACADEMY AND FLINT HEALTHCARE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- Provide access to healthcare careers for unemployed and underemployed individuals, low-wage workers, displaced workers, immigrants, and people with disabilities
- Employers actively involved in creating, building, managing, supporting, and delivering the bridge program
- Multiple points of entry and exit
- Career coaches help students negotiate pathways and provide support
- Entry level with release time for education to improve skills

- Typically technical, records, billing, etc.
- Not structured/sequential: people progress as they learn and succeed in the workplace, not necessarily when a particular milestone is reached.



**Bridge programs offer a unique opportunity for employees to not only receive training for a job, but receive continued education and training that will allow them to excel in their positions and move on to more advanced positions. Allowing employees time off for training and education benefits employers as well – their employees are constantly improving themselves and will be more likely to stay with the company if their training and education gives them mobility.**

#### IV. Community-Based Employment

The Community-Based model is more analytical, working with data and a matching system to find employment for residents of a particular community. The goal is to get to the root of the employment problem in a specific community and target the problem in a way tailored to that community.



**This model exemplifies the fact that certain approaches to workforce development may work in some communities but not others, so each one must be examined to develop a strategy that meets its needs.**

#### COMMUNITY-BASED EMPLOYMENT MODEL EXAMPLE: PROJECT MATCH

Project Match is a Community-Based Employment model created in the 1980s to work with AFDC and Public Housing residents. The goal was to analyze job-turnover data to provide evidence of job cycling in certain populations. Based on the data collected, Project Match developed a continuum of job-related steps to acquiring and sustaining employment.

- Long-term commitment: Project Match case managers work with their clients through multiple jobs and stages of employment

- Open eligibility: The only requirement for participation in Project Match is a two-hour orientation session. There is no screening process, since Project Match is analytical, not predictive.
- Accountability: The data tracking system reports monthly outcomes on planned change steps and other achievements



**People with little to no job experience often cycle through two or three jobs before internalizing work behavior and retaining employment. With this information, community-based programs and other workforce development programs can work to improve the conditions that lead to turnover, such as appropriate behavior, dress, attendance, and speech in the workplace. Stabilized employment is a crucial step in stabilized housing.**

## V. Integrated Vocational Adult Education

Advancements have been made in vocational adult education with the creation of I-BEST (Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training) at Washington Community College. I-BEST is a unique program designed to help underserved populations achieve a livable working wage. This model of adult education encourages students to progress at their own paces. Students choose a technical skill and receive training and college-credited courses related to that skill. With integrated programming (career training and higher education), basic skills students benefit from skills they can use immediately in the workforce, the support of staff committed to helping them remain employed, and credit toward a certificate or degree that will enable them to advance in a specific vocation.



**Traditional adult education is essentially a replication of grammar school: sequential, slow, step-by-step, and broad in subject matter. These programs have a 90% failure rate, and do not prepare students for a specific job.**

## I-BEST MODEL EXAMPLES:

### INTEGRATED OFFICE ASSISTANT CERTIFICATE FOR ESL

- Fundamental coursework that satisfies prerequisites for several degree programs at Bellevue Community College
- With the option to choose one of several degrees, students can choose what works best with their interests, strengths, and skill set

### I-BEST WELDING

- Welding classes are competency-based and lead to a welding certificate or degree
- Students progress at individual rates to course completion

## Panel Discussion: Building a Workforce Development Program

Nancy Goodman has been serving as the Director of Community Education at Wellspring House in Gloucester, MA, for the past nine years. As the Director, she oversees several education and training programs for men and women whose income is below the economic self-sufficiency standard. These programs include: GED test prep, ESOL, the Foundations program, a 17-week college transition program, and MediClerk, a 13-week training for entry-level administrative positions in healthcare. She also serves as staff liaison to Wellspring's Committee for a Just Society, encouraging civic action by members of the Cape Ann community.

### MEDICLERK PROGRAM:

The MediClerk program was created in 2001, and has been running 3 sessions per year since 2002. The strongest components of the program are its **partnerships with employers**, the assignment of a staff **contact person** for every student/employee, **top-notch instruction** that balances education and other supports, and an **applicant screening** process.



**MediClerk uses an applicant screening process because the staff firmly believes that if you are willing to accept anyone, then your program must be set up so that people can succeed and meet the needs of the employer. Unfortunately, no program can meet the needs of every person seeking help. By screening, the program is equipped to meet the needs of selected applicants in the best way possible and ensure that the partner employers will be satisfied and continue seeking employees from the program.**

- MediClerk does not accept homeless people
- Applicants must be highly skilled in order to secure administrative health care positions

- The program cannot help establish stable housing at the same time it establishes employment
- Case management for employees is critical
- Assessment/data collection of students and classes is a top priority, allowing MediClerk to constantly improve itself as it charts success rates



**In order to have a successful workforce development program like MediClerk, it is essential to research trends in a particular community or industry, find employers willing to train new applicants, establish funding for case management and other supports, and design the program to be mutually beneficial for both the clients and the employer.**

Tressa Antworth serves as the Career Development Manager of Employer Partnerships at Project Hope in Roxbury, MA, preparing candidates for employment in the Partners HealthCare system. She has more than 10 years of experience in workforce development, and has helped create and develop several programs including Partners in Career and Workforce Development and Marriott Pathways to Independence.

Project Hope currently offers two workforce development programs: Partners in Career and Workforce Development (PCWD), and Community Partners in Health Care Professions (CPHP).

PCWD, created in 2004, offers on-site instruction, case management, recruitment, and other supports. After a 6-week training period (3.5 weeks in the classroom and a 2.5-week internship), participants can acquire entry-level administrative and supportive staff positions. PCWD has an **89% graduation rate**, an **81% placement rate**, and an average of **49 days from graduation to placement**. Since 2007, PCWD has been **fully funded by Partners HealthCare**.

Participants must:

- Be at least 18 years old with a high school diploma or equivalent
- Pass assessment tests in reading, writing, and computer skills
- Complete a CORI screening
- Provide a reference for 1 year of steady employment
- Speak, write, and understand English
- Work full-time and complete a 90-day probationary period

Project Hope offers PCWD participants:

- Housing support, including a family shelter, Housing First services, emergency funding assistance, and housing search
- Case management to all participants for up to 1 year after placement – case management includes personal assistance and career coaching
- Transportation assistance
- Childcare assistance



**PCWD's strict guidelines resulted in only 20% of applicants being eligible for the program. Many applicants failed to qualify because of an inability to communicate professionally, weak language/reading skills, or lack of computer skills. Because even general service jobs currently require computer skills and strong communication, PCWD must keep the criteria strict. To accommodate those who don't meet the criteria, Project Hope created a new program, CPHP.**

CPHP began in 2007 as a response to applicants who could not participate in PCWD because of reading, language, computer, and soft skills. CPHP is an intensive 6-week partnership program with Brigham and Women's Hospital, designed to prepare participants for the workforce. After completing the 6-week program, participants can choose to enroll in PCWD for an additional 6 weeks of training, or they can begin searching for jobs at Brigham and Women's Hospital.

Project Hope offers CPHP participants:

- Housing support, including a family shelter, Housing First services, emergency funding assistance, and housing search
- Case management to all participants for up to 1 year after placement – case management includes personal assistance and career coaching
- Transportation assistance
- Childcare assistance
- Career development support to assess long-term goals and options so that participants don't feel "stuck" in a job they don't enjoy

Suzanne Kenney has been the Executive Director of Project Place for the last thirteen years. Project Place is a non-profit organization that provides employment, education, and housing opportunities for homeless individuals. Suzanne's work has included expanding the space of the organization to offer temporary and permanent housing units, as well as developing job training programs into self-sustaining social enterprises. Before joining Project Place, Suzanne worked at the Center for Children with Special Needs at New England Medical Hospital.

Project Place is a **Social Enterprise Program** that employs mostly homeless individuals. Project Place owns and operates small businesses to allow them to hire at-risk and hard-to-employ people. Examples include Project Pepsi, Clean Corners, Bright Hopes, and HomePlate (geared towards women). In social enterprise programs, participants are **paid as soon as they begin work** so that work becomes a stabilizing factor in their lives. The program is for 6 months of employment, which then allows participants to seek further employment elsewhere. Rehab is a requirement for participants with addictions.

Participants must demonstrate:

- Motivation to make change for themselves
- Commitment to sobriety
- Verification of homelessness

Project Place offers:

- Case management and a mentor program
- Housing placement and emergency financial assistance
- Career counseling and job placement
- Workshops and educational assessments
- Pre-GED classes
- Referrals



**Project Place hired skilled people to oversee the businesses (social enterprises), understanding that unless the businesses were profitable, they wouldn't be able to afford hiring homeless people. Working from the top down was a strategic way to ensure that the social enterprises accomplished what they were created to do. In addition, case managers had to adjust their schedules to meet with clients at the end of the day so that clients could complete a full day of work before classes, meetings, life skills coaching, etc.**

Lyndia Downie has been the President and Executive Director of Pine Street Inn since 2000. In her twenty years with Pine Street Inn, she has served as volunteer coordinator, director of the men's shelter, director of development, and vice president of programs. Pine Street Inn is New England's largest resource for homeless men and women, serving 1,200 people each day.

Pine Street Inn created a social enterprise called Abundant Table, a food service business that grosses \$1 million making 1,000 meals per day. All money goes to pay clients and guests. The production goal of the enterprise is to **offer real work for clients, not just practice for work.**

Pine Street Inn also offers the STRIVE program, a three-week job readiness program targeted to people who have been incarcerated, people leaving public assistance, homeless men and women, people recovering from substance abuse, and those generally considered hard to employ. The first phase of the program focuses on communication, teamwork, interview skills, computer skills, appropriate dress and speech, etc. STRIVE assists people with securing necessary documentation such as birth certificates, court paperwork, and resumes.

- STRIVE is privately funded, so the program can accept anyone
- The only criteria are the ability to complete the application, which is at a fourth-grade reading level, and basic English fluency/literacy
- STRIVE does not provide case management – applicant's case managers from other programs/shelters work with the STRIVE staff directly
- STRIVE accepts people with a CORI (70% of applicants)
- STRIVE accepts people with substance abuse
- In 2007, 50% of participants found full-time employment, while another 50% went on to further skills training or internships. 60% of applicants were still employed after six months of work.
- Types of jobs include: security guard, plane fueler, bus driver, prep cook, sales associate, painter, carpenter, city services

#### GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: BUILDING A WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

1) What are you already doing within your organization or community (or what ideas do you have) to provide career development opportunities for the families you work with?

2) What challenges would you face in your agency or community?

3) What is the next step for your organization in creating a workforce development program? Would you even create a program?

## Building a Workforce Development Program Question & Answer Session:

Q: How can community-based organizations and community colleges work together?

A: Nancy: The best way is to keep communication open. Many community-based organizations provide community colleges with students. They can also help by offering incentives, like course credit or tuition assistance.

Q: Would a transitional job qualify as a year's worth of work (for a reference, resume, or work history requirement)?

A: Tressa: AS long as there is a verifiable reference, a transitional job is fine. Transitional jobs are linked to legitimate companies, so it is an ideal option for clients in many ways.

Q: Who is eligible for programs at Pine Street Inn?

A: Lyndia: Pine Street Inn accepts anyone. STRIVE has two sites, but because it operates in a classroom format, the program is limited by class size.

Q: What changes have you made based on student feedback?

A: Nancy: The business communication writing class was too advanced, so that was toned down to be more accessible to students. Teachers are given feedback on whether or not they are reaching the students.

Tressa: Students wanted a longer program, so it was changed from five weeks to six weeks with a paid internship at the end (working while completing final week of training)

Lyndia: People wanted more follow-up and support after beginning their jobs, so more support staff were added.

Suzanne: HomePlate was created specifically for women, because women felt there weren't enough options for them.

Q: How much academic progress can someone make in 6 weeks?

A: Tressa: Computer literacy skills assessment improve dramatically; other tests not quite as high, but basic communication and understanding increases.

Q: What is the average wage participants now make?

A: Suzanne: Beginning wage is \$8/hour, final wages between \$9.50 and \$10.50/hour on average.

Lyndia: Average wage is \$12/hour

Tressa: For PCWD, average is \$13-\$14/hour. CPHP is variable.

Nancy: \$14/hour

Q: Are additional supports necessary?

A: Suzanne: Clients live in treatment or transitional programs, and case managers connect clients to mainstream benefits

Tressa: Clients receive help with health insurance, transportation, and childcare. Most clients rely on their subsidy to meet basic expenses, and case managers are continually working with clients to secure affordable, permanent housing

Q: What is the impact of the deteriorating economy?

A: Lyndia: There is a lot of competition for entry-level jobs, but STRIVE gives clients an edge by providing them with a contact instead of just a case manager to act as a reference.

Tressa: PCWD and CPHP deals with hospital jobs, so there is lateral movement within the hospital or healthcare system.

Nancy: The healthcare industry is one of the largest, and not as affected by the economy as other industries. This insures there are usually a large number of jobs available. Non-profit jobs are much more affected by the economy.

## Panel Discussion: Partnering in Workforce Development

Marianne Pelletier is the Welfare-to-Work Coordinator at the Massachusetts Community College Executive Office (MCCEO). She oversees eleven DTA-funded welfare programs at six community college campuses. Prior to working at MCCEO, Marianne was the director of welfare-to-work programs at the Lowell Campus of Middlesex Community College.

The COMPASS Community College Collaborative at the MCCEO is the first community college program that focuses solely on homeless families, providing training and education for single mothers. COMPASS operates on the belief that partnership is the best way to assess and address factors that are keeping people from moving forward; with this in mind, COMPASS staff assess **what each client needs**, and **what each client has to offer**.

Components of COMPASS:

- Employment training in various fields: human services, EKG technician, phlebotomy, clerical/customer service
- Clients complete eight weeks of comprehensive training, and then participate in an internship that can last from a minimum of one month to a maximum of nine months
- DTA-funded
- Clients must be receiving cash benefits from DTA, and must pass a community college placement test

COMPASS emphasizes the following factors:

- Day care – COMPASS seeks day cares that will accept vouchers
- Transportation – DTA provides transportation assistance
- Control/choices for clients – case managers are called “coaches” and work with clients through their chosen employment field track
- “Life after shelter” – life skills are taught, tailored to the needs of the clients
- Budget – COMPASS offers a budget assistance program
- Job-search – coaches offer assistance with computer skills, resumes, and cover letters
- Housing – COMPASS has housing agency partnerships
- Continuing education – funding is available for tuition and books
- GED/ESL classes – available through COMPASS
- Follow-up – after employment, clients can come back to find a new job if necessary



**An obvious advantage of the community college collaborative is that it utilizes existing programs, classes, facilities, and instructors. Training and working in the community college setting helps give a sense of accomplishment to men and women who might never have envisioned themselves in an academic setting.**

Thomas Belski is the President of Employment Resources, Inc. (ERI). He oversees all departments and establishes the vision of ERI. Prior to joining ERI in 1997, Thomas served as the CEO of a community-based behavioral health organization, the director for a special education consortium, and a school principal.

Employment Resources, Inc. began twenty-five years ago, and currently serves twenty-two cities and towns in metro northeast Massachusetts. ERI staff includes no state workers, and has become a competitive model by carefully and successfully placing clients in employment positions that they can keep. ERI staff receive incentives for accurate placement. ERI has maintained relationships with businesses that now turn to ERI for employees.

ERI clients are those that are typically difficult to place:

- 48% are immigrants or ESL
- 52% have a high school or lower degree
- 65% are minorities

ERI has several partnerships that make it successful:

- DTA
- Employers – ERI clients are hired on a temp-to-perm basis
- Community-based programs and services

Deborah Putnam is the Director of Program Development at hopeFound, the parent organization to IMPACT Employment Services. Prior to joining hopeFound, Deborah worked in community health, domestic violence programs, childcare, and other human service programs.

IMPACT Employment Services has been offering customized employment counseling services to homeless men and women in downtown Boston and Quincy, Massachusetts. The customization of the counseling includes **comprehensive employment assessment, individualized employment**

**action plans, portfolio development, training and education referrals and linkage, placement assistance, and retention support.**

IMPACT features:

- 4-6 month programs
- Individual meetings with counselors
- Group counseling
- Workshops
- Resource center
- Transportation assistance
- P.O. box mailing address and voicemail for applications
- Interview clothing
- Computer training

Anyone 18 years and older with documentation of homelessness is eligible for IMPACT – funding from federal grants, DTA, and private donors allows IMPACT to accept a higher number of clients than organizations solely funded by private donors.

IMPACT outcomes:

- 65% placement rate
- 61% of chronically homeless job seekers exited the program with employment income
- 30% of clients were placed in jobs making living wage - \$11.95/hour
- 86% retained their jobs after 3 months



**The success of IMPACT is due in large part to the overall guiding principles of the organization. These principles include: understanding that homeless people want and need to work, believing that employment is a critical strategy for ending homelessness, focusing on jobs with living wages, offering homeless job seekers the chance to choose their own jobs, tracking and responding to the local job market, and collaborating with housing/recovery programs and training providers. These principles are an excellent prototype for the vision of any workforce development program.**

IMPACT offers the following recommendations for effective collaborations:

- Secure and maintain commitment by encouraging the value of work
- Maintain ongoing and visible presence in the community and shelters
- Promote rapid engagement in employment services and activities
- Provide individualized career counseling services for all clients
- Include related support services (P.O. box, transportation, etc.)

Jerry Rubin is the President and CEO of Jewish Vocational Services. Before joining JVS, Jerry was the Vice President of Building Economic Opportunity at Jobs for the Future and Director of the National Program Office of Jobs to Careers for the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. He has extensive prior experience in economic development, and has written articles and book chapters on housing, community development and workforce development issues. He currently serves on the state Workforce Investment Board for the Governor of Massachusetts.

Jewish Vocational Services operates under the mission goal of helping people acquire jobs, succeed, and achieve self-sufficiency through advancement in a job. At the JVS's center for careers and learning, staff members focus on career advancement through basic education and training, specialized placement, and case management. JVS encourages collaboration between employers and JVS so that employees continue to get the additional life supports they need. JVS sees itself as having two customers: the clients seeking jobs, and the employers seeking qualified staff.

**CVS Regional Learning Center** is a CVS retail store set up in the JVS building as a training facility. JVS clients merge with current CVS staff to receive training and advancement opportunities.

Industries JVS focuses on:

- Health care
- Hospitality
- Retail



**Having three options lets clients choose their jobs and use their unique skills. These three industries offer entry-level jobs, advancement opportunities, and industry leadership positions.**

JVS looks at and assists with employment barriers that arise as a result of clients' backgrounds and/or the status of the economy:

- Credit issues
- CORI
- Education
- Email
- Permanent addresses
- Available shelter in other cities if job advancement requires relocation

GROUP QUESTIONS:  
PARTNERING IN WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- 1) What job training, workforce development, and education programs or agencies do you already/could you work with? Have these partnerships been successful? Why or why not?
- 2) What challenges would your community or agency face in partnering with an external stakeholder?
- 3) Based on this panel's discussion, what is the next step for your organization in partnering with a workforce development program?

Partnering in Workforce Development  
Question & Answer Session:

Q: What are the prerequisites for COMPASS?

A: Marianne: Clients must be receiving assistance from DTA. It helps if clients are English-speaking, though it is not required.

Q: What is COMPASS enrollment?

A: Marianne: Enrollment is limited by how many people DTA is currently assisting, and how many people DTA can fund through the program. The goal is to enroll 1,000 families in 2009.

Q: What are the prerequisites for COMPASS?

A: Marianne: Clients must be receiving assistance from DTA. It helps if clients are English-speaking, though it is not required.

Q: What about COMPASS funding for subsidies?

A: Marianne: Funding for subsidies is private.

Q: Does COMPASS offer childcare/transportation assistance after program completion?

A: Marianne: Clients continue to receive child care until children are 12 years old. Transportation assistance varies per case.

Q: Does DTA mandate enrollment in programs that they fund?

A: Marianne: Clients receiving DTA assistance are mandated to be in a program, but the specific program is not mandated.

Deborah: No, but by HUD definition people must prove they are homeless or newly housed.

Q: Do any of these programs have North Shore plans?

A: Marianne: Yes, COMPASS goals are statewide

Deborah: No.

Jerry: JVS follows the employees where they get jobs.

Q: Can you elaborate on "readiness for work"?

A: Deborah: A job means different things to different people. Our philosophy is to think about the job first, while working on other issues like education, housing, addiction recovery, etc. All these issues contribute to a person being "ready to work," but since employment plays a major role in these issues, it's important to keep that a major focus.

Q: Are there federal requirements for workforce development programs?

A: Thomas: There are certain federal requirements, but we can work outside the system with private funders – this allows us to maintain unique initiatives.

Q: At Employment Resources, Inc., are there incentives for staff to place people in any job or in certain wage categories?

A: Thomas: ERI staff focus on our preferred employer list – these are jobs where people will be able to advance and sustain permanent employment.

## Panel Discussion: State Workforce Development System and Homelessness

Rebekah Lashman is the Senior Vice President of Regional and Sector Pathways for the Commonwealth Corporation. She leads the Corporation's research, accountability and regional and sector strategies teams. She works to build upward mobility pathways in partnership with regional and state partners to prepare Massachusetts residents for the Commonwealth's critical vacancies. Before joining the Commonwealth Corporation, Rebekah served as a national workforce development consultant at Jobs for the Future and as a program development specialist for the Massachusetts Department of Employment and Training.

Victor Vasquez is the Assistant Commissioner for Policy and Program Management at the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA). His responsibilities include Cash Assistance and Full Engagement, the Food Stamp Program, and the Housing and Homeless Services Units. Before joining DTA, Victor served in Washington state government as the Assistant Commissioner for WorkFirst, and he also served in the Clinton Administration as an Assistant Administrator at USDA in Rural Development, responsible for launching the Rural Empowerment Zone and Enterprise Community program. Under Secretary Cohen he served as the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for the Military Community and Family Policy Office in the Office of the Secretary.

Rebekah's comments:

Massachusetts currently faces workforce challenges:

- The economy demands higher skills/education
- Population and labor force growth is flat
- The population is aging – most of these people work in healthcare, education, and manufacturing
- The workforce is losing people in the educational pipeline
- There are capacity constraints in high-demand areas – science, technology, engineering, and math skills are required for many high-demand jobs.

In response to these challenges, we must engage in a high-quality workforce supply strategy. Some features of this strategy:

- Tailor workforce development programs to local and regional demands
- Use existing programs and agencies in the area
- Provide career coaching
- Offer multiple entry points that are not sequential (i.e. housing, then English-literacy, then education, then a job) – get people to start working immediately
- Case management and other resources
- Integrate literacy, numeracy, ESOL, and computer literacy skills into training
- Accelerate acquisition of certificates and degrees required for advancement
- Target entry-level positions in firms and sectors that
  - Have a persistent demand for skilled workers
  - Have adopted a “grow our own workforce” strategy
  - Are investing resources to support employee advancement



**One of the most important features of a successful workforce development program is a commitment to data collection about the people who are receiving services. Without a complete story of the target population, percentage of people served, and percentage of people employed after the program, many programs will not be able to receive funding or operate successfully. Data is essential.**

In addition to strengthening the workforce development strategy in Massachusetts, we need to build greater opportunities for shelter residents to participate in workforce development programs.

Strengths of shelter residents as participants:

- Case management resources – many shelter residents already have assigned case managers, so they would not need additional supports
- Time – shelter residents have time to participate in intensive and longer-term training
- Income – some shelter residents are eligible to receive income support and other benefits, so they can accept jobs in many wage categories

Challenges of including shelter residents:

- Many programs have work and housing search requirements that residents cannot meet
- Housing stability – without stable or long-term housing, residents may not be able to complete long-term projects or assignments
- Income – not all residents can receive income supports, so they have an immediate need for income
- Transition to work – many residents will lose benefits and income support once hired, so the transition to work can be difficult and short-lived

Victor's comments:

This is a great time to discuss workforce development collaboration because people are mobilizing. Collaboration is more effective than partnership. Some ideas for effective collaboration:

- Begin in the neighborhood/community
- At the state level, focus on how to best serve the customers, both staff and clients
- Provide access and opportunity to get jobs as both a social service and an economic response

The challenge is to adapt to the changing economy in the state. Services need to be better for employers and job-seekers. **The first step to solving the job/housing crisis is to listen – hold forums, talk to people.** Assessing outcome measures is important to track progress and make necessary changes. People should also engage in various efforts like social enterprises and transitional jobs.

# State Workforce Development System and Homelessness

## Question & Answer Session:

Q: How is the workforce development system going to be different 3 years from now?

A: Rebekah: Programs that are currently one-size will change to local/regional planning for workforce development, and integrate DTA resources in those plans. There will be more integrated approaches to training – not sequential, and having clear goals and missions. There will be more support for collaboration among organizations at the regional/local levels to resource individual needs, share case management/resource systems, and align missions. Finally, we will know the results of services in an integrated fashion – we will be collecting data spanning all regions/programs/agencies.

Q: How will DTA change in 3 years?

A: Victor: DTA will be working at the regional/local level, not just at the state level. It is working on a team of agencies to collaborate and provide services from transition to economic stability. It will be working as one team to respond to the crisis.

Q: What can DTA do to better support low-wage workers as they pursue education and training (TAFDC recipients can't receive training for very long)?

A: Victor: DTA is limited by what the law permits. But it will be as permissive as necessary to move families out of homelessness.

Q: Has there been any progress on data-tracking (wage records, etc.)?

A: Rebekah: Wage record analysis works well, and we are very close to being able to effectively use this at the state level. Confidentiality issues make it difficult, but we are working on solid trend analysis to aid in program collaboration.