

**HUD'S  
HOMELESS ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS**

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# **Coordinating Community Plans**

**MAY, 2008**

**U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development  
Office of Community Planning and Development**

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# COORDINATING COMMUNITY PLANS

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# INTRODUCTION

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## PURPOSE OF THE GUIDEBOOK

Homelessness has become an enduring presence in American society. Despite two decades of Federal support, statewide planning, and local initiatives, 754,000 people are living in emergency shelters, transitional housing, and on the street on any given night.<sup>i</sup> In recent years, driven by intersecting Federal, State, and private initiatives, the emphasis has shifted from managing homelessness to preventing and ending homelessness in communities across the country.

These efforts are multifaceted and all recognize that preventing and ending homelessness, particularly for people with disabilities, requires more than housing. Supportive services—including mental health and substance abuse treatment, health care, and vocational and employment services—are vital to helping people who are homeless achieve greater self-sufficiency and reclaim a valued role in their communities.

Employment services are especially important because homeless people want and need to work. Homeless assistance providers funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and workforce development providers funded by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) are in many ways natural allies. Workforce development providers need to develop and train a pool of qualified job candidates, and homeless assistance providers want to help their clients find work.

In most communities, however, these two systems operate independently of one another; each has its own statutory requirements, administrative structures, treatment philosophies, and funding streams. This situation has resulted largely because the homeless assistance system grew up around the needs of a specific population, while the workforce development system includes a set of mainstream services intended to serve all jobseekers and employers.

Yet, there has never been a more important time for these two systems to collaborate. The goal of preventing and ending homelessness cannot be met if people do not have a stable source of income, and most homeless people are able to work with assistance. As the current workforce ages, employers increasingly will come to rely on nontraditional workers, and they are likely to turn to the workforce development system to prepare individuals for success in competitive employment. Neither system can address these issues effectively on its own with the limited available resources. This Guidebook proposes strategies for how the homeless assistance and workforce development systems can work together to recognize and address their common goals.

## TARGET AUDIENCE

This Guidebook is aimed at two primary audiences—key stakeholders in the homeless assistance, and workforce development systems. Within these systems, a number of specific individuals and groups will benefit from the provided information. They include the following:

- Continuum of Care planning groups
- Consolidated Plan committees

- State and community groups developing long-term plans to end homelessness
- Homeless assistance providers
- State and local Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs)
- One-Stop Career Center operators and partners

The information also will be helpful for an expanded set of partners that are likely to collaborate with organizations within the homeless assistance and workforce development systems on creating employment for people who are homeless. These include State mental health planners; mental health and substance abuse treatment providers; vocational rehabilitation providers; agencies that serve veterans, youth, and people involved in the criminal justice system; and secondary and higher education providers, among others.

## LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED

This Guidebook is directed at those who may have expertise regarding either the homeless assistance or workforce development system but who have only a rudimentary knowledge of how the other system operates. The vision, mission, and goals of each system are spelled out throughout the Guidebook. However, the material is presented at an introductory level; readers are encouraged to consult the additional resources that are cited in footnotes and endnotes in each chapter. The HUD and DOL websites also may be useful. See [www.hudhre.info](http://www.hudhre.info) for more information on homeless assistance programs and [www.dol.gov](http://www.dol.gov) for further details about the workforce development system.

## HOW THE GUIDEBOOK IS ORGANIZED

Four substantive chapters follow this Introduction. Though the chapters can be read independently of one another, each builds on the one that precedes it to help readers understand key issues, barriers, and strategies involved in planning a collaborative effort between the homeless assistance and workforce development systems.

- **Chapter 1: Understanding the Link between Homelessness and Joblessness**, explains how homelessness and joblessness are inextricably linked and introduces the importance of collaborative community planning.
- **Chapter 2: Community Planning Structures and Documents**, defines and describes community plans to address homelessness and workforce planning and begins to suggest ways that groups involved in these planning efforts can work together.
- **Chapter 3: Essential Features of Collaborating on Homelessness/Workforce Development Issues**, provides specific strategies to guide collaborative homeless assistance and workforce development planning at both the system and program level.
- **Chapter 4: Evaluating Outcomes of Combined Homeless and Workforce Planning Systems**, examines how data collection can be integrated between the

homeless assistance and workforce development systems to better reflect the needs of homeless jobseekers.

## USING THE GUIDEBOOK

There is more than one way to use this Guidebook. Where you start reading and what you get out of it will depend on where you are in the process of implementing a collaborative effort to support employment for people who are homeless. Here are some examples:

- If you are just beginning to think about collaborating with your partners in the homeless assistance or workforce development system but are not yet ready to begin, you can use this Guidebook as a springboard for discussion. Share it with your coworkers or others you believe will have a vested interest in this topic, and talk about it informally or at initial meetings of your stakeholder group.
- When you are ready to begin collaborating, you can use the material in the chapters that follow to develop a checklist of the activities you need to consider. The section titled “Steps in Planning a Collaborative Local Effort” in Chapter 3 may be particularly useful. Also, you might want to pay special attention to the discussion of developing a coordinated community assessment in Chapter 4.
- Finally, it is not too late to use this Guidebook even if you have already begun implementing a joint homeless assistance/workforce development planning activity. In particular, material that highlights the elements of successful collaborations may help your planning group determine how much progress you have made and whether you are achieving your stated objectives.

Putting homeless people to work is both a humanitarian way to help prevent and end homelessness and a smart business practice that ensures the economic vitality of our communities. The time to do so is now.

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<sup>i</sup> U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2007, February). *The annual homeless assessment report to Congress*. Washington, DC: Author.

# CHAPTER 1: UNDERSTANDING THE LINK BETWEEN HOMELESSNESS AND JOBLESSNESS

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## WHAT THE CHAPTER IS ABOUT

Homelessness and joblessness are inextricably linked. Stated simply, being homeless makes it difficult to find a job and not having a job makes it difficult to find and maintain a home. This chapter provides an overview of the nexus between homelessness and joblessness, with a particular focus on individual and systemic barriers that make it difficult for homeless people to find and keep a job. The chapter also introduces the importance of addressing the twin challenges of homelessness and joblessness through a collaborative community planning process that involves both the homeless assistance and workforce development systems.

If you participate as part of a homeless assistance or workforce development planning committee, or if you are interested in finding solutions to homelessness through addressing poverty, this chapter will help you understand the following:

- How homelessness and joblessness affect each other
- The barriers to employment experienced by people who are homeless and how to overcome these challenges
- Why collaboration in planning across homeless assistance and workforce development systems is important

## THE NEXUS BETWEEN HOMELESSNESS AND JOBLESSNESS

First and foremost, homeless people are usually poor. Those who have serious mental illnesses and co-occurring substance use disorders, a group that comprises a significant portion of the population considered to be chronically homeless,<sup>1</sup> are among the poorest in the country. They have significant barriers to work, and their inability to find and keep a job may lead to, or make it difficult to escape from, homelessness. These barriers are explained in more detail in the next section of this chapter.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A chronically homeless person is defined as “an unaccompanied homeless individual with a disabling condition who has either been continuously homeless for a year or more, or has had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past 3 years.” This definition is shared by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, as provided in Notice of Funding Availability for the Collaborative Initiative to Help End Chronic Homelessness/Federal Register, Vol. 68, No. 17/Monday, January 27, 2003, 4019.

<sup>2</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the characteristics and service needs of homeless people, see Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2003). *Blueprint for change: Ending chronic homelessness for persons with serious mental illnesses and/or co-occurring substance use disorders*. DHHS Pub. No. SMA-04-3870. Rockville, MD: Center for Mental Health Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

Further, homeless people are socially isolated, which, like poverty, is both a cause and result of homelessness. In the United States, work is an important way in which people define their role in society. Work also is central to developing relationships and support systems within a community. As a result, not having a job can lead to isolation and disengagement. For people who are homeless and have a mental illness or substance use disorder, lack of a support system often negatively affects their motivation to participate in treatment or recovery and results in poorer housing and employment outcomes.

Housing and employment alone are not a panacea for preventing and ending homelessness. Nevertheless, provided together with supportive services, such as treatment for mental and substance use disorders, they provide the very foundation for people to once again be productive members of their communities. Having a job that provides regular income helps people find and stay in stable housing, increasing their self-sufficiency and reducing reliance on scarce public funding for housing and cash assistance. Conversely, having a home provides the stability that makes it more likely that people will participate in treatment and support services, which improves their success in competitive employment. Understanding this nexus is important to craft effective solutions that will help prevent and end homelessness through employment.

### **How Everyone Benefits from Increased Employment**

Studies consistently show that investments in programs that keep people in stable housing yield positive results for individuals and communities. Much of this research has been conducted in the context of housing programs, such as supportive housing, that offer access to a wide range of services as part of a comprehensive approach to improving housing outcomes. Results indicate that providing supportive services—including vocational rehabilitation and employment services—to people in housing is effective in achieving residential stability, improving mental health and recovery from substance abuse, and reducing the costs of homelessness to the community.<sup>ii</sup>

<b>Employment Beneficiaries</b>
Homeless persons
Employers
Workforce development agencies
Homeless assistance providers

In addition to saving scarce resources in the public sector, increasing employment among people who are homeless may also bolster the economy by providing potential new workers. The average age of people in the workforce is expected to increase significantly over the next 10-15 years, and many industries anticipate significant worker shortages during this time. In fact, a recent survey by the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) found that 58 percent of its members currently rank hiring, retaining, and maintaining the skills of their workforce as their most significant problem. In the same survey, two-thirds of NAM members said that tight labor markets are forcing employers to “use non-traditional populations like students and the long-term unemployed” to fill job vacancies. It is noteworthy that among those surveyed, 42 percent reported that they cannot find qualified entry-level workers.<sup>3</sup>

Meeting these private sector workforce needs creates an important opportunity for people who are homeless, including those with disabilities and for the service systems charged with

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<sup>3</sup> See the complete survey results at:  
[http://www.name.org/s\\_nam/doc1.asp?CID=179&DID=222894#WF%20Issues](http://www.name.org/s_nam/doc1.asp?CID=179&DID=222894#WF%20Issues).

supporting these individuals. The role and potential value to employers of thousands of people who are homeless are important, and these individuals can be engaged and supported to help address current and anticipated workforce shortages.

Unfortunately, planning related to homelessness and even workforce development initiatives often fail to take advantage of this opportunity, remaining instead in planning “silos” that do not prioritize jobs for people who are homeless. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that State and local approaches to measuring unemployment generally focus on people who are receiving unemployment insurance or are registered with State or local unemployment agencies. People participating in mental health and/or substance abuse treatment services, or those appearing at shelters and served by homeless assistance agencies, often are not even counted when State and local unemployment rates are calculated. In addition, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) One-Stop Career Centers, which are the focal point for connecting jobseekers and employers in communities, are not required to track whether or not their clients are homeless.

### **Why People Who Are Homeless Can and Should Work**

Life on the street is, in itself, hard work. While many view people who are homeless as lazy, unmotivated, or incapable of doing real work, the truth is that surviving on the street requires a high level of organization, resourcefulness, and determination—all attributes of successful employment.

<p><b>Survival = Hard Work</b></p> <p>Organization</p> <p>Time-management</p> <p>Resourcefulness</p> <p>Determination</p>
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For example, on any given day, people who are homeless will manage complex schedules. Often, they are evicted from shelters early in the morning and make their way back before the doors close in the evening. During the day, in sweltering heat or below-zero temperatures, they need to know when and where to pick up food, what street corner offers the best chance of receiving loose change and when and where to meet with an outreach worker or case manager to talk about getting help, all with limited or no access to transportation and perhaps without even a watch. In addition, they develop and implement strategies to protect themselves from violence and their belongings from theft, even when living in a shelter or transitional facility.

The work people do while homeless, such as collecting bottles or panhandling, also requires its own set of work skills. These skills include the ability to develop and implement a plan, manage tasks and time, and make decisions to maximize the outcomes of their efforts. At a minimum, people engaged in these activities have an understanding of the “market” for their labor and “competition” for their services.

In light of this, it is perhaps not surprising that most people who are homeless want to work for pay and many do, in fact, work intermittently. A national survey of homeless assistance providers found that almost half of homeless people who used services had performed some kind of paid work during the 30 days prior to being interviewed. However, only 20 percent of those expected their job to last 3 months or more. Of those who reported income from work, 25 percent worked at a temporary or day labor job, 8 percent reported obtaining money through jobs outside of the mainstream such as panhandling, and 2 percent earned money by peddling or selling personal belongings.<sup>iii</sup>

## **OVERCOMING CHALLENGES TO EMPLOYMENT FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE HOMELESS**

There is no question that people who are homeless or transitioning from homelessness face important challenges in finding and keeping a job. These difficulties exist at the individual, program, and system levels and have a significant effect on employment outcomes. Yet, there are proven strategies that show that these challenges are not insurmountable.<sup>4</sup>

### **Individual Challenges**

Living on the street or in a homeless shelter makes it difficult to find and keep a regular job. Not having a permanent address or telephone means job applicants cannot tell potential employers how to get in touch with them. Many employers will think twice about hiring an applicant whose address is a homeless shelter or transitional housing. Equally important, people who lack stable housing often do not have appropriate clothing and may not have regular access to showers or laundry facilities.

Some temporary and transitional housing providers, as well as programs that provide services to people living on the street, have addressed these barriers by providing individuals with a range of community resources to support employment. These include access to showers, restrooms, and laundry facilities; independent use of telephones or voice mail boxes for receiving messages from potential employers; an address or post office box for receiving mail; and professional clothing.

Many people who are homeless also lack personal documentation and identification, including Social Security numbers, birth certificates, and State-issued identification cards, which are required for employment in most jobs. Community providers and case managers can help these individuals acquire copies of needed personal documentation, in part by developing collaborative relationships with State agencies that keep vital statistics records or issue identification.

In addition to the logistical challenges created by a life on the streets, many people who are homeless have disabilities, such as mental illnesses or co-occurring substance use disorders, which may significantly affect their ability to find and keep a job. These challenges include the following:

- Psychiatric or physical impairments that affect an individual's ability to meet the cognitive, interpersonal, or physical demands of work
- Alcohol or drug abuse and dependency, which may decrease motivation to work, impede efforts to find a job, cause a person to fail pre-employment drug screening, undermine job performance, or serve as grounds for dismissal from work

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<sup>4</sup> Many of these challenges and strategies are discussed in more detail in Shaheen, G., Williams, F., & Dennis, D. (Eds.). (2003). *Work as a priority: A resource for employing people who have a serious mental illness and who are homeless*. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

- Experiences as victims of physical or sexual abuse and other forms of trauma that make it difficult for individuals to trust people who are trying to help them
- Criminal history or other experiences with the criminal justice system that may exclude eligibility for some jobs and make individuals reluctant to even apply
- Fear of losing entitlements such as Medicaid and food assistance

Homeless assistance providers are in an excellent position to prepare individuals who have one or more of these barriers to receive and benefit from workforce services by doing the following: 1) providing or referring their clients to mental health and substance abuse treatment, including integrated treatment for mental illnesses and co-occurring substance use disorders; 2) coaching them in how to complete job applications; 3) counseling them (or referring them to other providers who can) about the impact of work on their public benefits, such as housing assistance, Medicaid and Medicare, and income supports; and 4) offering long-term, follow-up employment assistance.

Some homeless assistance programs have implemented evidence-based employment practices, such as supported employment that integrates treatment, case management, and employment supports in a single location with services provided by an integrated team. Research demonstrates that this model helps people find a job, stay employed, and earn greater income.<sup>iv</sup>

### **Program Challenges**

The most significant challenges to employment for people who are homeless sometimes come from the very programs designed to help them. Staffs in programs that serve homeless people often believe that their clients are either too disabled or unmotivated to work. Others provide employment services but do not maximize their potential because they are not adequately linked to case management, treatment, and other essential services. Still other programs fail to acknowledge the unique cultural and ethnic characteristics that affect a person's relationship to work.

Those programs that have addressed these challenges successfully assess a client's readiness for work following three important principles: 1) assume employability wherever possible; 2) introduce a "slow entry ramp to employment," offering temporary, flexible in-house work if necessary to build skills and confidence; and 3) assess work readiness in real work situations, because many people perform differently in competitive employment than in sheltered or prevocational environments. These programs also include formerly homeless people as staff to act as mentors to clients and to provide important cultural and personal perspectives. The importance of involving consumers of services is discussed in more detail in the last section of this chapter.

If homeless assistance providers sometimes fail to consider employment as an important goal for people who are homeless, workforce development providers, such as staff in One-Stop Career Centers, may be even more reluctant to do so. Workforce development providers are funded based on the ability of their clients to meet employment goals that are standardized for the general population and may be difficult for homeless people to meet. As discussed in later chapters of this Guidebook, these performance standards are a disincentive to serve people who are homeless, but they also can be a reason to collaborate with the homeless assistance

system to help prepare people with significant barriers to work for competitive employment. Available jobs and job training programs that are prepared to address the unique needs of people who are homeless can help them realize their potential as valuable members of their communities.

### **System-Level Challenges**

At the system level, multiple government agencies and funding sources result in disparate priorities, reporting requirements, and regulations for the delivery of services to people who are homeless and jobless. The result is a fragmented network of multiple service providers, leading not only to service gaps but to inefficiencies and duplication as well. Often, collaboration can break down the silos in which individual programs operate to promote a system better designed to meet the needs of homeless jobseekers.

For example, the process to obtain disability benefits from the Social Security Administration (SSA) can be lengthy and complex, and denial of benefits upon initial application is common. Efforts to obtain SSA disability benefits for homeless people are now supported by the HHS Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) through SOAR (SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery). The SOAR technical assistance initiative provides case managers with tools to assist clients in preparing and submitting their applications.<sup>5</sup>

People, whose SSA benefits applications have been approved, however, may be reluctant to work for fear of losing their hard-won benefits. Together, SSA and DOL fund the Disability Program Navigator program to better inform SSA beneficiaries and other people with disabilities about the work support programs available at DOL-funded One-Stop Career Centers. The Navigators serve as resources on SSA's work incentives and employment support programs.

Perhaps the most significant system-level barrier to employment is the stigma that surrounds people who are homeless, especially if they also have a mental illness or substance use disorder. Such negative attitudes may affect an employer's hiring decisions, but these misconceptions can be addressed effectively through direct experiences with people who are homeless or through a marketing strategy aimed at employers. Because businesses participate in driving local workforce development policies, endorsements from the business community can set the stage for developing policies that help get people who are homeless back into the job market. In addition, homeless assistance and workforce development providers can support enforcement of key provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to make jobs in the public and private sectors more accessible to people who are homeless and have disabilities.

<p><b>Overcome employer misconception through:</b></p> <p>Opportunities for direct experience with homeless people</p> <p>Marketing strategy</p>
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## **THE IMPORTANCE OF COLLABORATIVE COMMUNITY PLANNING**

Across the country, homeless assistance and workforce development systems face several common problems that cannot be solved by any one system alone. They include the following:

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<sup>5</sup> To learn more about SOAR, visit [www.prainc.com/soar/](http://www.prainc.com/soar/).

- **Severe shortage of affordable housing.** The growing gap between the number of affordable housing units and the number of people needing them has led to high rent burdens, overcrowding, substandard housing, and homelessness.
- **Lack of discharge planning.** Large numbers of people become homeless after being discharged from hospitals and treatment facilities, released from jails and prisons, or “aging out” of the foster care system without adequate community services to support them. These individuals have an especially difficult time finding homes and jobs.
- **Need for comprehensive prevention efforts.** Most agencies and local governments recognize the importance of prevention but do not know how to identify all stakeholders and collaborate across governments, community agencies, and service systems to develop a community-wide strategy to prevent, rather than respond to, homelessness.<sup>6</sup>
- **Scarce resources.** The critical gap between the need for homeless services and employment assistance and the resources available require service systems to be especially efficient, targeting each dollar to achieve maximum outcomes. Collaboration can help stretch limited resources.

Both homeless assistance and workforce development systems need to address these challenges in order to achieve their respective goals of preventing and ending homelessness and meeting the needs of employers and jobseekers.

### ***Preventing Homelessness among Youth***

Every year, more than 20,000 adolescents “age out” of the foster care system or become legally independent. This time is a challenging one for young adults who have few resources on which to fall back. In fact, 25 percent of former foster children report being homeless at least one night within a few years after leaving foster care.<sup>v</sup>

State and local Workforce Investment Boards and One-Stop Career Centers are critical partners in any collaborative effort to help prevent homelessness among youth who leave foster care. Other key stakeholders include State and local housing planners, foster care and child protection agencies, schools and school districts, police and courts, residential service providers, and former foster care youth. The purposes of this collaboration are to provide effective alternatives to homelessness while helping youth set realistic goals for independence, including education and career goals, and develop a plan for achieving them.

Workforce development programs can provide needed resources to support a youth’s transition to independence through work. In turn, collaborating with schools, foster care agencies, and other service providers will supply the workforce development system with expertise needed to improve services for this important group of clients.

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<sup>6</sup> For a comprehensive look at strategies to prevent homelessness, see Burt, M. (2005). *Strategies for preventing homelessness*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

## **Benefits of Collaboration**

Collaborating across systems to address common challenges can minimize duplication, improve each system's understanding of the scope and responsibilities of other service systems, and help address budget and service gaps. The homeless assistance and workforce development systems are designed to address unique sets of priorities that rarely overlap; however, changing priorities require increased collaboration. For example, most Continuum of Care projects serving people who are homeless were funded initially because they served a “special” population whose needs were not being met with mainstream resources. Substantial funding was provided for non-housing activities, such as employment services. However, to increase critically needed resources for housing, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is now placing greater emphasis on funding housing activities and advising homeless assistance providers to increase their efforts to access the resources of mainstream service agencies, including those whose principal mission is to provide employment services. The need for close working relationships between the homeless assistance and workforce development systems has never been more critical. A discussion of how to achieve effective collaborations is provided in Chapter 3 of this Guidebook.

## **Involving Consumers in Planning and Implementation**

An important component of all effective collaborations among homeless assistance and workforce development systems is the involvement of consumers of services—including people who are or have been homeless and people with disabilities—in every aspect of service planning, delivery, and evaluation. Services are improved when consumers have roles in design and implementation because they have first-hand knowledge of what works and what does not.

In particular, consumers often create and perpetuate a “customer orientation” in service delivery, and their involvement reduces stigma, increases consumer engagement and retention in programs, and provides unique perspectives about linkages to the community and alternative resources.<sup>vi</sup> Meaningful roles for those who have experienced homelessness in helping to shape joint homeless assistance and workforce planning will result in better, more informed decisions that are relevant to the needs and interests of the people they are intended to serve.

HUD has recognized the importance of consumer involvement, requiring the inclusion of low-income residents in the Consolidated Planning process and encouraging communities developing Continuums of Care to involve people who are homeless. Long-term plans to end homelessness and workforce development plans could benefit from consumer involvement, although they are not required to do so. Chapter 2 explains these planning processes in more detail.

There are many challenges to meaningful involvement by consumers, including the consumers' limited time and resources, concerns about stigma from disclosing their disabilities or the use of services, and lack of experience participating in such activities. In addition, many consumers will be unfamiliar with language and acronyms used by other system stakeholders and may be uncomfortable with certain terms and labels used.

One way to address these challenges is to avoid tokenism by ensuring that enough consumers participate to provide a supportive atmosphere and a diversity of consumer perspectives. Other approaches to securing consumer involvement include gathering input through focus groups and surveys; inviting provider agency staff who are formerly homeless to participate in planning;

sharing planning goals, objectives, and Memoranda of Understanding with interested consumers and requesting feedback; and hiring consumers to collect information from their peers. Additional approaches to supporting consumer involvement are discussed in several existing guidebooks and references.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>ii</sup> Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2003). *Blueprint for change: Ending chronic homelessness for persons with serious mental illnesses and/or co-occurring substance use disorders*. DHHS Pub. No. SMA-04-3870. Rockville, MD: Center for Mental Health Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

<sup>iii</sup> Burt, M.R., Aron, L.Y., Douglas, T., Valente, J., Lee, E., & Iwen, B. (1999). *Homelessness: Programs and the people they serve*. Washington, DC: Interagency Council on the Homeless.

<sup>iv</sup> Shaheen, G., Williams, F., & Dennis, D. (Eds.). (2003). *Work as a priority: A resource for employing people who have a serious mental illness and who are homeless*. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

<sup>v</sup> Cook, R., Fleishman, E., & Grimes V. (1991). *A national evaluation of the Title IV-E foster care independent living programs for youth: Phase 2. Final Report, Volume 1*. Rockville, MD: Westat, Inc.

<sup>vi</sup> Prescott, L. (2001) *Consumer/survivor/recovering women: A guide for partnerships in collaboration*. Delmar, NY: Policy Research Associates, Inc.

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<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Deegan, P., & Anderson, D. *How to successfully include people with psychiatric disabilities on boards and committees: Overcoming the barriers and providing support*, available at [www.patdeegan.com](http://www.patdeegan.com).

# CHAPTER 2: COMMUNITY PLANNING STRUCTURES AND DOCUMENTS

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## WHAT THE CHAPTER IS ABOUT

Successful collaboration between the homeless assistance and workforce development systems requires each system to understand the other's processes and plans. In addition, planners in both systems need to understand the constraints under which their partners operate. This chapter defines and describes community plans to address homelessness and workforce planning and begins to suggest ways that groups involved in developing homeless assistance and workforce plans can collaborate to meet the needs of homeless jobseekers.

As a member of the homeless assistance or workforce development system, this chapter will help you:

- Understand the processes and plans that drive the work of both systems
- Appreciate some of the constraints under which each system operates
- Become more aware of other planning processes that may be appropriate vehicles for meeting the needs of homeless jobseekers

## COMMUNITY PLANS TO ADDRESS HOMELESSNESS

Addressing homelessness requires collaboration between and among all levels of government—Federal, State, and local—as well as providers, advocates, researchers, and consumers of services. In the recent past, the emphasis was on managing homelessness by coordinating services within housing, homelessness, and disability systems and integrating those services to better meet the needs of people who are homeless. Currently, the focus in policy and practice has shifted from managing homelessness to preventing homelessness for all individuals and families and ending chronic homelessness, in part by connecting homeless people to mainstream services such as employment.

The plans discussed in this section are both a catalyst for, and the result of, this emphasis shift. These plans represent the efforts of States and communities to create coordinated, comprehensive, and integrated systems of care that are designed to prevent and end homelessness for individuals of all ages.

### Addressing Homelessness in State and Local Plans

- √ Continuum of Care plans
- √ Long-term plans to end homelessness
- √ Workforce Investment Board plans
- √ Consolidated Plans
- √ State Mental Health Plans

## The Continuum of Care<sup>8</sup>

In 1987, Congress passed the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act (P.L. 100-77) to address the growing problem of homelessness in the country. Now known as the McKinney-Vento Act, this legislation was the first and, to date, the only comprehensive Federal legislation to address homelessness. It authorized funding for homeless assistance programs administered by Federal agencies, including the U.S. Departments of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Health and Human Services (HHS), Labor (DOL), Education (ED), and Veterans Affairs (VA).

Originally, McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance funds were distributed directly to governments and community agencies through a national competition, with the largest share of the programs funded by HUD. There was no requirement for coordinated planning to receive these funds, which led to duplication and fragmentation of homeless services in many communities.

In 1994, with the involvement of stakeholders around the country, HUD introduced the Continuum of Care planning process to encourage communities to address the problems of housing and homelessness in a more coordinated and strategic fashion. This comprehensive approach encourages communities to identify and prioritize gaps in the housing and services available for people who are homeless. It also enables communities to develop long-term strategies and action plans to address these gaps using McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance funds from HUD and other Federal, State, and local resources. The strategic planning conducted through this process also forms the basis of a State's or community's Continuum of Care plan and application to HUD for McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance funds.

### The Components of a Continuum of Care

The fundamental components of a Continuum of Care include prevention, outreach, emergency shelter, transitional housing, permanent housing and permanent supportive housing, and supportive services. HUD funds three competitive programs that address many of these components:

- The **Supportive Housing Program** (SHP) provides supportive housing and/or supportive services for people who are homeless.
- The **Shelter Plus Care Program** (S+C) provides rental assistance for people with disabilities who are homeless.
- The **Single-Room-Occupancy Program** (SRO) provides rental assistance in connection with moderate rehabilitation of single-room-occupancy dwellings for people who are homeless.

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<sup>8</sup> Portions of this section are adapted from *How to Be a "Player" in the Continuum of Care* (2001), prepared by the Technical Assistance Collaborative, Inc., Boston, and Advocates for Human Potential, Inc. Delmar, NY. [www.tacinc.org/Docs/HH/ContinuumofCareGuide.pdf](http://www.tacinc.org/Docs/HH/ContinuumofCareGuide.pdf)

### The Continuum of Care Planning Process

The Continuum of Care planning process has to be structured in such a way that the community can meet local needs while achieving HUD's goals for Continuum of Care systems.

Characteristics of a successful process include the following:

- Maximum participation in the planning process by all interested parties
- A process for identifying the extent of the needs and gaps in services for people who are homeless, especially regarding permanent housing
- A strategy to achieve the community's long-term goals, particularly to end chronic homelessness

### *Organizing the Planning Process*

Successful Continuums have an organizational structure that supports a year-round planning process, monitors and adjusts the performance of the Continuum of Care system, objectively decides which projects to recommend to HUD for renewal or new funding, and coordinates with other planning efforts. The planning process needs to be as inclusive as possible and involve a broad range of stakeholders that include government and business representatives, homeless assistance providers, providers of mainstream services (including housing, employment, and mental health and substance abuse treatment), advocates, and consumers of services, among others. One way to engage workforce planners is to have a representative of the State and/or local Workforce Investment Board on the Continuum of Care planning group. Discussion of the workforce development system follows in this chapter.

The Continuum of Care process needs a lead entity. Ideally, this will be an organization that has the ability to schedule and hold meetings and, with the help of the other members of the Continuum, organize and lead the needs assessment, identify service needs and select projects, assess the performance of providers, complete the application, and produce planning materials.

Once a lead entity is chosen, the Continuum of Care group creates a governing structure. The governing process frequently is conducted through a steering committee or governing board. It is important that the membership of the governing committee is decided through an open and democratic process and is representative of both the private and public sectors.

### *Community Needs Assessment*

A competitive Continuum of Care application is best achieved by having a real and meaningful planning process that includes a comprehensive community assessment. The goal is to have requests for funding match genuine need in the community. In order to make that happen, the community needs accurate data about the following:

- The numbers of homeless people
- Their housing and service needs, including employment services
- The current capacity of the homeless assistance system

- Current and potential capacity in the mainstream housing, clinical, and employment services systems
- Gaps in each area

Typically, communities collect data during a routine point-in-time count of homeless people<sup>9</sup> and assess their housing and service needs. Also, many communities have a functioning Homeless Management Information System (HMIS,) which offers a community-wide perspective on who is being served, by whom, and for how long as well as referral patterns and outcomes for individuals. Data collection and outcome measurement are discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

### *Prioritizing Projects for Funding*

The process of selecting and ranking projects must be objective and defensible, and basing decisions on solid data is a good way to demonstrate a rational decision-making process. Increasingly, communities are held accountable for the performance of service providers in the Continuum of Care system. Therefore, communities need to have a way to assess and consider provider performance when making selection and ranking decisions. Performance regarding compliance with HUD rules has to be considered. Also, there needs to be a system for assessing provider performance within the Continuum of Care planning process.

#### **Project Selection and Ranking**

- Objective
- Defensible
- Based on solid data
- Considers provider performance

### Coordination with Other Planning Processes

The Continuum of Care provides the primary strategic planning vehicle for addressing homelessness in most communities.

However, because other strategic planning efforts concerning homelessness, employment, affordable housing, and mainstream services are likely to affect a Continuum's effectiveness, coordination among these planning processes ensures a more efficient use of the limited resources available to address homelessness. To this end, HUD has stressed, through its annual Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA), the importance of integrating and aligning multiple community planning activities into Continuum of Care plans. In addition, though the Continuum of Care application is required only to access HUD's Homeless Assistance funds, many other agencies within the Federal government encourage or require their grantees to participate in the Continuum of Care process.

Due to the central role the Continuum of Care plays in coordinating homeless assistance, the Continuum of Care planning process does not end when the annual application is submitted. A functioning Continuum of Care system includes maintenance of the provider network, coordination of meetings and product development, review of ongoing policies regarding homelessness and impacts on homeless people, overview of the quality of the homeless

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<sup>9</sup> A point-in-time count is an unduplicated one-night count or estimate of sheltered and unsheltered adults, children, and youth, designed to help communities understand the number and characteristics of people sleeping in shelters and on the street or in other places not meant for human habitation. For more information, see [www.hud.gov/webcasts/2006-10-10b.pdf](http://www.hud.gov/webcasts/2006-10-10b.pdf).

assistance system, administration of and regular reports from the HMIS, and ongoing coordination with other planning processes.

### Long-Term Plans to End Homelessness

In 2000, the National Alliance to End Homelessness announced its Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness, urging communities to develop detailed plans to end homelessness locally. Since that time, more than 300 jurisdictions around the country, from small towns to large cities like New York and Chicago, have created or are in the process of developing plans to end chronic homelessness or all homelessness in their communities. Plans to end homelessness involve identifying in detail the resources needed to prevent homelessness, move people who do become homeless back into housing quickly and connect them to mainstream services, and make progress on issues of affordable housing and income. The identification of resources is followed by concrete action steps, commitments of the necessary resources, and timelines for completion. Many long-term plans emphasize economic self-sufficiency for individuals, though specific employment goals may not be spelled out.

Typically, such plans are crafted by a coalition of key stakeholders that may already be meeting together as members of a State or local Interagency Council on Homelessness, or by a group that is brought together for this purpose. The process may be promoted and led by members of the business or provider community or by a unit of State or local government. An inclusive planning process ensures a more comprehensive plan and greater buy-in on the part of community members.

Unlike the Continuum of Care plans, these long-term plans are not a prerequisite to receive HUD Homeless Assistance funding. However, in its annual Continuum of Care grant competition, HUD encourages the coordination of Continuum of Care plans with other community plans related to homelessness.

**Inclusive planning leads to:**

- More comprehensive plan
- Greater community buy-in
- Better coordination with other community plans

## WORKFORCE PLANNING<sup>10</sup>

The workforce development system, administered at the Federal level by DOL, is facilitated in each State by the State Workforce Investment Board (WIB) and locally by the local WIB. These entities were created to implement the key requirements of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998 to provide jobseekers with access to employment and training opportunities and to link employers to a pool of qualified applicants.

One of the key features of Title 1 of the WIA, which replaced the Job Training Partnership Act, is the creation of One-Stop Career Centers where jobseekers can access a broad range of employment-related and training services in a single, central location. Designated agencies that traditionally have provided services to different groups—such as welfare recipients, youth, and

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<sup>10</sup> Portions of this section are adapted from *The Workforce Investment Act of 1998: A Primer for People with Disabilities* (1999), prepared by the John H. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, for the Rehabilitation and Training Center on Employment Policy for People with Disabilities. [www.heldrich.rutgers.edu/Resources/Publication/40/Primer.pdf](http://www.heldrich.rutgers.edu/Resources/Publication/40/Primer.pdf)

people with disabilities—are required to integrate access to their services for jobseekers through the One-Stop Career Centers. These services include job search and placement assistance services (core services), more intensive services for people who need them, training and supportive services.

State vocational rehabilitation offices, employment service agencies, and public assistance programs are among the mandated partners that serve clients in the One-Stop system. A vocational rehabilitation office is a key partner because its counselors help people, who have physical or mental disabilities that represent a substantial impediment to employment, prepare for and keep a job. Vocational rehabilitation counselors may be onsite at a One-Stop Career Center or available through referral.<sup>11</sup> Though not mandated to participate, other One-Stop partners may include community colleges and public school systems.

Like their counterparts in the homeless assistance system, leaders in the workforce

development system engage a broad group of individuals and organizations that have a stake in the process. A State WIB is required to have a majority of business representatives but also to include education providers, labor organizations, community-based organizations (including those representing people with disabilities), economic development agencies, and each of the mandated One-Stop partners. Elected officials and consumers of services also may serve on a State or local WIB.

**Prioritizing Homelessness  
at the State Level**

Unless people who are homeless are identified as a priority at the State level, prioritization in local workforce planning will be difficult.

### State Workforce Planning

The State WIB is charged with creating a five-year strategic plan (the State Plan) to guide workforce development policy for the State. To do so, the State WIB typically conducts a process that does the following:

- Targets the workforce needs of all residents, especially low-income people, as well as the labor needs of employers
- Identifies key areas of growth for the labor market across the State
- Encourages stronger links between the community college, university, and vocational training communities and workforce system
- Identifies methods for recruiting more employers and diverse industries into the State
- Targets required coordination with certain populations, such as youth and disabled individuals

Other than homeless youth, who are included in the DOL guidelines as a population that has to be addressed, there is very little emphasis in workforce planning on the employment needs of people who are homeless. Some States, such as California, have prioritized the workforce

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<sup>11</sup> For a list of State vocational rehabilitation offices, see [www.jan.wvu.edu/SBSES/VOCREHAB.HTM](http://www.jan.wvu.edu/SBSES/VOCREHAB.HTM).

needs of homeless people through the 15 percent “set-aside” funds that are reserved to be used at the Governor’s discretion, but this is not common.

The WIB planning process is intended to strengthen linkages between mandated partners within the system, focusing in particular on the delivery of services within the One-Stop Career Centers. In addition, the WIB pursues partnerships with qualified organizations that can develop innovative approaches to workforce issues. Further, the WIB is asked to identify specific priorities that require immediate attention and to ensure that any policy and funding barriers are removed. When the State Plan is complete, the WIB submits it for Federal approval.

### **Local Workforce Planning**

Under the requirements of the WIA, each local community must submit a baseline workforce development plan followed by a revised plan every two years. These local plans are overseen by the local WIB and are similar in structure to the State Plan. Each local plan is required to follow the primary recommendations of the State Plan, while also addressing specific community needs. As a result, some communities—including Los Angeles, New York, Boston, and Chicago—have identified homeless people as a priority population in their local workforce development plans. In addition to developing local plans, local WIBs may provide policy guidance, designate operators for their area’s One-Stop Career Centers, and oversee the job training activities within their local areas.

### **Relevant Dynamics of the Workforce Planning Process**

One important point to understand about local workforce planning efforts is the fact that they must be in compliance with those defined by a State Plan. The State Plan gives jurisdiction to communities in numerous areas to target funds based on local needs, but *unless homeless and very low-income people are identified as a priority at the State level, it will be difficult to get them identified as a funded priority at the local level.* This is different from community plans to address homelessness, which are developed independently at the local level. Other considerations that may affect collaborative planning between the workforce development and homeless assistance systems include the following:

- Employer needs often are given highest priority in many State workforce plans because they are seen as essential to the economic stability of a State and because a key State goal is to increase the overall number of jobs and types of businesses.
- Workforce planners must follow numerous directives from DOL, some of which may be inconsistent with HUD directives or regulations.
- Workforce planning usually involves the blending of numerous revenue streams, each of which may have specific eligibility criteria and requirements for how and when these monies can be spent. Sometimes, neither the workforce development nor the homeless assistance system is able to piece together funds to provide some of the services homeless people need to be successful at employment. These services include training in the non-technical skills, abilities, and interpersonal communications, sometimes referred to as “soft skills.”
- The performance standards and measures of the workforce system are standardized for the general population. Staff of One-Stop Career Centers must meet WIA

performance goals for the proportion of clients who find a job, retain a job for 90 days, earn increased wages, and receive employment credentials, usually through participation in training programs. Because these milestones may be difficult for a person who is homeless to meet, One-Stop operators may be reluctant to serve them, a topic discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

### **Coordination Between Workforce Plans and Plans to Address Homelessness**

As described above, the Continuum of Care and long-term plan processes and the documents that result are focused on the need for effective outreach, linkage to case management and clinical services, and development of permanent, affordable housing for people who are homeless. Typically, these plans are not focused on employment for homeless people. Also, with the sole exception of homeless youth, workforce development plans are not required specifically to address the needs of people who are homeless.

However, strengthening the emphasis on employment and training services in Continuum of Care and long-term plans can result in greater stability and self-sufficiency for people who are homeless, thereby addressing the goals of preventing and ending homelessness. Likewise, including the employment needs of people who are homeless in State and local workforce plans will result in closer attention to the needs of homeless people in One-Stop Career Centers and among business leaders. Specific suggestions for collaborative efforts are highlighted in detail in Chapter 3.

## **OTHER PLANNING PROCESSES**

Although coordination between workforce plans and plans to address homelessness hold the most promise for helping homeless people gain employment, there are two other plans with planning processes that can provide access to additional resources for homeless jobseekers. These planning processes pertain to the Consolidated Plan and the State Mental Health Plan.

### **The Consolidated Plan**

HUD's formula grant programs—including the Community Development Block Grant, HOME Program, Emergency Shelter Grant Program, and Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS—are governed by the Consolidated Plan. A Consolidated Plan provides the framework for States and local governments to identify housing and community and economic development needs and resources and to develop a three- to five-year strategic plan to meet specified needs, including priorities for addressing homelessness. Consolidated Plans that meet regulatory requirements must be approved by HUD.

Because the Consolidated Plan contains information on homeless subpopulations, it can be coordinated with the Continuum of Care plan. In particular, it can be used as follows:

- Planning groups may use the community's Consolidated Plan as a source of information for the "unmet needs" section of the Continuum of Care application.
- The community development section of the Consolidated Plan contains valuable information on economic development initiatives, workforce issues, and opportunities for connection to the employment and workforce systems.

- The Continuum of Care strategic plan goals addressing homelessness, in general, and chronic homelessness can be used in the development of the Consolidated Plan.
- Assessment of the employment needs of homeless people, used for the Continuum of Care and/or State or local workforce plans, can be included in the Consolidated Plan.

In addition to the State plan, many localities also have a five-year Consolidated Plan that responds to the guidance of the State plan and discusses local priorities and available funding, such as general or tax revenue funds.

Because of the breadth and depth of the Consolidated Plan, it is possible to integrate employment activities and goals into the overall intent of this plan both at the State and local level. It is also important to identify these employment priorities as an integrated component of all housing activities, with the possible use of housing funds dedicated to this purpose. Numerous States have integrated this language and intent into their Consolidated Plans, including California and New York.

### **State Mental Health Plans**

Similar to the State Consolidated Plan, all States that receive funding from the Federal Community Mental Health Services Block Grant must develop a State Mental Health Plan and must appoint a Mental Health Planning and Advisory Council (MHPAC) to oversee its development. This plan is crafted at the State level with involvement of stakeholders at the local level and is used to identify how Block Grant funds will be appropriated within the State.

The State Mental Health Plan is not focused specifically on workforce needs, but as of 2006 there is a requirement that all States discuss their plans for funding and implementing supported employment programs. Supported employment is an evidence-based practice for people with serious mental illnesses, many of whom are homeless.<sup>12</sup> In addition, the State Mental Health Plan must specify how the State will target the needs of the homeless population for housing and services.

The MHPAC has required representatives, including the State Departments of Vocational Rehabilitation and Education. As partners in the workforce development system, they may be able to introduce the employment needs of people who are homeless into the State's mental health planning process. In similar fashion, key mental health stakeholders can participate in workforce planning and in Continuum of Care and long-term plan activities.

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<sup>12</sup> For more information on supported employment, see <http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/cmhs/communitysupport/toolkits/employment>.

# CHAPTER 3: ESSENTIAL FEATURES OF COLLABORATING ON HOMELESSNESS/WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ISSUES

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## WHAT THE CHAPTER IS ABOUT

Homeless people, if they are able, want and need to work. When the homeless assistance and workforce development systems collaborate, people who are homeless get better services, including those that help them get, keep, and advance in jobs. Jobs, in turn, help individuals become productive members of their communities and maintain residential stability.

Collaborative planning to achieve the important goal of putting people to work pays off, but it takes time, effort, and resources. Stakeholders often must yield their preconceived notions and traditional ways of operating to achieve a shared vision and mission. This chapter guides policymakers and community planners by providing strategies to plan joint homeless and employment services that will result in people getting and keeping jobs.

Whether you are involved in planning services in either the homeless assistance or workforce development system, if you want to collaborate with your partners to assist homeless jobseekers, this chapter will help you:

- Understand why collaboration may be difficult but how you can use community and employment planning as incentives to work together
- Learn the key components of successful collaboration at the system level
- Assess your level of collaboration at the local level
- See how collaboration works in practice at the State and local level and how individuals and communities benefit from these efforts

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT COLLABORATION

Collaboration has been described as part of a continuum, rather than a static state, that ranges from cooperation and coordination to collaboration, and, sometimes, integration. The *Collaboration Handbook*<sup>vii</sup> defines collaboration simply as “people working together to try to get something done.” There is no one “right” way to collaborate, according to the author, but effective collaborations incorporate several key elements:

- The process is open, inclusive, transparent, accessible, and tailored to local needs.
- Meetings are civil and safe. No bullies allowed.
- Deliberations are thoughtful, frank, and never rushed.
- There is an agreed-upon way to make decisions.
- Commitments that are made are honored. Trust is built on that confidence.
- It is a team effort. You win, you lose, you [negotiate] as a team.

Keeping these elements in mind as you move forward in establishing collaborative efforts among potential partners, you undoubtedly will need to address impediments that will hinder your success. A part of overcoming these barriers is discussing with workers in the homeless assistance, workforce development, and other system why collaborations are useful and what they can achieve.

### **Barriers to Collaboration**

Traditionally, the homeless assistance and workforce development systems have operated independently to achieve separate but related goals. Each system has its own statutory requirements, administrative structures, funding streams, and treatment and support philosophies. The predictable result is that people who are homeless who could be working fall through the cracks.

For example, although homeless assistance providers well understand the treatment and rehabilitation needs of people who are homeless and are expert in creating housing with support services, they often are not attuned to the demands of the employment sector and needs of employers. Further, in most areas of the country, Workforce Investment Board (WIB) representatives do not have a seat on the Continuum of Care. Likewise, it is not yet common for Continuum members to be members of their local WIB.

The challenge for homeless assistance providers is to develop partnerships that allow them to do what they do best—outreach; engagement; treatment; housing; supportive services; and building motivation, skills, and experiences needed to help people re-enter the workplace. Conversely, the workforce development system often is better positioned than Continuum of Care providers to leverage training and jobs. Successful integration of these systems depends on the homeless assistance programs finding ways to connect their constituency with the workforce development system, and the workforce development system finding ways of fulfilling its mandate that “One-Stops work for all,” including jobseekers who are homeless.

### **Vehicles for Collaboration**

Collaborative efforts that draw on the respective expertise of each system enhance opportunities for jobseekers and stimulate ongoing partnerships. In response to the increasing need for collaboration between the systems, many homeless assistance and workforce development systems are currently collaborating to meet the employment needs of people who are homeless. Those communities that are successful in putting people to work have engaged local champions, realized the importance of employment to ending homelessness, and defined and accepted the roles and responsibilities of all key stakeholders in this effort. Many of these specific components of successful collaborations are highlighted in this chapter.

Many collaborative efforts, such as within the homeless assistance system, are driven by the requirements of the various planning documents and funding streams that govern the homeless assistance and workforce development systems. The need to collaborate in order to receive funds can be a powerful incentive. In general, homeless assistance plans, particularly those required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), require collaborative efforts to address homelessness and employment, while workforce plans do not require collaboration.

Here are some examples:

- HUD's Consolidated Plan coordinates housing and community development efforts in most large communities. As part of this larger planning activity, HUD requires efforts to enhance coordination among agencies to address the needs of homeless people for housing and employment, per the Consolidated Plan review checklist. See [www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/about/conplan](http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/about/conplan).
- The HUD Continuum of Care plan addresses both homelessness and employment (as part of the requirement to plan for supportive services), and Continuums of Care are required to enhance coordination among all partners addressing homelessness.
- Many communities that are developing or implementing long-term plans to end homelessness are including employment as a focus of their plan to end homelessness and are partnering with mainstream employment and training agencies to accomplish their goals.

Conversely, workforce plans do not require collaborative efforts between the homeless assistance and workforce development systems. Nevertheless, there are opportunities to do so, as illustrated by the following examples:

- Though there are assigned stakeholders on the WIB, there is no requirement for joint planning with the homeless assistance system. However, most local WIBs are doing some coordinated work with their partners in homeless assistance. Planned service activities for homeless youth must be addressed in the State WIB plan, though this requirement is the only one to address homelessness specifically.
- State Mental Health Plan prepared by States as a condition of receiving Federal Community Mental Health Services Block Grant funds, requires States to identify how they plan to serve individuals with mental illnesses who are homeless, and directs jurisdictions to address supported employment efforts that will occur statewide. Supported employment is considered an evidence-based practice for people with serious mental illnesses, many of whom are homeless.

## **Results of Collaboration**

Where collaboration between homeless assistance and workforce development systems is a priority, anecdotal evidence suggests the following tangible results:

- An increased number of individuals having affordable housing, employment with a living wage, and health insurance benefits
- Reduced costs to other systems (e.g., emergency rooms, inpatient treatment, etc.) as individuals with jobs and homes become stable in their community
- New resources for training and employment for the homeless assistance and workforce development systems leveraged from the mental health and rehabilitation systems and from other mainstream providers

- A reduction in service system fragmentation and enhancement of resource coordination that makes it easier for homeless people to get their basic needs met
- Replication of successful program-level collaborations by other Continuums of Care and One-Stop Career Centers

***Collaboration Yields Tangible Results***

The Jackson Employment Center (JEC) in Tucson, AZ, is one of three One-Stop Career Centers in the Pima County Community and Economic Development Department that provides a full array of employment and support services to homeless people seeking to enter the workforce. JEC has a prominent role in the City of Tucson/Pima County Continuum of Care planning process and, as such, has developed formal and informal collaborative relationships with the 40 member agencies of the Tucson Planning Council for the Homeless. In 2005, of 356 participants enrolled in the employment program at JEC and in a HUD-funded Supportive Housing Program, 75 percent secured full-time employment at an average wage of \$8.38 an hour at time of placement. A total of 74 percent retained both employment and housing at the 6-month follow-up.

## **CREATING COLLABORATIVE PLANS AT THE SYSTEM LEVEL**

Collaborative planning on behalf of homeless jobseekers takes place at both the system level, where State-level plans are created and key policy decisions are made, and at the local level, where homeless jobseekers get services. Those States that have been successful in creating collaborative, system-level plans to address the employment needs of people who are homeless share a number of common characteristics:

- First, they *recognize there is a problem*. They understand the need to build individuals' self-sufficiency and economic independence through employment as vital to ending homelessness.
- Second, they *identify and build on existing planning efforts*. In particular, States that have developed long-term plans to end homelessness have been able to attract high-level State government support and provide incentives for participating State agencies to include employment in their list of priorities.
- Third, they *examine the resources they have as well as resources they need to acquire and direct them to a new purpose*. As you will see in the examples at the end of this chapter, the ability of systems to share staff or blend resources helps promote and enhance systems change.
- Fourth, they *promote inclusive planning across systems*. This inclusion can be something as simple, but important, as having industry leaders serve on the Continuum of Care planning group and homeless assistance providers serve on the State or local WIB.

- Last but not least, each collaborative planning effort requires the existence of *visionary leadership*. Whether it comes from the office of the Governor, the lead of the Continuum of Care, or the WIB director, someone with clout and the ability to recognize, but rise above, parochial interests is a key ingredient of a successful collaboration. The need for “change agents” to lead collaborative efforts and so-called “boundary spanners” to keep them running smoothly is discussed below.

**Visionary Leadership**  
A key ingredient to successful collaboration

Ultimately, systems change takes time; perhaps the best evidence that change has occurred is when joint, collaborative planning across sectors is the norm, not the exception. Just as the realization that people who are homeless should have access to mainstream jobs as well as housing is an emerging concept, collaborative planning across homeless, workforce, and other supportive services systems is in its earlier stages throughout the country.

### Creating a Collaboration among Collaborations

The two key systems that will collaborate on behalf of homeless people who want and need to work—the homeless assistance system and the workforce development system—are themselves the products of collaborative planning. For example, both a Continuum of Care planning group and a State WIB must include multiple stakeholders, including those representing community- and faith-based organizations, the business community, education providers, advocacy groups, and individuals who are consumers of services. Also, the Department of Labor (DOL) One-Stop Career Centers are not single service entities, but rather a collaboration among co-located partners from multiple service systems. Each of these systems emphasizes inclusive planning, shared decision-making, and a commitment to the populations being served.

In fact, if you are part of either the homeless assistance or workforce development systems, many of the steps highlighted here will be familiar to you. However, the need for collaboration *between* systems imposes an additional layer of complexity that makes the following strategies for creating successful cross-system collaborations all the more important.<sup>13</sup>

#### **1. Determine which of your potential partners are affected by the problem of joblessness among people who are homeless. Gauge whether they perceive a need to change the way they do business.**

Your potential partners for a successful collaboration will include, but not be limited to, Continuums of Care, McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act programs, State and local Workforce Investment Boards, One-Stop Career Centers, and long-term plan committees, along

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<sup>13</sup> This material was adapted from *The Change Book: A Blueprint for Technology Transfer*, published in 2004 by the Addiction Technology Transfer Center (ATTC) National Office, Kansas City, MO. See [www.nattc.org/pdf/The\\_Change\\_Book\\_2nd\\_Edition.pdf](http://www.nattc.org/pdf/The_Change_Book_2nd_Edition.pdf). There is also an excellent set of tools on systems integration for people with multiple needs developed by the National Technical Assistance Center for State Mental Health Planning, available at [www.nasmhpd.org/publications.cfm#changeagent](http://www.nasmhpd.org/publications.cfm#changeagent).

with a broad range of State and local agencies. These include agencies that serve people with low incomes and those who are homeless, community- and faith-based organizations, business leaders, advocates, and consumers of services (see the list of key stakeholders below). In each case, these individuals and organizations may, or may not, understand that addressing joblessness is important to resolving homelessness. Further, even if they understand the importance of this issue, they may not perceive a need to do things differently. Your success in planning collaborative efforts will depend, in part, on your ability to educate all the players about how they and their clients will benefit from joint activities.

## **2. Engage the opinion leaders in each group.**

In each of the organizations that will be a party to your efforts, there will be leaders who can influence policy, funding, and regulatory decisions within and across systems. They may already be meeting together, for example, as part of a local or State Interagency Council on Homelessness. These individuals are critical to the success of your efforts because they have the authority to commit the resources of their organizations and because their involvement signals to their subordinates and to other stakeholders that their agency is committed to the initiative.

## **3. Select your team members.**

If the outcome of collaborative community planning is housing, treatment and support, and employment for people who are homeless, you need to involve the key stakeholders from each of these systems. At a minimum, your collaborative efforts need to include the following:

- The State and local workforce development agency
- The Consolidated Plan Committee
- The local Continuums of Care
- The State Medicaid agency
- The Social Security Administration
- The State Housing Finance agency
- The State and local departments of mental health and substance abuse services
- The State Health Department and its providers
- The State Department of Vocational Rehabilitation and its providers
- The State Department of Corrections and its providers

Each State and community collaboration will reflect unique economic, demographic, cultural, and political conditions. However, all of the above stakeholders—as well as representatives of the employer, private, and philanthropic sectors and consumers of services—deserve a seat at the table. In particular, it is important to involve those organizations that provide medical

assistance and related services. People who are homeless have complex physical health, mental health, and substance abuse treatment and support needs that have to be addressed at the same time as employment goals. Finally, because individuals and providers have fears about the impact of employment on benefits and entitlements, your collaborative planning group will ideally include representatives of the Social Security Administration, as noted above.

When involving stakeholders, think broadly about any and all entities that engage in community planning that might have an impact on employment for people who are homeless. For example, your community may enlist the efforts of State or county economic development planners as they are at the center of initiatives to expand business growth and, therefore, jobs. The more inclusive the planning, the more likely you are to obtain commitment on the part of individuals and organizations to the overall goals of the collaboration.

#### ***Falling Through the Cracks***

Every year, some 630,000 people are released from State and Federal prisons and more than 7 million are freed from city and county jails, often with no place to go. They face a multitude of challenges, not the least of which is the fact that many housing and work options are not available to people with criminal histories. As a result, many ex-offenders end up on the streets or back in jail or prison.

Corrections, housing, and workforce development providers all serve this population. Achieving positive outcomes for their clients requires collaboration among these stakeholders and other systems providing needed services, such as treatment for mental illnesses and substance use disorders. Unfortunately, such collaboration is the exception rather than the rule in most States and communities.

In particular, corrections agencies generally are not responsible for ex-offenders following their release from jail or prison. Mental health and substance abuse treatment providers and homeless assistance agencies may be reluctant to serve people who have been incarcerated. Likewise, One-Stop Career Centers may be concerned that ex-offenders will not be able to meet required performance goals, though One-Stop operators are required to serve youth with criminal records.

Still, all of these service systems have an interest in ensuring that the resources they invest will help clients successfully obtain stable housing, find and keep a job, and stay out of jail or prison. All must be considered key stakeholders in any collaborative homeless assistance and workforce development efforts.

#### **4. Invite key stakeholders to participate in the change initiative. Decide when and where you will meet.**

System-level collaborations can take many forms. For example, the Continuum of Care planning group and State WIB can meet jointly on a regular basis or to address a particular issue, such as their role in a State or community long-term plan to end homelessness. Alternatively, individual members of a Continuum of Care planning group can be appointed to serve on a WIB and vice versa, and these individuals can report back to their respective constituents. Ideally, the cross fertilization of ideas between the homeless assistance and workforce development systems will be regular and ongoing; the particulars of how you structure your collaborative efforts will very much depend on the political, economic, and social climate in your community and the key players involved.

### **5. Plan for regular communication.**

Successful collaborations are marked by open and frequent communication and established informal and formal communication channels. In addition, communication means not only methods for disseminating information among partners but also understanding and dealing with the different “languages” that each system uses in its work. For example, the homeless assistance and workforce development systems may define in different ways what it means for someone to be successful in employment, and each will have different requirements for a comprehensive assessment. Developing consensus around community collaborative planning means establishing agreement about common terms, definitions, and acronyms.

### **6. Reconcile the differing perspectives of team members.**

One of the key challenges affecting collaborative planning between the homeless assistance and workforce development systems is being able to answer the question, “What’s in it for me?” Homeless assistance providers may believe that an individual’s treatment and support needs can best be served by providers who “know their clients best.” Likewise, staff of One-Stop Career Centers, who must meet Workforce Investment Act (WIA) performance goals for the number of people who get and keep jobs and the earnings they realize, may view people who are homeless as “not job ready” and unable to benefit from their services.

As long as each system believes that people who are homeless will be served inappropriately by the mainstream workforce system, consensus on a common mission and practices will be difficult to achieve. Stakeholder groups have to find ways to reconcile the State’s interest in responding to the needs of homeless jobseekers with its need to remain focused on building a demand-driven system to prepare workers in critical occupations. To do so, the leaders working on these issues may need to examine provisions for negotiation of performance levels that allow States to consider such factors as the characteristics of participants. States that request an adjustment in performance levels must show that there is an unanticipated circumstance, that it impacts the State’s performance, and that the adjustment request is justified.<sup>viii</sup>

## **Key Components of Successful Collaborations**

Those collaborations that are successful in putting homeless people to work share several key features:

- First and foremost, as noted earlier, they have a strong and respected leader who is able to promote common goals and shared interests. This person often is referred to as a “change agent” and is responsible for securing the commitment of key stakeholders and creating visibility for the collaboration’s activities in the broader community.
- Many successful collaborative efforts also have a person who frequently is called a “boundary spanner.” This individual spans the different cultures and languages of the homeless assistance, workforce development, and other systems and helps them communicate and work together effectively. He or she is familiar with the formal and informal norms and values of both systems and is respected by each group.

- To be successful, the partners in any collaborative effort develop a shared vision and create concrete, actionable goals and objectives to realize their vision. The vision needs to be at once simple enough to capture the complex issues at hand and comprehensive enough to engage all relevant players.
- The stakeholders in a successful collaboration share a stake in both the process and the outcome. They understand that collaboration is a dynamic process that needs to be reassessed, reaffirmed, and renewed on an ongoing basis. Stakeholders may change to reflect changing economic or political considerations.
- Finally, any successful collaboration requires sufficient resources devoted specifically to the process and outcomes of collaboration. It is unusual for any one organization or system to have funds devoted to this purpose, but many States and communities have learned to make use of limited funds by sharing staff and existing resources, where possible. See the examples at the end of this chapter for further ideas.

## BRINGING COLLABORATION HOME TO THE LOCAL LEVEL

Systems change takes time, effort, trust, and persistence. Ultimately, the effects of successful systems change are seen in improved programs and services and in positive changes in the lives of people who are served. The Federal government, responding to a renewed call to end homelessness, is taking a more collaborative approach to understanding and addressing the root causes of homelessness, which include access to affordable housing and jobs at a living wage. Though Federal agencies, including HUD and its partners, can do much to shape policy and provide leadership and financial resources that support change, it is up to States and localities to apply their own collaborative solutions to ensure that change occurs and is sustainable.

Indeed, the saying that “all politics is local” arguably applies to collaborative planning as well. Program change is driven by a shift in attitudes, resources, knowledge, and relationships that compel programs to do better and achieve their stated goals. While it is important that partners at the system level reach across to engage and partner with other stakeholders, the same holds true at the program level. Successful programs network among themselves, cross-train their staffs, and develop integrated service teams to meet the needs of homeless jobseekers.



When programs or consortia of programs begin to tackle training and job development for people who are homeless, they would do well to mirror the strategy used by Continuums of Care to build comprehensive housing solutions in communities, as noted below:

- **Understand the extent of need through data collection.** Reliable data can make the case for collaboration and shape specific activities. Key questions to ask include: How many homeless people are working? How many want to work? How many are getting job training and employment services through homeless assistance providers? Are they accessing and using the One-Stop Career Center? How many are registered for WIA services? How many use core, intensive, and training services

and what are their outcomes? When data cannot be collected routinely, there are other ways to estimate the number of homeless people being served by the workforce development system (e.g., asking these types of questions as part of a point-in-time survey).

- **Understand the gaps in service.** Resource mapping<sup>14</sup> helps determine where gaps exist and how to fill them. Key questions to ask include: Where are the gaps? Are they in employment services at outreach? In assessment? In training? In job placement and support? In retention services? In staff training? In financing? Who is responsible for addressing these gaps?
- **Prioritize needs and strategies to address short- and long-term goals.** Once you have developed an overarching vision and outlined specific goals, you need strategies to help you realize these goals. Questions to ask include: What mechanisms will you use? Which partners will you involve? What information is needed to make good decisions? What timelines, roles, and responsibilities should be considered?

All of these factors build program knowledge and capacity and provide the foundation for building a comprehensive and seamless local employment services system that addresses homeless jobseekers' multiple needs.

### **What Does Collaboration Look Like at the Local Level?**

In many respects, developing program-level collaborative planning shares some of the same considerations, methods, and priorities of collaborative planning at the systems level. The significant differences will pertain to the relative power and authority vested in Federal versus State and local parties with regard to the process; available resources earmarked for collaboration; and the impact of local rules, protocols, policies, and procedures. There is no denying, however, that collaboration among local stakeholders holds the best promise for improving housing and employment outcomes among people who are homeless.

If collaborative community planning is to succeed at the program level, the parties to the collaboration need to understand how providers already are creating partnerships to increase access to mainstream employment and what must be done to shift attitudes and build program capacity that makes work a priority in homeless assistance agencies. A draft issues brief on employment services developed for the Federal Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness (PATH) Program underscores these challenges. It provides a conceptual framework that describes the different ways in which homeless assistance providers address employment and groups the approaches in the following three categories reflecting increasing adoption and integration of employment services:

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<sup>14</sup> Resource mapping is a type of community needs assessment that focuses on identifying and cataloging local community assets/resources to meet an identified objective. The Asset-Based Community Development Institute at the Northwestern University Institute for Policy Research has a set of publications and mapping tools that can be downloaded from [www.northwestern.edu/ipr/abcd.html](http://www.northwestern.edu/ipr/abcd.html).

- **Demand-Response Approach.** This approach is characterized by the belief, on the part of staff in both the homeless assistance and workforce development systems, that jobs are appropriate only after people are stabilized in housing, clean and sober for an extended period of time, faithfully attending treatment groups, and have demonstrated that they are “job ready.” Homeless people are least likely to find and retain jobs when this approach predominates.
- **The Cooperative Approach.** This approach is marked by more formal relationships between the homeless assistance and workforce development systems. Providers in these systems may co-locate staff in each other’s agencies and use the same assessment and referral instruments. Staff is cross-trained, they attend each other’s meetings, and they help identify and obtain funding to support the joint effort to increase employment among people who are homeless. A cooperative approach can be very effective for individual jobseekers but rarely leads to sustained, system-level changes.
- **The Collaborative Approach.** This approach represents the highest level of integration between the homeless assistance system and the workforce development system and is marked by joint responsibility for engaging and supporting homeless jobseekers. Partners develop Memoranda of Understanding that clearly define their relationships and how each sector will address homelessness through employment. A collaborative system has formal mechanisms in place to fund, sustain, and measure the outcomes of activities designed to put homeless people to work, making it the most effective of the three approaches. As part of measuring performance, the State WIB sets performance measures across its workforce investment areas in consultation with DOL. Local WIBs assisting hard-to-serve populations, including people who are homeless, could consider negotiating a change in performance measures to reflect increased numbers of homeless people served.

### ***A Sector-Based Approach to Job Development***

Some communities have developed a sector-based approach to job development that works particularly well as a collaborative effort among the workforce development system, which is seeking to expand the workforce; the homeless assistance system, which has employees to provide; and employers, who need qualified and motivated workers. Here is how it works.

- Workforce developers identify employment sectors that are growing, have long-term career opportunities, and have a shortage of workers.
- Together with employers in those sectors, they determine needed skill sets for available jobs and how these match with overall capabilities of jobseekers. They develop training programs to prepare workers for these jobs.
- Workforce developers and employers cultivate relationships with stakeholders and decision makers in other sectors. For example, they develop relationships with leaders of relevant unions in the business trades.
- Stakeholders in this joint venture—including workforce developers and homeless assistance providers—negotiate policy and program changes that make access to certain jobs possible. For example, if a building trade requires someone to have a GED in order to become a union member, they identify opportunities that allow individuals to obtain a GED while pursuing entrance into the union.
- Working together, workforce developers and homeless assistance providers offer employers a qualified pool of workers and connect individuals to the long-term support they need to be productive and successful employees.

### **Steps in Planning a Collaborative Local Effort**

How do you know when you have been successful in creating collaborative local planning activities regarding employment for people who are homeless? The following steps related to strategic planning, service provision, and funding/sustainability will help you determine the extent to which you are working in a *collaborative* way with your partners in the homeless assistance and workforce development systems. Although collaboration is the ideal state, many communities will find it difficult to achieve this level of integrated service planning. The material below also points out what your system will look like if it is *coordinated* and specifies what you can do beyond that to plan a true collaboration. Because many of the strategies for collaborative planning at the local level are similar to those at the system level, readers are encouraged to consult the resources for strategic planning cited in footnote 2.

#### Strategic Planning

- **Choose a visible leader for the effort.**
  - ◆ In a **coordinated system**, there will be leadership within and potentially across systems but no formal leadership structure.

- ◆ In a **collaborative system**, you select a leader who acts as a cross-systems authority to improve programs and integrate activities. This person needs to have credibility with stakeholders in both the homeless assistance and workforce development systems and be able to marshal the personal commitment and resources of key partners to support joint activities.
- **Develop a mutually held vision across systems for employing people who are homeless.**
  - ◆ In a **coordinated system**, the homeless assistance and workforce development systems may meet regularly at a management or staff level for case management discussions, but each system will focus on its own clients and strategies.
  - ◆ In a **collaborative system**, you develop a shared mission, vision, and practices for employment services for people who are homeless between the homeless assistance and workforce development systems. Staff providing employment services in each system recognize and respect each other's vested interests but emphasize the work of the collaborative approach.
- **Institute joint planning between the homeless assistance and workforce development systems.**
  - ◆ In a **coordinated system**, clients being helped at a One-Stop Career Center may get connected to homeless assistance and vocational rehabilitation, and homeless assistance staff might refer participants to the One-Stop Career Center and offer ongoing support, but neither system has any obligation to do so.
  - ◆ In a **collaborative system**, you plan program goals, outcomes, and related strategies for employment services that are consistent across systems. You can use Memoranda of Understanding or other agreements to create a formal collaborative structure among partners.
- **Create and formalize a process for engaging and sustaining the involvement of key stakeholders.**
  - ◆ In a **coordinated system**, there is mutual understanding of the need to involve diverse stakeholders on an ongoing basis, but there may not be a process for identifying additional individuals or organizations that could be involved.
  - ◆ In a **collaborative system**, you develop a formal process to identify, involve, and support new project stakeholders who play an integral role in the strategic plan or approach (see more about engaging stakeholders in the section "Creating a Collaboration among Collaborations" in this chapter).

### Service Provision

- **Integrate supportive and employment services, including links to treatment services, benefits planning, and case management, into an individualized plan for each person.**
  - ◆ In a **coordinated system**, the homeless assistance and workforce development sectors may be seen as a resource to each other, but they plan services for their clients independently of one another.
  - ◆ In a **collaborative system**, you create an integrated service team that includes homeless assistance providers, One-Stop staff, and staff in other systems (e.g., mental health, substance abuse treatment) that serve people who are homeless. Team members work together to share information about available services and combine them to create the best possible vocational plan, individualized to each jobseeker and tailored to his or her needs. Ancillary supports (treatment, benefits counseling, etc.) are included as an integral part of each individual's plan.
- **Develop and manage customer and employer outreach and relationships.**
  - ◆ In a **coordinated system**, the homeless assistance and workforce development sectors may conduct joint outreach to customers and employers by attending job fairs, sponsoring anti-stigma efforts, and educating colleagues and employers about the abilities of people who are homeless.
  - ◆ In a **collaborative system**, you focus on building strong connections with business leaders and using employer/economic data to identify labor growth trends. To reach potential customers, you may decide to fund and support a mobile One-Stop Career Center and/or satellite One-Stops at homeless shelters.
- **Provide post-employment, wraparound supports, and job retention services.**
  - ◆ In a **coordinated system**, homeless assistance providers and One-Stop staff may meet regularly to review and refine supports for each individual, but they might not have formal agreements to provide interagency support to homeless individuals pursuing employment.
  - ◆ In a **collaborative system**, job retention is a critical support that is provided by your integrated service team. Seamless cross-sector and interagency services are available to support individuals once they are employed. It is up to the partners in a collaborative venture to determine who is responsible for follow-up support and how best to meet the ongoing needs of homeless job seekers.

### Funding/Outcome Measurement

- **Identify, obtain, and manage funding to support training and employment.**
  - ◆ In a **coordinated system**, the partners are represented on each other's planning groups. However, though partners cooperate on funding issues, they finance their own services only and have no ongoing sustainability plans.
  - ◆ In a **collaborative system**, the WIB would ideally be represented on the local Continuum of Care and long-term plan teams, and homeless assistance providers will serve on the local WIB and perhaps the State WIB. Together, the stakeholders in both systems identify resources that can be blended or braided across partners,<sup>15</sup> seek new resources specific to achieving the goals of the collaboration, and coordinate funding and sustainability strategies. Drawing on the strength of multiple service providers rather than a single agency or system enhances the collaboration and benefits both for individual jobseekers and the providers that serve them.
- **Determine how you will identify, track, and analyze program outcomes and performance measures.**
  - ◆ In a **coordinated system**, there may be mutual recognition of the outcome requirements of each system but limited use of compatible criteria and joint reporting.
  - ◆ In a **collaborative system**, you develop mutual and clear expectations and agreements about program goals, performance measures, and outcomes in advance of joint planning activities. Your goals and outcomes are developed through cross-systems and interagency planning, supported by documented results, and funded accordingly. Outcome measurement is explored in depth in chapter 4.

## **EXAMPLES OF SUCCESSFUL COLLABORATIONS**

The examples below highlight some innovative statewide and community approaches to collaborative planning around the employment needs of people who are homeless. The individual examples are organized by the key principles of collaborative planning that are discussed in this chapter.

### **Bridgeport, CT: Getting Everyone to the Table**

**Joint Planning.** Cross-system collaborative planning in Bridgeport, CT, began with a privately funded initiative called Passports to Success, with the goal of better integrating case

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<sup>15</sup> According to the U.S. Department of Labor, “blended” funds are pooled from multiple sources that become somewhat indistinguishable. With “braided” funds, the individual funding streams remain visible and are used to produce greater strength, efficiency, and/or effectiveness.

management, vocational training, and employment support to formerly homeless tenants of supportive housing. After Passports to Success ended, the partnerships that had formed remained active. Coalition members—including the One-Stop Career Center operator, the Greater Bridgeport Continuum of Care, shelters, Veterans' Employment and Training Service programs, and vocational rehabilitation, among others—set out to expand the stakeholder group significantly when the city began to write its long-term plan to end homelessness.

**Leadership.** Employment became and remains a centerpiece of its long-term plan with a number of standing committees charged with bridging the homeless assistance and mainstream employment systems. Among these committees is the Employment and Income Task Group, which is co-chaired by the vice president of Career Resources, Inc., the One-Stop operator, and the district director of the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services.

**Consensus on Mission and Vision/Involvement of Key Stakeholders.** Consensus on mission and vision and active involvement of a diverse stakeholder group have resulted in a number of significant outcomes that would not have been possible by agencies working alone. For example, the Employment and Income Task Group organized and jointly staffed Project Homeless Connect. Mental health, substance abuse, and vocational rehabilitation providers and One-Stop staff provided information regarding employment and support services to area homeless people. The coalition also recognized the importance of training staff on employment linked to housing. The Task Group conducted two Training Institutes for homeless assistance providers, the first on how to link to mainstream service systems and the second on employment law for undocumented workers and people on probation and parole.

**Resource Mapping.** Gaps analysis and joint resource development led to creation of a Career Coach, a mobile employment resource center. The Career Coach is a tour bus that has been retrofitted with a wireless computer lab and other amenities that effectively brings the One-Stop Career Center to neighborhoods frequented by people who are homeless. Homeless jobseekers are able to use One-Stop services in an accessible, welcoming environment.

**Use of a Boundary Spanner.** Homeless coalitions have difficulty meeting their goals if they do not address service fragmentation among various agencies serving people who are homeless. In what may be a model for other States directly attributable to the work of the collaborative, the Connecticut Departments of Vocational Rehabilitation and Mental Health jointly fund a fulltime "boundary spanner" between these agencies. This individual also has a seat on the State's Interagency Council on Supportive Housing and Homelessness, thereby helping to bridge these three, often separate, cultures.

### **State of Michigan: Leveraging Resources and Creating Boundary Spanners**

**Leadership.** Collaborations need to have an effective leader who understands the various systems issues, can be a skilled convener, and has the power and authority to champion the effort. In the State of Michigan, the Housing Finance Agency and State Housing Development Authority filled this role.

**Joint Planning.** Recently, the Housing Finance Agency issued a \$20 million Request for Proposals (RFP) for new housing targeted to people experiencing chronic homelessness, youth homelessness, and family homelessness as well as to domestic violence victims. One requirement in the RFP is that all parties seeking to access resources for housing development

must create cross-systems collaboration/interagency teams. Though the RFP does not specify the membership of these teams, it does include employment as an essential supportive service that must be provided. This example shows how funding incentives can influence system change.

**Use of a Boundary Spanner/Resource Collaboration.** Funding inducements, however, are not enough; consistent leadership and mentorship is also required to develop and sustain collaborations. Michigan recognized that systems integration among players that historically have not worked together depends on leaders acting as change agents and boundary spanners. In 2004, the State Housing Development Authority allocated funding to six One-Stop Career Centers, which had to match the funding, to create and pilot test a housing specialist position. These specialists embedded in One-Stop Career Centers focused attention on the issue of housing for people seeking employment. This inclusion of a housing specialist represents not only a significant culture shift for the workforce system, but it is a good example of the importance of having staff who can bridge the homeless assistance and workforce systems to help jobseekers achieve housing stability that is so important to obtaining and sustaining employment.

### **Boston, MA: Bringing Business Leaders and Providers Together**

Two Boston collaborative projects have demonstrated that the work of local, cross-sector coalitions addressing homelessness, housing, and employment provides valuable direction for State-level policy planners.

**Joint Planning/Resource Collaboration.** The first effort, called Employment Connections, represented a collaboration between Job Net—a One-Stop Career Center—and the State Department of Mental Health (DMH). Job Net used DMH funds to hire specialized staff to deliver services for people with mental illnesses within the One-Stop environment. This initiative represented collaboration at two levels. First, resources were shared across systems (mental health and labor) to achieve a common goal. Second, by providing staff responsible for implementing the cross-systems effort, each system became invested in the success of the project.

**Consensus on Mission and Vision.** More recently, Boston implemented the “HomeWork” project, one of five national demonstration projects funded by HUD and the DOL to address chronic homelessness through housing and employment. The Boston Private Industry Council (PIC) is the grantee, leading a partnership of housing and service organizations. The PIC and its core service provider partners spent considerable time and energy in the beginning phases of the project understanding each other, arriving at a common mission and vision, and negotiating “win-win” agreements among partners before they began to serve clients. The high profile involvement of so many key players in the workforce development, homeless assistance, employment, and mental health sectors attracted the attention of State-level planners. As a result, the PIC chairs an employment subcommittee of the Lieutenant Governor-led State Interagency Council on Homelessness and also has a seat on the local Continuum of Care planning group, where it uses its influence to highlight the importance and value of helping people who are homeless access mainstream resources.

**Engaging New Stakeholders.** The HomeWork partnership adhered to a cardinal rule of collaboration building; i.e., the collaborative needs to grow and attract new stakeholders to stay

abreast of the changing needs of those it serves and the variable environment in which it operates. This dynamism has resulted in expanding the network of both One-Stops and homeless assistance providers as partners in the HomeWork initiative. Although these new partners do not receive direct funding, they are now at the table as members of a community-wide process. Each brings its special expertise (e.g., housing, social services) to the partnership, enhancing its success.

### **Salt Lake City, UT: Building on Collaborative Relationships**

**Joint Planning.** Providers in Salt Lake City, UT, have built on an extensive history of collaboration between community-based providers and the Department of Workforce Services to better meet the needs of homeless individuals and families. Most notably, the Department of Workforce Services—in partnership with The Road Home (homeless shelter), Volunteers of America (substance abuse provider), the 4th Street Clinic (homeless medical treatment provider), and Valley Mental Health—are participating in the pilot Pathway Project. Begun in August 2005, this project provides stable housing, case management, and supportive services, including employment assistance, to 17 chronically homeless individuals. As of its second year, the Pathway Project had resulted both in positive outcomes for the individuals in the program and a more collaborative working relationship between the Department of Workforce Services and the community partners that are involved.

**Provision of Comprehensive Services.** In addition, the Department of Workforce Services initiated a Homeless “One-Stop” Task Force in April 2006 that involves both community and faith-based partners. This Task Force is focused on establishing a service delivery system that can place homeless individuals and families into housing with supportive services from various points of entry into the system. The group plans to use a self-sufficiency matrix to prioritize the needs of individuals and families for housing, employment, and supportive services.

**Shared Expectations.** Employment and long-term self-sufficiency for individuals who are able to work is required by all Continuum of Care providers and many mainstream providers. Further, organizations that receive grant funds from several of the city’s Homeless Trust Funds must provide job readiness and employment services. Most organizations meet this goal because of their extensive partnerships with the Department of Workforce Services.

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<sup>vii</sup> Daly, C. (n.d.). *The collaboration handbook*. Helena, MT: Red Lodge Clearinghouse. [www.redlodgeclearinghouse.org/pdfs/handbook-full.pdf](http://www.redlodgeclearinghouse.org/pdfs/handbook-full.pdf)

<sup>viii</sup> Employment and Training Administration, U.S. Department of Labor, Washington, DC. Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) 11-01, Guidance on Revising Workforce Investment Act (WIA) State Negotiated Levels of Performance, February 12, 2002 and TEGL 17-05, Common Measures Policy for the Employment and Training Administration’s Performance Accountability System and Related Performance Issues, February 17, 2006.

# **CHAPTER 4: EVALUATING OUTCOMES OF COORDINATED HOMELESS AND WORKFORCE PLANNING SYSTEMS**

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## **WHAT THE CHAPTER IS ABOUT**

The overall effectiveness and success of any community planning process, including that between the homeless assistance and workforce development systems, ultimately is determined by the demonstrated outcomes and goals that are achieved over time. Identifying goals and outcomes in advance is critical to the success of the planning effort and to the ability of the homeless assistance and workforce development systems to track and measure individuals' progress within and between systems. This chapter examines the sometimes competing priorities of both systems and suggests ways in which data collection can be integrated to better reflect the needs of homeless jobseekers. While you will evaluate your success after you have implemented your collaborative efforts, you need to plan for this work from the very earliest stages of your collaboration.

To guide you in evaluating the success of your collaborative efforts to support employment for people who are homeless, this chapter will help you:

- Appreciate the importance of a community-wide assessment as a starting point to identify desired outcomes and develop performance goals
- Understand how the homeless assistance and workforce development systems currently collect data and measure outcomes
- Identify outcome measures and performance indicators for a collaborative effort
- Recognize four key features of a coordinated plan for measuring outcomes

## **DEVELOPING A COORDINATED COMMUNITY-WIDE ASSESSMENT**

As noted in earlier chapters of this Guidebook, the homeless assistance and workforce development systems each align its partners and resources consistent with its overall mandates and goals. But when it comes to addressing employment for people within each system who are homeless, few resources are dedicated specifically to this effort, nor is there consistency in addressing the issue across systems. Frequently, this inconsistency leads to the development of contradictory program goals and outcomes, and the needs of homeless jobseekers remain unaddressed.

It is important, therefore, that the community has a shared vision of anticipated outcomes. Typically, communities achieve consensus on a vision and mission after they are brought together by a common purpose, such as ending homelessness through employment or by vested interests that can best be met by collaborative activities. In this case, homeless assistance providers looking for ways to help their clients become stable in the community have an interest in helping them pursue employment, and workforce development providers who want to grow the workforce can profit from using the untapped labor resources that homeless people represent. Once the groups achieve consensus on their joint mission and purpose, gathering

data on the extent of need and strategies to address those needs is a logical next step. This can best be achieved by a coordinated communitywide assessment.

In the case of collaboration between the homeless assistance and workforce development systems, a coordinated assessment will help identify the employment services and options available to homeless people, as well as the gaps between what employers need and the job skills and employment goals that homeless people have. This coordinated assessment allows stakeholders to establish mutually agreed upon expectations of employment outcomes for the homeless population. In turn, these outcomes will act as valuable milestones of a community's progress toward preventing and ending homelessness through employment.

Achieving a coordinated assessment is a process that has critical characteristics:

- A sustained effort
- A well-informed understanding of the employment needs of low-income and homeless individuals and families
- A thorough review of all services available to this population
- A champion supported by political will that encourages individual agencies to become more responsive to, and effective in, meeting the needs of people who are homeless

The assessment provides an opportunity for community stakeholders to focus on the employment needs of homeless people and potential solutions without being constrained by an agency's or system's internal goals or performance indicators set by outside funding sources.

#### ***Community Assessments Reflected in Long-Term Plans to End Homelessness***

Many long-term plans to end homelessness, described in Chapter 2, are built on the foundation of a community assessment that is broader than the homeless assistance and workforce development systems. Nevertheless the assessment results in an action plan that frequently includes the employment needs of homeless people as a community priority. Here are some examples:

- The long-term plan in Austin, TX, calls for increasing access to mainstream employment programs by designating funding or slots for homeless people in social service contracts that address employment and job training.
- In Denver, CO, the long-term plan includes development of 580 employment opportunities in the 10-year period for homeless and formerly homeless people.
- The long-term plan in Contra Costa County, CA, calls for enacting a "Hire Homeless First" policy for all local government, entry-level employment opportunities and for developing a housing wage ordinance that links minimum wage to housing costs.

Each of these steps can be measured and evaluated. For more information on these and other long-term plans to end homelessness, see links on the National Alliance to End Homelessness Web site at [www.endhomelessness.org/section/tools/communityplans](http://www.endhomelessness.org/section/tools/communityplans).

Ideally, communities will complete a coordinated assessment before they begin developing homeless assistance and workforce development plans. That way, all parties feel that they “own” the information, which can be used to identify desired outcomes for both individual and joint planning processes and documents. General guidelines for developing a coordinated community assessment focused on the employment needs of homeless people include the following:

- Assemble known information about current needs and capacity in the homeless assistance and workforce development systems.
  - ◆ Homeless system: Review your community’s point-in-time survey and housing and service needs and capacity assessment. Consider adding questions about job readiness to the annual survey of homeless people.
  - ◆ Workforce development system: Review State and local Workforce Investment Board plans and request any planning or allocation documents used by the local One-Stop Career Centers.
  - ◆ Create a summary document highlighting how service dollars currently are allocated, what services are provided, and how outcomes are being tracked.
- Compile information on all employment services available to homeless people in the community, including ones that are not part of the workforce system. For example, the substance abuse and mental health treatment systems may fund employment programs that serve people who are homeless.
- Conduct a labor market analysis to determine what jobs are available in your community, the type of education or training people need to be considered for these jobs, and the salaries and benefits they afford.
- Assess workers’ skill sets and their employment goals and identify what types of services (e.g., education, training) homeless jobseekers require to meet employer needs.
- Create an action plan designed to fulfill the needs both of employers and people who are homeless, specifying timelines for implementation, available resources, responsible parties, detailed outcomes, and a method for tracking and reporting success.

***Labor Market Analysis Leads to Career Advancement Pathway for Homeless People***

In Chicago, the Corporation for Supportive Housing, under a U.S. Department of Education grant from the Rehabilitation Services Administration, led a collaboration of city and State agencies, as well as the Wright Community College and supportive housing organizations, to establish an accredited certificate program in housing property management at the college. The program was the result of labor market and field research into the needs of employers in the housing industry, the labor force needs of that industry, and the future demand for workers.

In addition, the Stepping Up project, as it is called, conducted focus groups with industry leaders and with homeless and formerly homeless tenants in supportive housing who might want to pursue a career in the housing industry. The credentialed program is a career advancement pathway for homeless jobseekers. For more information about the project, the focus groups, and the field research, see [www.csh.org](http://www.csh.org). You can find it in Employment & Housing under the Resources link.

## **UNDERSTANDING OUTCOME MEASUREMENT IN BOTH SYSTEMS**

While a community assessment serves as a foundation for a host of local plans, it also provides a starting point from which you and the partners with whom you are collaborating can identify outcome measures and performance indicators to evaluate the success of your activities. Evaluating the effectiveness of a collaborative effort of this scale, however, requires an understanding of how each system functions—the data requirements, what is collected and how, and how it can be accessed.

### **The Homeless Assistance System**

The overarching goal of the homeless assistance system is to prevent and end homelessness for individuals, families, and youth. To accomplish this goal, the system provides shelters, transitional and permanent housing, access to benefits, mental health and substance abuse treatment, medical care, case management, and employment services. Typically, these services are provided by numerous organizations and agencies, many of which focus on only one piece of the service continuum or on only one subpopulation of people who are homeless. The outcome measures tracked by homeless assistance providers focus on whether clients obtain permanent housing and acquire the skills they need to remain stably housed and become self-sufficient to the greatest degree possible. Though receipt of employment services may increase self-sufficiency, the homeless assistance system may not track whether its clients receive these services or whether they obtain a job as a result.

The homeless assistance system tracks progress toward its vision of preventing and ending homelessness using the Federal Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), an HMIS is a “computerized data collection tool designed to capture client-level information over time on the characteristics and service needs of men, women, and children experiencing homelessness.” In 2001, Congress directed HUD to take the lead in requiring every jurisdiction to collect client-level data in order to develop an unduplicated count of homeless people, determine how they use services, and evaluate the effectiveness of homeless assistance programs in meeting their needs.

Basic HMIS data components required by the congressional directive include client intake, service tracking, and a report generation tool. Some systems also include an information and referral component and/or a benefits eligibility tool. Collecting this type of client-level data can help streamline services for people who are homeless, improve access, reduce duplication of effort, and inform public policy.<sup>ix</sup> An HMIS generates reports at three different levels: client, agency, and community-wide. Though an HMIS can track receipt of permanent housing, it does not record type or level of preparation received in order to obtain or maintain housing, nor does it focus on outcomes from receipt of other services, such as employment.

As part of HUD's Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) goal of ending chronic homelessness and moving homeless families and individuals to permanent housing, the agency tracks an increase in the employment rate of clients that exit its homeless assistance projects. This outcome measure reflects increased self-sufficiency for formerly homeless individuals, though it does not report on individuals still living in HUD transitional or permanent housing who may be working.

### **The Workforce Development System**

The workforce development system has the dual tasks of preparing and providing a qualified workforce that meets the demands and changing trends of the labor market, as well as responding to the employment and training needs of individuals who may have specific barriers to work. These individuals include veterans, youth, seniors, people with disabilities, workers who are re-entering the workforce, and dislocated workers.<sup>16</sup> The workforce development system measures clients' success in finding and retaining a job after receiving services. There is little emphasis on tracking outcomes that are not directly related to employment placement or retention, even though the path to obtaining employment for individuals with special needs may be lengthy and marked by incremental progress. In addition, most workforce development systems do not prioritize services for people who are homeless; the majority of plans developed by State Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) do not mention homelessness as an area of concern.

In order to identify how its goals are being achieved, the workforce development system tracks individuals as they enroll in the system and pursue training and other services needed to obtain employment. Within the workforce development system, outcomes are based on performance standards established overall by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) and further defined by each State's WIB. These performance standards, which reflect a focus on placement, include the following:

- Entry into employment (unsubsidized)
- Retention in employment (unsubsidized) for 6 months
- Earnings received through employment (unsubsidized) for 6 months

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<sup>16</sup> In simple terms a "dislocated worker" is an individual who has been terminated or laid off, or who has received a notice of termination or layoff, from employment. For a more detailed definition, see section 101(9) of the Workforce Investment Act at [www.doleta.gov/regs/statutes/wialaw.txt](http://www.doleta.gov/regs/statutes/wialaw.txt).

- Attainment of a recognized credential, including a secondary school diploma or its equivalent or selected occupational skills
- Participant and employer satisfaction

These performance goals reflect a placement-driven philosophy, and they result in a workforce development system focused on serving people who are likely to succeed within a specified amount of time.<sup>17</sup> Workforce providers may fear being penalized for not meeting their goals if they serve individuals with multiple disadvantages and barriers to work.

## INTEGRATING THE TWO SYSTEMS

Currently, both the homeless assistance and workforce development systems focus on outcomes that reflect “exits” from the system; i.e., obtaining permanent housing or a job. Neither system emphasizes smaller changes that reflect an individual’s progress toward these goals. In addition, both systems measure narrow outcomes related only to housing (the homeless assistance system) or to employment (the workforce development system). Yet in order to reflect adequately the complexity of serving people who are homeless, each system needs to broaden its vision to include incremental measures of success in both housing and employment. For the homeless assistance system, this broader vision would include non-housing related indicators such as training, education, and employment. For the workforce development system, this change would entail looking at incremental success along the path to employment, such as an increased number of hours worked over time or an increased length of time in any one job.

### Broader Vision of Successful Outcomes

Individual progress, not just exiting system

Incremental measures in housing and employment

Additional outcomes, e.g., training, education, treatment, overcoming barriers

## Data Collection

To measure effectively homeless individuals’ progress in obtaining housing and employment within and across the homeless assistance and workforce development systems, both systems can consider tracking similar types of outcome measures. The success in doing so varies and often is easier in the homeless assistance system where modules can be added to an HMIS to capture movement and progress toward achieving housing and employment goals. Measuring the level of preparation needed to support someone in finding housing or a job can help you set realistic timeframes for these events and plan services that the population requires.

If you are part of a collaborative effort between the homeless assistance and workforce development systems, you will want to work with the leaders of the HMIS in your community to integrate the collection of data about employment services and outcomes. In many cases, the Continuum of Care planning group is responsible for implementing the HMIS, which it may contract to an outside agency.

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<sup>17</sup> For more information about WIA performance measures, see [www.doleta.gov/performance](http://www.doleta.gov/performance) and [www.spra.com/PEP/adult.shtml](http://www.spra.com/PEP/adult.shtml).

Usually, it requires more effort to change data collected by the workforce development system, which operates under Federal and State mandates based on requirements of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). However, you may be able to work with your local WIB to add outcome measures that reflect a homeless jobseeker's progress. For example, short-term field studies that examine how homeless people use their local One-Stop Career Center can lead to the creation of services better designed to meet their needs. Generally, your State and/or local WIA plan will have to mention homelessness as a priority area for these types of changes to be possible. Both homeless assistance and workforce development providers can advocate at the State and local levels to include homeless people in workforce development planning. One-Stop Career Centers that offer or broker specialized services for people who are homeless may be in a good position to provide important data about the needs and outcomes of these clients.

In order to gauge the progress of individuals within the homeless assistance and workforce development systems, you have to be able to track outcome measures that reflect broad-based goals, such as "pursuit of employment," as well as data that support these measures, typically called performance indicators. Below are examples of data you can collect (the performance indicators) to assess your outcome measures:

- To measure pursuit of benefits advocacy and counseling (with a focus on how employment will affect individual benefits), you can track the number of individuals who
  - ◆ meet with a benefits counselor, and/or
  - ◆ maintain a certain level of benefits after becoming employed.
- To measure participation in and completion of skills training toward an employment goal, you can track the number of individuals who
  - ◆ receive job counseling and other employment services,
  - ◆ enroll in and complete skills or on-the-job training or classes, and/or
  - ◆ engage in a mentoring relationship.
- To measure pursuit of competitive and supported employment, you can track the number of individuals who
  - ◆ complete job interviews,
  - ◆ accept employment, and/or
  - ◆ remain continually employed after 30, 60, and 90 days, six months, and 1 year.
- To measure increased motivation to address issues that pose barriers to work, you can track the number of individuals who
  - ◆ engage in mental health and/or substance abuse treatment,

- ◆ experience fewer psychiatric emergencies and fewer days drinking and/or using drugs, and/or
- ◆ lose fewer work days to symptoms of mental illness or substance use.
- To measure successful completion of personal skills training, including money management, tenant responsibilities, and interpersonal relationships, you can track the number of individuals who
  - ◆ show increased household income as a result of employment,
  - ◆ obtain permanent housing in addition to a job, and/or
  - ◆ experience increased social support and ability to maintain relationships.

### **Four Key Features for Producing Integrated Outcomes**

Even communities that are implementing coordinated efforts to support employment for people who are homeless tend to look at each portion of the plan they are developing separately and divide up tasks accordingly. However, approaching the plan this way usually results in fragmented goals and outcome measures that may reflect neither the vision of the collaboration nor the needs of the homeless people being served. A successful strategic planning process that is centered on the findings of the community assessment, as highlighted earlier in this chapter, will share the following four key features:

- Collaboration across agencies
- Consistent data and definitions
- Measurement of an individual's progress
- Realistic expectations

Each of these factors is discussed in brief below.

#### **Collaboration across Agencies**

A community assessment that identifies clearly the current service capacities related to employment for homeless people, as well as challenges and gaps, requires solid planning and coordinated efforts between participating branches of government and community-based providers. Collaboration across agencies goes beyond mere participation, however. It will be helpful if the homeless services and workforce development systems share information about funding guidelines and required outcomes, as well as the unique needs of the individuals they serve. This communication will allow the partners in a collaborative effort to identify barriers in both policy and funding that hinder integration of outcomes. For example, are there issues that need to be modified in order to create a smooth transition within or between systems for the same population? Honest conversations about what can and cannot be changed will promote a greater understanding across organizations and allow the team to set realistic goals both for their work together and for the individuals they serve.

### Consistent Data and Definitions

A community assessment that produces clear, consistent information can be used to determine strategic goals and outcomes that directly address current needs for homeless people. In addition to agreeing upon data sources, the collaborating partners will need to consider using standardized language and definitions to discuss and measure eligibility, services, and referrals. Examples include definitions for the terms “homelessness,” “chronic homelessness,” and “disability,” some of which may be defined by an agency’s funding sources. Different definitions mean that someone who is considered homeless by one program may be ineligible for services from another and, therefore, will not be counted by both providers.

How these terms are defined and described can have a major impact on outcomes and whether or not the community can reach its goals. It is important that participating organizations agree on common definitions, or if unable to do so for reasons of funding or internal policy, have a basic understanding of how other organizations or programs function. For example, when a person is considered enrolled in a program and what data are collected at intake will vary from agency to agency, and the number of people enrolled affects the baseline for all outcome measures.

**Measuring achievement of strategic goals and outcomes requires:**

- Standardized definitions
- Consistent data

Ideally, workforce development systems will indicate whether their clients have a permanent home, and homeless assistance providers will explore whether or not a person has an interest in pursuing employment and what services he or she needs to do so. Each system can use the data to refer clients to additional services and to identify and resolve duplication of efforts or gaps in services.

### Measurement of an Individual’s Progress

A collaborative effort to measure employment success for people who are homeless needs to evaluate more than enrollment and placement, even though these are often the major focus of funders. As noted throughout this chapter, the goals and outcomes you measure ideally will include homeless individuals’ progress in overcoming barriers to work. You can account for progress by identifying mechanisms that reflect an individual’s movement through and between the systems. For example, is an individual making progress with personal goals? Have they filed for benefits, obtained necessary documentation, or maintained a treatment program? Do they understand the rules about working while receiving benefits? These personal goals also may include addressing barriers to employment, such as lack of transportation and education.

Typically, One-Stop Career Center operators are concerned about job placement, credentials, and employment stability and earnings growth because their success is measured by these criteria. Though they are comfortable working with jobseekers who have barriers to work, they are not case managers whose job it is to help individuals address their treatment and rehabilitation needs. However, successful collaborations between the homeless assistance and workforce development systems focus on this key fact: the receipt of supportive services designed to remove barriers to work helps prepare a previously untapped labor market for success in competitive employment, a key goal of the workforce system.

### Realistic Expectations

Comprehensive information about such items as individual barriers, community capacity, and labor market trends will produce more realistic goals for the employment of homeless people and better outcome measures for reaching those goals. Homeless assistance providers need to share with their colleagues in the workforce development system more than the employment expectations of the population it serves. For example, what characteristics of being homeless make employment difficult? In addition to the acquisition of job-specific skills, the population may have unique needs such as help obtaining appropriate clothing or access to voice mail.

Likewise, workforce providers can share information about what employers are looking for beyond what industries are likely to need workers and what skills these jobs require. What is the likelihood of obtaining jobs in these industries, even if the required skills are present? What is the ability of the community to provide training in these skills? How many people can be trained and employed in a given time frame? Are there cycles in an industry that affect obtaining or retaining a job? What is a realistic pay scale?

Sharing this kind of detailed information across systems allows the planning team to identify and fund specific activities to target special employment barriers in the appropriate systems. Conducting these activities becomes the basis for establishing performance measures that can help the community track progress toward its goals.

## **MOVING FORWARD**

Joint planning to support employment for people who are homeless begins by assessing community needs and defining how to measure success in meeting those needs. This is not an easy task. As noted throughout this Guidebook, the homeless assistance and workforce development systems operate independently of one another, with separate statutory regulations, administrative structures, treatment philosophies, and funding streams. Data collection, in particular, frequently is directed by legislative mandate or program policy. But as this chapter points out, there are ways to be certain that the employment needs of people who are homeless are measured in both systems and used to improve service delivery. Putting homeless people to work is both a humane way to help prevent and end homelessness and a smart business practice that ensures the economic vitality of our communities. The time to do so is now.

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<sup>ix</sup> Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2003). *Blueprint for change: Ending chronic homelessness for persons with serious mental illnesses and/or co-occurring substance use disorders*. DHHS Pub. No. SMA-04-3870. Rockville, MD: Center for Mental Health Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.