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Best Practices, In Workforce Development

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BEST PRACTICES IN WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Prepared for The Delta Strategy Employer Practice Group

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Community Research InstituteSM

Supporting Community Improvement Through Research and Data Sharing



DOROTHY A. JOHNSON CENTER FOR PHILANTHROPY AND NONPROFIT LEADERSHIP

The Community Research Institute

The Community Research Institute (CRI) at Grand Valley State University, a partnership between the Dorothy A. Johnson Center for Philanthropy & Nonprofit Leadership and the Grand Rapids Community Foundation serves West Michigan nonprofit and philanthropic communities. CRI's mission is to assist nonprofit organizations in acquiring information and technical skills necessary to understand the evolving needs of the community; plan programs, solve problems, and measure outcomes.

CRI engages in applied research and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) projects and is a share-house for community data. The CRI web site provides a comprehensive overview of community indicators at www.cridata.org.

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The Literature Review

The following is a summary on best practices in workforce development initiatives as gathered through an extensive literature review of credible sources like researchers, accredited scholars and institutions. Though by no means exhaustive, it conveys what knowledge and ideas have been established on this topic to

date. In addition, you will find brief descriptions of public policy relating to the subject of workforce development; some of the more commonly identified potential challenges to workforce development with suggestions for resolution; and lastly, reference to some model programs throughout the nation.

Introduction

Bennett Harrison and Marcus Weiss define workforce development as “the constellation of activities from recruiting, placement and mentoring to follow-up, of which the actual (job) training is but one element” (1998).

Workforce development for low-income people goes beyond placement and work skills training to include strategies that provide basic ‘soft’ skills conducive to job training or promotion. While of utmost importance to both low-income workers seeking employment and the agencies who assist them, *soft skills* are subjective and often difficult to define.

Economists Phillip Moss and Chris Tilly define soft skills as the “skills, abilities and traits that pertain to personality, attitude and behavior rather than to formal or technical knowledge.” Former New Orleans Jobs Initiative Site Director, Darryl Burrows, adds that soft skills are “the reason most people get fired: not showing up for work; showing up late; showing up not ready to work; either sleepy, hung over or not properly dressed; being hostile to supervisors; being rude to customers; disobeying direct orders; lacking in production.”

Workforce development looks to connect low-income people with family-supporting jobs that lead to career advancement and self-sufficiency by not only giving workers technical abilities but also the skills to solve dilemmas experienced in everyday human interactions, money-management, transportation, and childcare.

For the low-income individual the positive effects of such an approach seem obvious. From a collective standpoint, when a “neighborhood employment program can link residents with the range of high quality services they need to gain a secure foothold in the metropolitan economy, the program succeeds in diminishing the disadvantages of living in a high-poverty neighborhood” (Fleishcher & Dressner, 2002).

The following literature review offers an overview of current ‘best practices’ locally and nationally in workforce development initiatives. It builds upon the top ten critical success factors as featured in CRI’s 2001 literature review entitled, *Welfare to Work: Connecting Low-income Residents with Family-Supporting Jobs that Lead to Career Advancement* by summarizing best practices in the specific workforce development-related areas of job training, employers involvement, job readiness, soft skills, case management, career advising, improved retention and mental health services. Included in this review are some of the more commonly identified potential challenges to workforce development with suggestions for resolution and reference to some model programs throughout the nation.

The report begins by highlighting some of the hallmarking public policy acts that have responded to society and consequently driven change in workforce development strategies.

Hallmarking Public Acts in Workforce Development Strategies

Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) Program

1964 President Johnson declares War on Poverty

By 1995, the United States offered over 300 social programs, and Federal and state spending on the poor had increased from around \$40 billion to about \$360 billion. Yet child poverty stayed at high levels and actually drifted upwards between the 1970s and the early 1990s.

1996 Personal and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act- PRWORA

Replacing the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and Job Opportunity and Basic Skills Training (JOBS) programs comes a new program and funding source called...

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

**1998 Workforce Investment Act
+
1998 Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century**

1999 final TANF regulations are issued by the Department of Health and Human Services

Aid to Families with Dependent Children

Before our current welfare system, we had the Aid to Families with Dependent Children Program. The Department of Health and Human Services, on their website (<http://aspe.os.dhhs.gov/98qb/7afdc.htm>), identified three purposes of the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program:

- 1) *To encourage the care of needy children in their own homes (original 1935 purpose),*
- 2) *To strengthen family life (added in 1956),*
- 3) *To promote family self-support (1956).*

Initially, eligibility was limited to needy children (under age 16 and with only one able-bodied parent at home); but later Congress allowed States to assist the following subpopulations:

- *Needy mothers or other caretaker relatives (effective in 1950),*
- *A child of an unemployed parent and that AFDC-unemployed parent (effective in 1961),*
- *Second parent in a family with an incapacitated or unemployed parent (effective in 1962),*
- *Any other individual in the home deemed essential to the child, known as the "essential person" option (effective in 1968), and*
- *An unborn child, in last trimester of mother's pregnancy (effective in 1981).*

Personal Responsibility & Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act

Identified by many as the Act that dramatically changed the United States welfare system, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA) required work in exchange for time-limited assistance. As displayed on their website (<http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/ofa/prwora96.htm>) the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services Child and Family Services highlighted PRWORA under the following categories:

- **Work requirements.** *Recipients were required to work after two years on assistance, with few exceptions. Twenty-five percent of all families in each state were to be engaged in work activities or have left the rolls in fiscal year (FY) 1997, rising to 50 percent in FY 2002. Single parents were required to participate for at least 20 hours per week the first year, increasing to at least 30 hours per week by FY 2000. Two-parent families were to have worked 35 hours per week by July 1, 1997.*
- **Supports for families transitioning into jobs.** *The new welfare law provided \$14 billion in child care funding -- an increase of \$3.5 billion over current law -- to help more mothers move into jobs. The new law also guaranteed that women on welfare would continue to receive health coverage for their families, including at least one year of transitional Medicaid when they left welfare for work.*
- **Work Activities.** *To count toward state work requirements, recipients were required to participate in unsubsidized or subsidized employment, on-the-job training, work experience, community service, 12 months of vocational training, or provide child care services to individuals who were participating in community service up to 6 weeks of job search (no more than 4 consecutive weeks) would count toward the work requirement. However, no more than 20 percent of each state's caseload could count toward the work requirement solely by participating in vocational training or by being a teen parent in secondary school. Single parents with a child under 6 who could not find child care could not be penalized for failure to meet the work requirements. States could exempt from the work requirement single parents with children under age one and disregard these individuals in the calculation of participation rates for up to 12 months.*
- **A five-year time limit.** *Families who had received assistance for five cumulative years (or less at state option) were ineligible for cash aid under the new welfare law. States were permitted to exempt up to 20 percent of their caseload from the*

PRWORA (continued)...

time limit, and states had the option to provide non-cash assistance and vouchers to families that reached the time limit using Social Services Block Grant or state funds.

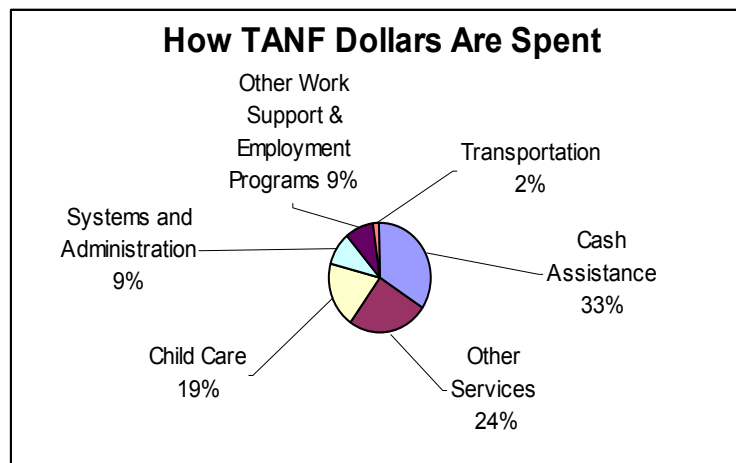
- **Personal employability plans.** *Under the new plan, states were required to make an initial assessment of recipients' skills. States could also develop personal responsibility plans for recipients identifying the education, training, and job placement services needed to move into the workforce.*
- **State maintenance of effort requirements.** *The new welfare law required states to maintain their own spending on welfare at least 80 percent of FY 1994 levels. States were also required to maintain spending at 100 percent of FY 1994 levels to access a \$2 billion contingency fund designed to assist states affected by high population growth or economic downturn. In addition, states were to maintain 100 percent of FY 1994 or FY 1995 spending on child care (whichever was greater) to access additional child care funds beyond their initial allotment.*
- **Job subsidies.** *The law also allowed states to create jobs by taking money used for welfare checks and applying it toward creating community service jobs or in providing income subsidies or hiring incentives for potential employers.*
- **Performance bonus to reward work.** *\$1 billion was available through FY 2003 for performance bonuses to reward states for moving welfare recipients into jobs. The Secretary of HHS, in consultation with the National Governors' Association (NGA) and American Public Welfare Association (APWA), was to develop criteria for measuring state performance.*
- **State flexibility.** *Under the new law, states that received approval for welfare reform waivers before July 1, 1997 had the option to operate their cash assistance program under some or all of these waivers. For states electing this option, some provisions of the new law which were inconsistent with the waivers would not take effect until the expiration of the applicable waivers in the geographical areas covered by the waivers.*

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

“The 1996 law that created the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families block grant gave states both extraordinary flexibility and greater responsibility for designing and implementing programs to help poor families with children move from welfare to work” (Schott, Lizare, Goldberg, & Sweeney, 1999). The final TANF regulations were issued by the Department of Health and Human Services in 1999.

Under TANF, states would now “use TANF funds to provide a very broad range of benefits and services without triggering time limit, work participation, detailed data reporting or child support assignment consequences.” Assistance included “cash payments, vouchers and other forms of benefits designed to meet a family’s ongoing basic needs (i.e., for food, clothing, shelter, utilities, household goods, personal care items, and general incidental expenses)” (Schott, et al, 1999).

In 2002, states used their TANF funds toward “cash assistance (including wage supplements); child care; education and job training; transportation; and a variety of other services to help families make the transition to work” (Coven, www.cbpp.org). The chart below shows the 2002 TANF and MOE expenditure percentage breakdown according to category. *Cash assistance* was the category receiving the highest percentage (33%) of TANF and MOE money. ‘Other services’ referred to “a variety of other services to help families make the transition to work” (Coven, 2003).



Reflects fiscal year 2002 expenditures of TANF and MOE funds (totaling \$28 A billion).
Chart Source: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Coven. Revised 10-24-03.

Workforce Investment Act of 1998

The **Workforce Investment Act of 1998** offers the framework for workforce preparation towards an employment system designed to meet both the needs of the nation's businesses *and* the needs of job seekers and those who want to further their careers. As outlined by the U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration (www.doleta.gov/usworkforce/wia), Title I of the legislation is based on the following elements:

- *Training and employment programs must be designed and managed at the local level where the needs of businesses and individuals are best understood.*
- *Customers must be able to conveniently access the employment, education, training, and information services they need at a single location in their neighborhoods.*
- *Customers should have choices in deciding the training program that best fits their needs and the organizations that will provide that service. They should have control over their own career development.*
- *Customers have a right to information about how well training providers succeed in preparing people for jobs. Training providers will provide information on their success rates.*
- *Businesses will provide information, leadership, and play an active role in ensuring that the system prepares people for current and future jobs.*

Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century

Established in 1998, the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) was framed to build upon the initiatives of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA), TEA-21 by bringing new initiatives to:

- ✓ Meet the challenges of improving safety
- ✓ Protecting and enhance communities and the natural environment
- ✓ Advance America's economic growth
- ✓ Compete domestically and internationally through efficient and flexible transportation

Specific to the concept of Welfare to Work, this Act created a new program for Job Access and Reverse Commute Grants. The purpose of the program was twofold: 1) "to develop transportation services designed to transport welfare recipients and low-income

individuals to and from jobs; and 2) to develop transportation services for residents of urban centers and rural and suburban areas to suburban employment opportunities" (Dept. of Transportation, www.fhwa.dot.gov/tea21/sumover.htm).

TEA-21 also provided job opportunities through training by permitting States an opportunity to "reserve slots for welfare recipients in On-the-Job Training programs which could lead to full journey level in skilled highway construction trades. As trainees, the welfare recipients would also have access to supportive services programs for pre-employment counseling, orientation to the requirements of the highway construction industry, basic skills improvement, assistance with transportation, child care or other special needs, jobsite mentoring, and post-graduation follow-up" (Dept of Transportation, www.fhwa.dot.gov/tea21/sumover.htm).

Key Components in Today's Welfare

In reauthorizing the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, four primary components of this legislation were identified by the Bush administration in 2002 as ones to build upon in the future (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/02/welfare-book-01.html>). Those components were to:

- ✓ *Promote work.*
- ✓ *Strengthen families - promote healthy marriages.*
- ✓ *Acknowledge state and local capacity to design and conduct effective social programs that ultimately improve program coordination so more adults can move off welfare by experiencing increased levels of financial and social security for themselves and their children.*
- ✓ *Allow legal immigrants to receive food stamps after five years.*

From “*Working toward Independence*” in the overview addressing how to “maximize self-sufficiency through work and additional constructive activities” came the following message from the Bush administration:

Since welfare reform was enacted in 1996, the number of dependent families has been cut in half, and more families than ever are working. Yet evidence suggests that almost 1 million of the 1.6 million adults presently on TANF are not engaged in any activity leading toward self-sufficiency. These families cannot be left behind. The heart of welfare reform is encouraging work and requiring all welfare recipients to do everything they can to end their dependency on welfare and gain a secure foothold in the workforce.

The Administration proposal strengthens work rules to ensure that all welfare families are fully engaged in work and other meaningful activities that will lead to self-sufficiency. Along with new requirements for individuals, states are expected to closely monitor the participation and progress of all TANF families. All parents are to be fully and constructively engaged. States will be required to make certain that, over time, the percentage of TANF recipients engaged in work and additional productive activities continues to grow.

At the same time, the Administration proposal gives states greater flexibility to define activities that will lead toward self-sufficiency and that are consistent with the purposes of TANF. Beyond the hours that parents must be engaged directly in work, states have the flexibility to implement education and training programs to help workers advance in their jobs. Furthermore, states will be able to count individuals who are in treatment for substance abuse or undergoing rehabilitation related to work abilities, toward their participation requirement for a limited period of time.

Current Status of TANF Reauthorization

As of October 2004, the Congress has not voted to reauthorize or modify TANF. Consequently, the 1996 TANF legislation still stands, having been renewed each year since 1991.

Top Ten Critical Success Factors

In a 2001 best practice literature review entitled, “Welfare to Work: Connecting Low-income Residents with Family-Supporting Jobs that Lead to Career Advancement” by GVSU’s Community Research Institute, ten critical success factors to low-income employee placement and career advancement were identified.

1. **Adopt a “dual customer” approach** that understands and meets the needs of both parties involved in workforce development, the workers (supply) and the employers (demand).
specific and includes “soft skill” development while respecting employees’ talent, dignity, and self-reliance.
2. **Understand the difference between finding work and becoming economically self-sufficient.** Identify and secure entry-level, family-supporting jobs that offer livable wages, benefits, and opportunities for wage and career advancement.
3. **Give attention to post-placement issues of retention and career advancement** in order to provide sustainable employment.
4. **Widen the organization’s “cultural competency”** so that issues of race, class, and culture can be identified and managed through education and example.
5. **Develop ties with community service providers to address personal barriers.** Helping the under-employed job seeker usually involves providing support services during and after placement in the areas of childcare, transportation, housing, etc.
6. **Provide short-term preparation and skill training** that is industry
7. **Provide community-based organizations** with sustained support and technical assistance that assists them in developing organizational capacity and meeting workforce development goals.
8. **Stress outcomes-based management** by encouraging providers and workplace sites to develop business plans, set performance targets, and evaluate progress by quantifiably measuring job placement, retention, and costs.
9. **Change does not come from a single system.** Collaborate and commit to increasing dialogue and communication among community players to develop further understanding on issues of workforce development and create system reform efforts.
10. **Involve local businesses in system reform efforts.** Work towards broader systemic change at the local, state, and national levels that will lead to more effective jobs and workforce development programs and policies.

Best Practices in Workforce Development-Related Areas

When taking a ‘best practice approach’ toward workforce development, the critical success factors identified in CRI’s, “Welfare to Work: Connecting Low-income Residents with Family-Supporting Jobs that Lead to Career Advancement,” in 2001 still apply today.

Developing best practices in the specific workforce development related areas of *job training, employer involvement, job readiness, soft skills, case management, career advising, improved retention and mental health services* as outlined in this literature review will therefore, deepen understanding of best practice as a means to more effectively address societal needs.

JOB TRAINING

BEST PRACTICES

- **Providing Specific Skills:** Employees should be trained in the specific skills necessary to qualify for jobs.
- **Individualized Trainings:** Trainings should be tailored to fit the individuals' unique goals and needs.
- **Broad-based Offerings:** Because it is unlikely that any one training program will meet the needs of every participant, there should be a wide variety of partnerships in the community that meet the collective needs of all participants.
- **Simulated Work Culture:** The training environment should mimic a 'real-world' work situation to better prepare participants in performing future hard and soft job skills.
- **Recruitment:** Make a concerted effort to recruit and train the *most unemployable* participants for skills trainings.
- **Employer Involvement:** To facilitate their expectations, employers should be included in the training curricula development process early on.
- **Long-term Development:** Provide continuous opportunities for skill development so employees may advance in their job placements.
- **Cultural Sensitivity:** Issues of race, class and culture should be recognized and handled through education and example. Teachers and peer counselors from similar backgrounds to the trainees should be involved in the training and overall program implementation.
- **Respectful Demeanor:** Instructors and staff must have respect for program participants and trust in their ability to surpass their current difficulties in working toward success.

BENEFITS

For Employees

- Higher hourly wages.
- Legitimacy from having completed a certified training, especially for participants with a history of unstable or problem-laden employment, criminal records, insufficient educational credentials, and/or substance abuse problems.
- Enhanced skills and job stability.
- An improved understanding of the work environment.

For Employers

- Employees are better prepared for employment with regard to ability, confidence, and skills.
- Higher retention rates.

INVOLVING EMPLOYERS

BEST PRACTICES

- **Economics:** Show employers how participating in the workforce development initiative will reduce their bottom line. Educate business leaders about the exorbitant costs of turnover and how job training, readiness, and retention services can help reduce these costs. Keep in mind that employers WILL NOT be involved merely because of goodwill.
- **Clear Expectations:** Make sure employers know what they should expect from the collaborative effort. Identify what their role(s) will be and what they can expect to gain so that they have reasonable expectations.
- **Active Involvement:** Involve employers as partners in program design and delivery. Look for ways for employers to be actively involved; for example, in management (ex. through membership on the Board) and through volunteering.
- **Employee-friendly Employers:** Recruit employers who are willing to consider accommodating individuals from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds; and who offer a livable wage with benefits and opportunities for advancement.
- **Multi-level:** Involve all levels of company staff, from senior managers to front-line supervisors, in the collaborative effort.
- **Continuous Contact:** Maintain communication with employers to keep abreast of their successes, questions, and concerns.
- **Employer Education:** Educate employers about ex-offenders or low-income individuals as employees. Help them organize trainings for management and staff to address issues of race, class and culture.
- **Good First Impressions:** Place a responsible and trustworthy low-income employee in a business new to hiring low-income individuals to ensure a positive first experience. Doing so helps persuade companies to consider changing their hiring practices and workplace cultures to accommodate low-income individuals.
- **High Quality:** Ensure that the program adequately trains job seekers, demonstrates consistent high quality, and effectively responds to businesses' needs.
- **Professional, Business-like Image:** The organization should function like a business and market itself in professional ways. It should keep meetings brief and succinct,

Best PRACTICES Involving Employers (continued)...

develop private-sector expertise, keep up with area business trends, coordinate and deliver responsive and personalized services.

- **Appreciation/Focus/Importance:** Make sure all staff value employers' needs as much as participants' needs.
- **Know Your Customers:** Effective agencies make sure they know area employers and the people they might hire. They strive to understand the skills employers need by analyzing current labor market information.
- **Networking:** Develop strong relationships between key organizations, educational institutions, community partners, human service organizations, and employers. Recruit board members and other volunteers who have access to jobs.

JOB READINESS

BEST PRACTICES

Many low-income individuals seeking employment would benefit greatly from instruction in basic life and job skills including math, reading, and English.

KEY COMPONENTS OF EFFECTIVE JOB READINESS COURSES INCLUDE ATTENTION TOWARD:

- **Language:** Language proficiency courses should be available for native speakers to improve their grammar, reading and writing and for non-native speakers to gain a basic proficiency in English.
- **Resume Building:** Participants should be taught how to prepare a professional resume.
- **Appropriate Workplace Attire:** Participants should be instructed in what they should and should not wear to work. STRIVE, one of the model programs, uses the video, *Erin Brokovich*, to illustrate the do's and don'ts of workplace attire.
- **Interviewing Techniques:** Participants should be given the opportunity to practice interview skills; including frequently asked interview questions complete with the appropriate responses.
- **Self-reliance Training:** Participants should be instructed on healthy forms of problem resolution as a means to becoming self-sufficient.
- **Soft Skills Training:** Participants should be taught acceptable workplace behavior, expression, and appearance.

SOFT SKILLS

BEST PRACTICES

Overall, employers agree that the following soft skills are *musts* for prospective employees:

- ✓ Punctuality and regular attendance.
- ✓ Cooperation with co-workers.
- ✓ Cooperation with supervisors.
- ✓ Courtesy.
- ✓ Work ethic.

Some programs also recommend teaching participants to:

- Take pride in their personal presentation.
- Increase self-discipline and self-confidence.
- Understand the importance of conforming to social norms in order to succeed in the work environment.

In their 2001 Study, “Hard Work on Soft Skills,” the Annie E. Casey Foundation elucidated seven practices of effective soft

skills trainings. Specifically, effectual soft skills training programs:

1. Incorporate soft skills training in all aspects of the curriculum.
2. Assign individuals to teams to work together to complete work tasks.
3. Allow trainees to act as managers every once in a while so they can learn how to be managed by managing others.
4. Insist on appropriate workplace discipline in every area of the program.
5. Emulate a workplace environment as much as possible in trainings.
6. Provide participants with myriad opportunities in becoming acquainted with successful people. For example, some programs invite clients to presentations by area business professionals.
7. Provide support services to help people keep their jobs. For example, issues with childcare and/or transportation must be resolved to enable employees to practice.

CASE MANAGEMENT CAREER ADVISING

BEST PRACTICES

- **Keep case manager to client ratio at a reasonable level.** The Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation states, “low caseloads are essential if staff is to keep in frequent contact with each worker and have time for in-depth, face-to-face conversations” (Fleischer & Dressner, 2002, p. 17).
- **Effective case managers:**
 - ✓ Establish a one-on-one relationship between client and case manager/career advisor.
 - ✓ Administer a career assessment and work with the client to develop an individualized plan for job training, placement, advancement, and support services.
 - ✓ Provide individually tailored job readiness assistance; such as working on soft skills, helping clients write a resume, practicing interview skills, teaching them appropriate workplace dress and behavior, and building skills for dealing with stress and prejudice in the workplace.
- ✓ Provide individualized job development/placement services with a focus on finding a good-paying full-time job with benefits and opportunities for advancement.
- ✓ Provide access to support services.
- ✓ Offer post-placement support with an expressed minimum of monthly site visits and a focus on job advancement.
- ✓ Monitor client progress to manage individual customer service delivery as well as, to track trends in service provision and client needs.

RETENTION

- **Improving retention is considerably more difficult than promoting placement.** Overall, workforce development programs have demonstrated that the factors involved in enhancing retention are somewhat hard to specify. Most of the problems associated with retention originate in lack of soft skills and unresolved issues with child care and transportation; making case management an integral component of effective programs, though, not by any means, the only one.
- **Although quick employment strategies initially appear more effective, this impact declines fairly quickly over time.** Initially, quick employment programs regularly increase employment and average wages. However, during the first one or two years the benefits diminish, and, by the third or fourth year, the advantages completely disappear (Fleischer, 2001).
- **Delay in substantiated effectiveness.** Research has indicated that programs which emphasize job training and skills development sometimes do not demonstrate significant impact for up to two to three years after program initiation (Fleischer, 2001).

BEST PRACTICES FOR IMPROVING RETENTION

- **Quality employment—** Place employees in jobs that pay a living wage (\$7+/hour) and provide benefits and opportunities for advancement. The Center for Employment Training (CET) in San Jose, CA has repeatedly demonstrated that higher paying jobs lead to higher rates of retention.
- **Initial assessment—** Participants should be carefully assessed and screened to identify strengths and challenges that need to be addressed in making the employment successful. A thorough assessment is also useful in ensuring that the participant-employer relationship is a good match.
- **Combination of job search assistance and education/training-** Programs that provide job training and/or opportunities for educational advancement in addition to job search assistance have higher retention rates than those that focus solely on job placement. The most effective programs provide job readiness, job searching, job training, job retention, and support services.

BEST PRACTICES FOR IMPROVING RETENTION *continued...*

- **Individualized services—**
Tailor job trainings and services provided to meet individual participant's unique needs and situations. Project Match in Chicago discovered that an individualized, one-on-one approach helps clients "start at an appropriate point for them, take different routes to self-sufficiency, receive assistance when it is needed, and get recognition from a trusted advisor for small steps along the route" (Fleischer & Dressner, 2002, p. 10).
- **Soft skills—**
Soft skills are "the skills, abilities and traits that pertain to personality, attitude and behavior rather than to formal or technical knowledge" (Fleischer & Dressner, 2002, p. 18). Most employers cite soft skills as among their primary considerations for hiring. It is therefore imperative to teach employees how to adapt to the workplace environment.
- **Employer involvement—**
Include employers in program and curricula design and implementation. Educate them about cultural and racial differences and how best to respond.
- **Clear expectations—**
Explain policies and procedural manuals to all new employees, making sure they accurately understand all relevant information; such as company rules and regulations, consequences of rule violations, disciplinary procedures, union information, and safety information. Prepare participants mentally for the environment in which they will be working to increase the chances they will be able to handle myriad stressors of employment.
- **Career advisors—**
Programs that provide employment counseling and placement assistance are more effective than those that focus on placement. Career advisors fill this role by providing individualized case management to participants, which addresses their employment goals and helps circumvent obstacles to successful employment.
- **Mentors—**
Assign a co-worker, supervisor, or manager to mentor each participant so that his/her long-term physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual needs are adequately addressed.
- **Retention support groups—**
Peer support groups help decrease participants' frustrations and difficulties as they realize other people are going through similar experiences. They also serve as a forum for problem-solving and a place where participants can give and receive encouragement, sharing both their joys and frustrations.
- **Support services—**
Effective agencies seek to eliminate barriers to employment, primarily childcare and transportation issues; but also including family problems, substance abuse issues, health problems, mental health issues, food and clothing shortages, housing, legal problems, and criminal records.

BEST PRACTICES FOR IMPROVING RETENTION *continued...*

- **Financial assistance—**
Participants may especially benefit from transitional benefits, income subsidies, budgeting classes, and by learning to maximize their income through tax benefits such as the Earned Income Tax Credit.
- **Focusing on family—**
Case management should address the entire family and should help participants arrange a work schedule that can accommodate familial and other obligations.
- **Post-placement services—**
Programs should offer individualized attention to participants for a period of at least one to two years after placement with at least monthly contact between case manager and participant in the form of phone calls, lunch meetings, or site visits. The focus should be on attending to physical, emotional, spiritual, and vocational needs. Post-placement services should also include opportunities for participants to engage in additional skills trainings and career advancement sessions.
- **Networking –**
Develop strong relationships between key organizations, educational institutions, community partners, human service organizations, and employers with a special focus on involving people and agencies that know and understand the targeted community.
- **Track client progress-**
Determine what is most effective for individual clients as well as, the interventions most beneficial for clients overall.

MENTAL HEALTH

Best practices toward improving employee retention suggest agencies should offer support services that address mental health and substance abuse issues.

Research shows a greater incidence of mental health conditions among welfare recipients and other low-income populations. For instance, in 1999, the National Survey of America's Families indicated that 35 percent of low-income individuals reported having mental health issues, including depression, anxiety, insufficient emotional control and psychological malaise. Likewise, Chandler and Meisel (2000) determined that 33 percent of individuals participating in California's CalWORKS program had at least one identifiable mental illness in the last year, with approximately 20 percent having more than one disorder.

Mental health conditions frequently make people tired, negatively affect their socialization skills, and decrease their ability to concentrate. Consequently, there is a strong correlation between mental illness and employment, in which it is often considerably more difficult for people suffering from mental health disorders to obtain and/or keep a job.

In 2001, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services commissioned Mathematica Policy Research to investigate the ways in which four states (Oregon, Tennessee, Florida, and Utah) were addressing the mental health needs of their welfare recipients. Though the general conclusion of the study advocated for no one particular model in providing mental

health services, it supported the notion that mental health services can serve as a valuable resource for employment case managers in taking hard to employ people out of a welfare situation to one of employment. The study called for more research in determining the effectiveness of mental health services currently being provided to improve the employability and well-being of welfare recipients. The study states primarily relied upon TANF block grant and state Maintenance of Effort (MOE) funds to pay for mental health services. From it came the following generalized understandings.

Workforce development initiatives that seek to address mental health issues must attend to the following components:

- ✓ target population
- ✓ issues addressed
- ✓ services offered
- ✓ client identification
- ✓ service administration and delivery
- ✓ funding.

Addressing mental health issues

Overall, workforce development models that effectively address issues of mental health share the following implementation components:

- **Referrals to local mental health agencies:** Effective programs utilize available community resources to better serve their clientele while avoiding unnecessary duplication of services.

Addressing Mental Health Issues continued...

- **Flexible services to increase client participation:** Programs should tailor services to meet client needs. For example, some programs meet with clients in their homes or at mutually convenient locations. Others provide culturally competent interpreters for non-English speaking clients.
- **Integration:** Mental health treatment is integrated into the individual's work-related activity by having mental health and employment staff gradually increase conventional work activities when appropriate through an adopted treatment model.
- **Support for mental health staff:** Because mental health encompasses a wide range of problems it is likely that clinicians will often be required to work outside their area of personal expertise. It is therefore imperative for clinicians to be able to communicate with other clinicians who have expertise in dealing with the problem at hand so they can discuss cases, brainstorm treatment options, and implement optimal interventions.
- **Client confidentiality:** Programs must ensure that client information is kept confidential. This includes obtaining signatures on necessary consent forms before sharing information between case managers, mental health service providers, and/or local mental health agencies.
- **Tracking client involvement:** For funding and documentation purposes, agencies should maintain detailed records of a client's participation and progress in both workforce development and mental health programs.

POTENTIAL CHALLENGES SUGGESTIONS FOR RESOLUTION

Potential challenge:

Clients are unwilling or unable to participate in trainings without financial assistance.

Innovative ideas for resolution:

- Provide training stipends—PhAME, one of the Jobs Initiative (JI) programs in Philadelphia raises public funding to provide training stipends to participants.
- Design trainings to be as brief (and therefore inexpensive) as possible.
- Formulate programs so participants are made eligible for education grants such as the Pell Grant.
- Schedule trainings on a variety of days and times, such as evening and/or weekend trainings so participants can begin or continue to work while simultaneously attending trainings.

Potential challenge:

Limited available funding for trainings.

Innovative ideas for resolution:

- Employers commit to hire training graduates. **Example:** Milwaukee JI generally requests employers to select their employees before they begin training them so the agency can receive workforce development funding to offset the cost of training.
- Employers fund trainings for future employees.

Potential challenge:

Limited resources for support services.

Innovative ideas for resolution:

- Network with human service organizations.
- Collaborate with governmentally funded organizations—For example, The SOURCE's collaboration with the Family Independence Agency (FIA).
- Combine objectives—kill two birds with one stone—**Example:** The Jobs Plus program offers free onsite assistance with filing taxes, during which time financial advisors take the opportunity to encourage clients to request the Earned Income Tax Credit and other income supplements.

POTENTIAL CHALLENGES

SUGGESTIONS FOR RESOLUTION *continued...*

Potential challenge:

People with the greatest need for assistance may not be reached.

Innovative ideas for resolution:

- **Actively recruit people who would otherwise not have the opportunity to receive employment services.** While programs will appear most effective if only the most employable residents are served, the needier and less capable individuals need to be sought out and involved if the goal is to positively impact the community and reduce poverty. A good strategy for involving harder to reach low-income individuals is to collaborate with area churches and other agencies that already have established trusting relationships with this population.
- **Target the most vulnerable populations and/or geographical areas.** Effectiveness may be increased by targeting a specific sub-population, such as teenage mothers, ex-offenders, people who hang out on street corners, or long-term welfare recipients.
- **Encourage clients to refer their friends, family and neighbors to the agency.** When a person has a positive experience at an agency, encourage him or her to refer friends and family so they can experience a similar success. Some theories hypothesize that individuals are most successful when their personal network is filled with successful and supportive people.
- **Balance limited resources with recruitment.** While many agencies are already overwhelmed with clients, neighborhood programs that seek to serve the entire area should openly accept all clients. Walk-ins are the most likely to succeed but they are also the most likely to have found a job on their own without agency assistance. Staff should try to dedicate the majority of their resources to clients who have the greatest need.

POTENTIAL CHALLENGES

SUGGESTIONS FOR RESOLUTION *continued...*

Potential challenge:

Clients may become overly dependent on agency assistance.

Innovative ideas for resolution:

- Establish an employment center with a resource room open to all members of the community where they can search for jobs and obtain assistance from career and financial advisors.
- Ensure that financial and career advisors as well as, all agency staff promote active client involvement in the decision-making and job-searching processes. Provide the client with a variety of options from which to select.
- Work with the client to construct an individualized job training and support service program.
- Gradually provide clients with increased responsibility and autonomy.
- Teach low-income individuals how to independently locate a job.

SIGNIFICANT BARRIERS

*There are significant barriers to meaningful employer engagement. For example, “**the public and private sectors typically have different workforce objectives that make collaboration difficult.** Employers want employees who will contribute to productivity and profitability. To the extent that public agencies can help them achieve this goal, employers are willing to participate. To the extent that they are asked to sacrifice productivity and profitability in the pursuit of other objectives, employers are understandably less eager. Historically, the public sector has focused on job placement for the disadvantaged, with a strong emphasis on the hardest to serve, such as long-term welfare recipients. As a result, many employers are wary of hiring graduates of publicly subsidized programs, believing that “something must be wrong” with people who are eligible for such efforts” (What’s Next After Work First, p. 3).*

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

ADDITIONAL BEST PRACTICES

Centrality of services: One-stop shopping for welfare, work-study, health services, childcare referrals, and job search assistance.

Outcome driven: The most effective workforce development agencies focus on employment outcomes and do not become so overwhelmed providing support services that they forget their primary focus is to find people long-term employment. To accomplish this, performance targets should be set and progress toward these goals quantifiably measured on a regular basis.

MODEL PROGRAMS

I. JEWISH VOCATIONAL SERVICES (JVS): Detroit www.jvsdet.org

Jewish Vocational Services (JVS) is a non-profit organization helping people throughout the metropolitan Detroit area to overcome challenges affecting their self-sufficiency. They offer counseling, training and support services. Some JVS-run programs include:

- *Displaced Homemaker Program*: Designed for women who have lost their primary means of support and need to find or upgrade their employment. JVS provides individualized employment counseling, skills assessment, career and educational goal setting, resume writing workshops, interviewing seminars, job referral & placement assistance, an occupational resource library, internet access and enrichment classes on money management, nutrition, single parenting and stress management.
- *Detroit's Work Place (DWP)*: DWP is a division of JVS and a nationally recognized Michigan Works! Career Center. It partners with different agencies to offer an innovative, one-stop approach to all Detroit residents looking for a job. DWP oversees Career Resource Centers that offer broad resources and tools to job seekers including: resume writing, child care, transportation, career planning, employer information, computers with Internet access, fax and copying machines and Michigan Talent Bank online. DWP also offers workshop, testing, and assessment services.
- Career Initiative Center: This is a "one-stop" vocational center created in response to the growing need for services for homeless men. The goal of the CIC program is to help remove all barriers preventing "participants from becoming self-sufficient and gainfully employed." CIC also provides specialized services for problems related to mental illness and substance abuse.

II. JEWISH VOCATIONAL SERVICES (JVS): Chicago <http://www.jvschicago.org/career/>

JVS provides career counseling and job placement to clients in the Chicago area. JVS assesses clients to determine their interests, aptitudes and experiences to match them with an appropriate career. JVS staff help participants look for jobs, prepare resumes and cover letters, and learn job-searching skills like interviewing, connecting with people, and compromising. To promote independence, JVS locations have installed computer resource centers where participants can perform job searches, prepare, print or post resumes and cover letters. Of special interest is JVS's website, where they list profiles of job ready candidates to increase the probability of participants being matched with appropriate employers.

III. NEW YORK'S VOCATIONAL FOUNDATION, Inc.:
<http://www.volunteernyc.org/org/1414119.html>

The mission of Vocational Foundation, Inc. (VFI) is "to give economically and educationally disadvantaged young adults in New York City the tools they need to achieve financial independence through academic and occupational training, job placement and retention counseling." VFI's work is based on the following principles:

- 1) Provide "a high quality, integrated curriculum of hard, soft and basic skills that will enable young people to successfully incorporate themselves into the workforce."
- 2) "Support each student's transition from poverty to economic independence for at least two to three years before and after job placement."
- 3) Provide assistance to help participants overcome myriad barriers that may exist between them and independent gainful employment.
- 4) Increase participants' confidence and self-esteem.
- 5) Create a realistic culture of work during training to help ease participants' transition to the workplace.

IV. TRAINING Inc.: **<http://www.traininginc.org/about.htm>**

Training, Inc. is a national nonprofit organization that provides low-income individuals with job skills training and assists them in obtaining gainful employment. Training Inc. focuses on placing participants in jobs where they will remain productively employed. Consequently, the organization's curriculum offers the combination of technical training, soft skills training, and support services that trainees need to locate and keep good jobs. This is accomplished through the following three core strategies:

1. A simulated employment culture during training that acclimates participants to the 'culture of work.'
2. A focus on cultivating relationships with employers and community agencies.
3. A supportive environment that promotes continuous learning from the training stage to after placement.

Training Inc. currently operates in Boston, Chicago, Indianapolis, Newark, New Orleans, and Pittsburgh and boasts multiple accomplishments. For example:

- Since its first training program in 1975, Training Inc. has successfully trained over 14,000 individuals.
- In 2000, 87% of Training, Inc.'s trainees obtained jobs upon program completion and 85% of their graduates were still working one year later.
- Training, Inc. graduates' salaries averaged \$20,446 and the majority had health benefits.

V. STRIVE: <http://www.STRIVEcentral.com/academy/index.htm>

STRIVE is a nationally recognized workforce development program that focuses on improving participant self-sufficiency and promoting community empowerment through employment. STRIVE was featured on “60 Minutes” and is best known for its “tough love” approach although some sites have adopted less aggressive approaches. STRIVE focuses on recreating a work environment in the classroom. Beginning with the training, instructors demand personal responsibility as well as, workplace attitudes and behaviors from participants. STRIVE now operates in 20 cities throughout the United States. The program consists of a three-week class followed by job placement and a two-year period during which participants continue to benefit from individualized case management.

VI. JOBS INITIATIVE: <http://www.commbuild.org>

The Jobs Initiative (JI) was funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation to “improve the way urban labor markets work for low-income, inner-city residents.” JI currently operates in six sites (Milwaukee, Denver, New Orleans, Seattle, St. Louis, and Philadelphia), each of which operates under the same basic premises:

- JI programs include all disadvantaged job seekers in their geographical areas.
- JI considers employers as equal participants and encourages their integral involvement in all areas of program management including curricula and program design and site development.
- JI programs focus on employee retention rather than placement. To improve retention, JI programs only place people in what they call “quality” employment, i.e. jobs that pay at least \$7 per hour and provide benefits.

	Denver	St. Louis	Milwaukee	Philadelphia
Employment strategy	Rapid attachment	Job readiness, placement & retention	Short-term job training (6-8 weeks)	Long-term job training (61 weeks)
Average wage at job placement	\$8.00	\$7.00	\$10.10	\$10.94
1-year retention (% of eligible)	34%	50%	57%	78%

Denver is the only program that encourages its participants to get a job quickly and provides only limited pre-employment preparation. That Denver’s retention rate is the lowest of the four measured appears consistent with most research which suggests that quick employment strategies are initially effective in increasing earnings and employment rates but that these benefits decrease over time.

VII. CASCADE ENGINEERING: <http://www.cascadeng.com/about/ceu/wtc.htm>

Cascade Engineering, a Grand Rapids privately owned firm, offers a Welfare-to-Career Program “to support unemployed and underemployed individuals as they move from dependence to economic self-sufficiency.” Through the program, Cascade Engineering provides education, coaching, mentoring, resource guidance and transportation opportunities for its employees and the community at-large. Cascade Engineering strongly endorses Dr. Ruby Payne’s training on the hidden rules of the economic class as defined in her book entitled, “A Framework for Understanding Poverty.” All employees undergo this training to understand the different types of poverty (generational vs. situational) and the hidden rules associated with each economic class that influence the individual’s “patterns of thought, social interaction, and cognitive strategies” (Payne, 2001).

Some of the businesses applying the Ruby Payne concept:

- Cascade Engineering
- The SOURCE
- Hope Network West Michigan (HNWM) – through a grant to provide employment services to people of color with cognitive or physical disabilities.
- Public Schools throughout the nation.

Cascade Engineering is recognized nationally as a model company; with one full-time Family Independence Agency (FIA) Retention Specialist and one part-time FIA caseworker on site.

- Participant turnover rate has consistently improved: in 1999, the monthly retention rate for employees in the program averaged 83%; 96% in 2003.
- In 2003, 116 former welfare recipients participated in the program, including 30 who achieved self-sufficiency; meaning they were no longer receiving any cash assistance from the state.

Cascade Engineering is also an affiliate company of The SOURCE in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

VIII. THE SOUTHWEST ORGANIZATIONS UNIFYING RESOURCES FOR OUR COMMUNITY AND EMPLOYEES (SOURCE):

The SOURCE is a neighborhood-based collaborative effort that brings together private industry, government agencies and non-profit organizations in meeting the needs of the under and unemployed residents, employers, and employees in the Southwest and Southeast areas of Grand Rapids, Michigan. The mission of The SOURCE is to:

- *Assist the under and unemployed residents of the community in obtaining the skills and supports needed to gain and maintain employment and move to economic self-sufficiency.*
- *Sustain a productive and motivated workforce drawn from ALL socio-economic segments of the community by developing a model of employee supportive best practices.*

- *Network with their Corporate Citizen Neighbors, Community Partners and Government Agencies in an effort to share information and best practices and to pool and leverage community resources on behalf of their employees, community and member companies* (The SOURCE, 2003).

As of October, 2004, The SOURCE consortium was comprised of the following member companies: *Belwith Keeler Group; Butterball Farms, Inc.; Decc Co.; Hekman Furniture;; Michigan Wheel; Notions Marketing; Pridgeon & Clay; Spectrum Industries and Vi-Chem Corporation.* All of the member companies are involved in or with the manufacturing business and are located within a 3 mile radius of one another.

The Family Independence Agency has placed one full-time retention specialist and one part-time caseworker on-site at The SOURCE facility. Goodwill Industries of Greater Grand Rapids, Inc. is a fiduciary for The SOURCE and is the mechanism by which The SOURCE claims its 501(c)(3) status as a nonprofit business.

Retention - Additional Examples from the MDRC & the NGA

As taken from the MDRC and the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices in their 2001 examination entitled, “Building Bridges to Self-Sufficiency – Improving Services for Low Income Working Families,” the following businesses were identified as “providing unique employment retention services that attempt to address some basic threats to job stability in the low-wage workforce: fragile child care arrangements, poor financial literacy skills and limited assets, and transportation problems” under the following foci. (Miller et al, 2004).

Post-employment case management involving the entire family

I. SONOMA COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES (SCDHS), CA:

Case managers work with their client’s entire family before job placement. “They provide both pre- and post employment family activities, like outings and events, as well as simultaneous events for children (like homework clubs) while their parents are attending retention activities.

Workplace-based services

CASCADE ENGINEERING, GRAND RAPIDS, MI:

In addition to the information provided on page 32 of this review, “Cascade also offers a home-purchasing program in partnership with the Home-Link Employer Assisted Housing Program. Employees take money management classes and can save up to \$1,000 for home down-payments through matched payroll deductions” (Miller, p.34).

Partnering with employers

AMERICA'S FAMILY, COLORADO SPRINGS, CO:

"A nonprofit organization that works with employers in several sectors." One program in particular trains employer partner's staff to be ambassadors by directing "entry-level peers to community supports and services" (Miler, p. 34).

GOODWILL/EASTER SEALS – A MEMBER OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD EMPLOYMENT NETWORK, MINNEAPOLIS, MN:

"Offers a "Lunch and Learn" series for low-wage employees of the local banking industry" (Miller, p.34). Topics of discussion include retention issues and career advancement plans.

ACHIEVE PROGRAM TOWARDS EMPLOYMENT, CLEVELAND, OHIO:

A Community-based organization that "provides employer-based services for low-wage workers, including training modules for frontline supervisors; lunchtime workshops ("Lunch and Learn") that facilitate discussion and provide information on topics that threaten job retention and career advancement (budget management, on-the-job conflicts); and one-to-one customized support by Achieve Advisors" (Miller, p. 34).

ARAMARK STAFFING CENTERS- ARAMARK CORPORATION, PHILADELPHIA, PA:

"Aramark created its own staffing agency to hire welfare recipients and other disadvantaged individuals. After six weeks, hires can become permanent employees of Aramark or the employer who initially contracted their services. In Philadelphia, the center partners with the local One-Stop to recruit staff and provide pre-employment training. Supervisors also frequently connect with clients' outside case managers to address employment barriers" (Miller, p.34).

Asset Development

SEEDCO, NEW YORK:

Offers Individual Development Accounts (IDA's) to low-income families in New York City for purposes of home ownership, education or training. (Miller, p. 35)

Transportation

CASCADE ENGINEERING, GRAND RAPIDS, MI

Accessibility to "door-to-door transportation services during the first three months on the job, as well as stipends to purchase cars through the Family Independence Agency for welfare recipient employees. Cascade also funds 'Angels Wings' – a free round-the-clock van ride to and from work" (Miller, p. 35).

CAREER ADVANCEMENT

Additional Examples from the MDRC & the NGA

“Career advancement services represent a longer-term strategy to link working-poor families with higher wages and better jobs” (Miller et al, p. 37). In order to become financially self-sustainable, low-wage workers often need further training, formal education and/or job-placement services. Yet doing so is often ‘easier said than done’ as low-wage workers frequently face family demands and work responsibilities with limited financial means and supports. For the low-wage earner, career advancement proves daunting unless systems are in place to help. The following are some of the career advancement approaches throughout the nation as noted from the MDRC and the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices in their 2001 examination entitled, “Building Bridges to Self-Sufficiency – Improving Services for Low Income Working Families,”

Vocational English as a Second Language (VESL)

PILLSBURY UNITED COMMUNITIES, INC. (PUC), MINNEAPOLIS, MN:

In partnership with Home Depot, PUC uses TANF funds to create a VESL program that functions to help Spanish speakers pass the store’s applicant exam through a three week training on-site at Home Depot. “PUC also provides support services to participants” (Miller et al, p. 39).

Public-private education partnership

SALES AND SERVICE TRAINING CENTER AT ARUNDEL MILLS, HANOVER, MD:

“This skills center offers on-site ABE, GED, ESL, and vocational training in sales and service occupations for potential hires and incumbent workers of the Arundel Mills mall, through a partnership with Anne Arundel Community College and local welfare and workforce development agencies. The National Retail Federation, a key partner, has launched similar centers in other areas” (Miller, p. 39).

Training for high-growth industries

OPPORTUNITIES INDUSTRIALIZATION CENTER WEST (OICW), MENLO PARK, CA:

“OICW provides low-income residents with assessment, job training, and placement services. On-site training opportunities are available in allied health, information technology, construction, culinary arts, digital publishing, office skills, and electronics/telecommunications. Clients can access “Smartforce,” a self-paced e-learning program offering 44 certificate programs and 64 courses in technology, business, and soft skills. OICW has also partnered with Canada College to offer ESL and occupational classes on-site at its One-Stop, Peninsula Works” (Miller, p. 39).

CAREER ADVANCEMENT - Additional Examples from the MDRC & the NGA (CONT.)...

Employer-sponsored training

CAREER ADVANCEMENT TRAINING (CAT) PROGRAM, MARRIOTT INTERNATIONAL, INDIANAPOLIS AND MARYVILLE, IN:

Offers over 10 training modules centered on job and life skills for entry-level positions, leading to advancement opportunities. “Training includes classroom and experiential components covering customer service, goal setting, teamwork, and accessing community services. Career development activities are also included, such as mapping out career plans and creating a resume. Additional CAT programs are under development in South Bend, Indiana, and St. Louis, Missouri, with proposals pending in additional states” (Miller, p. 39).

Postsecondary education

MONTGOMERY JOB CENTER, DAYTON, OH:

“Offers clients on-site opportunities to enroll in Sinclair Community College classes” (Miller, p. 39).

FAST TRACK TO WORK (FTW) - CARILLO COLLEGE, APTOS, CA:

“For certificate- and degree-seeking students, FTW provides dedicated academic advisors who are familiar with welfare and workforce development regulations, an on-site welfare caseworker, and career development classes” (Miller, p. 39)

Re-employment services

WORK CENTRAL CALL CENTER, ROCKY MOUNTAIN, NC:

“Identifies re-employment as a specific goal of its phone-based case management services based on the understanding that career advancement depends on work experience” (Miller, p. 40). Further explanation provided in the March 2004, Building Bridges to Self-Sufficiency report.

Career ladder approach

SACRAMENTO WORKS, INC. (SWI), SACRAMENTO, CA:

“SWI meets the hiring needs of local employers through partnerships with employers, workforce and welfare agencies, and education providers, and it has developed a health care career ladder program with Los Rios Community College, Sutter Hospital, Kaiser Hospital, and Catholic Healthcare West. Participants receive entry-level training for Certified Nursing Assistant and Licensed Vocational Nurse certificates, job placements, and upgrading training to earn nursing credentials. SWI also has customized, employer-based upgrade training in the hospitality, construction, technology, and customer service industries” (Miller, p.40).

CAREER ADVANCEMENT - Additional Examples from the MDRC & the NGA (CONT.)...

CONNECTING “RUNGS” OF THE EDUCATION LADDER - URBAN COLLEGE, BOSTON, MA:

“Urban College was created by a local community development organization, Action for Boston Community Development (ABCD), to serve low-income and working clients’ education needs. The college has negotiated agreements with local four-year universities so that credits from its two- year occupational programs count toward four-year degree programs” (Miller, p.40).

CONCLUSION

Current public policy promotes work by endorsing approaches that move adults off welfare to a lifestyle of financial and social security for themselves and their children. As a result, workforce development strategies for low-income people go beyond placement and work skills training to include strategies that provide basic ‘soft’ skills conducive to job training or promotion.

This literature review highlighted some common best practices in the specific workforce development related areas of *job training, employer involvement, job readiness, soft skills, case management, career advising, improved retention* and *mental health services* as a means to better identify ways to effectively move people to self-sufficiency.

There are significant barriers to meaningful employer engagement. Public, nonprofit and private sectors typically have different workforce objectives making collaboration between them a challenge. Because corporate employers want employees who will contribute to productivity and profitability, at first glance, many of the best practice approaches featured in this literature review seem opposing. Yet an approach that offers low-income individuals access to services, employment, training in both work and soft skills and opportunity for advancement can ultimately increase productivity at both the corporate and individual level. Though limited at present, there are businesses from all sectors taking innovative measures to address poverty.

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