



Joint Newark & Essex County Welfare to Work Committee
Tuesday, April 12, 2016
50 S. Clinton Street, East Orange, NJ
Meeting Minutes

Attendees:

Aleksandra Adamcynk, Mary Alexander, Kelli Bell-Taylor, Joseph C. Epps, Danny Denise Gonzalez, Betty Mirda, Julius Montford, Morris Murry, Samuel Okparaeké, Curtia Orr, Myriam Rodriguez, Adelaida Ramos, Janine Schaeffer, Safanya Searcy, Cathy Skelley, Nicole Vazquez-Wise, David Weiner, Howard Weiss

Meeting Called to Order, Co-Chairpersons, David Weiner & Danny Denise Gonzalez

Mr. Weiner led a roundtable introductions of all committee members. He made a motion to approve the minutes from the previous meeting; minutes approved. Danny-Denise Gonzalez introduced the guest vendor.

PART I- Vendor Presentation
Essex County College, Training Inc.

Training, Inc. has been a service provider for about 30 years. They have four general areas of focus which include:

- Training Inc. offers vocational training
- Workforce Development offers job search and pre-occupational services.
- Special Initiative Grants offer additional training services for summer youth, basic skills and the GED Program.
- Single Stop Program offers free tax preparation services, financial counseling and legal services for students.

The Day Program includes Computer Literacy, CNA, Patient Care Technician and Certified Clinical Medical Assistant Certifications. The Evening Program offers CNA, Patient Care Technician and Certified Clinical Medical Assistant Certifications run Mondays thru Thursdays from about 5pm to 9pm. The Workforce Development Program provides professional and personal development enhancements, office skills, dressing for success, effective communication in the workplace and marketing skills. During the summer, Special Initial Grants serve about 150 youth who attend paid training and work opportunities. This includes certifications in Microsoft MOS, High School Equivalency and basic skills. All Allied Health programs require a high

school diploma. In 2014/15 (Day Program) about 224 clients were serviced; 113 were placed. Although Training Inc. provides placement and job search, some clients don't want to work. On average, certifications can range from \$8 to \$20/hour. The range varies based on place of employment (i.e. hospital or nursing home) and the companies that hire further out tend to pay more than in urban areas.

The agency is also funded by multiple grants which are mostly for the evening program while the day programs are mostly DTE.

The biggest challenge that the agency faces is that many of the clients don't want to be there, but they are mandated to attend training to avoid being sanctioned. The vendor communicated that out of twenty students, about five actually want to work. Tanya Wright is the person who is responsible for getting in touch with the Employment Specialists in regards to clients who are not in compliance with training and/or job placement. There was an issue raised about whether or not clients are asked if they have refused a job. Ms. Orr mentioned that she has never seen documentation in the City of Newark's benchmark package that stated such. Another challenge is that the clients tend to have child care, housing, attendance and punctuality issues. The agency tries to be flexible and sensitive to the clients' needs. Clients normally get placed while they are still in training, but they don't track them beyond ninety days.

The agency suggested that their toughest challenge is being sent clients who are ready and willing to train and work. The County is in the process of working with the Employment Specialist to help steer clients towards career paths that tap into their interests and consider their barriers. The vendor communicated that clients who have successfully completed the program have expressed that the Training Inc. Program is rigorous, yet they are gracious upon completion because they discover that they have been prepared for the workforce.

A question was raised regarding whether information about a client failing a background check is reported to the case manager. Although the Training Inc. Representative couldn't answer the question with certainty, she communicated that she would think so. Mr. Okparaeké stated that he hoped that before the next contract, the County would be able to have the ability to conduct background checks as a first step in the right direction. Looking ahead, the committee agreed that background checks should not be limited to New Jersey.

The vendor presentation portion of the meeting is concluded. Ms. Gonzalez thanked the agency for their presentation.

PART II- Strategic Plan

Ms. Gonzalez asked everyone to review the breakout notes from the 2015 WIB Retreat which helped to fill in the gaps of the strategic plan. She expressed that the committee had been working on many of the committee goals which included participating in the RFP process and speaking directly to vendors. To date, La Casa de Don Pedro, FOCUS and Essex County College have presented before the committee. The group decided that they would like to continue to conduct vendor presentations. Mr. Okparaeké said that he will have NCC, Catholic Charities and the Academy of Allied Health be invited to present at the coming meetings.

It was resolved that the Committee Chairs would complete the strategic plan and it would be collaborated and sent out to the committee at a later date.

Part III- Next Steps

Mr. Epps raised a concern about the importance of funding and how it is utilized; He expressed that since vendors are tied to current and future funding, they should be held more accountable. Mr. Weiner recommended that Mr. Epps represent the committee and meet with Mr. Montford and Mr. Okparaeke who agreed to give him a crash course on the RFP process. Mr. Epps will be tasked with helping to formulate questions and concerns to vendors.

David asked whether the matter from the previous meeting regarding volunteer hours had been resolved. It was affirmed that there was a form already in the system that is being used to address the matter to eliminate any confusion clients may have about mandated training and service hours.

Sam suggested that we use the next 3 meetings to meet with vendors. He also asked that the meeting calendar and minutes be sent to the committee. Committee business is concluded. The meeting is adjourned. The next meeting is scheduled for May 10, 2016.