

HUD EMPLOYMENT LECTURE SERIES
Lecture #4 Script
EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS IN ACTION

Section 1 Introduction to HUD Employment Lecture Series, Lecture #4
“Employment Programs in Action”

Colleagues:

This lecture is the fourth in a series of nine lectures that are being developed on employment-related topics. To download lectures from this series, please go to www.hudhre.info.

In today’s lecture, we will take an inside look at three programs that have been demonstrating remarkable success in helping people who are homeless get and keep permanent, full-time jobs. Each of the three programs places more than 60 percent of their homeless clients into permanent, full-time jobs. Their clients who have found full-time work have also been successful in moving into permanent housing.

The directors and staff have graciously shared their insights about how they have succeeded. We think that their insight can help you in your efforts to help people escape homelessness through full-time work. These programs offer homeless assistance models for successfully accessing employment services of the U.S. Department of Labor’s Workforce Investment System. They also combine those services with other supports needed to help homeless people obtain and retain jobs.

This lecture is intended for outreach workers and case managers working in homeless programs and community rehabilitation programs. During this lecture, we’ll talk primarily about serving homeless single adults and families although you might find it useful if you are helping older adolescents as well.

There are ten sections in this lecture. The topics contained in the remaining nine sections are as follows:

- Section 2. Overview of Three Successful Programs;
- Section 3. Using Employment as a Tool for Engagement;
- Section 4. Exploring Interests, Abilities, and Barriers;
- Section 5. Addressing Housing, Employment, and Other Supports Simultaneously;
- Section 6. Targeting Training Toward Rapid Employment;
- Section 7. Keeping Focus on the Job Search;
- Section 8. Focusing on Employers’ Needs and Clients’ Abilities;
- Section 9. Following up and Focusing on Job Retention; and
- Section 10. Conclusion.

This lecture has a companion pamphlet that provides additional information, including a reference to each of the resources discussed in this lecture.

Section 2 Overview of Three Successful Programs

You might think that helping people who are homeless find permanent, full-time jobs is a daunting task. Certainly, there are challenges involved. However, from coast to coast, there are programs that are helping people escape homelessness through employment.

For today's lecture, we interviewed staff at three organizations. Each one operates a successful program, but the programs are run according to different models. The organizations are also geographically diverse, representing the Mid-Atlantic, Southwest, and Pacific Northwest. The three programs are as follows:

- First, we'll discuss the YWCA of Seattle-King County-Snohomish County Homeless Intervention Project, which is located in Washington State. When we discuss the program operated by this organization, we'll often refer to it using the program name "HIP;"
- Next, we'll talk about the Midtown WorkSource Center at SEARCH, which is located in Houston, Texas. In this lecture, we will specify either the WorkSource Center or the larger organization called SEARCH, depending on which activity is being discussed; and
- Lastly, we'll discuss Jobs for Homeless People, Inc., which we'll refer to as "JHP" throughout the lecture. This organization operates in Washington, D.C. and a bordering county in Maryland.

In Seattle, the YWCA is an agency that provides many services. Its employment services include both the Homeless Intervention Project and a One-Stop Career Center. HIP exclusively serves homeless clients under contract to the local Workforce Development Council, which administers McKinney-Vento funds for this purpose. The One-Stop, on the other hand, serves all job seekers.

Because HIP is a YWCA program, HIP staff can link clients to the many services provided by the YWCA. The YWCA offers emergency, transitional, and permanent housing, as well as the diverse employment and educational services at the One-Stop. In addition, HIP clients have ready access to needed supports such as child care, work clothing, benefits counseling, domestic violence services, and on-site health care.

Similar to the YWCA, the Midtown WorkSource Center is an affiliate of Houston's workforce system and operates within an agency with a service-oriented mission. The agency, SEARCH, is a Houston-based agency that provides many services to people who are homeless. The local Workforce Investment Board contracts with SEARCH and other agencies to operate WorkSource Centers, which are One-Stop Career Centers.

The WorkSource Center at SEARCH is located prominently within a building where SEARCH offers a day shelter, meals, medical and dental care, transitional housing, and a business employing SEARCH's clients. The One-Stop is open to all job-seekers, but because of its location, approximately 95 percent of the center's clients are homeless. SEARCH also operates a HUD Supportive Housing Program-funded job bank and offers comprehensive employment and other case management services for those who are not making progress at the WorkSource Center.

The third organization, Jobs for Homeless People, Inc., is an independent agency that operates offices within several Washington, DC-area homeless shelters and also has an office to serve people in other shelters and in transitional housing. Clients receive a variety of services from shelter staff, but JHP focuses specifically on employment and providing services needed to

support employment. JHP collaborates with the local workforce system, regional employers, and other employment service agencies to help link clients with jobs.

To help serve job-seekers in flexible ways, the programs and the agencies with which they are associated rely on a variety of funding sources:

- The Seattle region’s Workforce Development Council supports the YWCA’s HIP project through HUD Supportive Housing Program funds. However, HIP clients have access to other YWCA resources. In addition, the agency braids funding from the Workforce Development Council, the Continuum of Care, Food Stamps, and TANF in order to provide services to all job-seekers, including those who are homeless.
- In Houston, SEARCH contracts with The WorkSource—a nonprofit employment services agency—to operate the Midtown WorkSource Center. Support for the agency’s employment services comes from HUD through the Continuum of Care, TANF, Food Stamps, Hurricane Katrina funds, private foundations, and local educational institutions.
- JHP relies on public funding sources for a much smaller percentage of its operating budget. About 60 percent of its budget comes from public sources such as HUD funding through the Continuum of Care and support from Washington, DC-area social services agencies. JHP gets 40 percent of its funding from foundations, corporations, and individual donors.

Looking at success rates, the three programs are similar. Generally speaking, the programs monitor outcomes for people who complete the initial intake process, rather than for everyone with whom they’ve had contact. Let’s look briefly at each program’s outcomes:

- HIP serves approximately 125 people per year, about 65 percent of which secure full-time employment. Of those who are employed full-time, approximately 80 percent move into permanent housing.
- SEARCH provides employment services to between 108 and 135 clients on any given day. Of the approximately 800 people who met with employment counselors in a year, more than 80 percent obtained employment. However, finding affordable permanent housing remains a challenge.
- JHP serves approximately 600 people per year, with about 60 percent maintaining full-time employment for 12 months after placement. Of those clients who work, 70 percent move into permanent housing, and 80 percent of housing placements are in unsubsidized housing.

These numbers are impressive, and they might surprise you. They certainly dispel many stereotypes about people who are homeless.

In the remainder of the lecture, we’ll look at how the programs achieve this type of success, documenting what program staff does from the time they encounter a person living on the streets, in transitional housing, or in a shelter, through the job search and the first few months of work.

Section 3	Using Employment as a Tool for Engagement
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Contrary to popular misconceptions, many people who are homeless want to work—in fact, they might already be working. Nevertheless, people are often reluctant to accept help from outreach workers. Getting people housing or other services often takes time, and some people who are homeless might have had experiences in which they were offered help, but none was forthcoming. Offering people immediate, hassle-free access to employment services sometimes

can be a “hook” for engaging a person. Your client could subsequently access the highly individualized mix of supports that he or she might need to escape homelessness. Offering and following through with immediate help with employment can help build a client’s confidence in the agency.

An example provided by SEARCH’s staff illustrates this point. SEARCH conducts agency-wide outreach and its outreach teams go out Monday through Friday during the day and two evenings a week, talking to people living on the streets of Houston and trying to engage them in the agency’s services.

One man had rejected the outreach team’s past offers of bus tokens, help finding housing, and other forms of assistance, but one day an outreach worker said to him, “Come in tomorrow, and someone can help you write a resume.” The man came to SEARCH the next day because he was promised something tangible that the agency could offer immediately. Once he was inside, the agency could offer him a variety of supports that he might need in order to find and hold a job.

While this man had rejected other offers of assistance, it is more typical that people who are homeless will already be accepting some form of assistance from social services agencies before they accept employment services. Therefore, the three programs we studied prioritize the distribution of information about their available employment services to people who are getting other services from the homelessness assistance system.

Three keys to successful engagement are: (1) maintaining visibility; (2) offering promising leads; and (3) being persistent with outreach and support.

Visibility is one key to success.

The YWCA’s Homeless Intervention Project operates from a location that includes a shelter, transitional housing, and other services for women, so the presence of HIP and the One-Stop are apparent to clients. The program also does outreach to Seattle’s men’s shelters and holds an orientation meeting once a week for homeless jobseekers.

Similarly, SEARCH’s WorkSource Center is located prominently in the agency, and people who come in for a meal, shower, health care, or other services see the WorkSource Center. The center has a greeter who can talk to people about the WorkSource Center and SEARCH’s other services and put the names of interested people on the list to speak with the employment counselors.

Many people come to SEARCH specifically seeking employment assistance. Other homeless assistance agencies in Houston refer people interested in employment to SEARCH because of the comprehensive nature of its services. In addition, WorkSource does a great deal of advertising for the WorkSource Centers, including newspapers, magazines, billboards, radio, and TV. All of this leads to a lot of walk-in business. By the time the center opens at 8 a.m., there are waiting lists of people wanting to use the computers and speak with staff.

Jobs for Homeless People, Inc., promotes its services both through placement of staff in some of the Washington, DC, region’s shelters, and “inreach” to clients in other shelters and in transitional housing programs. Some shelters have a policy requiring participation in JHP’s services, but others do not. In all cases, JHP holds a weekly orientation meeting that offers information about JHP’s services, as well as practical advice on getting housing, developing a budget, and looking for a job. The practical nature of the information offered helps to encourage clients to view JHP’s services as valuable.

Another key to success is the ability to offer valid job leads.

HIP and JHP work to identify employers and fields that offer promise, while SEARCH has access to jobs developed by other WorkSource contractors. Participants in each program benefit from access to databases of jobs maintained by the local workforce system—YWCA and SEARCH operate One-Stops, and JHP participates in the local system’s job database. Because the programs can offer potential jobseekers immediate access to valid job leads, clients are more likely to take their offers of assistance seriously.

A third key to successful engagement is persistence and active support.

Many people who are homeless might not consider employment to be important, at least in the short term. However, each of the three programs we visited reported that they take an open-end approach with people who do not appear motivated initially. Programs might offer some form of assistance, such as bus tokens, just to establish relationships and get the conversation about work going. Staff might offer pre-employment activities, such as job training, adult education, or GED classes, to people who are not immediately interested in work. The programs all report that some clients will commit to a job search only after months of informal contacts, careful development of trusting relationships, and provision of direct, tangible support that is meaningful, reliable, and consistent. This includes working directly with other services that affect the client’s overall stability and quality of life.

Section 4	Exploring Interests, Abilities, and Barriers
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Although the three programs offer interested clients rapid access to a job search, they also use detailed intake processes to determine eligibility for services, experience and abilities, vocational interests, and support needs.

To help people find jobs that meet their interests and talents, each of the programs uses both formal and informal methods of vocational assessment. Please note that the first lecture in this series focused on vocational assessment and provides a good resource if you are looking for more detailed information.

At intake, the three programs ask for the same type of information that employers ask for—past employment, education, references, reasons for leaving, etc. They also pose questions to help gauge current interests and abilities; for example, they ask which of their past jobs clients have enjoyed, and they ask them to list specific skills that they gained at past jobs. SEARCH also gathers information about life skills, such as family life and parenting, budgeting, stress management, honesty, hygiene and grooming, and acceptance of responsibility.

In addition, the three programs use standardized tools to explore job interests and abilities. Information about the following tools is found in this lecture’s pamphlet:

- The Employability Competency System (or ECS) Pre-Employment/Work Maturity Checklist;
- The Self-Directed Search; and
- The COPSsystem.

While each of the programs seeks to explore and develop clients’ interests and talents, they also stress that the primary objective is to get people working full-time, rather than to find the “perfect” job for people. With many clients facing significant barriers to employment, such as criminal histories, staff stresses that people might have to take a less-than-perfect job as a stepping stone to a better position.

Many—although not all—jobs require some degree of education or literacy, and the programs therefore evaluate literacy and educational achievement as part of the intake process. The programs use one of two tools: the Test of Adult Basic Education or the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System. Information about these two tools, which are used widely across the United States, is available in this lecture's pamphlet. As we'll see in the next section, the programs can link clients to needed education based on the results of these assessments.

Regardless of the type of job they take, most of the three programs' clients will require some sort of support services during the job search and after starting work. Therefore, the initial intake process also includes a detailed assessment of support needs. The emphasis is on identifying those needs that will have an impact on obtaining and retaining work. To best assess the supports that a client will need in order to find and keep a job, the programs collect fairly extensive personal information. Here is a list that will give you a sense of the information the programs collect:

- The cause and length of homelessness and efforts to find housing;
- The status of benefits such as Social Security, Supplemental Security Income, Medicaid, Food Stamps, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, and Veterans benefits;
- Immediate needs such as food and shelter;
- Information on medical conditions, substance abuse, and treatment received;
- Criminal histories;
- Transportation availability and needs;
- Forms of identification possessed or needed;
- Family, spousal, or partner issues, including domestic violence;
- Child care needs;
- Current resources and budgeting;
- Legal or immigration issues; and
- Financial or credit problems.

Clearly, the programs gather quite a bit of information from clients, so in the next few sections, we'll look at what they do with this information.

Section 5	Addressing Housing, Employment, and Other Supports Simultaneously
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Even people with significant support needs can work successfully, but the approach to providing supports differs significantly from client to client.

Generally speaking, the programs help people simultaneously pursue both employment and housing. Attaining one often helps with attaining the other. Access to subsidized permanent housing is limited, and employment income provides an alternative to housing subsidies and expands immediate housing options. Similarly, having housing in place, rather than coping with the stresses of homelessness, helps many focus on employment goals.

Helping a client pursue employment and housing simultaneously can be achieved in several ways. Sometimes, a staff member of the employment program coordinates with another member of the client's service delivery team, such as a case manager from the shelter. In other

cases, a member of the employment staff might offer housing-related assistance if the client is not getting help elsewhere.

For some clients of the three programs, however, finding housing is prioritized, rather than pursuing housing and employment simultaneously. For these clients, homelessness poses an especially significant obstacle to finding a job. The increased need for housing might be the result of a family situation or an issue of safety. It might also be the case that the person has some specific educational, vocational, or support needs that should be addressed before the job search and commencement of work.

- In cases where time is needed to achieve specific pre-vocational goals, and housing is necessary to achieve those goals, the programs often can link clients to housing for a limited period of time. For example, JHP operates a small number of transitional housing units, the YWCA operates transitional and permanent housing, and SEARCH operates housing and can pay for up to four months of housing out of workforce funding.
- An example of a situation in which the need for housing is directly related to job goals might be a woman with dependent children who needs to complete a three-month adult education program in order to improve her chances of earning a wage that would allow her to support her family.

Outcomes from the three programs demonstrate the success of simultaneously addressing unemployment and homelessness. For example, 80 percent of HIP clients who find work also find permanent housing, and 70 percent of JHP clients are able to do so as well. Among the JHP clients who move into permanent housing, 80 percent move into unsubsidized housing. This is an indicator that homeless jobseekers not only can find jobs, but also can find jobs that pay a “living wage.”

Housing is only one of a number of needs that the programs should address in order to help their clients find and hold jobs. Support needs are unique to each client, but from program to program, certain needs tend to be more prominent.

- For example, JHP operates in men’s shelters, family shelters, and transitional housing for families. In the family shelters and transitional housing, finding child care is the most common area in which clients need support. Many of the jobs that JHP is able to find for its clients have non-traditional work hours, such as evenings, weekends, or even overnight. JHP has established relationships with licensed childcare providers that offer services at needed times. Although clients usually qualify for subsidized childcare, there is often a waiting list for subsidies, and JHP provides temporary assistance until the subsidy becomes available.
- Most of HIP’s clients have substance abuse and mental health needs, with most clients already participating in some form of treatment. HIP’s case managers frequently work with clients to improve self-esteem and build a social support network to cope with employment-related stress. HIP has a part-time counselor who is a graduate student at a local university; this person provides both assistance and referrals to outpatient and inpatient treatment as needed. HIP staff reports that the substance abuse and mental health treatment systems have adequate capacity to address the needs of HIP clients seeking treatment, a favorable situation that does not exist in many communities. Sometimes, the need for inpatient treatment puts a job search on hold, but HIP resumes working with the client toward the end of the inpatient stay.

Placing a client with a history of substance abuse problems often requires increased effort. At times, staff of the programs will vouch for a client’s character if the client has demonstrated engagement with both treatment and employment services; for example, the client may have

been attending needed classes or following through with the steps that he or she developed to reach employment goals. The programs often place high expectations on their clients and a client's ability to meet those expectations can be an indicator of character. However, vouching for a client poses risks, as a failed drug screen can damage long-held relationships with employers. Therefore, the programs keep a close eye on substance use, either by testing clients or asking them to grant access to their treatment records.

Of course, clients often have numerous other support needs that can be addressed while looking for work. When clients come to use employment services at SEARCH, for example, they have access to visiting staff from the Food Stamp program, the VA, the mental health authority, the hospital, the HIV program, and the Social Security Administration. Clients can also access health care and dental care on site, as well as receive help with TANF and subsidized child care issues.

Section 6	Targeting Training Toward Rapid Employment
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In addition to having support needs, many clients can benefit from some form of education or training in order to help them find better jobs. The types of training and education offered through these programs are geared toward the programs' focus on getting people employed quickly.

During the initial intake process, the programs evaluate a client's literacy and education levels through the administration of standardized tests. For some clients, no education is necessary in order to help them qualify for jobs that meet their goals and offer a living wage. For others, specific skills or a high school diploma are required to help them meet their goals. In such cases, the programs offer some choices.

Because SEARCH and YWCA operate One-Stop Career Centers, they offer educational opportunities on site. For example, YWCA collaborates with a local community college to offer GED, English as a Second Language, adult basic education, and alternative high school diploma classes. SEARCH offers GED classes from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Monday through Friday. It also has self-paced instruction in its computer lab for clients who need to improve their math, reading, or language arts skills. JHP refers clients as needed for educational services.

The programs do offer some forms of training for specific jobs. However, the training is largely geared toward giving people specific skills and credentials for jobs for which employer demand is high. For example, HIP provides training in forklift operation, construction flagging, welding, and hazardous material handling. SEARCH provides training in food preparation through its onsite catering business. The programs also have found community partners to provide training, such as union pre-apprenticeship programs and technical community colleges.

As we'll discuss in a later section, cultivating relationships with regional employers and joining with the local workforce system can help to identify the positions for which training can lead to quick results. Some of the other fields that have shown promise for the three programs include: factory jobs, institutional food service, in-home nursing, adult day care, and security jobs. Many high-demand jobs require a few basic skills, and linking clients to training for such jobs can keep them on the fast track to employment.

Section 7 Keeping Focus on the Job Search

Not all clients of the programs we're discussing require additional education and training for specific jobs, but the programs provide every client with assistance in their job search. For many clients, finding a full-time job can be a challenge, and to meet that challenge, the programs strive to keep people focused on their job search.

The strategy is relatively straightforward:

Step 1. Give people access to good job leads.

All of the programs give their clients access to computer banks that they can use to search for jobs. They encourage clients to use the computers regularly; for example, JHP expects clients to use the computers two to five times per week. All three programs offer access to job leads through the local workforce system—YWCA and SEARCH operate One-Stops, and JHP participates in an online database known as WORC. WORC is maintained through the collaborative effort of the workforce system, regional employers, and employment agencies. The programs might also provide people with leads that come in through their network of contacts, and clients can participate in job fairs or onsite interviews or meet with a representative of an “employer of the day” through the One-Stop Career Centers.

Step 2. Help them pursue the leads.

The programs teach clients “self-representation” skills. These are skills that teach them how to “sell themselves” to employers. Based on individual discussions with the client, staff might help the client to develop a formal resume, sample cover letter, or a “master job application.” A master job application is a written summary of past employment, education, etc., that the client can copy into written job applications in order to avoid grammatical or other errors. By being well prepared, upfront, and articulate in addressing issues, a client can increase an employer’s interest in hiring the client, based on presentation and character.

Step 3. Make sure they follow up.

Some clients might need encouragement or prompting to make sure that they are aggressively pursuing the leads that are available. People might lack confidence or not look forward to a particular job. However, the programs stress to them that career development is an ongoing process; unsuccessful job interviews can be learning experiences, and less-than-desirable jobs can be stepping stones. JHP, for example, expects clients to go on five job interviews per week.

Step 4. Help them get the job.

Another aspect of teaching self-representation skills is preparing people for job interviews. For example, staff might practice a job interview with a client. For clients who face a particular obstacle to employment—for example, a criminal record—staff might help them write up a script of how they will answer certain questions and rehearse those questions and answers with the client. Programs also provide practical support in participating in job interviews; they can provide bus tokens, appropriate clothing, and child care during the interview, for example, or they might arrange a reasonable accommodation. One program arranged a sign-language interpreter for a client, who then got the job.

Step 5. Help them get to work and do the job.

Sometimes, the biggest barriers to re-entering the workforce begin when a person is hired. People might lack the clothes, equipment, transportation, or child care to work, or they might have lost touch with basic workplace “smarts.” The programs are especially careful in the critical first few weeks of work to make sure clients know how to get to the workplace, have enough bus

tokens to get there, are dressed appropriately, and have the right tools. Programs might give clients gift cards to discount stores or even take a client to the hardware store with a list of tools provided by the employer. Staff makes sure that child care is covered until the client can pay for it. Staff might also help with adjusting to a work environment, perhaps stressing to them the need to be at work at a particular time if that is a job requirement or dictated by the culture of the workplace. Staff can also help clients handle stressful social interactions that come with being new to a workplace. Providing this kind of support can be facilitated by scheduling consistent, frequent times to check in with clients during the first one to three months of the job in order to address problem areas and create solutions before the situation becomes a “crisis”.

Step 6. Motivate them to keep trying.

Although the programs have excellent success rates overall, some clients will have a more difficult time than others. One tactic that is effective in keeping people optimistic through a difficult adjustment is bringing former clients who are now working to speak to current clients about their experiences as a job seeker and the rewards that they have found in working.

Section 8	Focusing on Employers’ Needs and Clients’ Abilities
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Although the programs we visited have a clear social mission, they take a very businesslike approach to helping clients get jobs. When the programs speak with fundraisers, they promote the social purpose of helping people escape homelessness through self-sustaining employment. However, when they speak to employers, they promote their ability to help employers fill their hiring needs.

In fact, JHP uses its corporate name, “Jobs for Homeless People,” in explaining to fundraisers what the agency does, but when interacting with employers, JHP uses its slogan, “Jobs Have Priority.”

Some employers do indeed have altruistic motives in hiring people who are or who have been homeless, but the vast majority of employers is interested only in meeting staffing needs.

JHP and HIP are actively involved in job development—meeting with employers to identify their hiring needs and making it easier for clients to apply for jobs. Job development is not a part of SEARCH’s contract with WorkSource. However, WorkSource has job development contracts with other agencies, and clients of the Midtown WorkSource Center have access to these jobs, additional job leads, on-site job fairs, and direct referrals to employers through the affiliated One-Stop.

The programs identified five keys to successful job development:

First, dig deeper when looking for job opportunities.

Sometimes a region’s major employers are a good source of jobs for homeless jobseekers, and sometimes they are not. HIP, for example, has found that major regional employers have not been a big source of opportunities for its clients. JHP’s staff members bring cards with them wherever they go—restaurants, gas stations, stores—and ask if they know who is in charge of hiring, and whether they know who provides services such as security and cleaning. Some industries have much greater hiring needs than others, and it is important to go where the grass is greenest.

Second, avoid stigmatizing clients unnecessarily.

For a time, JHP promoted to employers the tax incentives associated with hiring their clients who were leaving welfare. However, the employers only needed to employ the clients for 90 days in order to qualify, and JHP found that employers were laying off those clients on the 91st

day. JHP staff realized that they could find jobs for clients without promoting these tax incentives, and clients no longer face this problem.

Third, focus on abilities rather than disabilities.

The programs noted that employers generally want to treat their clients just like they would any other employee. Thus, the programs try to operate just like any other employment agency and remain “behind the scenes” after a client takes a job. HIP staff sometimes communicate with employers with whom they have a more established relationship, to get feedback if a client has an unsuccessful job interview or work experience. Such communication is designed to help the agency refer clients who meet the employers’ needs as well as to help the client learn from the experience.

Fourth, develop long-term relationships with employers.

Some clients are more difficult to place than others, and the programs have found that by developing ongoing relationships with employers, those employers see the programs as a source of quality employees. They are willing to take a chance on some applicants with less-than-stellar work histories or even major issues such as criminal histories or recent substance abuse. The programs find ways to identify people who are truly committed to changing their ways, before recommending them to an employer with whom the agency has a longstanding relationship.

And lastly, spend the most time on employers that offer good pay and benefits.

At JHP, for example, the assistant director concentrates on cultivating relationships with employers who offer better pay and benefits. Through persistence, JHP has established relationships with government agencies that offer employees excellent benefits, making it much easier for clients with family responsibilities or health issues to work full-time. At the same time, case managers continue to pursue job development with employers that may not offer the best pay or benefit packages but that hire frequently and have few employment prerequisites.

All three programs report that placing individuals in jobs with growth potential is a programmatic priority.

Section 9	Following up and Focusing on Job Retention
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The work of an employment agency does not end when the client gets a job. The programs we visited do follow-up with clients for varying lengths of time. JHP has the longest formal follow-up period, keeping in contact with all clients for one year. The other programs have shorter follow-up periods, although they might follow certain clients for longer if they need more support than most.

Follow-up achieves two purposes. First, it helps the programs monitor their success. Second, it helps clients adjust to work and have a greater chance of succeeding and advancing in their careers.

The programs use a variety of information-gathering systems to collect data on their clients and thus track their current status. There are several tools discussed in the pamphlet, among them is the Homeless Management Information System (or HMIS), which is accessed by various software programs and can generate numerous reports.

The programs collect several pieces of information to evaluate outcomes. They examine entry into full-time employment and retention for 90 days and 120 days. They also examine housing outcomes, such as the entry into permanent housing and unsubsidized permanent housing, as well as the upgrade of housing, such as moving from a shelter to transitional housing.

During the follow-up phase, the programs also offer job retention services and assistance to clients in adjusting to work life. Much of this assistance comes in the form of practical advice, such as suggesting actions that can be taken to minimize stresses at the job and avoid potential relapse. Assistance can also be serving as a “sounding board” for people who are having unpleasant experiences at work and reassuring them that people can succeed in jobs even when there are difficult people to deal with.

Staff also helps with issues such as finding housing that meets a client’s needs, working out issues with transportation and child care, and other ongoing support needs. There are also many support needs that often require attention. Clients may need practical support for clinical issues that might arise, such as coping with medications, symptoms of mental illnesses or addiction. They may need help scheduling adequate support with treatment providers that does not interfere with work, and they may need input on identifying new ways to cope with stress and discomfort.

Some clients might need additional supports in order to continue working successfully. By keeping in contact with these clients, the programs are often able to link clients to the needed supports and keep them in the workforce. For example, the programs might have an agreement with the local Vocational Rehabilitation office that the employment program will arrange for supports during the pre-employment phase and that Vocational Rehabilitation will provide needed supports once the client is on the job.

The programs offer a few suggestions about following up with clients:

- **First, develop collegial relationships with clients during the job search.**
When clients view staff as confidants, they are more likely to want to continue talking to staff. Many former clients call to share when they get promotions, raises, or better jobs. Using a sense of humor when dealing with clients helps staff to establish this level of rapport.
- **Second, offer some form of incentive to meet with staff.**
For example, the programs might distribute a weekly or monthly transit pass during each meeting with the client, offering the client a reason to get to the follow-up meeting.
- **Third, avoid interference with the client’s work performance.**
The programs do their best to avoid contacting the client at work and make sure that staff is available to meet with clients at times that do not conflict with the clients’ work schedules. Programs might collect alternative contact information—such as that of a parent, sibling, or friend—so that if the client moves or changes phone numbers, program staff will not have to resort to trying to contact the client at the workplace.

Section 10	Conclusion
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Today’s lecture should have given you a pretty good picture of how three programs thousands of miles apart and following different models have achieved similar success rates in placing homeless job-seekers into full-time positions. We appreciate the contributions of the staff and directors of the three programs, and we hope that their insights can help you in your efforts to help people escape homelessness through employment.

Here are the key concepts that you should remember and apply to your practice:

- Explore clients' skills, abilities, and interests to determine what they can offer to employers;
- Carefully identify clients' support needs, remembering that each person is different, and figure out how those needs can be met in a sustained way;
- Help clients to address housing, employment, and other needs simultaneously;
- Partner with the local workforce system for training and job leads;
- Make sure that clients are hitting the computers, going to job fairs, and scheduling interviews;
- Provide clients with the clothes, transportation, and childcare they need to get to those interviews;
- Assist clients to prepare adequately for discussing difficult situations and issues during job interviews;
- Remember to focus on clients' abilities and employers' needs rather than the social issue of homelessness; and
- Follow up to make sure that clients have the support they need to get to work, do the job, and cope with challenges on the job.

Partnerships between the homelessness assistance and workforce sectors can make these steps much easier to accomplish.

Our visits with the three programs resulted in an abundance of useful information—much more than we could cover in this brief lecture. This lecture's pamphlet contains more detailed information about the topics we discussed today. It also covers additional topics such as the programs' eligibility requirements, information collected from clients for administrative purposes, and what the programs look for when hiring employment staff.