

Employment can play a key role in permanently ending homelessness, by helping individuals gain self-respect and a sense of purpose and by generating income that can reduce their reliance on entitlements for housing and other necessities. Further, maximizing opportunities for employment helps to ensure that tenants who are able to move on from supportive housing will have the means to do so, when they choose to do so. Through our work with our partners, the Corporation for Supportive Housing has gathered years of best practice information, case studies, and other evidence that demonstrates that tenants of supportive housing can succeed and thrive in a wide variety of employment settings. The following principles have evolved from this work and provide a foundation for CSH's *Toolkit for Connecting Supportive Housing Tenants to Employment*, available at www.csh.org/EmploymentToolkit, which seeks to strengthen the capacity of the supportive housing industry to implement high-quality employment services programs and strategies:

- **Employment is an integral, stabilizing part of the recovery process.** Service providers should not assume that a person with mental illness and/or substance abuse issues cannot work. The prospect of a good job can help motivate a tenant to develop new habits and routines, to establish new social networks, and to identify other meaningful goals. With the right preparation, employer outreach, and response plan in place, relapse or job loss can become a learning opportunity rather than a failure.
- **Enhanced partnerships between the supportive housing industry and public workforce systems are achievable - and are critical for success.** Such effective partnerships are an essential component of long-term, sustainable employment services for individuals who are homeless or formerly homeless. Regional workforce development programs, One Stop Career Centers, and education and training programs should be an integral part of tenant employment services. Rather than create new and/or parallel systems, all stakeholders must work together to create better access to these existing community resources.
- **Work opportunities should be numerous and varied, with opportunities to start right away, as well as to advance, in a job.** Work opportunities may range from employment in the competitive labor market to internships to on-the-job training positions to self-employment and to in-house jobs, such as those in property management or with social purpose ventures. Ideally, employment options will allow for rapid tenant engagement in work activity, include both full-time and part-time options, jobs with benefits, opportunities to enhance skills, and an identified career pathway.
- **In some cases, job duties can be effectively tailored (or “customized”) to create a mutually beneficial situation for employers and for employees with disabilities.** Customization of the employment experience, designed to be responsive to an employer’s labor needs and a tenant’s employment strengths, interests, and goals, leads to successful employment outcomes.
- **Placement into a job is just the beginning; individualized, on-going employment support - for retention and advancement—is an essential element of successful employment services.** Effective case management can offer the working tenant a range of integrated services, such as transportation assistance, child care, mentoring and asset development, and connections to education and training, providing the support needed for employment retention and advancement. Other services staff, such as mental health and substance abuse counselors and public assistance case managers, should function as a team, mutually supporting a tenant’s employment goals and achievements.

CSH is committed to continuing to pursue strategies that will enhance the ability of the supportive housing industry to provide meaningful employment opportunities and services to tenants of supportive housing. CSH will continue to listen to – and learn from – our partners and tenants of supportive housing, in order to strengthen our understanding of the principles and practices that help ensure the provision of high-quality employment services.