



The Allies for Employment Initiative: Overview and Achievements

OVERVIEW OF THE ALLIES FOR EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVE

In January 2008, the MetLife Foundation awarded the Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH) a grant to implement the *Allies for Employment Initiative*, a re-granting and technical assistance program that established and enhanced partnerships between the supportive housing industry, private employers, and mainstream workforce systems funded through the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). Direct service workforce programs, known as One-Stop Career Centers (or “One-Stops”), exist in nearly every community and are charged with providing “universal access” in order to make services and resources available to everyone. Many WIA-funded workforce agencies, however, are not prepared to work effectively with individuals who have multiple barriers to employment, and WIA’s internal performance standards often create a disincentive for working with clients with multiple and complex service and training needs. Unfortunately, for persons faced with the most significant barriers, including the impact of homelessness, mental health issues, challenges with substance abuse, and/or childcare needs, the concept of “universal access” has resulted in, at best, limited and ineffective access. Often, it has resulted in no access at all.

Allies for Employment Initiative funds were dedicated to local planning activities that designed strategies for providing improved access to the mainstream workforce system for tenants of supportive housing, that featured new or enhanced collaborations and cross-agency coordination, and that will, ultimately, be more effective in helping tenants secure and retain mainstream jobs in appropriate employment settings, including the competitive marketplace. CSH developed and issued a Request for Proposals for *Allies for Employment* Planning Grants available to supportive housing providers or coalitions seeking to launch or enhance partnerships with local mainstream workforce agencies and private employers. CSH selected Planning Grant recipients in five diverse communities across the country:

- Supportive Housing Employment Collaborative, led by Community Housing Partnership (San Francisco, CA)
- Property Management Career Pathway Program, led by the Property Management Career Pathway Advisory Board (Bridgeport, CT)
- Minneapolis Housing and Workforce Initiative, led by Project for Pride in Living (Minneapolis, MN)
- Specialized Employment Center, led by Miami Valley Housing Opportunities (Dayton, OH)
- Bridges to Housing, led by Neighborhood Partnerships (Portland, OR)

Each of the five collaborative projects received Planning Grants that were effective July 1, 2008 through June 30, 2009. To help ensure the successful achievement of outcomes, CSH provided technical assistance to the grantee organizations and their partners throughout the Planning Grant period, often utilizing resources included in CSH’s *Toolkit for Connecting Employers and Tenants of Supportive Housing*, a web-based resource made possible through previous funding from the MetLife Foundation and available at www.csh.org/EmploymentToolkit. In addition, in March 2009, CSH convened a meeting of the *Allies for Employment* grantees featuring the participation of representatives from each of the collaborative projects.

In August 2009, CSH published the [Allies for Employment Initiative Summary Report](http://www.csh.org/AlliesforEmployment) (available at www.csh.org/AlliesforEmployment) that documents the remarkable progress and planned next steps for the collaborative projects that received *Allies for Employment* Planning Grants, highlighting important lessons that organizations and communities across the country can learn from the grantees’ partnerships, activities and plans. The *Summary Report* includes detailed profiles of each of the *Allies for Employment* projects, the innovative strategies they pursued and continue to implement - strategies that will provide tenants of supportive housing with more effective employment services and with expanded employment opportunities.

THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE ALLIES FOR EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVE

Through these Planning Grants and through CSH's technical assistance, all of the *Allies for Employment* projects made remarkable progress toward improving employment outcomes for tenants and created strong foundations for future activities and collaborations:

- **Supportive Housing Employment Collaborative (San Francisco, CA):** Led by Community Housing Partnership, the Supportive Housing Employment Collaborative (SHEC) was successful in using the *Allies for Employment* Planning Grant to reinvigorate their existing Collaborative, to secure renewed and strengthened commitments from their partners, and to convene a new Employer Advisory Council to help guide an expanded array of employment strategies and to strengthen the SHEC's collaborative hiring practices. Despite the impacts of significant budget cuts from the City of San Francisco, the SHEC partners have already been able to document significantly increased employment placement rates for tenants resulting from the new strategies that the Planning Grant enabled them to implement.
- **Property Management Career Pathway Program (Bridgeport, CT):** Led by the Property Management Career Pathway Advisory Board, the *Allies for Employment* Partners were successful in developing the curriculum plans for both a non-credit course and a for-credit certificate program to be offered at Housatonic Community College. The curricula are designed to prepare supportive housing tenants for careers in the property management field. The non-credit, three-week intensive course has now been offered once, with seventeen (17) supportive housing tenants participating. The curriculum for the for-credit course has been approved on campus and will be submitted to the Connecticut Community College Board for review and approval.
- **Minneapolis Housing and Workforce Initiative (Minneapolis, MN):** Led by Project for Pride in Living, the Partners within this Initiative completed a gaps analysis regarding the existing employment services for supportive housing tenants and identified program innovations to address those gaps. The Partners are now actively pursuing efforts to implement two such innovations: jointly hiring new vocational specialists to serve the Partners' collective tenants; and providing joint training for case managers to create an increased focus on vocational and employment services within the Partners' existing case management services. In addition, the Partners are considering the possible creation of a Transitional Jobs Program, another innovation identified as a goal through the Planning Grant.
- **Specialized Employment Center (Dayton, OH):** Led by Miami Valley Housing Opportunities, the Partners involved in the *Allies for Employment* Planning Grant Steering Committee developed a final operations plan for a Specialized Employment Center, designed to serve persons who have experienced homelessness and/or incarceration. The *Allies* Partners have published a comprehensive set of materials which will guide their implementation of the Specialized Employment Center, including: a *Specialized Employment Center Guide*; a *Point of Entry Handbook*; an *Assessment Handbook*; an *Organizational Handbook*; a *Program Handbook*; and a *Funding Handbook*. Following completion of the Planning Grant period, the *Allies* Partners have been successful in obtaining several grants and funding awards that will enable them to begin implementing their plans.
- **Bridges to Housing Employment Collaborative (Portland, OR):** Led by Neighborhood Partnerships, the Partners completed the planning of a "future state" system which will feature streamlined assessment processes for clients, expanded training for staff regarding mainstream employment programs, and improved services planning tools to assist clients to navigate toward self-sufficiency. The infrastructure necessary for this future state system will be implemented by the same Partners who were involved in the Collaborative that was supported through the Planning Grant.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information and resources related to the *Allies for Employment Initiative*, please see www.csh.org/AlliesforEmployment or contact info@csh.org.

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