

Conference Call on Employment
August 16, 2006

Featuring: Gary Shaheen of Advocates for Human Potential, Brigitte Slayton of New Directions Inc., and Mark Rosenbaum of Swords to Plowshares.

Brigitte Slayton:

Important to have realistic employment training programs:

- Enter program
- Counseling with peers and mentors
- Obtain VA benefits if eligible
- Work toward fulfilling employment needs
- Focus on growth toward employment – it's a process
- Overcome fears and obstacles to employment
- Important to identify clients' accomplishments and congratulate
- Be sensitive to fears and challenges that clients face, and address them as they arise

Following up:

- Follow up with clients' new employer to show both the employer and the client that support is there
- Engage clients in on site training at your program to identify their needs, and to help them learn how to behave in a work environment
- Present training opportunities that allow clients to use the skills that they have
- Two main areas New Directions has had success with are construction and culinary arts
- Allow clients to gain and advance skills in a supportive environment that will ease them back into a regular work environment

Once employment programs are developed and become successful it changes attitudes of employers as well as the clients.

Meeting with potential employers:

- Don't talk about barriers, talk about marketable skills
- Share the success of the program
- Reference other employers hiring from your program
- Slowly ease the employer into the process, no shocks

Preparing clients for interviews:

- They must be honest if asked about past troubles with the law
- Train them to provide information that moves the employers focus away from past mistakes and onto skills and benefits of hiring

Mark Rosenbaum:

Acquiring closed military facilities for program use, supportive housing is a worthwhile option to pursue.

Swords to Plowshares provides employment and training services, social and health services, as well as legal services. Is known throughout San Francisco community for the services they provide. It is important and beneficial to make yourself known in the community, and to collaborate with other organizations and people.

Outreach:

- Facility centrally located among area many homeless congregate
- Outreach mostly through collaboration with other entities in the community

Employment/Training:

- Employment is the biggest obstacle
- Most homeless vets are Vietnam vets in their 50's and 60's, have been homeless for years, have health and psychological issues, substance issues, and many are unemployable
- Hard to get ahead with younger, more employable competition
- Housing/social services dealt with before employment to address this

Residential substance abuse programs:

- Provide access to other employment services and health services
- Are a successful model
- After certain time in substance abuse program, you can analyze employability and involve clients in pre-employment training
- Types of jobs clients have had success in include working at theaters, doing security, and trucking – part time or low pay jobs, but ones that many excel in
- Clients can obtain employment and remain in treatment program for the first 3-4 months
- Many share a house with others – lowers rent share
- Clients can eat at facility to cut back on costs
- Provides support of other veteran friends

Match clients with jobs they can do.

Lower relapse rate with vets still participating in programs as they begin to work.

Small to medium sized companies headed by veterans are good employers – they identify with other veterans and want to help those who have been less fortunate.