

Spring 2005

ACE Partners:

Chicago Workforce Board



Thresholds, Inc.



University of Illinois—Center on Mental Health Services Research and Policy



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UPDATE

ACE Project Completes Year 1

ACE is a demonstration project funded by the Department of Labor, in collaboration with the Chicago Workforce Board, University of Illinois at Chicago Center for Mental Health Services, Research & Policy and Thresholds.

ACE's purpose is to increase the capacity of One-Stop Career Centers to provide employment services to persons with mental illness by funding staff from Thresholds who can individualize the employment relationship between job seekers and employers in a manner that meets the needs of both.

This first year has been full of lessons learned and getting started. The project has staff that work at the Mid-South One-Stop Career Center at 715 E. 47th St.

and is making plans to expand services to the One-Stop Career Center at Daley College, 7500 S. Pulaski, this Spring.

ACE staff customize and individualize job placements based on strengths, needs and interests of the person being served. Customization may include employment developed through job carving (job re-engineering), job sharing, self-employment, entrepreneurial initiatives, job development or other restructuring strategies that result in the job responsibilities being customized and individually negotiated to fit the needs of the job-seeker.

In addition to the services provided, ACE has been involved in other capacity building activities (details on page 3) including creating and providing training for all

staff at the Mid-South One-Stop Career Center and producing a resource manual for Mid-South as well. ACE staff also are participating in activities related to city and state initiatives that increase the employment of individuals with disabilities in Illinois.



ACE has helped 18 people find jobs in the first six months of operations.

Meet the ACE Team

ACE has a great team. The Project Manager for the Chicago Workforce Board is Deb Russell. The two primary partners are UIC and Thresholds. UIC's activities are led by Dr. Judith Cook and Thresholds' activities are coordinated by Ginnie Fraser. Each of these individuals plays a key role in coordinating and planning the grant's long term and short

term activities and strategizing methods to sustain the work of the project.

In addition to the leadership team of Deb, Ginnie and Judith, both UIC and Thresholds have staff that are assigned to work for ACE. UIC ACE staff include Dr. Lisa Razzano, Jane Burke-Miller, and Carol Petersen and Thresholds has an entire team of profes-

sionals providing services to individuals enrolled in the project.

The Thresholds ACE team includes: Carolyn Jones, Program Director; Kimberly Zmijewski, Outreach Worker; Earl Evangelista, Clinical Care Coordinator; Britt Maier, Vocational Specialist; Liz Cotter, part-time Outreach Worker; and Daisy Castro, Mobile Education Worker.

Advisory Councils provide opportunities for individuals outside of the Project to be involved in decision making and special projects.



ACE Advisory Council Updates



The Advisory Councils allow ACE staff to benefit from the brainpower of many experts.

Advisory Council 1: Policy and Sustainability

Mission Statement

The Council's mission is to conduct a systematic review of One-Stop Center policies and procedures in terms of their efficacy in serving people with psychiatric disabilities, and to suggest new policies and practices that enhance customized employment, as appropriate. This Council will also conduct a strategic planning and implementation process, which will evolve into implementation of a long-range strategic plan for expanding the availability

of customized employment statewide, and for the continued funding of customized employment. Council members will review and provide feedback on annual evaluation results.

Activities: Year One

Advisory Council 1 met three times and had discussions related to policy barriers and sustainability plans. The group agreed to postpone further meetings until the Project had run for a longer time. Since then, the Chicago

Workforce Board has received a grant to perform a full policy review for all workforce development systems in Chicago. When this is complete, Advisory Council 1 will be able to utilize this report to identify policy barriers.

Council Membership

Members include representatives of federal, state and local agencies, state legislative representatives, and philanthropic organizations.

Advisory Council 2: Advocacy and Outreach with Project TAP

Mission Statement

The Council's mission is to ensure the projects' outreach activities, services and materials reach a diverse array of individuals with disabilities. In addition, Council members will maintain their consumer-relevance and customer-sensitivity.

in regards to all types of activities in Chicago that relate to individuals with disabilities and employment.

Council members read drafts of materials created to help One-Stop Career Center Staff become more familiar with services and issues related to job seekers with mental illness and materials designed to help the job seekers better understand the impact of work on their current income.

Activities: Year One

Advisory Council 2 met four times. The membership provided information and input into both Projects' activities and materials. A listserv was developed and is being maintained by UIC to help the Council members stay current

providers, mental health and disability advocacy groups, faith based organizations, organizations of family members of individuals with mental illness, centers for psychiatric and developmental disability, and other groups and organizations that provide support, services or advocacy for persons with disabilities.

*** Project TAP is another U.S. Department of Labor grant designed to increase the ability of One-Stop Career Centers to provide quality services to job-seekers with disabilities in Chicago.**

Council Membership

Members include: One-Stop Center partners, mental health and vocational rehabilitation service

Advisory Council 3: Education and Curriculum

Mission Statement

The Curriculum and Education Council's mission is to advise and assist in the education of relevant stakeholders about customized education approaches and services; and the creation and implementation of an education program to inform others about the integration of customized employment services into the menu of services available at One-Stop Career Centers.

Activities: Year One

Advisory Council members determined in the first meeting to focus on marketing materials for Project ACE. A subcommittee was formed to design the "look" of the materials. Council members from the Chicago Tribune created designs for outreach and marketing materials. The result of this activity is a professional "brand" identity for Project ACE.

Council Membership

Members include institutions of education, media and communication enterprises, University Centers for Excellence, Rehabilitation Counseling Education Programs, dissemination units of state agencies, training programs, and other organizations.

ACE Participants

Loretta's story is one about not being satisfied with the career opportunities presented and so she created her own. Loretta had a difficult time finding a fulfilling career and was referred to the ACE Project.

Loretta enjoyed the experience and consistent paycheck, of working for a house cleaning business but she felt that there were greater opportunities awaiting her.

Loretta was linked to agencies that specialize in Entrepreneurial efforts and ACE staff provided support to Loretta as she went through each step. She had to learn accounting, tax rules and marketing. In less than six

months Highlights was born with clientele that includes condominium and home owners.

Loretta believes that a trustworthy attitude and professionalism are the keys to a successful business. She makes every attempt to show her clients that she can be trusted to do the job is hired to do as well as respect the client's home and possessions.

Dymond came to the ACE project at the age of nineteen with almost no work experience. She had worked at a fast food restaurant for a few weeks while she was in high school.

ACE staff brought Dymond to a mall near Dymond's home and

assisted in getting her an interview. Dymond was nervous but did well and obtained a sales position with the company. Dymond was subsequently fired after only three weeks on the job. After reviewing with Dymond what had happened on that job, the ACE team scheduled an interview at a hospital. Dymond again did well in her interview and obtained a position as a sales clerk at the gift store. Dymond was motivated to do well and did.

ACE staff stay in contact with the store manager and continue to provide support to Dymond, who has now been working in that the gift store for over six months.



Self Employment allows flexibility in scheduling as well as provides great rewards.

ACE Focus Groups

Talking to ACE customers and One-Stop Career Center staff was a top priority for the UIC team, led by Dr. Judith A. Cook, to help create quality trainings. Therefore, four groups were convened: two with Mid-South One-Stop staff, one with ACE customers/family, and one with ACE employers.

The goal was to identify specific employment barriers and solu-

tions related to each group.

These groups generated insight into and ideas for solutions enhancing employment access for consumers and employers.

For example, Mid-South One-Stop staff identified small print and blotchy, hard-to-read customer forms as an employment barrier.

The ACE participants and family

group identified being treated with respect, completing forms, and job searching as a few of the supports they need to successfully navigate employment services.

ACE employers emphasized education and training of employers about mental illness, on-the-job accommodations and the role of ACE staff, as ways to overcome employment barriers.

ACE Training

In keeping with the ACE practice of customizing employment for customers, UIC trainers, led by Dr. Judith A. Cook, offered Mid-South One-Stop staff customized training. By participating in discussions initiated by UIC staff, Mid-South staff across all levels had the opportunity to identify their training needs. They requested a customized resource book and training on: how to work with stressed customers, how to respond to incidents that are out of the ordinary, and how to work with persons who have a mental illness. The following

three trainings were designed to meet these specific requests.

In the first training, High Quality Customer Service for Clients in Stressful Circumstances, staff learned easy-to-use strategies to avoid and manage customer outbursts. In the second training, Safety and Crisis De-Escalation, staff learned safety techniques, policies, and practices to avoid and manage a crisis situation. In the third training, Identification and Referral of Customers with Mental Health Difficulties, staff learned symptom and diagnosis

recognition, effective communication, educational strategies, and on-the-job accommodations.

As requested, UIC created a 30-page resource book of social services located in the Mid-South One-Stop Career Center's area. It contains contact and descriptive information for 16 categories of services, such as: shelter, food, and medical care.

All of these trainings were provided to Mid-South One-Stop Career Center staff during Year 1.



ACE is helping other people understand the employment potential of individuals with mental illness.

“a trustworthy attitude and professionalism are the keys to success...”

Loretta,

ACE Project Participant



**BUILDING CAREERS FOR
PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES
VIA ONE-STOP CENTERS**

ACE Project Manager's
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Chicago Workforce Board
60 W. Randolph, Ste 200

ACE Services Main Office
Thresholds
4101 N. Ravenswood
Chicago, IL 60613



Customized Employment (CE) is a service that assists individuals in finding employment by assessing their strengths and negotiating with employers to maximize the job seeker's strengths and meet the employers' labor needs. CE can result in a variety of employment arrangements, for example: job carving (job re-engineering), modified job duties, job sharing, supported employment or employment that appears no different than all other employees.

We're on the WEB!! www.chicagoworkforceboard.com/ACE



ACE: A Partnership for Success

On October 1, 2003, the Chicago Workforce Board (CWB) was awarded a grant from the U.S. Department of Labor – Office of Disability Employment Policy (US DOL-ODEP). This grant is a five-year initiative that will help increase the capacity of the One-Stop Career Centers to provide customized employment services to individuals with severe mental illnesses. This project is a partnership between the Chicago Workforce Board, the One-Stop partner agencies, the Center on Mental Health Services Research and Policy at University of Illinois-Chicago (UIC-CMHSRP) and

Thresholds, Inc.

The Chicago Workforce Board is a body consisting of 52 members, over half of which are businesses that facilitate the vision of Chicago as ensuring the creation of a workforce development system that sustains economic growth and competitiveness by meeting the needs of employers for qualified workers and expanding employment opportunities for Chicago residents.

The other components in this initiative, Thresholds, Inc and UIC-CMHSRP are both recog-

nized experts in the field of mental health. UIC-CMHSRP has been awarded multiple federal training and research center grants to further the study and practice of providing quality services to individuals with mental illness. Thresholds is the oldest and largest community-based mental health center in Chicago, with offices scattered throughout Chicago and the surrounding area, they have served thousands of individuals with mental illness each year, assisting with stability, lowering hospitalizations and increasing employment.