Cross-Sector Service Coordination Strategies: Key to Improving Employment and Vocational Rehabilitation Outcomes of Individuals Living with HIV/AIDS

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Annual National Rehabilitation Association Training Conference
Brooklyn, NY
September 20, 2013
National Working Positive Coalition (NWPC)

• Who we are:
  • People living with HIV/AIDS, HIV service providers, educators, researchers, and vocational rehabilitation and workforce development professionals, policy makers, advocates and employers
  • Focused on HIV and employment, working for the economic and personal well-being of people living with HIV/AIDS

• Mission
  • Promote research, development and implementation of effective practices in employment services
  • Coordinate sharing and dissemination of this information
  • Advocate for work options and opportunities for people living with HIV/AIDS
Community-Based VR Programs (HIV/AIDS-specific)

• Limited number of targeted programs in the U.S. (partial list)
  – Education for Life – Minnesota
  – Cascade AIDS Network – Portland, OR
  – Positive Resource Center – San Francisco
  – Chicago House/iFOUR Program – Chicago
  – Albany Damien Center – Albany, NY
  – GMHC/MATCH Program – New York
  – Housing Works – New York
  – Harlem United – New York
  – The Alpha Workshops – New York
  – Catholic Charities Community Services – Rochester
  – AIRS – Baltimore
  – Action AIDS/Positive Action Program Program – Philadelphia
A New Era of Coordinated Federal/State Resources for Employment, Health & Prevention Outcomes?

In the U.S., HIV/AIDS prevention and health care providers have rarely coordinated services with the primary federal/state systems of employment and vocational rehabilitation services which can be utilized (and maximized) by people living with HIV/AIDS considering employment:

- State/Federal Vocational Rehabilitation (U.S. Dept. of Education/Rehabilitation Services Administration/RSA)
- Workforce Development/American Job Centers, formerly called One Stop Career Centers (U.S. Dept. of Labor)
- Ticket to Work (SSA)
Cross-Sector Service Coordination Strategies

• Opportunities within & among federal, state, local and private agencies and programs
  – HIV/AIDS services (Ryan White Program, HUD/HOPWA, SAMHSA, CDC)
  – Vocational rehabilitation (DofED/RSA, state VR agencies, local district offices, Ticket to Work/Ens, WIPA, CBOs)
  – Workforce development (American Job Centers/One Stops, DEI, JobCorps, YouthBuild, WIBs, CBOs)
  – Education Institutions (adult basic education/GED, LEP, community colleges & other post-secondary)
Recommendations

• Regional/local networks
  – Working collaboratively to increase vocational skills and combat stigma

• Ensure expertise specifically related to HIV represented within vocational rehabilitation and workforce development systems

• Cross-training for HIV/AIDS service providers on vocational rehabilitation and workforce development systems

• Include employment status and supports in HIV-related health and prevention research

• Examine policies that limit vocational participation
  • Complexity of employment incentives
  • Lack of access/understanding of employment supports
  • Limited post placement services
  • Eligibility criteria for programs (e.g., VR)
  • Ability for Ryan White Grantees to link with VR services
VRCs Are Well-Matched to the Needs of Many Individuals Living with HIV/AIDS

• Enhanced training and expertise on, and experience with
  – Chronic health conditions and episodic disabilities
  – Invisible disabilities
  – Stigma and discrimination

• Individualized services
  – Assessment and goal-setting
  – Plan implementation support and follow up
  – Employment transition adjustment and post-employment supports
HIV/AIDS Service Provider Presentations to VR Staff

• Invite HIV/AIDS service providers to make in-service presentations for VR staff about
  – Issues related to employment and living with HIV/AIDS
  – Local HIV/AIDS programs and services

• Develop a liaison relationship with an HIV/AIDS service provider contact.

• To strengthen support for VR plans for employment, learn about local HIV/AIDS resources that may strategically complement and supplement other commonly utilized VR services and referrals.
HIV/AIDS Outreach - VR Leadership

• Invite HIV service organization staff for VR services open house/site visit events. Information presented can highlight:
  – eligibility requirements
  – available services
  – strategies that may help to facilitate the application and determination of eligibility process
  – best practices and opportunities for agency collaboration and referral.
Develop A VR Liaison to HIV/AIDS Service Providers

• If one VR staff person can function as a liaison to HIV/AIDS service providers, the potential for productive relationship building and bridges between service systems is significantly increased.

• The VR liaison to HIV/AIDS service providers can become an internal resource about HIV for VR staff, and a conduit for information about community HIV/AIDS services and resources.
Cross-Sector Outreach: One Model

- In collaboration with HIV/AIDS service providers, convene a meeting to bring together VR and independent living, workforce development, and HIV/AIDS service providers.
  - Include multi-directional cross-training
  - Explore opportunities to streamline and customize referral process
  - Solicit ideas from local HIV contacts for how to increase accessibility of and engagement with VR and other services
  - Include contacts from vocational training programs and post-secondary education institutions (student disability services, adult basic education, LEP)
VR Presentations for Consumers

• VR counselor presentations for HIV/AIDS program participants can
  – increase understanding about VR services and policies
  – encourage realistic expectations and well-informed employment and vocational rehabilitation plans
  – increase comfort levels of individuals concerned about confidentiality, stigma and discrimination

• Off-site VR counselor presentations send a message into the community (consumers and providers):
  “We want to work with you - individuals living with HIV/AIDS are welcome.”
Resources

• U.S. Dept. of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy – Employment & Living with HIV/AIDS
  – http://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/HIVAIDS/


• U.S. Dept. of Justice – Fighting Discrimination Against People with HIV/AIDS
  – http://www.ada.gov/aids/

• U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development – Getting to Work Initiative (for PLWHA)
  – http://www.vpi.org/tap/gettingtowork/

• The National HIV/AIDS Strategy
  – http://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/onap/nhas

• National Working Positive Coalition (NWPC)
  – http://workingpositive.net/
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