

OCL Study Session, May 20, 2014 at ProLiteracy

Attendees: Laurie Black, Ginny Carmody, Jessica Cohen, Karen DeJarnette, Suzanne Gilmour, David Goodness, Steve Kempisty, Ava Kerznowski, Melissa Menon, Laura Miller, Rhonda O'Connor, Mike Sattler, Honora Spillane, Jai Subedi, Mary Thompson, Juanita Williams,

OCL: Co-chairs Barbara Carranti and Ben Lockwood; Sandra Barrett; Renée K. Gadoua

Carol Hill, SUNY EOC, facilitated a panel discussion with non-traditional educators and trainers

Panelists:

Alan Marzullo: Membership development coordinator, IBEW

Dominic Robinson: Northside UP

Andrea Hahn: Operations manager, CNY Works

Ron Boxx: Circles coach, Visions for Change

Gina Rivers: Mercy Works

April Palozzola: Jobs Plus

Claudia Dotterer: Careers supervisor, La Liga of Upstate New York

Mike Pasquale: Director of Reintegration Services, Center for Community Alternatives

Hill invited panelists to describe workforce services each agency provides.

Marzullo: IBEW represents 1,300 electricians. Once eligible, applicants enter apprenticeships, and then become journeypersons. Training involves three years of daytime training/two years of evening training. <https://www.ibew43.org/training.html>

Robinson: Northside UP partners with CenterState CEO, Catholic Charities, St. Joseph's Hospital Health Center and others.

--Workforce development is employer driven and filling their needs to fill jobs they have; community driven/accessible geographically and culturally to population; aligning partners for best outcomes. Work with SUNY EOC, SCSD, BOCES to provide recommended training and wraparound services.

--Green Train provides construction training; Health Train provides health care training. 200 people have participated: 93 percent completed, 85 percent are in full-time jobs.

--Creating a third program, Work Train, to create broader opportunities/partnering with MACNY.

Hahn: Says that people are unclear what CNY Works does, which is to assist people who need specific skills.

--"You can't be everything to everyone." Not training program, but helps provide skills to help people find training.

--"Many people don't know how to job search, so we train them."

Boxx: Visions for Change leads the National Circles Campaign in New York, a strategy that creates the framework for people in our community to build intentional relationships across class and race lines with the goal of ending poverty.

--Deal with people with generational poverty; seek to teach people to be intentional rather than reactionary in making decisions about their lives.

--Two-week program: Choosing to Thrive. Guides participants to assess and articulate their dream' includes programs to understand behavior, discuss resilience, soft skills, conflict resolution, resume prep, interview workshop, financial workshop.

--Address barriers that prevent people from having access and skills to network

Rivers: Vision-based living: Provide opportunities for young people to see what's possible, and then provide possibilities.

--Teen Tech: Program teaches hardware, software skills. When completed, students get a free computer. 700 given so far. Program addresses the digital divide.

--Synergy: Program works with OnPoint, CNY Works, Upstate and others. Leadership training for college students. Provides work experience by partnering with companies. Mercy Works pays students. Focus on professional development, financial fitness, soft skills that young people need. They also do individual and group projects that help community.

--They use the Donald Trump model: "I love young people enough to fire them. I'd rather fire them at 20 so they're not still late for work at 40."

--Students with high academic skills think they have to leave Syracuse; Synergy provides opportunities to show them what's here.

--Work with 50 college students each summer.

Dotterer: La Liga programs are open to the community, but she works mainly with low-income residents and immigrants and refugees.

--Help with resumes and job search.

--Many clients have no access to the Internet and no computer skills. Also often lack English skills and lack credentials.

Pasquale: Project for reintegrative services works with people involved with prison system or at risk. Work with people with criminal histories looking for jobs.

--Sees about 25 people a week. 700-800 a year.

--Barriers with criminal history, and may accompany other barriers (mental health challenges, addiction, language limitations).

--People who have jobs don't recommit crimes. Employment is an important aspect of public safety.

--60% of parole violators are unemployed.

--Try to get a sense of what people are interested in an attempt to match skills to available jobs.

--Many need to work on soft skills.

--Two-week job-readiness class based on Transition and Workforce Offender Training curriculum. Provide mock interviews (occasionally lead to job offers.)

--Transitional job program via DOL (grant ending soon): connects with Housing Authority and Catholic Charities to provide part-time jobs. 24-hours a week, minimum wage job, Puts money in their pockets and gives opportunity to practice and develop skills. ("We give second and third and fourth chances, and we do fire people.")

--Program at Onondaga Correctional Facility in Jamesville offers Cognitive Behavioral Training: "Thinking for Change."

Palozzola: Jobs Plus assists DSS with temporary assistance benefits and in attaining jobs.

Serve refugees, people in generational poverty, people with advanced degrees coming from different countries.

--Operating since 1995, places 200 to 300 people per month in full-time jobs.

--Training: People are identified as work ready. Non-profit agencies provide work experience/internships, which allow clients to maintain skills, create network.

--Companies that hire clients are reimbursed 50% of gross earnings for 52 weeks.

--Also offer ESL, customer service, computer labs, approve short-term vocational training.

--Collaborate with Northside UP, SCSD, Westside Learning Center, Refugee Assistance Center, hospitals

Hill: SUNY EOC in Syracuse is one of 10 in state via SUNY system.

--Eligible students attend for free (income eligibility).

--Serve people ages 17 and up

--Offer educational and vocational programs. Most popular is GED prep. Also offer college prep programs.

--Partner with OCC on the entrance exams.

--Short-term vocational programs include CNA, business office technology.

--Sees lack of computer skills: "There is a true digital divide. If they cannot email, they cannot attach a resume."

--Work with employers and other agencies

--Drop-in tutoring lab daily

(Possible report recommendation addressing digital divide. Perhaps connect with recent announcement by Mayor Miner and Rep. Maffei to address access to hi-speed Internet. More community computer labs? More computers for public libraries?)

Question: What barriers, specifically, do people with criminal record face?

Pasquale: Very often employers will choose not to move application forward because individual has a criminal record. Some come out of prison with skills, and some employers see these workers as hard-working and highly motivated.

Hill: She also deals with clients right out of jail, many of them with credentials. "If I can advocate for them, it does help."

Robinson: Employers are using hiring styles that don't reflect their needs. If you don't have GED, you won't get in. If you have a criminal history, you won't get in. The skills needed often have nothing to do with these things. We need to help employers understand it's in their best interests to be more flexible. Barriers are often more perceived than real.

Rivers: Skin color and language are still very real barriers. People make assumptions based on your zip code or your last name.

--There are college students who, during breaks, have nowhere to live, no food, no transportation. We try to provide bus pass, grocery or clothes shopping.

--"If the live on Midland Ave. or their last name is Hernandez people make assumptions ... We have to do a better job not to profile people."

(Possible report recommendation: A gentle way to address issue of profiling applicants.)

Heidi Holtz: Referenced Gifford's showing of film "Gaining Ground: Building Community on Dudley Street": "You're building in our neighborhood; hire me."

(Possible report recommendation on encouraging Community Benefits Agreements of Project Labor Agreements to increase employment in challenged neighborhoods.)

Question about problems transferring credentials.

Rivers: We do a good job cross walking skills for people coming out of the Army; we need to do better job with people coming out of prison. We find people with bachelor's level credentials taking our basic courses.

Palozzola: "Health Care Initiative for Cultural Inclusion" at University Hospital: program aims to make sure health care professionals obtain living-wage jobs that allow them to follow transparent path to licensure in US.

--"Why Your Taxi Driver is Smarter than You Are": National Journal, May 16, 2013

<http://www.nationaljournal.com/magazine/why-your-taxi-driver-is-smarter-than-you-are-20130516>

--May be losing critical talent by not addressing this. "We're screaming for health care professionals in this country; why wouldn't we want a work force that looks like us?"

Robinson: There are intense logistical barriers. Credentialing looks different in different in different countries. Language barriers are part of it.

(Possible report recommendation on encouraging increase in programs to address path to US licensing.)

Question from moderator about how workforce providers/trainers network.

Marzullo: Union works with 86 local contractors.

--Offers prevailing wages

--Building trades need to integrate more with these workforce training programs.

--We're in middle schools, high schools, OCM BOCES

--Notes that trades are the alternative to college. "We need to be shouting that from the mountaintops. We need to market this better."

--Union has waiting list for training. Application is a barrier. Aptitude test requires reading comprehension and math skills. www.electricprep.org training to address this.

--Salaries are \$70,000-100,000/year.

Laura Black: Is there a frame for conversation or goals, numbers, best practices?

Robinson: Workforce development /DOL is where all people are funneled through and control all the resources.

--At Northside UP we think about demand side and focus on community needs.

--Fundamental reality is these groups will train people for the next step.

Dual client model: low-income job seekers and employer (Based on Skill Works workforce development program in Boston)

(Possible report recommendation: Build on Northside Up's success with employer-driven training programs to fill real needs and real jobs. Partner with MACNY and CenterState on this?)

Palozzola: If we can attract the employers with living-wage jobs, we have the resources to train future employees.

(This prompted a discussion of local living wage/prevaling wage)

Question: Are many of these jobs temporary?

Boxx: Temporary jobs not all bad. They help a person who has not worked recently to add something to resume. But some people do get trapped in temp job to temp job.

Robinson: We place people in good construction jobs, but these are project-based jobs.

Hahn: We see some higher-skilled workers bumped down to lower-skilled jobs, which creates domino effect.

Rivers: Microsoft Office, Excel, social media skills will make employees competitive. Digital divide becomes critical. Computer skills not related to age, but to poverty. Low-income folks may not have wifi at home, but they have smart phones. How do we find people where they are?

Boxx: Gap is about world view. Low-income people's view is limited by their experience. Key to overcoming division is to have intentional relationships that break down stereotypes and a mentor to help. Help people who have never seen someone succeed in corporate setting succeed.

(Need for mentoring emerges again as a possible recommendation.)

Upcoming meetings:

June 12 Study Committee Meeting, 11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m. at ProLiteracy: Employment agencies

June 24 Study Committee Meeting, 11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m. at ProLiteracy tba

Submitted by Renée K. Gadoua, study writer