Using the Online Work Readiness Assessment (OWRA) Tool to Address Significant Barriers to Employment

June 6, 2018
Using GoToWebinar

Your Participation

Please submit your text questions and comments using the Questions panel.
To respond to the poll, click the radio button next to your preferred response.
Webinar Overview

Addressing Significant Barriers to Employment

Long-term Self-Sufficiency
Webinar Objectives

- Understand correlations between living in poverty and significant barriers to employment
- Identify research-informed approaches that reduce risks of significant barriers and address existing barriers
- Consider the OWRA tool as a vital component of a comprehensive, employment-focused, service delivery approach
- Explore real-world examples for addressing significant employment barriers and improving employment outcomes
Presenters

- Pamela Loprest, Senior Fellow, Urban Institute
- Tamitha Davis, Deputy Administrator, and Agnes Venson, Supervisor, at DC Department of Human Services
Overview – Pamela Loprest
Challenges to Work and Poverty
Facts about Personal Challenges, Poverty, and Work

1. People in poverty or with low incomes have higher rates of many personal challenges than higher income individuals.
2. Personal challenges make finding and maintaining work more difficult.
3. Poverty increases the likelihood of some challenges.
4. Less work increases the likelihood of being in poverty.
5. Poverty is strongly intergenerational:
   Children born in poverty have a high chance of staying in poverty.
Cycle of Poverty, Work, and Challenges to Work

- Child Poverty
- Poverty
- Less Work
- Challenges to Work
Challenges to Employment Among Low-Income

Studies have found evidence that these challenges lead to reduced probability of work and hours of work:

- low education levels and low functional literacy
- child under age 1
- poor health and disability
- mental illness
- child with chronic health issues/disability
- substance use and addiction
- experience of domestic violence
- Involvement/record with criminal justice system

Citation: Bloom, Loprest, Zedlewski 2011
Prevalence of Challenges to Work Among TANF

No High School Degree (2015) – 38.6 percent
Child on SSI (2008) - 5.5 percent
Work-limiting health condition (2008) – 30.4 percent
Poor emotional/mental health (2005/6) – 13.8 percent

Citations: Characteristics and Financial Circumstances of TANF Recipients, 2015 ACF; Bloom, Loprest, Zedlewski, 2011
Personal challenges make finding and maintaining work more difficult

Individual challenges are associated with lower probability of work and lower hours of work

Challenges can make it difficult to find work

lower education, criminal record

Challenges can make it difficult to maintain work

health problems, child with health problems

The greater the number of challenges the lower the likelihood of work
Poverty and Personal Challenges Multi-directional

The risk factors that lead to some challenges are more prevalent in poor families and lower economic areas than in others.

For example:

- higher rates of abuse and neglect
- lower access to health care including mental health and substance abuse treatment
- environmental health hazards
- poor schools
- high crime rates
- stress of being poor – chronic stress on infants and children (Shonkoff)
- effect of scarcity on decision-making (Mullainathan and Shafir)
Persistently poor children more likely to be poor adults

In the United States, 12 percent of children will spend at least half their lives from birth through age 17 living in poverty. These persistently poor children are significantly less likely to succeed as adults than their nonpoor and less-poor counterparts:

- 62 percent complete high school compared with 90 percent of children who never experience poverty.
- 34 percent consistently work or are in school between the ages of 25 and 30 compared to 75 percent.
- 45 percent are never poor between the ages of 25 and 30 compared to 92 percent.

Citation: Ratcliffe and Kalish 2017
Approaches to Reduce and Address Challenges to Work
Approaches

• Treatment access paired with employment services
• Coaching
• Other models of work for individuals with challenges
• Transitional employment (often with case management)
Approaches – Treatment-based programs and case management

Programs that address individuals work and health related challenges together with the understanding that improving/alleviating challenge is essential to increase earnings and economic well-being

Several programs have achieved some success:

• Substance Abuse Case Management (TANF recipients) and Working Toward Wellness (telephone-based care management for TANF recipients with depression) both increased treatment participation not employment

• Substance Abuse Research Demonstration (intensive case management for TANF recipients) improved treatment participation and employment

TANF recipients targeted for interventions through initial assessments
Approaches - Coaching

Multiple definitions: generally involves one-on-one longer-term relationship with individual; work to set specific attainable goals; includes multiple life domains and supports; participant-driven; training of “coaches”; can include motivational interviewing and focus on “self-regulation”

- ACF GOALS project - Strategies for using emerging insights from psychology, neuroscience, and behavioral science to inform goal-setting behaviors to help participants improve employment and move to self-sufficiency
- Can involve intensive/comprehensive assessments through tools and interviews
- Coaching differs in intensity; length of time; training of coaches
- Current ACF Evaluation of Coaching-Focused Interventions for Hard-to-Employ TANF Clients and Other Low-Income Populations
Approaches – Coaching - Examples

• Executive Skills Coaching – specific model to (1) assess executive skills (2) set goals (3) create environmental modifications; and (4) provide incentives (Dawson and Guare 2009). Implemented as pilot. Currently being evaluated.

• Mobility Mentoring (specific model of Empath in Boston) – one on one coaching based on brain science, client goal setting; enhanced case management; long-term coach-navigator relationship. Some outcomes data, not evaluated

• Building Nebraska Families - home-visiting model with life skills program. Positive impacts on earnings for “very hard to employ”
Approaches – Other Models

Other evaluated models include:

Individualized Placement and Support (IPS) model – initially used mainly with individuals with serious mental illness; includes rapid placement in unsubsidized jobs picked to match the participant’s preferences; uses a team of specialists provides a range of supports. Positively impacts employment and earnings/ used successfully for TANF pilot (small sample)

Jobs Plus model – public housing based place-based housing services couple with financial incentives; positive impact on employment and earnings

Transitional/subsidized jobs – temporary jobs, often subsidized, in private or non-profit setting. Programs serving individuals with challenges included additional services. Several examples increased employment in short-term, results faded over time. Other evaluations ongoing.
Conclusions

Poverty, work challenges, and low work are interconnected

People with multiple challenges have harder time finding/maintaining work – speaks to appropriateness of comprehensive assessment

Multiple approaches to addressing work challenges as part of employment programs have been evaluated

Assessments used to place people in appropriate programs

Lesson from early TANF period – assessment paired with service/program to address; sometimes capacity for services/programs is limited
Polling Question #1

What are the top 2 significant barriers to employment facing your families?

- domestic violence
- substance use disorder
- mental illness
- criminal background
DC Department of Human Services

DC DHS’ Approach To Harnessing The Power of Assessments & Next Steps
In serving any individual or family, case managers and coaches make key decisions that impact customer success.

1. Engagement
2. Needs Analysis
3. Setting Goals
4. Developing a Plan
5. Referencing Services
6. Intervening
7. Monitoring Progress
8. Updating the Plan

Customer success is the outcome of these key decisions.
It is rational to think that we make objective decisions consistently. After all:

- We are skilled at our jobs
- We understand our customers
- We have the appropriate expertise and/or qualifications
- We are experienced
- We’ve been doing this for a long time
- Etc.
Questions that DC Asked Before Deciding on the OWRA Assessment Tool

- What is it that we want to assess
- What do we want to do with the information
- What tool is right for us and why
- How would we execute the tool
Our Business Process moved from a one size fits all to make intentional referrals based on customer’s needs, strengths and successes.

DC’s TANF Redesign 1.0 Model

Education and Occupational Training Provider

Job Placement Services Provider

Education and Occupational Training

Job Placement

TANF Universal Service Delivery Model

Barrier Removal and Financial support

Barrier Removal and Work Support

LOW

MODERATE/HIGH

PERSONAL, HEALTH, AND OTHER BARRIERS

LOW

MODERATE/HIGH

EDUCATION, EXPERIENCE, AND SKILLS
DC’s Initial TANF Redesign

Identify Supports for customers and their families that may present as barriers to employment and education attainment

What the tool does not assess:
- child’s development;
- customer’s literacy and numeracy skills;
- no skill attainment only self-reports
Partner with City Agencies to Create Seamless Connections

- Child Welfare*
- Rehabilitative Services
- Adult Education and Training
- Child Care*
- Child Development Assessments*
- Behavioral Health*
- Substance Abuse
- Employment Services
- Job Placement
- Homeless Services*
- TANF Case Management
- TANF Incentives and Bonuses
- Domestic Violence*

*currently co-located at DHS Assessment Sites
Current Use of Assessment

Application Process

Immediate Connection to Critical Services

Work Readiness

Goal Planning
Lessons Learned

1. Frequency – have not really determined the right fit

2. Time between Assessments and actually referrals has to happen sooner.

3. How has the TCA Benefitted our programming

4. Are we still assessing the right things
Lessons Learned

**Recognizing** information is based on **customer self-report** at time of interview
- Executive Decision Theory
- Client Centered Perspective
- Self-Determination Theory

**Recognizing** impact of **Case Worker’s skills** of interviewing, engaging and interpreting customer’s verbal and non-verbal communication
- Communication Theory
- Motivational Interviewing

**Recognizing** that personal information is being asked must **establish a Relationship**
- Engagement Theory
- Solution Focused Theory
- Strength-based Theory

Long – 90 min. </>
Unexploited Potential

Frequency of Administering

Improving platform

Office Self-assessment via technology/app
Next Steps for DHS

Additional Assessments
- Career
- Financial
- Child Well-being
- Motivation
- Trauma
- Adult Education

Comparing Customer’s Change Over time
- Moving within Career/Promotions
- Educational Gain
- Customer’s perspective of well-being of their family

Universal Assessment with Sister Agencies
- Non duplication of questions
- Data sharing agreements
So What Happens after the Assessment?
TARGETED MOBILITY COACHING THEORY

• Targeted Mobility Coaching empowers customers to change their situation by building skills and behaviors through peer mentorship and modeling.

• Approach is family centered, with customers self-identifying their needs and developing a plan.
IMPLEMENTATION MODEL

- Initial Outreach → Intake → Assessment
- Goal Setting → Mobility Coaching → Outcomes
**Clinical Roadmap**

**ENGAGING: Open the Conversation**
- Explain role
- State appointment length
- Ask permission

**FOCUSBNG: Negotiate the Agenda**

**EVOKing: Build Motivation**
- Ask evocative questions
- Encourage elaboration
- Looking back/Looking forward
- Explore/Amply ambivalence
- Explore goals and values
- Assess importance/confidence

**PLANNING: Strengthening Commitment**
- Brainstorm ideas and opinions
- Negotiate a plan
- Explore barriers
- Identify support
- Elicit final commitment

**Provide Clinical Feedback**
- Use visual support materials
- Be clear, succinct, and non-judgmental
- Compare to norms and standards
- Elicit Participant’s interpretation

**Elicit**
- Education
- Advice
- Feedback
- Skills
- Referral

**Support the Transition:**
- Recognizing readiness
- Summarizing the big picture
- Ask about next steps

**Close the Encounter:**
- Summarize the session
- Show appreciation
- Support self-efficacy
- Arrange follow-up as appropriate
- Link with available resources
Contact Information

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  email: agnes.venson@dc.gov
Polling Question #2

What percentage of your caseload is currently experiencing 1 or more significant barriers to employment?

- less than 25%
- 25-50%
- 50-75%
- more than 75%
The Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center

• **Mission:** The CSG Justice Center provides practical, nonpartisan, research-driven strategies and tools to increase public safety and strengthen communities.

@csgjusticecenter
@CSGJC

www.csgjusticecenter.org
National Reentry Resource Center (NRRC)

The NRRC was authorized by the passage of the Second Chance Act (SCA) and launched by the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) in 2009.

NRRC staff have worked with nearly 800 SCA grantees, including state and local government agencies and community-based organizations.

The NRRC provides individualized, intensive, and targeted technical assistance, training, and distance learning to support SCA grantees.
SCA Funding Opportunities

SCA Adult Reentry and Employment Strategic Planning Program,
BJA
Deadline: June 18

SCA Improving Reentry for Adults with Co-occurring Substance Abuse and Mental Illness Program,
BJA
Deadline: June 18

https://csgjusticecenter.org/nrrc/funding/
Bridge and integrate best practices from the corrections and workforce development fields

Maximize limited resources
Break the cycle of reincarceration and/or joblessness
Prepare people for success

Supported by the U.S. Department of Justice and the Annie E. Casey Foundation, with guidance from the U.S. Department of Labor
Connect people to appropriate services based on assessed risk, needs and job readiness.
Employment program components to improve work outcomes *(what to do)*

**More Job-Ready**

**Primary Focus:**
Finding & Retaining Employment

- Non-transitional subsidized employment (e.g., on-the-job training)
- Job development and coaching
- Retention and advancement services *(includes continued education and training)*
- Financial work incentives to encourage job retention

**Less Job-Ready**

**Primary Focus:**
Promoting Job Readiness

- Education and training
- Soft-skill development
- Transitional job placements
- Non-skill-related interventions
Employment service-delivery principles to reduce recidivism *(how to do it)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Lower Risk</th>
<th>Higher Risk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engagement</td>
<td>Avoid intensive case management</td>
<td>Intensive case management and cognitive-behavioral interventions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timing</td>
<td>Connect to services upon release</td>
<td>Connect to services pre-release or immediately upon release</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incentives</td>
<td>External motivation is less critical</td>
<td>Enhance motivation through recognition and incentives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordination</td>
<td>Less intensive community supervision</td>
<td>Work closely with supervision agents and reentry providers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structured Time</td>
<td>Avoid disrupting existing pro-social ties</td>
<td>Structure time in pro-social environment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## An example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Joseph</th>
<th>Group 4</th>
<th>Michael</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Risk/More Ready</td>
<td></td>
<td>Higher Risk/Less Ready</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Joseph</td>
<td>Michael</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Joseph</td>
<td>Michael</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felony conviction</td>
<td></td>
<td>Felony conviction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GED</td>
<td></td>
<td>High school graduate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other Risk Factors:</strong></td>
<td>No prior convictions</td>
<td>3 prior convictions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maintained family ties</td>
<td>History of substance use</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other Job Readiness Factors:</strong></td>
<td>Employed at time of arrest</td>
<td>Unemployed at time of arrest</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Worked in correctional industries while incarcerated</td>
<td>Gaps in employment history</td>
<td>Gaps in employment history</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Limited skills</td>
<td>Limited skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Appropriate Services:</strong></td>
<td>Connect with services that focus on job attainment and retention</td>
<td>Intensive engagement and structured programming</td>
<td>Focus on soft skill development and building job readiness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low intensity service delivery and supervision</td>
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Applying client matching at a systems level in Milwaukee Co., WI
Employ Milwaukee

Using the Online Work Readiness Assessment (OWRA) Tool to Address Significant Barriers to Employment

June 6, 2018

Chantell Jewell
Reentry Manager
Wisconsin’s Workforce Development System

- Wisconsin has 11 local Boards that received WIOA funding based on a federal formula for the state
- Employ Milwaukee is the largest local Board in the State
- For Milwaukee, the CLEO is Mayor Tom Barrett who appoints the President/CEO of the Board and its members
Reentry Department

- Developed to assist returning citizens overcome barriers to employment and provide innovative sources of talent for employers
- Staff are trained in best practices from workforce development and corrections fields
- Department implements evidence-based practices from the corrections field
Referral Process

- Wisconsin Department of Corrections Division of Community Corrections (DCC) sends referral to EM
- In reach services conducted within 30 days of release
  - Administer Online Work Readiness Assessment (OWRA)
  - Discuss individual employment and/or training plan (IEP)
  - Schedule follow-up appointment for week of release
- Provide case management and referrals to workforce programs upon release
- Coordinate programming and supportive services with DCC agents
  - Share IEP and schedule first appointment
  - Monthly progress notes shared with DCC agent
Why EM chose OWRA

- Previous experience with the tool
- Web-based and easier to share information between agencies
- Needed a comprehensive tool to identify work-readiness for IRES implementation
  - Identification of strengths, barriers and career interests which assists with making the appropriate alignment with available jobs
  - Ability to track and monitor participant’s activities
Our use of OWRA

• The OWRA is administered pre-release

• Guides in the development of the individual employment plan

• Aligns with the Risk-Need-Responsivity Model

• Accurate identification of participant’s barriers which allows for more appropriate resource allocation and informs target areas of future funding
Program Strategies

- Find ways to increase social capital
- Figure out ways to increase intrinsic motivation through strong Motivational Interviewing (MI)
- Use a trauma informed approach
- Develop formal relationships with service providers
- Develop incentives
- Use former participant success stories
- Celebrate Success!
OWRA results for IRES project participants

- 84 people released to Milwaukee Co. from 4 state prisons between July 1 to December 31, 2017 were served by Employ Milwaukee

- Explored a sample of 19 OWRA Self Sufficiency Plans
  - 79% Has previous work experience
  - 79% Has a GED or high school diploma

**Common Work Interests**
- 53% Building things
- 53% Working indoors
- 47% Fixing objects
- 47% Working outdoors with tools or objects
- 32% Cleaning/organizing rooms or areas

**Common Career Interests**
- 74% Construction and extraction
- 47% Building and grounds cleaning and maintenance
- 42% Installation, maintenance, and repair
- 37% Food preparation
- 37% Transportation

Employ Milwaukee data analyzed by the Council of State Governments Justice Center
Transportation and financial management were identified as major barriers to employment.

**Common barriers and flags for additional services**

- Single Parent*: 12
- Financial Management Issues: 19
- Currently Not Working: 14
- Transportation Challenge: 19
- May Have Alcohol or Drug Addiction: 16

**Other barriers experienced by the sample included:**
- Emotional health challenge
- Mental health diagnosis or treatment
- Vaccination not current

*Flag for additional services

Employ Milwaukee data analyzed by the Council of State Governments Justice Center
What we learned from using OWRA

- Understanding barriers
- Understanding community resources
- Guide planning
- Grant seeking & funding
Lessons Learned/Recommendations

- Staff must be trained and equipped
  - MI
  - Trauma Informed Approach
- Staff must understand tool workflow and logistics
- Develop strong partnerships and relationships
- Incentives
Lessons Learned/Recommendations (cont.)

- Holistic approach
- Comprehensive approach
- Systems level approach
Polling Question #3

As a result of this webinar, what is one thing you will do differently to better support customers experiencing significant barriers to employment?
Q & A SESSION
Additional Information

- Webinar recording and materials:
  - https://peerta.acf.hhs.gov/owra/owra-video-resource-library

- Help us expand our network:
  - http://peerta.acf.hhs.gov

- More on OWRA:
  - https://peerta.acf.hhs.gov/owra
  - OWRA Help Desk: 1-866-989-6972 or owra@icf.com
Please take 2 minutes to provide feedback about this webinar.

Thank you!