Healing Through Trauma-Informed Work Readiness

Today’s Goals

- Understand different ways of framing and defining “work readiness”
- Understand the importance of collaboration and partnership
- Hear examples of promising practices from the National Fund’s network of regional workforce collaboratives
  - Chicago, IL - Worker Rights Education
  - Springfield, MA – trauma-informed needs assessment and practitioner supports
A little bit about me…

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Workers have resources required to thrive

Systems ensure basic resources, including affordable and quality child care, transportation, housing, health care, high-speed broadband, and other needs (i.e. social determinants of work).

Race does not dictate employment outcomes

Racial or gender groups are not concentrated in specific jobs and industries that correlate with lower wages, lack of benefits, and less opportunity for advancement.

All jobs are good jobs

A good job is safe, offers sustainable pay and benefits, is secure and stable, and provides career pathways and opportunities for mobility.
Understanding the impact of trauma helps us advance workforce equity.

Institutions and systems that promote resilience are critical to ensuring people who have experienced trauma can thrive.
Grounding

What does it mean to be “work-ready”?

• WIOA?
• Workforce service and training providers?
• Employers?
• Job Seekers?
Chicago Jobs Council Career Readiness Framework

“…the strategies used to deliver job readiness content actually matter more than the content of what is delivered.”
Five Tiers of Economic Empowerment

- Employment
- Experience Building
- Skill Building & Work Readiness
- Career Exploration
- Crisis Management

How do the people you work with navigate their needs across these tiers? What are common sticking points?
Collaboration is Essential

- Training Institutions
- Employers
- Legal Support
- Survivor Support Orgs
- Workforce Orgs and Career
- Basic Needs (Housing, Healthcare, Food)
Survivor support organizations are essential bridges to training and skills development opportunities for survivors.
What organizations do you currently partner with? What does that partnership look like?
Collaboration is Essential…and Challenging

**Challenges**
- Different language, frameworks, and culture
- “That’s not our job!”
- Lack of resources, incentives, and mandates to collaborate
- Turnover can make lasting partnerships difficult

**Strategies**
- Establishing mutually beneficial goals
- Establishing regular touchpoints
- Collaborative/reciprocal training
- Shared leadership and governance
- Partnerships at institutional and systems levels (MOU, shared funding, strategic plans, collective impact, etc.)
Examples from the National Fund
Assessing Work Readiness of Job Seekers with System Involvement in Springfield, MA

**Background**

- Community Reinvestment and Empowerment (CERP) Initiative supported by Springfield WORKS
- Majority of survey respondents not aware of available supports
- Respondents also identified significant gaps in the process
- Trauma responsive principles were necessary to support people on their journey toward employment

**Strategy**

- Modified the “Ready, Willing, and Able” assessment tool
  - Uses language that supports resiliency, builds relationships, and is less likely to re-traumatize
  - Asks questions aligned with Social Determinants of Health framework to assess needs
- Implemented a community of practice and series of trainings on trauma-informed approaches for CERP partners
Assessing Work Readiness of Job Seekers with System Involvement in Springfield, MA

Social Determinants of Health Framework in Assessment

The “Ready, Willing, and Able” assessment tool includes next steps for BOTH the jobseeker and the partner

Ready, Willing & Able (Interviewer Assessment: Check One)

Tier 1

Ready, Willing & Able
Engage in Training as soon as available, while also utilizing referrals and assistance

Tier 2

Needs Additional Support
Needs additional education & support to prepare for workforce readiness – follow-up in 6 – 12 months.

Tier 3

Ready & Willing
Utilize referrals & assistance & follow-up in 3/6 months to re-assess

The “Ready, Willing, and Able” assessment tool includes next steps for BOTH the jobseeker and the partner.
Worker Rights Education as Part of Career Readiness Training

Background

- Quality Vanguard Project supported by the Chicagoland Workforce Funder Alliance was formed to build worker power to ensure good jobs for workers.
- Weakening of worker power has contributed to decrease in wages and job quality in many jobs and industries. People of color are often overrepresented in lower wage, lower quality jobs.
- Most workers, particularly those that are part of marginalized groups, do not learn about their rights as workers.

Strategy

- A key pillar of the Vanguard work involved developing a worker rights curriculum for job seekers, workers, and training providers.
- Delivered many trainings to frontline workforce providers
- Currently seeking funding to continue building and expanding on the work
Worker Rights Education as Part of Career Readiness Training

**Job readiness**
Part of being “job ready” is knowing your rights as a worker

**Financial literacy**
Protecting against wage theft and other workplace violations helps workers earn more $ and better support their families

**Perfect partnership**
Workers + mission-driven CBOs/educational institutions + career focused education
Thank You

National Fund for Workforce Solutions
A Trauma-Informed Approach to Workforce

Chicago Quality Vanguard Worker Rights Curriculum

Chicago Jobs Council
Career Readiness Framework