

**HUD EMPLOYMENT LECTURE SERIES**  
**Lecture #2 Pamphlet**  
**OUTREACH AND EMPLOYMENT**

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**INTRODUCTION**

Having a job with the opportunity to earn a living wage and a chance to escape chronic poverty are among the key factors in preventing and escaping recurrent homelessness. When outreach workers meet people who are homeless on the streets, in shelters, at food pantries, etc., their prime objective is to help the client access needed housing, treatment, and life-sustaining, crisis-averting services. Helping them get jobs might not be high on the list of needs homeless people have at the time. Yet, there is much that outreach workers can do to pave the road to successful employment when the appropriate time comes. This material is intended to provide outreach workers with an orientation to the tools and techniques that could help people who are homeless make a decision to engage in employment. In fact, outreach workers most likely already use these practices to help people decide to accept housing and services, but they might not think about applying them to employment.

HUD recognizes that the road from homelessness to a home of one’s own in the community often requires developing a greater measure of economic self-sufficiency. Work is the best way people can become more economically self-sufficient. Outreach staff has an important role in this process by helping people who are homeless establish hope and consider what employment can mean for them. The materials on employment as part of outreach will be valuable to agencies seeking to end homelessness through the powerful combination of engagement and provision of housing, treatment, and employment services.

This material is intended for outreach workers and case managers working in homeless and community rehabilitation programs. It addresses employment as part of outreach to homeless people, many of whom are living with disabilities, including single adults, youth, and families. It emphasizes how conversations about work and ready access to flexible jobs with minimal demands are important parts of the outreach function.

This information can help staff understand the role they play in facilitating conversations about work and motivating clients to progress from refusing employment to considering employment to employment planning and action. A key characteristic of successful outreach is the development of a relationship built on mutual trust.

## OUTREACH

Almost every organization seeking to help people who are homeless undertakes some type of outreach activity. One formal definition of outreach is, “contact with any individual who would otherwise be ignored (or unserved)...in non-traditional settings for the purposes of improving their mental health, health, or social functioning or increasing their human service and resource utilization.”<sup>1</sup>

Organizations might approach outreach in different ways and on multiple levels to either prevent homelessness or help people exit homelessness:

- An outreach worker in a program serving older adults might place signs in buildings that house lower-income, older adults and develop a relationship with building managers. By doing so, the team can identify older adults who are at risk of eviction and can intervene before they become homeless.
- An outreach worker in a program serving families might visit short-term shelters, health clinic waiting rooms, and cheap motels, bringing art supplies to engage families with children who might be in need of housing.
- An outreach worker might meet people who are homeless in an encampment area each evening to distribute food and blankets.

A critical component of outreach is to communicate with homeless individuals in their environment and on their terms. The ultimate goal is successful and continued interaction to help homeless people improve their life, through treatment, housing, and employment.

### ***Characteristics of Successful Outreach Strategies***

Outreach differs according to key factors such as target population, geographical setting, and program emphasis. For example, outreach to homeless men with co-occurring disorders requires a different approach from outreach to homeless families. A program serving a

county with rural areas will seek out people who are homeless in different settings than an urban program.

Although there are many different ways to approach outreach, the literature describes some common characteristics of successful outreach strategies.

- **Location.** Basically, outreach means seeking out people who are homeless rather than waiting for the person to come to the program’s office. The outreach worker needs to make sure that outreach occurs on the homeless person’s own turf and in a location that feels safe and non-threatening to the homeless person. For example, this outreach could mean going to shelters, homeless “camps,” under a bridge, or on the street. Additionally, the outreach worker often must adopt a flexible schedule in order to locate people who move from place to place at different times of the day.
- **Persistence and Patience.** Outreach workers might have to make multiple contacts over a period of time to gain a homeless person’s trust and engage him or her. If you build a regular relationship with the person, you will gain trust and begin engaging the person in activities such as seeing a caseworker to seek out flexible, low-demand employment opportunities, vocational training, counseling, treatment, and housing.
- **Responsiveness and Flexibility.** Additional characteristics of successful outreach include a quick response to an individual’s needs and the flexibility in what services are offered. Based on the conversations the outreach worker has had with an individual, the outreach worker should assess the immediate needs and make an appropriate “offer of assistance.” The initial offer of assistance can be basic, such as blankets or food, or more complex, such as housing, employment assistance, vocational training, help with benefits assistance, and treatment. If the outreach worker can meet the more immediate needs of the individual, the worker is more likely to gain the trust of the individual and engage him or her in accepting other services.

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<sup>1</sup> Morse, G. (1987, October). *Conceptual overview of mobile outreach for persons who are homeless and mentally ill*. Paper presented at the meeting of the American Public Health Association in New Orleans, LA, p. 9.

Among current practices, two outreach strategies have emerged—motivational interviewing and Assertive Community Treatment (ACT). These two practices are important for outreach workers to understand as they attempt to engage and support homeless individuals. Motivational interviewing is an approach they can use in interacting with clients, and the use of an Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) team is another approach that specifically focuses on providing services to clients with serious mental illnesses. Each of these approaches is intended to help the individual increase motivation to engage in services and acknowledges the client's need for control rather than coercion.

- **Motivational interviewing** is a non-confrontational approach in which the practitioner helps the client identify goals and understand how current behavior conflicts with those goals, building motivation to change. In the context of outreach, the worker helps the client articulate his or her own goals for escaping homelessness and choose services that will help to achieve these goals.
- **ACT teams** respond to the complexity of needs that homeless people with serious mental illnesses have and the need to meet them in a coordinated manner. ACT teams provide comprehensive, community-based services, such as initial and ongoing assessments, substance abuse services, psychiatric services, and employment and housing assistance. The ACT approach differs from the more traditional case management by delivering services to the client in the community and in nontraditional settings, such as over coffee or while playing basketball, rather than requiring the client to come into the office. ACT team members share responsibility for their clientele and generally have small caseloads because of the intensity of services provided by the team.

Finally, outreach workers need to make sure the client chooses to participate and does not feel coerced into participating.

### ***Attributes of a Successful Outreach Worker***

In addition to physically going out and attempting to engage people who are homeless, successful outreach workers employ a variety of

techniques and embody specific traits that enable them to reach homeless people.

Outreach workers should have a basic level of sensitivity and empathy for others—being able to see things from the client's point of view. This ability helps the outreach worker understand why an offer of assistance might be rejected or why change is slow.

An outreach worker must be non-judgmental. This means working with clients and being sensitive to where they are in the change cycle, having patience, and knowing that the process is cyclical and that relapse is normal. Rather than evaluating the person, you should focus on getting to know him or her.

A successful outreach worker should be able to instill confidence in clients over time, rather than trying to force or coerce change. The outreach worker should explore and identify an individual's skills and strengths. Rather than impose or suggest goals for a client, the outreach worker should help the client to identify goals and how to reach those goals. A broad knowledge of, and connections to, a variety of services will give the outreach worker multiple options for assisting a client.

An outreach worker must be consistent and reliable in order to gain a client's trust. Delivering on promises builds trust with people who are homeless and who often have little trust in others or in the system.

In order to fully understand their clients and build relationships, outreach workers should have a basic level of comfort with drug use and other illicit activity. This does not mean condoning illegal activity but having the ability to discuss drug use with a client and use vocabulary and terminology that the client understands. A good outreach worker must be able to evaluate drug or alcohol use issues in relation to skills, strengths, needs, and problems.

Any agency conducting outreach should have safety guidelines, including the following seven rules of thumb:

- Make sure someone knows where you are going.
- Work in pairs.
- Carry a cell phone.

- Avoid closed buildings or other locations that appear dangerous.
- Leave immediately if you see drug use, possession, or dealing.
- Develop a relationship with local law enforcement personnel.
- Above everything else, trust your instinct—if you don't feel safe, get out.

Finally, building a relationship with a client relies on being a good listener, observer, and communicator. Workers should also have realistic expectations of clients and their progress. Successful outreach workers can inspire clients by celebrating the smallest success and helping them see that change is possible.

### ***Developing Trust***

An important function of outreach is engagement, which means developing the type of relationship with a person who is homeless in which the person feels comfortable accepting needed services to escape homelessness. This type of relationship is built on trust.

This trust is essential for two reasons. First, homeless persons might be hesitant to accept services, and second, trust helps to keep persons engaged while they are applying for or waiting for needed services. “Mutual trust and respect” is an important foundation of the outreach relationship, and there are certain tasks that can be used to develop this two-way relationship:<sup>2</sup>

- Gather information from those who know the client (family, friends, providers, etc.).
- Put oneself in the client's shoes and view problems from his or her standpoint.

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<sup>2</sup> Winarski, J.T. (1998). *Implementing interventions for homeless individuals with co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders: A PATH technical assistance package*. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, p. 32.

- Be flexible and recognize that the relationship with a client might have ups and downs based on the client's ever-changing situation.
- Be patient enough to allow the lengthy time often necessary for engagement.
- Set clear boundaries and well-defined expectations for the relationship with the client.

However, establishing trust is not always a straightforward process, and there are numerous reasons why people who are homeless might reject offers of services:<sup>3</sup>

- A mistrust of social services due to past negative experience with services such as mental health treatment
- Experiences of trauma and a fear of the possibility of being re-traumatized
- A fear of being judged or involuntarily committed to treatment if they ask for help
- The denial or lack of awareness of his or her own situation, such as mental illness or substance abuse, and a refusal of any offers of assistance based on these diagnoses
- A rejection of lengthy “red tape” process or hurdles in accessing services

“Empathic communication”—showing people who are homeless that you understand their feelings and share their concerns—can be an effective method of reaching people who might be hesitant to accept help. Some of the ways that an outreach worker can signal empathy to a person who is homeless include the following:<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Ridgway, P. (2005). *Active engagement and relationship building: Creating an alliance for success*. Unpublished manuscript.

<sup>4</sup> Winarski, J.T. (1998). *Implementing interventions for homeless individuals with co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders: A PATH technical assistance package*. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, p. 34.

- Focusing attention exclusively on the person to whom outreach is being conducted and tuning out any distractions
- Using body language that communicates comfort and interest in what the person has to say, such as maintaining eye contact, keeping a close but comfortable distance, and leaning toward the person speaking
- Focusing on the person's ideas and beliefs rather than viewing the discussion through the lens of what the outreach worker believes is best for the person
- Asking open-ended questions that allow the person to express his or her feelings, preferences, and needs
- Probing deeper into a person's goals and readiness to change, reserving advice on how to achieve goals until after a trusting relationship is in place
- Trying not to move faster in building a relationship than the person is comfortable

### ***Low-Demand Approaches***

Among organizations serving the homeless, there is a changing perception about the kind of approach best suited to serving people who are homeless. Many programs have been based on a "readiness model," in which clients are required to demonstrate readiness for housing or employment services by progressing through a preordained sequence of steps before housing or employment assistance could be made available. Now, more organizations take a "low-demand" approach to service delivery. This approach is considered by many to be the most effective way to reach out to and engage people who are homeless and help them reach a stage where they will choose to actively receive services and participate in service programs.

A low-demand approach, often also referred to as a low-threshold approach, places few requirements on clients to become eligible for services and represents a move away from a "readiness" model of service delivery. Important components of the low-demand approach include the following:

- Consumer choice

- Immediate access to important resources without requirements for sobriety or treatment
- Providing intensive and flexible supports chosen by the client
- Separating clinical indicators from functional ability

Consumer choice represents the recognition that clients must choose services that they believe will help them reach their goals, rather than being guided by program requirements. Building on this recognition, low-demand programs allow people to access what is important to them, such as housing or employment services, without first achieving program requirements that have commonly included mental health or substance abuse treatment. It is important that services and case management be readily available, but again, on the person's own terms and only when he or she is ready. Nevertheless, assessing one's own readiness can be difficult. When helping someone with self-assessment, staff should remember that clinical indicators do not necessarily predict functional ability. Staff must keep in mind that the setting in which they see clients might not be the best one for assessing the person's abilities. Clients show different skill-sets and abilities in a clinical setting than they do on the streets.

These components of the low-demand approach are central to the Safe Haven model. A Safe Haven is a HUD-funded form of supportive housing that serves hard-to-reach homeless persons with serious mental illnesses. Safe Havens share the following characteristics, as mandated by the McKinney-Vento Act:

- 24-hour residence for eligible persons who might reside for an unspecified duration
- Private or semiprivate accommodations
- Overnight occupancy limited to 25 persons
- Low-demand services and referrals
- Supportive services on a drop-in basis to eligible persons who are not residents

Safe Havens create a stable and safe housing environment but place no treatment demands on residents. Expectations that residents transition from unstable homelessness to a permanent housing

situation and eventually engage in treatment services are introduced only when each resident feels he or she is ready.

The Safe Haven model is proving to be successful in helping chronically homeless individuals stay off the streets. The low-demand approach also has application in using employment as a means to engage people who are homeless and motivate them to change their perceptions about what they need, want, and are capable of achieving.

## **USING EMPLOYMENT AS AN ENGAGEMENT AND MOTIVATIONAL TOOL**

Outreach workers should be familiar with the principles of motivational interviewing and the stages of change (discussed in greater detail below). They should also understand how ‘harm reduction’ techniques may help some clients take small steps towards employment as they take small steps towards recovery. For example, a harm reduction approach could mean that a person drinks on the weekend or in the evening, but it does not affect their ability to show up sober for their vocational program or job each day and perform their work to expectations. This approach is in contrast to requiring that clients are completely abstinent for some months before they are allowed entry into employment services. Skilled employment-focused outreach staff understands employment services such as job development, job matching, and job support. That does not imply that outreach workers need to be job developers, but they should have information about employment services and know where their clients could get help if they decide to pursue employment.

A number of resources help outreach workers understand employment basics, such as the following:

- SAMHSA’s Work as a Priority (available at <http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov> – see “Homelessness/Housing” under the “Online Publications” section)
- CSAT’s TIP #38 on vocational services for people with substance abuse or co-occurring disorders (available at <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov> – see “SAMHSA/CSAT

Treatment Improvement Protocols” under the “Books” section)

- SAMHSA’s Toolkits on ACT or Supported Employment. (Available at <http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov> – see “Evidence-based Practices Implementation” under the “Community Support Programs”)

Each provides a starting point for understanding employment services. When staff receives skills training on ACT (which includes an employment component) or supported employment, outreach workers should also be included to receive training.

## **‘STAGES OF CHANGE’**

To understand when, where, and how to influence a person’s perception of the importance of mainstream training and employment, it is first necessary to understand how a life on the street influences a person’s perception of the need for change and the value in committing to change. This transition from denial to acceptance and from avoidance to engagement in services, activities, and relationships is called the ‘Stages of Change.’

In brief, the Stages of Change can be summarized as follows:

- **Pre-contemplation.** The client has no awareness of a problem or the need to change.
- **Contemplation.** Emerging awareness and ambivalence sets the stage for contemplating the positive effects of change.
- **Preparation.** The staff and client engage as partners in the change process. They identify skills and supports, anticipate “hot spots” (for example, reacting with anger when a supervisor provides criticism that has usually resulted in job loss in the past), conduct formal planning on ways to get a home or a job, and rehearse scenarios.
- **Action.** Plans are implemented with continual feedback loop between the staff and client.
- **Maintenance.** The staff and client put in place the necessary contacts, celebrate success, and reinforce what works.

- **Relapse Prevention.** Change is an ongoing process that anticipates and plans for relapse. If relapse occurs, it is viewed as learning opportunity.

Outreach staff needs to identify a client's stage of readiness to make good decisions on when, where, and how to introduce information, make suggestions, provide examples, and otherwise seek to positively influence a person's decision to accept housing or employment. The factors that contribute to a person's overall motivational state and their willingness to make changes include the following:<sup>5</sup>

- **Perception of Need.** A person identifies the discrepancy between the pain of the present and the potential for future improvement.
- **Belief that Change is Possible.** A person believes that a positive outcome is achievable in a reasonable time period.
- **Sense of Ability.** A person believes that he or she has the ability to succeed.
- **Makes Stated Intention to Change.** The person takes observable steps, verbally or in action, to initiate the change process.

### ***Stages of Change Model Applied to Employment***

Typically, people who are homeless are resistant to change, have had difficulty accessing services in the past, and have been characterized as non-compliant with services.<sup>6</sup> In fact, people who are homeless have their own hierarchy of needs that should be acknowledged and addressed if staff is to succeed in developing the trustful relationship.

Most homeless people are working at some sort of job. They might be panhandling, collecting and selling bottles, working day labor

jobs, or doing a host of other income-producing activities. Yet, they might not be ready to consider or even discuss the possibility of a job in the mainstream economy. In essence, they have not yet decided that having a job will be a positive thing in their lives.<sup>7</sup>

The same motivational factors hold true for employment. People might have had many job failures in the past. They might have lost hope that they could ever attain a meaningful job at a living wage. They might have been deemed "not job ready" too many times and have been denied access to vocational services, even though they said they needed a job. In all, many might feel that there is no benefit to change and no hope for success. They are often more likely to focus on immediate needs such as getting a place to sleep for the night and warm food rather than an abstract concept like "what is your ideal job?" Nonetheless, it does not mean that outreach workers should avoid helping people with employment or that they have no responsibility for influencing a vocational process. In fact, there is much that outreach workers can do using the tools and techniques they are already familiar with, including use of the five principles of motivational interviewing:<sup>8</sup>

- **Express Empathy.** Understand the client's point of view. For example, accept their view that working at a steady job with a steady schedule was not a good experience and that they lost many jobs in their lifetime. Use reflective listening. That is, engage your client on a more personal level by rephrasing or paraphrasing what he or she said to clarify or to probe deeper; this can also be done using feeling statements (e.g., It seems that you feel ... ) as a way to connect emotionally with the person. Finally, understand that ambivalence is normal.
- **Develop Discrepancy.** Facilitate a confrontation that occurs within the person, not imposed from the outside. Work to establish awareness that the pain of the present (being poor,

<sup>5</sup> Miller, W.R. & Rollnick, S. (1991). *Motivational interviewing: Preparing people to change addictive behavior*. New York/London: The Guilford Press.

<sup>6</sup> Winarski, J.T., & Dubus, P. (1995). *An analysis of 16 federally-funded programs for homeless individuals with co-occurring mental health and substance abuse disorders*. Rockville, MD: Center for Mental Health Services/Center for Substance Abuse Treatment.

<sup>7</sup> Prochaska, J., & DiClemente, C.C. (1982). Trans theoretical therapy: Toward a more integrative model of change. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, and Practice*, 19, 276-288.

<sup>8</sup> Miller, W.R., & Rollnick, S. (1991). *Motivational Interviewing: Preparing people to change addictive behavior*. New York: Guilford Press.

homeless, hungry) is more severe than the fear of the future (confronting past job failures and discouragements and trying again).

- **Avoid Argumentation.** Resistance can also mean fear, and it is strongly affected by a practitioner's response. If the person fails to make an appointment to talk about a job with an employment specialist, arguing about it would be counterproductive. Rather, return to the reasons he or she gave when agreeing to make an appointment. Confirm that the motivation is still present and work with the person to find another method to support attendance at the next meeting.
- **Roll with Resistance.** Resistance is not a force to be overcome. Provide alternatives to deal with the issue, but first ask if the client can propose a solution. In the case cited above, the client and staff might agree that the meeting with the employment specialist should be at the shelter in the evening or that the outreach worker accompanies the client to the meeting.
- **Support a Sense of Ability.** There are three basic principles in supporting self-efficacy: belief in the possibility of change; responsibility for carrying out the change process as resting with the client; and hope in the range of alternatives presented.

In essence, whether outreach workers are helping clients decide to accept housing or a job, they must first do a good job engaging and supporting the client using techniques that facilitate positive change at the client's own pace.

### ***Incentives to Work***

In addition to their skills at engaging people who are homeless and knowledge of where to find food, shelter, safety, treatment, and other services, outreach workers might have a number of practical tools and methods that can be used as incentives for work.

First, as liaisons with shelters, they might talk with shelter directors about the types of work shelter residents can do in and around the shelter and who is participating in those jobs. When they meet those individuals on the street, they can bring the knowledge they have

about their shelter jobs into a conversation about work. In that conversation, they can explore the likes and dislikes the client might have about their shelter jobs and begin to explore alternatives that the client might want to pursue next.

Another option is for outreach workers to be on the lookout for flexible, part-time jobs that they believe a client they know can perform. Even if the job lasts only a few hours for a couple of days per week, it might be a more consistent level of employment than the client has had in a long time. The outreach worker might want to accompany the client to the job for the first couple of times and meet afterwards over coffee to discuss how it went and to endorse the client's accomplishments.

Staff can also talk with clients about the range of services the community has to offer. At a minimum, they should inform the client about where the nearest One-Stop Career Center is located and what it does to help job-seekers get training and jobs. In addition, staff should know about homeless services agencies that operate their own social-purpose businesses and hire clients on part-time or full-time basis. They might also want to know what Vocational Rehabilitation staff has to offer their clients, as State Departments of Vocational Rehabilitation help people with disabilities get access to training, education, and jobs. The client might dismiss any or all of these services out-of-hand because of fear or bad experiences; however, if the information is presented as just that, with no strings attached, then gradually and as motivation to work builds over time, the information might have increased relevance to the individual.

Another tool is for outreach staff to act as change agents for employment within their own agencies. They should look for jobs in their agency that might be contracted out (e.g., lawn care, basic maintenance, etc.) or that are vacant and can be split among a number of potential workers. These "standing offers of work" need to meet standards for quality, consistency, and quantity, but they should also ease your client into a job situation by having minimal demands. Staff should expect and allow for the inconsistencies of attendance and performance that many clients might have at this early stage.

### ***Early Engagement and Standing Offer of Work***

Jobs with a nonprofit agency, a social-purpose business venture, or community employers that include flexible readiness criteria, schedules, and tasks can engage homeless job seekers who want to work but who might shun lengthy work preparation programs. To develop this standing offer of work, agencies should look inward and analyze what jobs they could offer that consumers could do on a flexible, part-time basis. Some agencies throughout the country are seeking to provide alternatives to the day labor “trap” in which most people who are homeless find themselves by starting their own supportive temporary/day labor enterprise. The objective is to help clients realize how important a job is to them so that the desire to keep a job builds determination to address their issues of substance use or access to mental health treatment.

Some social-purpose businesses provide training and employment opportunities from early-engagement, flexible options to more regular part-time and full-time employment. One example is Rubicon Programs located in Richmond, California. More information about Rubicon can be found on their website: [www.rubiconprograms.org](http://www.rubiconprograms.org).

Early-engagement, in-work strategies should be part of a comprehensive training and employment program that provides alternatives for clients at any stage of readiness. If they are on the streets, the objective is to influence motivation to work through conversation, modeling, information, and support for flexible, part-time jobs. If clients enter a drop-in center or a shelter, they should see job postings, and they should be able to meet with an employment counselor or attend a job readiness class if they wish. Whether they feel they want to dive in quickly and obtain a competitive job or take a slower route with volunteer work or goal-setting discussions, they should be able to choose their own path.

### ***Outreach as a Portal to a “Vocationalized” Agency***

A standing offer of work is only one dimension of an agency that is “vocationalized” (i.e., the culture and infrastructure of the agency or the housing environment support employment). Employment-focused outreach can be a portal to a vocationalized agency in a number of ways. Outreach workers should be able to bring from the streets a person who wants to observe an in-house job or talk with a job

counselor, expecting that their client will be welcomed and assisted. It also means that outreach workers understand the types of employment services their agency offers and advocate for early work engagement opportunities for their clients. If outreach workers are able to facilitate motivation to attempt employment, but there are no opportunities, then their credibility with their clients is severely compromised.

A vocationalized agency hires consumers as staff, and there are job postings, training opportunities, and agreements with partners like Vocational Rehabilitation and Department of Labor to help clients access training and jobs. The vocationalized agency also has staff trained to provide vocational counseling, job development, and job support. An important aspect of such an agency is integrated services planning, using the ACT model discussed earlier. That means that the outreach worker, as well as housing specialists, employment staff, and case managers, all meet and confer about the challenges and progress they are making with their clients.

How will you know that you are in a vocationalized agency? First, clients who are working or attempting to get back to work should have someone they can talk with at the end of their workday or about their aspirations. They should have opportunities to visit One-Stop Career Centers, hear employers talk about jobs they have available, or listen to peers talk about what their journey from the streets to a home and a job of their own was like. In essence, a vocationalized agency sees helping clients obtain meaningful jobs at a living wage as one of their major goals, and all staff supports the employment process.

### **CONCLUSION**

Homeless outreach is on the “front line” of services for this population. Outreach workers are critical in helping people who are homeless access needed services including HUD McKinney-Vento housing and mainstream job training and employment services. The condition of homelessness can last for years and even decades, and the process of instilling hope and an awareness of the value of “changing for good” can take a very long time. Ultimately, if people are ever to escape homelessness once and for all, they need access to safe and affordable housing and a means of self-sufficiency by having a job at a living wage. Outreach workers can be the first to

encourage and support people who are homeless in recognizing these possibilities and achieving those realities.

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