



HomeWORK

The HomeWORK Project is a unique approach to helping supportive housing tenants enter the workforce (or advance in their employment), improve their earnings and/or strengthen their education and training. The HomeWORK Project is a collaboration between the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS), Corporation for Supportive Housing and the Department of Social Services (DSS) Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS). Funded through a DSS Medicaid Infrastructure Grant, this systems-change initiative is being piloted in Bridgeport, New Haven and Hartford and targets DMHAS-funded supportive housing providers and their employment partners.

HomeWORK project staff and partner agencies deliver services to supportive housing providers allowing them to be current with employment industry best practices. Staff assist providers to establish or strengthen ties to local workforce agencies and to deliver their services more efficiently and effectively. HomeWORK is not intended to recreate or reinvent existing resources but will carve out resources and trainings appropriate for a particular agency.

HomeWORK Strategy:

- Build on system change efforts already underway in the state
- Focus on the career development infrastructure to leverage existing employment services
- Strengthen sector and agency collaborations to improve employment outcomes for traditionally underserved populations

HomeWORK Tactics:

- **Culture Change** – New trainings for supportive housing staff have been implemented including *Creating a Work-Ready Housing Environment* and *Service Planning for Employment*. HomeWORK staff worked with supportive housing providers to create Agency Service Plans that define agency goals for tenant employment, retention and career advancement.
 - HomeWORK staff is working closely with the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services to assist them in messaging the importance of Employment and Education in a tenant's life.
 - HomeWORK staff is also working closely with the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services to understand the importance of data collection around employment and education and to implement a data collection system which gathers the most pertinent tenant employment information.
- **Peer Engagement** – A peer speaker's bureau is being developed in each region, with supportive housing tenants who have had success in education and employment sharing their stories. Speakers empower tenants to regard employment and education as part of recovery and an important step in becoming a larger part of their community.
- **Benefits Coordination** – One of the biggest questions and concerns we receive is, "How will work affect my benefits?" The HomeWORK team includes a benefits counselor that

assists supportive housing providers to better understand benefits and the impact of work on tenants' benefits.

- **Systems Connection** – HomeWORK bridges the gap between the Workforce Development System and the Supportive Housing System through such innovations as new cross-sector case conferences that brings together supportive housing providers and employment professionals; and is testing out new job creation strategies by linking untapped job development resources (e.g. Weatherization Program; In-House Census Training and Testing for Supportive Housing Tenants) with supportive housing programs.
 - HomeWORK bridges the gap between perspective employers and job seeker's through a collaboration with Connect-ability, Connecticut's leading on-line technical assistance provider for both employers and disabled job seeker's. This collaboration has afforded HomeWORK staff the opportunity to inform employers about benefits that maybe available to them, such as On the Job Training funds and has also afforded HomeWORK the opportunity to post "best-practices" tools and information sheets for staff and tenants of Supportive Housing.
 - Through a collaboration with the State of Connecticut Department of Social Services (DSS); the State of Connecticut's Rental Assistance Program was able to implement an Earned Income Disregard that applies to all individuals with disabilities who live in either the CT Rental Assistance Program (RAP) and/or Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program subsidized housing.

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