

Housing + Employment Works: A Discussion on the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Rapid Rehousing, and Rapid Job Placement Webinar Transcript

2/25/2016

Sandy Patel: Good afternoon everybody and thank you for joining today's webinar, "Housing + Employment Works: A Discussion on the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Rapid Rehousing, and Rapid Job Placement." My name is Sandy Patel, and I'm with TDA, a technical assistance provider for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). I will be serving as your host today. I'm going to run through some technical instructions on how to ask questions and things like that before I hand it off to our wonderful presenters.

Please turn off your cell phones and close your e-mail and all other programs on your computer and give your undivided attention to our presenters today. Today's webinar is approximately 90 minutes and will be recorded. If you have any technical problems, please call the number on the screen or you can send a chat message to the host—that will come directly to me. I can help you through any issues that you may be having.

All participants will be muted during the call. Questions can be asked in writing using the Q and A tool. You can ask written questions at any point during the presentation and the panelists will collect them when we stop for questions. To ask a written question, use the Q and A tool. It is located on the right-hand side of the screen. You can see a screen shot of what it looks like up on the screen. If you do not see it, click on the triangle, and it will expand the box. Please ask questions to "All Panelists," then just type your question into the box and click "Send." Again, those you can send at any point during the presentation. Questions will be answered verbally and in writing through the Q and A tool. We may not be able to get to all of the questions but we will try to answer the common ones first. Please send any additional unanswered or private questions to Kate Rio at krio@ahpnet.com. With that, I'm going to hand it off to Sherri with Advocates for Human Potential.

Sherri Downing: Welcome, everyone. I am Sherri Downing from Advocates for Human Potential, and I will be serving as the moderator for today's event. I'm very excited about this. Employment is a win-win strategy for preventing and ending homelessness, and these tools should be useful to all of you. We're hoping that, by the end of today's session, participants will be familiar with the key features of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (or WIOA), understand the importance of employment services in rapid rehousing projects, and understand how rapid rehousing staff can support participants in their employment goals, as well as be aware of available training and technical assistance materials. With that, I would like to welcome Kevin Kissinger, a Senior Program Officer for the Office of Special Needs Assistance Programs, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. And Kevin will introduce Jennifer Kemp and Jasmine Hayes from federal partnering agencies. Kevin?

Kevin Kissinger: Well, good morning or good afternoon everyone, thanks for participating. This is the first in a series of webinars that will be focused on employment as a strategy to end homelessness. The webinar is sponsored by the U.S. Departments of HUD and Labor and the U.S. Interagency Council on the Homeless (USICH). As you know, most people who are experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness want to work. And, you know, getting people into housing is only the first step to achieving their stability. So the next step, regarding financial stability, is sustainable employment and a regular income. This step is critical to being able to sustain housing. This webinar will focus on rapid job placement coupled with rapid rehousing, as well as some of the opportunities available through the

Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act, otherwise known as WIOA of 2014. Joining me are my cosponsors and colleagues from the Department of Labor and the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness. Jennifer Kemp, who will be up first, works for the Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration where she serves as the unit chief for youth policy and performance. Jennifer?

Jennifer Kemp: Hi, I'm Jennifer Kemp, and I was asking if I needed to be unmuted right on cue, so thank you, I hope folks can hear me now. It's great to be with you all this afternoon or morning, depending on where you are. We're very excited about the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act here at the U.S. Department of Labor. It's given us a great opportunity to work closely with a number of partners across many different agencies at both the federal and state and local levels. There are a couple very recent developments related to WIOA and state planning that I'm excited to be able to alert you all to. If you did not know, on February 22 we issued what is known as the WIOA Unified State Plan and Combined State Plan requirements. These are the documents that provide structure and require contents in the state plans. I wonder how many of you are involved in your state plan or your local plan. I would encourage you all to go check out those requirements if you have not had the opportunity yet. All of the information that the Department is working on related to WIOA can be found at one central website location and that's www.doleta.gov/wioa. That's where you'll find all the information that you need to know on what we're doing within the Department of Labor and with education and other partners.

A couple of things to think about when we think about the connections to the homeless populations within the workforce program, and we are very excited to be doing some of this work with our partners at HUD and other federal agencies. It's an important role that supportive services can play to reconnect people who have been homeless or are currently homeless, and one of the nice things about both the adult and youth programs under Title I of the WIOA is this focus on supportive services. And it's defined in the legislation to include things that are very relevant in services such as transportation, child care, dependent care, housing, and needs related payments. So, if you all aren't familiar with the role that supportive services under WIOA legislation can play, I would really encourage you to look at that and to know that language too when you approach folks on the workforce side in your local area. To connect with local area workforce board and local members there is a great website, www.servicelocator.org, and if you go there you should be able to type in your zip code and find out who is on the local workforce board or the state workforce board in your area, as well as finding out where the nearest one-stops are. So that's a great resource for you all if you're not currently making those connections.

I think another valuable change was in the legislation related to our shared interest in getting homeless individuals into employment. This is a focus on clear pathways. We all know, if we think back to the start of our own jobs, our own careers, sometimes there are jobs that we really built upon to get to where we wanted to go, and sometimes we had jobs that taught us what we don't want to do. The clear pathway component, which is being integrated into all of the thinking around WIOA, gives us an opportunity to help individuals who have barriers to employment sit back to think about where they want to go and the steps that they need to take to get to a career ladder.

And, finally, I would say that one of the real opportunities, from my perspective, within the new legislation is the change of age for out of school youth. As you may know, under WIOA a youth is a youth not older than the age of 24 at the time of enrollment. One of the advantages of someone between 21 and 24 becoming identified as a youth, an out of school youth, is that there's more comprehensive wraparound services, which we know are crucial to the homeless, young adult homeless population, and, along with that, a lot more supportive services are available. And, in terms of concerns

on the workforce side, there are some concerns about where they'll be able, on the local level, where they will be able to find out of school youth to enroll, and my theory is that a lot of the young homeless youth are not only disconnected from home but they're also probably disconnected from education and employment. So that's one final suggestion for you. And with that I will turn this back over to Kevin and just remind folks that there's a lot of us on the line and muting your phone is probably a good thing.

Kevin Kissinger: Thank you, Jennifer. This is Kevin Kissinger from HUD again. Just as a reminder, this conference call has a limit of 1,000 people, so if you're not able to get on and see the video, it is being recorded so you'll be able to view that later, and if you can listen in we invite you to do that if you can't get on the, the video part. And next, the last welcome is from our cosponsor Jasmine Hayes. She is the policy director for youth and families for USICH. Jasmine, are you on the line?

Jasmine Hayes: I am. Thank you, Kevin. And thank you everyone. On behalf of Matthew Doherty, the Executive Director for the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, I'm really pleased to have the opportunity to participate with all of you as we kick off this webinar series. Here at USICH, along with our partners, particularly at HUD and at DOL, we have been working to really better integrate employment in homelessness assistance systems and to work towards reducing the gaps and silos that we know exist in services and really impact the populations that we're talking about. And last year's release of the Partnership for Opening Doors, a report to guide agencies and national partners towards integrating those systems, was a result of the feedback and sharing of what's working well, as well as recommendations for additional guidance and support that so many of you that are on the phone shared with us both during the summit that was held in the fall of 2014, as well as through your on-the-ground experience and feedback to many of our offices. So the result of much of your hard work and continued efforts to really drive towards increased access to meaningful employment is that we're starting to see progress.

Moving into 2016, USICH has identified as one our key priorities over this next year, and particularly to be able to lock in our progress as we transition to a new administration, and this includes strengthening the connections between homeless assistance and mainstream systems. Mainstream systems are starting to take a larger role in the awareness and the understanding of the needs of people experiencing homelessness and then translating this into concrete actions, which would include tracking housing status of job seekers, priority access where individuals experiencing homelessness are trying to be connected to services, and ensuring that employment is very much a part of a comprehensive array of services that accompanies a housing intervention. So I'm really looking forward to today's presentation and particularly to the future learning that I know is going to come out of this webinar series and really will help to advance the field. So, with that, I'm going to hand things back over to Kevin.

Kevin Kissinger: Alright, well thank you, Jasmine, and thank you, everyone. We appreciate this information and your focus on employment as we work together to prevent and end homelessness. So now we're coming to the primary part of our presentation and to do that Sherri Downing will facilitate that presentation. So, Sherri?

Sherri Downing: Thank you, Kevin. I would like, again, to welcome you and also to let you know that we have bios, as well as a listserv that was released under the SNAPS In Focus a little while ago, available for download under event info. With that, I would like to welcome John Rio, who is the Deputy Director I at Advocates for Human Potential, my colleague, and one I am proud to say is nationally respected for his expertise in this area. John?

John Rio: Hello and thank you, Sherri. We much appreciate all the support from the federal agencies to make this webinar series happen, so hats off to you all. And I'm particularly pleased today that we have such good representation from communities across the country and that our participants are representing not only the homeless assistance system and our continuums of care, but we also see representation from the workforce system and, in large measure, that's what this call and future calls will be about, is how we can partner together and answer the call to helping people experiencing homelessness to increase their income through employment.

So we want to focus in the first part a little bit on WIOA, as Jennifer had mentioned, an important piece of legislation; then we will take a deeper dive into rapid rehousing, which many of you are concerned about, and how rapid rehousing can connect with employment services in a targeted, strategic way to help prevent future homelessness. So let's take a snapshot of WIOA, which is the first legislative reform of the public workforce system since 1998, when we had the Workforce Investment Act or WIA. It brings together employment programs across a spectrum of services that includes that Department of Labor, people at Jennifer's shop, as well as the Department of Education and Health and Human Services. By requiring plans and partnerships, states are free to take some approaches and use special set-aside funds to develop cross-sector employment and training initiatives. As was noted, President Obama signed the act into law in July of 2014, and it ended up taking effect the following July 1 in 2015. The Rehabilitation Act, which is Title IV, took effect on that date of enactment. The WIOA state and local plans and the WIOA performance accountability provisions are going to be taking effect this summer in July. There was a proposed rule on April 16, and the comment period ended last June, and we're now awaiting the final rule. This information can all be found on the website that Jennifer noted.

As most of you know, and appreciate, the federal strategic plan to prevent and end homelessness is called Opening Doors, right? It highlights the importance of increasing economic security for people experiencing homelessness, which reflects the federal commitment to address the lack of earned income as one of the drivers of homelessness across our country. The passage of WIOA provides the opportunity to build an inclusive workforce system and improve some of the strategies to integrate housing and workforce approaches. Okay, so what does this mean for our continuums of care on the homeless assistance side and the people who help people find jobs? Through the rules, DOL proposes to implement job training system reform and strengthen the workforce investment system to put people, particularly those individuals with barriers to employment, back to work. WIOA increases the focus on the population that you serve in the homeless assistance system—men, women, youth—who have significant, often multiple, barriers to employment. So this is about the people you care about.

There are significant opportunities. WIOA allows up to 10 percent of adult and dislocated worker funds to be used for an intervention called transitional jobs. That is defined as a time-limited, subsidized work experience for individuals with multiple barriers to employment. The Act eliminates the sequence of service provision under WIA. Some of you who were well-steeped in this recall the challenges we had when we had to go through core and intensive services to get to training services. Now this is combined in a career service category, giving workforce staff new flexibility to better meet the unique needs of job seekers. WIOA focuses much more of the youth funding on disconnected youth, as Jennifer noted, by requiring at least 75 percent—increased from 30 percent—of available local funding for youth be spent on workforce investment for out of school youth. Youth services prioritize those who drop out of school, individuals subject to the juvenile or adult justice systems, homeless youth, runaways, current and foster care youth, as well as pregnant or parenting youth.

Let me just run over the importance of state and local planning and how critical it is for you in the homeless assistance system, and particularly leadership and the continuums of care, especially those

that have established employment subcommittees, to look at how they can participate in planning efforts. Under WIOA workforce boards must do extensive planning and coordinate with service providers in their communities. As of earlier this month only one of the 57 jurisdictions has submitted their workforce plan for the state. These are going to be due April 1, so there is still a window of opportunity. Twenty-three are developing what's called unified plans, 21 are developing what's called combined plans, and 13 we don't know about.

Under WIOA, states are required to submit these plans to federal agencies. A unified state plan must cover the six core formula grant programs that are authorized under the Act: The adult and dislocated worker and youth programs under Title I, adult education under Title II, Wagner-Peyser employment service activities under Title III, and vocational rehabilitation services under Title IV. The plans should outline the state's vision and strategy for carrying out activities of each program. A combined plan, on the other hand, includes those required elements that are in the unified plan, plus they can include one or more of 11 other eligible partner programs that are specifically identified under WIOA. These include the Perkins Career Act and technical ed. programs, TANF or the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Programs, employment and training services; these can be pulled together and included in a combined plan.

Plans vary greatly in their level of detail, as well as what they speak to in the way of goals or objectives for specific target populations. What I want to get across to you is, if your state or jurisdiction's plan doesn't specifically identify information or strategies to serve people experiencing homelessness, they may be encompassing those planned under the term disadvantaged job seekers. If you're not certain or if you're concerned or worried that your constituency, your population, is not included, speak to your local or state workforce planners, participate in the process, even if the plan appears to be fully formulated. We have a long way to go to actually implement this on the local level, which is where the rubber hits the road. It is where you all care about what actually happens in my community.

Just so you can be more aware, as I think Sherri mentioned, that the SNAPS In Focus is going to be posted on the site here, or is already, and that's about CoC collaboration with workforce boards under WIOA.

Okay, so let's turn our attention to rapid rehousing and jobs. Specifically, we're going to take a look at what we're learning. I'm going to review some of the evaluations that we have done on rapid rehousing and employment, and then we're going to dive a little deeper into the program operations in Seattle and King County, Washington, where my colleagues, Mark Putnam and Nick Codd, will present to you. So, quickly, let's just run through why it makes some sense. As communities work to expand your supply of rapid rehousing units and try to ensure successful outcomes for participants, the close connection between employment and rapid rehousing becomes even more important. Some communities focused early attention on increasing access by rapid rehousing participants to employment opportunities.

Rapid rehousing, we all know, is a short-term financial assistance to help individuals and families who have fallen into homelessness and assist their rapid return to a permanent housing situation. Rental subsidy is often limited to less than 12 months, probably more programs are limiting assistance to 6 or fewer months. To the extent possible, programs try to tailor that assistance to the needs and abilities of participants to meet their obligations with their available earned and unearned income. In December of 2015, I want to note, that the Conference of Mayors, in their report on hunger and homelessness, reported again that unemployment, low-paying jobs continued to remain the main causes of homelessness among our families with children.

Taking a little closer look, there's the Rapid Rehousing for Homeless Families Demonstration. Under contract with HUD, a company called Abt Associates, which you should be familiar with, is conducting an evaluation of 23 sites that receive funding for rapid rehousing services, part of a federal demo. The study uses HMIS data to track outcomes, along with a participant survey conducted at 12 months after program exit. The message seems to be that rates of employment increase; however, during rapid rehousing program participation, the amount of earned income remains short of what is needed to pay for housing, food, and other needs, and the situation persists after 12 months. In other words, what we're seeing in this demo is that earning a housing or living wage for rapid rehousing participants may take longer than expected and may most likely take longer than the actual duration of the housing assistance.

In the Family Options Study, you should all be aware, we had an interim report recently on that study. It's a multi-site, random assignment experiment designed to study the impact of various housing and service interventions for homeless families. HUD launched this in 2008, in response to congressional direction, with the goal of learning more about the effects of different housing and service interventions for families. So, for a 2-year period between 2010 and 2012, nearly 2,300 families and their children were enrolled in this, and there were four groups that they were randomly assigned to. One is subsidy only, where people were receiving mostly a Housing Choice voucher; group two, which was project-based transitional housing, which was defined as temporary housing for up to 24 months, with an intensive package of supportive services; and three, the third group, were community-based rapid rehousing participants who are in temporary rental assistance where it was potentially renewable for up to 18 months, with limited housing-focused services. And the last group was usual care, defined as any housing or services that a family accesses in the absence of immediate referral to these other interventions. So families are going to be tracked for a minimum of 3 years, and they are being interviewed and information is gathered at baseline, 18 months, and 36 months. Extensive data is being collected from the head of household, as well as the children's experience in all of this. In addition to family outcomes, some cost data is also being collected in order to help contextualize the outcomes. And, right away, what's been observed is this double bind that participants' experience, and I'm sure if you're running a rapid rehousing program this is not unfamiliar to you.

In Philadelphia, we see that there is increase in income after rapid rehousing, every month after rapid rehousing an average increase of \$15 per month. But it increases over time, but the amounts, again, are not significant relevant to the costs of housing and other personal needs. As you all know, rapid rehousing was built on the Housing Prevention and Rapid Rehousing Program (HPRP), as well as the SSVF experience of including prevention in rapid rehousing in that program. So it's important for us to also look at what's happening in SSVF for veteran families, and clearly we're seeing that participants in SSVF are also increasing their income from entry to exit and that we're learning a little bit more in terms of the relationship with homeless prevention—that those in prevention assistance came in and left with higher income than those in rapid rehousing. In some ways that's not a terribly big surprise. The grantees in SSVF did find that they were most successful in raising income when they began the program with an income of less than \$1,000.

So, in Washington State, which you'll hear a little bit about in Seattle, but they did a statewide HPRP evaluation back, I think it was, in 2012, and this is what they found. The employment outcomes of over 3,000 persons were looked at in the state, and they were split in a group and that group was split between persons receiving rapid rehousing and those who did not receive rapid rehousing. But they were a matched group. Here, again, the message is that people are likely to increase their income, and what Washington State found is that they worked more days during the follow-up than did the comparison group who did not get rapid rehousing.

So, clearly, these are relatively new, emerging research data. We need more research to inform our practices. We need, for example, a better understanding of what employment interventions were available to participants. In some cases, these research results are focused on the rapid rehousing component, and there isn't a targeted employment intervention. We do know that colocation of services helps support integration better than when they are separated. And, obviously, earned income is something that our participants can actually change. You cannot increase your entitlement income but you can increase income through changing jobs or getting more training and getting a better job, and those are obviously not helpful if you're on a fixed income.

I want to quickly turn this over to Mark Putnam, who is the Director at All Home in Seattle, and let's dive into some of their activities. Mark?

Mark Putnam: Yes, thanks, John. This is Mark Putnam. I am the Director at All Home, which is Seattle/King County's Continuum of Care and just a bit about, sort of, my background: I'm excited to be on this call and to be talking about employment. I've been committed to improving employment outcomes for people experiencing homelessness for quite a while. My background's in working in nonprofits focused on AIDS housing and on homeless youth and families before joining our Continuum of Care. So I'm going to provide a bit of context leading into Nick Codd's presentation about a particular rapid rehousing and employment program that we have here in King County, but I think starting with some context—you'll see some similarities, I assume or bet, with some of your communities.

So, again, we're the Continuum of Care and strategic planning body for homelessness in Seattle and King County. Our 10-year plan, which completed in 2015, we didn't make significant progress on employment. Employment was a strategy; it was something that was worked on. Nick and I, and John Rio, actually, also helped us in Seattle/King County make some progress. I think we all felt, and feel there's much more work to do. We, not surprisingly, and I think at the beginning of the webinar Sherri spoke about this, that we know that people experiencing homelessness want to work. One of the things that really struck us is when we did some youth and young adult homelessness planning a couple of years ago and we did some surveying, and employment and wanting training and jobs was the top priority for youth and young adults experiencing homelessness in King County. So our new plan includes employment strategies, a focus on increasing access to mainstream programs and I think, you know, the approach that you'll see sort of in my slides and that Nick will talk about is really not having employment be a separate strategy but really integrated into our local priorities around, particularly, our coordinated entry and access system. So it's not just access and entry to housing but also to employment. And then also integrating it very closely, as we know is so important to the success of rapid rehousing.

So, in Seattle/King County we have a really strong economy, and we have an increasing affordability gap. So just a little bit about where we are—it will sound familiar to some of your communities—is that we have a really low unemployment rate; it's down to 3 percent. We have a minimum wage in Seattle and also in SeaTac, where our airport is, that is moving to \$15 per hour. The \$15 per hour minimum wage has been approved. Huge efforts locally to get that policy passed and it's incrementally being implemented. So that's all, that's really positive, both of those things. At the same time, we have a lack of housing supply—a 2 percent vacancy rate. A lot of job and population growth has led to a lot of people moving to Seattle. We're one of the fastest growing cities and counties, in King County, in the country. And that our rents are really increasing. Countywide, not just in the city of Seattle where it's even more expensive, countywide our rents went up \$115; average rent is about \$1,500 across the county. And that's actually led to an increase in homelessness. So, an important study that Burns and Culhane did at the Urban Institute in 2012 showed that increases in rent of \$100 per month actually is correlated with increases in homelessness in communities. Not surprising, but still really valuable

information and, I think, helpful to policy at the local level. We also know something related to income is that single households, single adult households in communities where there are more of those types of households, you actually have higher rates of homelessness, as well, and I think that shows. I know in our community where it really takes, a lot of times, two incomes to be able to afford to live in our community.

So we've taken an approach to systems redesign that is client-centered, and we are really focused, currently, on reshaping our coordinated entry system. So we've had coordinated entry for families, for youth, and for veterans, and for the chronically homeless, for a few years. We have not had it for our single adult population, and right now we're really aligning all of those different populations and entry places into a single system that we're calling coordinated entry for all. And we're reshaping it to include access not just to housing but to employment and health care and prevention, and so, doing that incrementally, employment's really at the forefront of this, and this is a local project that we're working on really currently and in the moment. We are also, as a system, moving to, and this is the client-centered part, expanding our efforts to divert people from homeless services by asking, "What do you need to become housed? What will end homelessness for you?" And that, you know, the focus of that, is certainly housing, getting people into housing first, but solutions also include employment so we have flexible funding resources that if the answer to that question of what do you need to become housed is I need someone to pay for a license or for some tools that people need for a job or something that's job-related, that can be done with these flexible resources. And then we're also creating pathways to employment just right from that housing front door, so that's the vision in our new system which is launching in the next few months.

An example of that, and I think John talked earlier about colocation and putting employment services at the same location, we are trying out some different things right now including access points at food banks and at libraries. We've seen that that's been really successful in engaging and providing, sort of, places where people are already going for other services, bringing our employment staff there and bringing those resources to folks. And we've seen, just quickly, a couple of success factors with that, things that have been important to that have been local site control, so if you're at the food bank or you're at the library, you're really deferring to that staff and that program and their customers and their process and workflow and that the employment services are really something that's a supplement to that mission of the food bank or the library. So flexibility and deference has been helpful. Consistency and just building trust with clients; consistency in attendance and service offerings. And then really ensuring that you're committed to this and bringing a value to that work and to those sites.

Let's talk a little bit about some of the system redesign work that we're doing. So we, John Rio tells me, we are one of the few communities in the country that had almost \$1 million in employment services funded through our McKinney Continuum of Care until last year—until this year, actually. We had employment programs for years. This year we had about \$5 million out of our almost \$30 million Continuum of Care grant that was dedicated for support services only projects. HUD, as many of you will know, has deprioritized using their funding for those services and really wants us to use those funds on housing. And so we shifted all those resources to rapid rehousing and to permanent supportive housing this year and used that opportunity to make some changes and find other funding sources for our employment programs. We were not able to find all of the resources to completely meet the exact gaps, but it also has allowed us to do some redesign and thinking about how those programs connect to our coordinated entry system.

Over the years, I think, this is the opportunity that's in front of us right now, and funding alignment and connection to coordinate entry is a key part of that. We've had a lot of solid employment programs in

our community but it hasn't been systemic, and it hasn't been connected always to housing and to rapid rehousing, as Nick will talk about. Our local Workforce Investment Act system, that we call Work Source, through our workforce development council, and here at King County is the operator, serves about 15,000 job seekers a year, and last year, the results that we had through that system were 200 jobs for people who were experiencing homelessness. The average wage for those jobs was \$13 an hour, and then we saw a 250 percent increase in income from enrollment in those services to placement in jobs.

So some of our challenges ahead, as I kind of wrap up and pass the baton to Nick, we know that we did the right thing in finding, you know, aligning our resources and making sure we're using our housing resources for housing, but finding the funding on the employment side to really take it to scale, to really meet the need has been challenging. We have, we're doing a lot of great work around the basic food and employment training program, BFET, and maximizing the amount of federal resources we can get there, and we've seen a huge spike in the amount of money for that program and enrollees and progress there, so that's been, that's been great. But, you know, as always, looking for those resources to be able to do more is a challenge as we move ahead. We are also going to really learn and refine and have an ongoing process of continuous improvement around adding employment to coordinated entry. We know that there are a few other cities around the country that are doing this at the same time as us, partly through the Heartland Alliances connections project, and so we're excited to learn from you all and those communities around the country.

And then increasing employer commitments to hire people who are or have been homeless. We've added, as a key communications message for us when people ask, "What can we do as a community member to help address the crisis of homelessness?" we talk about a few different things, but a key one is you can rent to people who are experiencing homelessness or you can hire somebody who's experienced homelessness. And we've had some real successes with employers, and we need to highlight those so we bring additional employers along.

And then I'll just add one other thing that we're really trying to address is so many people who experience homelessness and are having a hard time reconnecting to the job market, one of the key barriers has been criminal history. And so we have a bill that we've worked on actually for a few years, but looks like it's going to pass our state legislative session this year, and that's a certificate of restoration of opportunity or CROP—the Certificate of Restoration of Opportunity Act. And it removes barriers to occupational licenses for those with criminal histories. What we've found is that there are, once people are out of the criminal justice system, trying to get back on their feet, there are collateral consequences to their being incarcerated. And that includes that there is at least 90 career paths in Washington State that are not accessible to people with certain criminal histories because, just right from the gate, you can't get a license, can't get the occupational licenses for those particular career paths. So it looks like that bill is going to pass for us this year, which we're really excited about and think that that's going to provide some help. And if you're interested in that I'll add the website information in a little bit, but it's columbialegal.org/crop.

So that's what I have. I turn things back over to John, and Nick is next. Thanks very much.

Nick Codd: Thanks, Mark. So that was a good setup, a good segue into what I want to just share with everybody and that is a pilot project that we implemented here in the Seattle/King County area, where we paired employment services the employment services we paired were employment navigation services, with a rapid rehousing pilot. And so I want to just talk a little bit about that and share some of our data and results and learnings.

But first I just want to say I work for Building Changes. We're located in Seattle, Washington. We're an intermediary that focuses on youth and family homelessness. We're not a direct service provider—we take a systems change effort approach to improving systems, those systems that serve homeless families. And we're involved in a family homelessness initiative in the greater Seattle area and, as a part of that, we have available to us what are called system innovation grants, which we can use to implement and build, implement new strategies and build capacity. And so we used that, these grants, for this pilot project. The other thing I would say, and it's been said by others, is that Building Changes has been working in this area of family homelessness for a number of years and we certainly have recognized the importance of income and employment as being a key strategy to helping households move out of homelessness, stay housed—become housed and stayed housed. And over the years we have worked on a particular approach, which we call an employment navigator approach, and I'll talk a little bit more about that, but, in 2013, as we were planning here, locally, this rapid rehousing pilot for families, Building Changes introduced the idea of pairing it with an employment intervention, an employment strategy, and so what we settled on was pairing rapid rehousing for families with employment navigation services, and that was the model and the approach we would take in this 2-year pilot.

So, just a little bit about the rapid rehousing program and perspective on this. So, it's a rapid rehousing program for homeless families. It was a very, very, low, low barrier program, so there were no requirements around income, and, in fact, most of the families that were involved in this pilot had evictions. They had convictions. They had debt, health issues—it was a challenging crowd. Most of them were staying in emergency shelter as their rapid rehousing services started. We had a small percentage that were actually literally homeless. And, as Mark shared with you earlier, our context, the context in our community here, was that we're in an environment of rising rents, lowering vacancy rates, but a good job market, so the cost of housing was going up rapidly as we started with this pilot.

So what we did in this pilot is we had five agencies providing rapid rehousing services, and that was their role, and we selected three workforce providers to provide employment navigation services. And we intentionally paired each rapid rehousing provider with a workforce program, so there were specific staff, specific navigators, employment navigators that were working with each rapid rehousing provider. And we did this because we felt that starting off with this integrated team approach was really essential. Participating in employment services was voluntary for the families, but as soon as the rapid rehousing services started, the employment navigator was involved in meetings with the family and the housing provider, so it was really this team of housing, employment, and the family from the beginning. We looked at the option, and not very closely, to be honest, of having the employment resources be in our local one-stop and giving families a name and a number to go and check out, but what we knew is that too many things can happen between that referral and people actually getting to where they need to go, so we really wanted to structure this in a way that was really very intentional and a very unified approach. And so, by doing this, we really set the stage that permanent housing and increasing income were things that we were working on concurrently and working on from the very beginning. And that it wasn't a track of housing on one end and employment somewhere else.

The other thing that we did in this pilot, which I think was very helpful—time-consuming, but helpful—is we held monthly learning circles or a learning collaborative, and this involved all of the providers, and it also included the funders, and we talked a lot about what was working, what wasn't working, best practices—things that needed to be changed and corrected. But one of the things that really became clear as we were doing this pilot, going through this pilot and gathering people together, is that the housing staff were really voicing very clearly the recognition of the importance of income and employment. They were really seeing the value of the navigator role and the importance of this

approach. And this is significant because, for a long time we've tried to get the attention of housing providers—to get them to pay attention to employment and to work with employment providers, and sometimes that is felt, sort of, not something that they wanted to or felt like they had the capacity to do. But, in this learning circle, not only did they have the capacity to do this, but they truly saw the value in it. And, for many of the rapid rehousing staff that were approaching landlords with families and trying to advocate and get them into housing, in particular when the families had very little income or maybe weren't working, being able to talk to a landlord about the employment program or the employment navigator work was actually a good, sort of, advocacy tool and it was. It relieved some of the landlords regarding some of their concerns around income.

So let me talk a little bit about the employment navigator role. So the role is really, ideally, about navigation. So we were not looking to create a parallel employment program for homeless families. We really wanted this role to be about providing the needed individualized and tailored assistance for families that maybe the mainstream system isn't set up to do. But really focus on connecting people to mainstream workforce services, enhancing those services, supporting people, and making good use of those services that are out there and available. The other thing that we did is we really set this up so that, when the employment navigator got involved, they did not have the option of saying that a family wasn't ready for employment and not serving them. There was sort of a zero exclusion approach, meaning that if a family said they needed a job or wanted a job, the employment navigators began working with them—just started with where the family was. The other thing is that these employment navigators, these workforce providers, were organizations that were selected based on some criteria. They were organizations that had worked with hard to house, hard to employ people in the past. They had good capacity around that, but they were also all connected to the mainstream system in different ways, so we had one that was a very active WIOA contractor. They were all working closely with our SNAP and BFET programs so they had funds coming in from that angle. A few of them had worked with our housing authorities around getting people in public housing employed. We had one that was a provider for TANF and doing employment work for TANF recipients, so they were all linked to the workforce system, yet had the capacity to work with homeless households, which I think was, again, a key, an important factor. So they weren't intimidated by working with people that had a lot of very complicated situations.

So here are some of the outcomes that we saw in this pilot, and, again, it was just under 2 years and sort of a point in time. We basically ran these in October of 2015. So we had 392 individuals that participated, and, in some cases, there would be two individuals from one household, so we had fewer households but 392 individuals. Of that 392, about 20 percent were employed at entry; however, the employment that people had at entry oftentimes was, I mean, it was employment, but these were oftentimes very part-time jobs, seasonal jobs, people were underemployed—Not jobs that would suit them well moving forward.

Of the 392, we were able to move 228 into employment, so about 58 percent. At one point we were just over 60 but we ended up with 58 in October of 2015. And we had 249 new job placements. And what that means, and this might be sort of a confusing data point, but what that means is that, to get 228 people employed, we needed to find, people needed to find, more than 228 jobs. We had a number of people that maybe came in with employment that needed to get a different job. We had people that came in with no employment and got a job and that job wasn't the right job and had to be helped find another job again. And this is important. This is an important factor because, I think, any employment provider that's going to work with families that have been homeless and in rapid rehousing—that they need to understand that this is not a one and done approach. That job retention,

re-placement, comes with the territory. And it's something that people have to be prepared to do and open to doing.

So our wages were about \$12.02 on average, and, as Mark mentioned, we do, in the City of Seattle, we're moving towards a \$15 an hour minimum wage, but during this time period the minimum wage, for the most part, across this county, was under \$10, so this was a few dollars above minimum wage. So, ideally, we'd like it to be higher, but it's not a really low, low average wage.

So we had about 59 people that were involved in training, and this is important because I think one of the things that has been mentioned before and one of the tension points and challenges is that, with rapid rehousing, with that approach of short-term rental assistance and the need for people to obtain income quickly, there is a strong push toward getting a job and getting to work, and that pushes people. It gets people working but it makes it much more difficult for people to spend time in training and, in particular, training that might put them on a higher wage platform as they get started. So this is an ongoing challenge, and I would say of that 59 that were in training, some of those trainings were very, very short-term trainings, like forklift certification, so certainly nothing that would be a big time commitment.

So we saw 192 people housed, so, if you look, we have more people employed than housed. So, one of the big learnings here, of this project, is that a number of families were in shelter when this started, and they wanted to focus on getting a job before signing a lease. They've been down the road of having a lease and not being able to pay their rent and being evicted, and they did not want to put themselves in a situation where that could happen again. So we had a number of families that said, "No, we want to start with employment first. Then we'll worry about housing," which I think really sort of turns things on its head a bit, because I think oftentimes we've really operated under this impression, this approach that people need to be housed, stabilized, then they can go get a job. I think what we learned in this pilot and, I think, the type of thing that we're trying to build into coordinated entry is that we need to start talking about income and employment from day one, and we shouldn't assume that everybody has to be stably housed before they can start considering employment. It has to be this concurrent, dual approach. And for some families, they're going to want to start with employment first.

Our average rent, at time of move-in, was \$951 a month. So that includes a range of housing arrangements. I will say that one of the things we saw was people moved to parts of our county that are much more affordable, so they moved away from services. They even moved out of county, so that's an observation that we had in this project. It's concerning to people. I think, actually, though, if you compare this to the general population in a fast-growing, expensive area like Seattle, homeless people aren't the only people that are moving to new areas looking for affordable housing.

So, a few of our lessons learned, which I've touched on already, is basically it starts with this idea that if you're talking about housing referrals to a homeless household, you have to start talking about income and employment at the same time. And that has to be part of the conversation moving forward. There is this inherent tension, and I think we have to continue to really figure this piece out because rapid rehousing does mean that people have to get income together quickly. We have more and more households who, I think, are going to be offered rapid rehousing as their service from the homeless housing system. In particular, as coordinated entry moves towards prioritizing and prioritizing those that are most vulnerable, we have a lot of households that are not going to be going into heavily subsidized units, affordable units. They're going to be looking at the private sector and so this is something that we need to pay attention to. And it's one reason why we selected employment programs that are connected to the mainstream in hoping that families can make the connection not just with an employment navigator staff, but the mainstream system and be able to revisit that system

moving forward as they, as their housing is stabilized, as they've worked for a while and are ready for maybe the next phase of their career development.

The availability of flexible financial assistance. Sort of a no brainer, but, between rapid rehousing and employment providers, financial assistance that is very flexible to pay for very unique things that people need that make a huge difference in their lives is key to making these strategies work effectively. The other thing I would say is that, and I've said this before, we really need to select the right providers. We were fortunate in that we could select some workforce partners that had a commitment and some experience working with the hard to employ. They, themselves, were all linked to workforce funds and services, so there's opportunities for co-enrollment; there's opportunities for leveraging those types of other funds. And that really gets to the whole sustainability question, and I think what we've tried to do with this project is to build a case that if you offer homeless families rapid rehousing and employment services, people will go to work. We have just under, just about 60 percent of the people become employed. Not, probably, what a typical WIOA program would expect, but not incredibly far off. We've showed, we've demonstrated some good practices, some strong partnerships, so it's something that people can look at and build on.

And moving forward, we do hope to look at ways to leverage WIOA funding. We don't expect at this point for WIOA to fund specialized employment navigators to serve homeless families in rapid rehousing—we don't expect that replication—but we certainly hope that those that are funded with WIOA dollars have a greater sense of capacity and competency to serve homeless households. And we've looked at other funding options and understand that any one of these workforce programs serving homeless families uses and relies on multiple funding options—United Way, BFET, some of our local funds—and so I think in trying to develop and sustain these types of programs, WIOA is something to certainly consider but not stop there.

So those are some of our findings. And again, I think, what this has led us to is this idea that waiting until people start rapid rehousing to talk about employment is actually, in some ways, too late. We need to really start this conversation at coordinated entry, and we could, in some ways, actually divert people from rapid rehousing by looking at employment at the very beginning. So, a very interesting project, lots of learnings, lots more I could share, but I feel like this is an example that could be helpful to the field in the future, and I'd be happy to answer any questions about this project. But at this point, I'm going to turn things back over to John, and I think he's going to wrap us up and move us forward. Thanks.

John Rio: Sorry about that, it takes a second for the mute button to roll off. Thank you, Nick, for your information and you too, Mark. Just a couple of take-aways from what this webinar is saying, and I think one area is about expectations and how we need to manage our expectations a little bit. WIOA is going to be implemented in your community and across the country. It is not a drive-up window from which you can get cash to operate an employment program in your agency. It is a potential partner and what you can expect is going to be determined by how you're collaborating with your local workforce board, your American Job Center, that's the local career center or career office. It's about building relationships with those folks, and I can't understate that. It is not a drive-up window. It's about a developed relationship, and so we have to manage what WIOA can do.

Similarly, managing expectations around the amounts of income that people will earn when they are going to work after bouts of homelessness and trying to get on their feet and managing what's reasonable to expect, and I should offer that they're not unlike our public housing residents and their experiences in trying to increase their income and gain a stake in their communities to move out of public housing. So when you're thinking about the wages of your rapid rehousing clients and you're

thinking about what happened in Seattle, consider, or try to find out in your community how well is your public housing residents doing. They are a more comparable group to many of the folks that we're working with in rapid rehousing.

And we can't say it enough, I think Nick was driving it home to you and your heads may be hurting from it, but if your aim is to improve income through employment, you have to provide targeted employment services and help people secure employment. If you do that, you will get employment outcomes and you will get those outcomes more consistently. If you don't do that, you're not going to get very good employment outcomes, and you certainly are not going to get them consistently. So, that old adage, if you pay attention to it, focus on it, do something about it, it is reasonable to expect to have some success with it.

And that we're not excluding people. There, we oftentimes talk about and our workforce colleagues talk about whether an individual is ready for competitive employment. We have to work with our workforce system to better understand that we have to work with everybody who is coming in our doors and begin to work with them where they are at, meet their challenge by matching their needs with the right service. And, whenever possible, using the mainstream system, that career center or American Job Center, and making modifications when necessary and using the relationship that you have, because our approach in this work has to be very strategic. It has to be bridge building across these systems, just like we found out that we have to work with landlords in different new ways than we did before. Rapid rehousing brought us to dealing with landlords in parallel and, in some ways, as we deal with employers for disadvantaged job-seeking populations.

So, with that, I want to bring the webinar presentation part to a close, and we may have a few questions that we can answer. Sherri, I think I should turn this back to you to see if we have any questions for the panelists to address. Sherri?

Sherri Downing: Thank you, John. That was absolutely wonderful. I think they're saying that it's a basic human need for people to work and contribute to their communities, and in many, if not most cases, people are able to work, one way or another. So we, I'm really excited about this topic.

Before we go to some questions I'm just going to encourage you to come to our next event, which will take place April 21 at 1:00 p.m. eastern, when we'll be talking about Housing +Employment Works: The CoC and Workforce Partnerships to serve the WIOA Population Priorities. A third one will take place 2 months later in June, and it will speak to employment assessment and coordinated entry systems. And, finally, Housing + Employment Works taking place in August will talk about systems performance measures and employment income maximization, so all of these will be taking a different perspective on employment, on the employment picture, so thank you for that.

I would like to ask the presenters some questions so I'm going to go into the question box and look at what the audience has submitted. John either you or Nick or Mark could maybe answer this one. Could you provide some more specifics like which organizations can be contacted, what can be done specifically, are there specific grants to apply for? I guess, really, what this question comes down to is, how do you get started? How do you get started bridging the CoC with taking advantage of the new priorities in WIOA and working with the workforce investment folks? So, John, do you want to start that one?

John Rio: Sure, Sherri. If you are new to this, there are any number of places to start, and it is like a big circle. You just need to start somewhere on it in order to continue on and go around. Early in our webinar Jennifer mentioned the service locator for career centers. If you are a case manager working in a housing or rapid rehousing program or PSH, reach out to your local career center, which you can find

at this locator, and I suggest just Google American Job Centers locator, and it will pop up. Reach out to a Job Center and, one to one, service provider to service provider, explore and understand what that career center does, what they might be able to do for your clients, and what their limitations are. If you are at a managerial level or concerned around how your agency's programs are interfacing with workforce services, you might want to not only understand the job centers in your community, you will also want to understand your vocational rehabilitation system in your community, and you want to identify who are some of the workforce boards members in your community. I strongly suggest reaching out to them and asking for a meeting to share your concerns. Some communities have moved from those kinds of initial conversations to having a workforce board person sit on the CoC and vice versa, having a CoC person sit on the workforce board. So those are some early things you can do is start communicating. Beforehand, do some research so you have some understanding of what the workforce responsibilities are, who the players are, and how they function. Most of that can be found on their websites or the sites that Jennifer had told us about. So I think that might help. Maybe Nick or Mark, how did you get started with the workforce solutions in or the workforce development council in your community?

Mark Putnam: This is Mark. I can jump in with that. We cultivated the relationship in a number of different ways. And, I think it's really hard because we're really operating so separately with such different sort of infrastructures and board and everything. I got a question in the Q and A that I answered that we have included representatives from the workforce system on our Continuum of Care board, we've had housing providers, nonprofits on the CoC, sorry, on the WIA, WIOA, now, board. And then, also in our community, Nick and I and a number of others from philanthropy, local government, nonprofits, workforce and housing have formed, essentially, an employment subcommittee that's focused on homelessness and employment. So I think all of those things can really build the connections, and then you've got to get into practice together and test some things out and try different things, like the navigator program.

Nick Codd: So I, this is Nick, I can add that, as I mentioned, we are fortunate here in the Seattle/King County area to be involved in a family homelessness initiative that includes grant money to test out and build capacity around new, emerging strategies. We were able to use those funds to fund the, employment navigator and rapid rehousing pilot. So if there's a way to use private philanthropy dollars to at least test something out, get something started, again to sort of build a presence and understand what your practices are and build partnerships, that's a way to start. We also were fortunate, here in the State of Washington, to receive, a Department of Labor Workforce Innovations Fund grant to test out our employment navigator model. Building Changes didn't receive this but one of our workforce partners did. And so these are all short-term funded projects, but it's a way to start to build capacity, build out your model, and, I think, build the case for sustainability and continuing things forward. So it is, I mean, it is difficult but, I would say, being as resourceful and creative as possible is the way to get these things started.

John Rio: Just another piece on that, Nick. Especially if you're a CoC or if you're engaged in, how should I say, active reeducating your state leadership in the needs of homeless individuals in your community, the WIOA reestablishes a governors' set-aside for special grant funding. So out of the governor's office you may certainly see flexible dollars being used for targeted projects or activities that rise to the level of attention to the governor. For example, some years back, the last time this was available, California had several funding opportunities out of the governor's office targeting homeless employment. So if you're involved in educating your state leadership, they may need to hear from you.

Sherri Downing: Excellent, thank you. Thanks, gentlemen. I want to mention that the webinar will be available, the recording will be available on the HUD Exchange, so that will be posted and available. We've got about three minutes left. One person asked about developing a rapid rehousing program for youth. This is particularly salient because WIOA really does have some specific advantages for dealing with youth. So do any of you have any suggestions on how to begin applying the rapid rehousing model with employment to the youth population? Maybe through apartment sharing or housemates? Go ahead.

Mark Putnam: Yeah, this is Mark, and I also responded to the Q and A on that. We have a rapid rehousing program for young adults already, and we have applied, through our Continuum of Care application for, I think, another million dollars for that approach, and we've been working locally and with national partners on developing sort of a model or standard for rapid rehousing for young adults. The USICH, or maybe NIH, released this week some guidelines around rapid rehousing and standards that might be helpful for people to look for those. And then one last thing is that with our single adult rapid rehousing program, in the initial phase, we really found some success in placing people quickly into housing and the rent assistance only lasted for a few months. It was pretty quick, but the successes were in roommate sharing and placing people together into programs and, or into housing, in the private market, because, really, as I said earlier, that double income is really necessary in our community. Thanks.

Sherri Downing: Thank you. Thank you very much. This brings us to the very end of our time. I would like to thank all of you for participating, for tuning in to this, and I also would like to thank HUD, Department of Labor, and the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness for sponsoring this webinar. We're very excited to be able to bring you this information and, not only today, but in the next three webinars that are scheduled bimonthly through our final presentation in August.

With that, I encourage you to please answer the short survey that you will be getting, and let us know how this worked for you; we will use that information to go forward. So, thank you so much everyone and have a good rest of your day. And this concludes our webinar.

[End of audio]