

# Housing + Employment Works: Employment Assessment in Coordinated Entry Systems Webinar Transcript

June 16, 2016

**Dawn:** Hello, my name is Dawn, and I will be your conference operator. At this time, I would like to welcome everyone to the Housing + Employment Works Webinar. All lines have been placed on mute to prevent any background noise. Later, we will conduct an interactive question and answer session. If you would like to ask a question during that time, simply press star (\*), then the number one (1) on your telephone keypad. You will hear a tone acknowledging your request and a prompt to record your name. If you would like to withdraw your question, please press star (\*), then the number two (2). Thank you. I will now turn the call over to our host, Sandy Patel. Please go ahead.

**Sandy Patel:** Good afternoon everybody, and thank you for joining today's webinar, Housing + Employment Works: Employment Assessment in Coordinated Entry Systems. My name is Sandy Patel, and I am with TDA, a technical assistance provider for HUD. I will be serving as your host today. I am going to run through some technical instructions on how to ask questions and things like that before I hand it off to the wonderful presenters. Please turn off your cell phones and close the email and all other programs on your computer and give your undivided attention to our presenters today. All participants will be muted during the call. Today's webinar is approximately 90 minutes, and it will be recorded. If you have any technical problems, you can send a chat message to the host—that will come directly to me, and I can help you with any issues that you might be having. Questions can be asked in two ways: You can ask a written question using the Q&A tool or a verbal question using the via conference call, by pressing \*1 on your telephone keypad to get into the question queue. To ask a written question, use the Q&A tool. It is located on the righthand side of your WebEx box. You can see a screenshot of what that looks like up on the screen. If you do not see it, click on the triangle and the box will expand. Please ask questions to All Panelists, then just type your question in the box and click "Send." Again, you can ask written questions at any point during the presentation. Questions will be answered verbally and in writing through the Q&A tool. We may not be able to get to all questions, but we will try to answer the common ones first. Please send additional questions to the email address on the screen—that's [krio@ahpnet.com](mailto:krio@ahpnet.com). With that, I'm going to hand it off to Kevin Kissinger from HUD's Office of Special Needs Assistance Programs. He is here to welcome you. Kevin?

**Kevin Kissinger:** Well thanks, Sandy, and welcome, everyone. We're excited to bring you this third in a series of four webinars focused on the role of employment as a strategy to prevent and end homelessness. As we know, housing is key to helping those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness achieve stability and self-sufficiency; however, as we've seen in other, previous webinars, regular income through sustainable employment is critical to help people stay housed and become self-sufficient. So, as we've mentioned before, several studies have found that most people who are at risk of homelessness or who are experiencing homelessness actually want to work. So, during today's webinar, we're going to look at the role of coordinated entry and employment. So we'll hear about the different opportunities available through the Workforce Investment and Opportunities Act of 2014, the Earn As You Learn, and then hear from two different Continuums of Care who are assessing employment needs as soon as a person requests services via their coordinated entry system. My colleagues from the U.S. Interagency Council on the Homelessness and the Department of Labor could not be with us today, but I want you to know that both of them support these efforts and plan to join us on our final webinar in a couple months. So now, welcome again, and I think it's time to pass the baton to John Rio, one of our nation's premiere experts on employment and homelessness. John?

**John Rio:** Thank you, Kevin, and I appreciate your welcoming remarks to everyone, and I'm glad that you are all here for this webinar this day. We have, as Kevin noted, we have two colleagues from two different communities that will speak to their activities and roles in coordinated entry. Kevin, can you pass the green ball over to me, if you would be so kind to try and do that, that's great. That's done. This is our contact information up on your screen, if you wish to take note of that and you certainly can contact any of us after the call and, as we said, the presentation will be available at the HUD Exchange website. Give us a little bit of time to get that up—a week or so—and you'll be able to access it in a YouTube video. If you are interested in the slides, in particular, Sandy, our host, is posting a link in our chat box where you can go and get these if you're determined to have them earlier.

Okay, so today, as we are going to precede our discussion of coordinated entry by talking a little bit about WIOA. As you may know, this is an Act that was recently passed and, in communities across the country, is on the edge of implementation. So we hope that, as we talk about it, that you'll learn a little bit about WIOA through these comments and, as well as our plan for the rest of the webinar to address employment in coordinated entry. So these are our objectives up on the screen. We hope that you'll leave today's webinar a little smarter about these issues.

Okay, so, before we jump into this, let me just see if we can bring up a poll question. We're going to do some polls as we go through our presentation today, and we request that you all who are participants answer the question. And the first question that we wanted to get a sense of from you is, "Is there an adequate supply of employment services in your community to meet the needs of homeless job seekers?" So you see that the question right on the righthand side of your screen, and you have three choices: Yes, No, or that you're Not Sure. So take a minute and please give us an answer by just checking the little circle there, and then hit "Submit." Okay? We'll record all the answers and share that with you in a few moments after you respond. So, is there enough employment services in your community for your clients who want to seek employment? From your point of view. Okay, so, everybody has done that? Pretty much? Let's see what we get in the way of some of your responses. Quite a distribution. Out of 220 participants today, we have a group, about 15%, I think, that there is an adequate supply. A larger percentage, about 42% or so, that think that there is not enough, and there is a number of you that, about another 15%, that are unsure or don't know. Well, we appreciate that, and if you didn't put an answer in, that's okay—we do appreciate it when you do, though.

We're going to see if, as we are talking about the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, if it holds some opportunities for your community to offer more employment services, so we're hoping that you'll actually learn about some opportunities or learn enough to go have some conversations with people in your workforce system and to see if you can advance more employment services in your community. Within WIOA, which is, you know, replacing the WIA, the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, WIOA replaces that, so there's a new set of rules and new programs that are under WIOA. And one of the things that WIOA is emphasizing is this concept of people earning money while they learn. And this is a pretty straightforward concept, with the idea that people would earn more money as they get more knowledge, skills, and competencies that are valued by employers. So we know that, from research, that this is indeed true, that people with more credentials and credentials that employers value, that those individuals actually earn more—they have a higher salary. And WIOA does emphasize training that leads to recognized credentials, and not always postsecondary credentials or college credentials, but a variety of credentials that can help people advance their job, their careers, and their income. WIOA is organized into six core programs, including these four titles you see on your screen—the adult programs, the employment service, and the voc. rehab—and all of these programs offer some kind of learn and earn strategy. It's available across programs, whether we're talking about the SNAP E&T on the bottom line of your screen, which is the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Programs Employment and Training, out

of the Department of Agriculture, or the Title IV, the vocational rehabilitation, which each of your states has a vocational rehabilitation agency that can serve clients with disabilities. So the idea of learn and earn goes to the core of WIOA and is available in the programs that are listed and are part of the Act. And also it has an emphasis, as we've said on our previous webinars, that it has a focus on helping those with barriers to economic success. It is, as we've recognized in the last, uh, over a decade, from our experience under WIA, that, sometimes, people with the greatest needs did not get the services that they needed in order to succeed in the world of work. So WIOA is a little bit more explicit about serving people with significant barriers, and this should be reflected in your state's workforce plan, as well as in the activities of your local workforce board and local American Job Center or career center.

Another aspect under WIOA that's emphasized, and it relates to the earn and learn approach, and that's the concept of career pathways, meaning that it's a series of linked jobs within a particular sector or industry that people can advance in, based on experience within that type of work, as well as education and specialized training and other ways that influence their competencies in a particular field. So the idea of career pathways is kind of important, because a lot of our clients have had challenges to advance in a career. We have more, a disproportionate number of our clients are low-wage workers and have challenges to try to advance in a career pathway, so this focus that WIOA has on career pathways should be tapped to help our clients have a ramp—a way to earn more money and be able to contribute to their well-being, including their housing. So it encourages these American Job Centers, your local career center, or whatever your state calls your local career office. There are some 2,500 American Job Centers across the country, and one is assigned to every community. Some communities might be more rural, and so the accessibility may be challenging but, nonetheless, there is an assigned center to your area. So this career pathway idea is a concept that's going to be worked on as WIOA is implemented, and it's important that you have some knowledge, if you are working in a program under your CoC, or funded by your CoC, or you're part of the CoC, having some essential knowledge about pathways will be useful to you as you start to talk with your Workforce Investment Board or job centers. So this slide is a little bit difficult to read, possibly, but it's a visual just highlighting some of the key elements of a career pathway; that is, it taps different sources of training and education—that's the row of pinkish or rose-colored arrows that are pointing into the blue pathway. That pathway represents the growth in competencies over time that people would develop. And the green arrows are the credentials that get earned by participating in the training that they needed, and those purple boxes there are just representing the growth in different jobs, so the first box of purple is job 1, the next is the second job, the third job, and the fourth job that one might have over time. So it, conceptually, it may be a little bit challenging to grasp, but it's worth spending a little bit of time and looking at the details in this slide so you have some awareness of what the workforce system means by a "career pathway."

Earn and learn, as a strategy in the pathway, is really about providing an opportunity for individuals to get those competencies that they need and those skills and to also be paid while they're learning. I think that's a pretty straightforward concept. We have a tendency to make it more complicated as we develop programs that try to do that. Here are four examples of a learn and earn strategy that are designed into programs. I would expect that you've seen or heard all of these words previously; these are not brand new to you, but they may be new to you to conceptualize them as opportunities for our clients not only to get the skills that they need but to earn money as they're doing so. And some of these, or all of these, actually, can be created. They are not things that exist; they are strategies or approaches that exist, but the type of apprenticeship or the type of on-the-job training varies greatly. And there are opportunities to create new activities in one of these. For example, in my community here, one of our homeless agencies created an apprenticeship for construction laborers. It's a 4-week training, during which time people receive just slightly above minimum wage. They have a guaranteed job at the end of that apprenticeship, and, in fact, the employers in the Houston area were deeply involved in creating this

and have ownership of this apprenticeship. And that was just created this year, since January. So it can be done, and it's important to try to look for creating and crafting these earn and learn programs, tailoring it specifically to your clientele.

I just want to get you to understand that there are expanded opportunities under WIOA that you need to have *some* knowledge about. When you download these slides or look at them after today's webinar, you'll get a little more background on them, as I'm just going through these kind of quickly. But there are funds, for example, to support OJT, as well as paid work experiences for youth in addition to summer jobs programs. So there's a variety of funding for this. There also will be, in your states, a Governor's Discretionary Fund where, if your community is able to influence the governor's planning on his use or her use of the discretionary funds, there is opportunities for those resources to be used for homeless job-seeking clients. So I want to mention that and make sure you're aware of that. There is also a priority of service for high-need adults. So these things that I'm mentioning are improvements over the WIA program that we faced previously, where the homeless were included, but they were not a priority, per se. So there is more opportunity under this new program, under this new law, for our people to get the kind of education and jobs that they want and need to pursue.

So here are just some resources. If you're not terribly familiar with what some of the things that I'm talking about that are available, and some of these earn and learn opportunities, these resources should be helpful to you to, kind of, bone up on this. And I would urge you to talk with your workforce system about these.

So let's just stop right here for a second and check in on any questions that you have. Operator, are there any questions that have come up?

**Dawn:** If you would like to ask a question, please press \*1 on your telephone key pad. You will hear a tone acknowledging your request and prompt to record your name. We'll pause for just a moment.

**John Rio:** If you also have questions and don't want to ask them verbally, you can also use the Q&A box and type in a question.

**Dawn:** And there are no questions. I apologize, one moment. We have a question from the line of Michelle Caldwell.

**Michelle Caldwell:** I'm sorry, it wasn't a question. I must have misunderstood and thought I was supposed to say my name anyway, I apologize.

**John Rio:** Very well, Michelle, no problem. We thought that you might have had a question.

**Dawn:** And, again, if you have a question, press \*1.

**John Rio:** Okay. Alright, well, let's go to our poll question, if we can, before I introduce our speakers from Houston and Seattle. Sandy, can we roll out the second poll? And as we're doing that, this question is about your Continuum of Care coordinated entry system. Does your system currently assess employment needs at intake? So, if you would respond to that question, we would be grateful if you would. And as you're completing that, let me just make a few remarks before we have our speakers come onstage. Just want you to know that I think there's been a growing recognition, certainly in communities, that our clients need income or more income. And there's a growing recognition that employment, if support and services are available, people can go to work and will pursue and maintain employment, but to do so requires assessment and support and the services to make that happen.

So are we getting some answers in there, Sandy? So we're waiting for our poll to tally the results. We'll see in a minute.

You know, in order to make this coordinated entry work to include employment, it's going to be critical that you speak with your local workforce board about planning their involvement in providing services to our population. This is not something that you can just go and do on your own, but it's going to require collaboration.

So we see here, in raw numbers, we have 40 CoCs that have addressed employment early on, and 52 have not, and there's a large number of unanswered. And a few people who do not really know or are unsure. So it looks like less than half, easily, do not have employment. So let's see if the conversation we're going to have now, and for the rest of the call, will help inspire you and also provide you with some strategies to incorporate employment in the mix.

Today we're going to have two speakers—their lovely faces are posted there on the screen. We have Gary Grier, who is from Houston, Texas. Gary is serving as a project manager at the Coalition for the Homeless, where his work focuses on managing the Income Now initiative, including acting as the CoC SOAR local lead and coordinating access to housing and income with the workforce system. Gary has extensive experience managing and designing the SSVF in their community, in his community, as well as the rapid rehousing system expansion in the Houston–Harris County area. He also is very involved in the point-in-time count, the community needs assessment, as well as capacity building and training for program staff.

I want to also introduce at this moment, joining Gary, is Danielle Winslow. She hails from Seattle, Washington, where she works for the All Home initiative that focuses on family homelessness in King County. All Home is the CoC's Collaborative Applicant and is responsible for strategic planning to end homelessness in the county, and that also includes the city of Seattle. In addition to family homelessness work, Danielle is leading efforts with Building Changes, the Workforce Development Council in King County and the City of Seattle, as well as the United Way. So we have two experienced speakers and I'm going to turn this over to Gary. Gary, welcome.

**Gary Grier:** Good afternoon, and thank you, John, for that introduction. Also, thank you, Kevin and Kate, for inviting Houston to tell our story here. We're very excited. It's an exciting time for Houston, but also it's a very crucial time because we're deep into system change and discussing coordinated access to income and housing, which is what I'm going to discuss today. I would like to give a little bit of background information for my colleagues in the workforce system and CoC systems to understand how we got to a system change. So we're going to talk a little bit about what, you know, what system change looks like in Houston. Also, I'm very excited to hear Danielle in just a few minutes.

Before we started system change—we're in our fifth year of system change—we had a system that was not coordinated, as you can see from this slide. Our citizens who were experiencing homelessness or needed services had to go to many different programs or providers and fill out different intake forms at each one. And then, depending on what their eligibility was, they could or could not receive services. So it was really, you know, an effect of, who was the strongest at getting to the services, so it was very haphazard and didn't allow us to do the tracking that we would like to do for program measurement, particularly in line with the HEARTH Act.

So, in 2012, our community came together and did a very important planning process under something called the charrette, and one of the things was that we really, our community really wanted to increase political will, and then, you know, we discussed six issues that were action issues. There are multiple, tens of issues, that were vetted and that were offered and one that just did not make the top six was

our workforce development. So we started first with permanent supportive housing and then going into coordinated access, which went into implementation in 2014. So we're moving from, in silos, under the program-centered model, to a system which is client-centered and focused.

In the system change, one of the essential tasks was to identify who our leaders would be and how we would help different populations getting good data. So we definitely reviewed our point-in-time data and did our needs assessment and focused on action plan and solutions at the system level for, at the beginning, chronics and veterans, and then, of course, our turn, our focus is on family and youth and how to, you know, stabilize their housing situation. We have a CoC Steering Committee that provides governance and then there's different workgroups that are built into our system that report, essentially, to the CoC Steering Committee and to our community at large.

I work for the Coalition for the Homeless. We serve those who serve the homeless, so we're the lead agency for the CoC. And we've seen some progress since 2012, since we've had the charrette. We have seen a dramatic decrease in homelessness—over 50% at the 2016 PIT, which we've released at the end of last month. This slide indicates that we have housed over 3,348 veterans through 2015. And that number is over 4,000 now and it really is taking the community and changing it the way that we did services so that we were not competing, but working together in collaboration and having collective impact.

Of course, the advantages of having the system approach is that you have a proven track record in your CoC and we get to get great together. It's really finding out what our strengths are and working together as a collaborative to have a collective impact, and then we are data driven, so we're going to measure it all along the way. Of course there's going to be problems along the way and barriers, so we're constantly in refinement—looking at how we can continuously improve the quality of the service and the system design, and then the workgroups, the ongoing workgroups—many of them meet monthly. Our Income Now team, which is in implementation, meets weekly. We have a commitment from all of our team to meet weekly so that we can build this system, work through the barriers, and get it designed correctly.

So, the Income Now, which is—I'll talk in just a second about the different prongs of Income Now—is the last of—the most recent, I should say; it's certainly not going to be the last—the most recent of our massive project management that we're doing in systems change. So you can see that, on this slide, that it's not a stand-alone; the Income Now works together, obviously, with coordinated access, but also with our rapid rehousing expansion, the work with youth, and so on and so forth. The projects team meets weekly to make sure that everybody understands which way their project's going and how they can serve each other within the system.

The building of the system—we identified several things that needed to happen in order to get where we are today. Coordinated access to housing was extremely important. So, in 2014, after leveraging private and government dollars, we launched our coordinated access system and we phased in the permanent supportive housing and then, later, rapid rehousing, so we had a phased-in piece, and I'm going to talk a little bit more about coordinated access later, but that's an essential part to our Income Now program.

Then you'll see a new service delivery model has to do with using housing to work with systems of care and the health field and with criminal justice. Our rapid rehousing expansion, to make sure that we can prioritize and do assessments to maximize the outcomes for rapid rehousing. And then it was essential for us to increase the number of permanent supportive housing units, which, fortunately, we're well into that 2,500 goal—I think we are scheduled to meet that full goal.

So we're going to talk a little bit about coordinated access to housing and income and how the Income Now program works. As you can see, there are a variety of different points of entry in the homeless response system that are in the top of the funnel here. And in our coordinated access they can be directed to one of 12 hubs. We don't have one centralized intake; we have a hub system. And the hub system also includes outreach and a phone call-in. Now, the phone call-in isn't open up to the public at large; it is provided through a case management, referral system, so we don't want to try to supplant what's at 211 and look at populations that might need to, might need an intervention that is diversion or homeless prevention and not necessarily enter the homeless response system. Building out the coordinated access into our HMIS system—and we use ClientTrack here in Houston—was key. So we have an assessment that's been built in for housing to determine if they, a client, is appropriate for permanent supportive housing or rapid rehousing and, now, in 20 . . . , at the end of 2015, we've included our income assessment so that each person who comes through coordinated access, or each household, can be assessed not only just for their housing option, but for an income option, as well. So the next stage—at the assessment there will be a program matching in the algorithm that is in HMIS—it actually will show on HMIS where they're matched to, and then that generates a referral, and the referral then gets to an employment counselor or a housing case manager or a navigator and, in many cases, both. So they may be referred to a housing, a rapid rehousing case manager and start their housing search, but, at the same time, while they're in shelter, they would be referred to our employment counselor.

This is a little bit of what it looks like to do matching in our HMIS system. And we can track and review if there's mistakes along the way—if someone didn't meet the eligibility for a particular housing program or doesn't seem to be a fit with one of the interventions that we have for income, then we can go back and they can be rerouted through the system appropriately.

So, when it comes to the Income Now, we have developed three different interventions for developing income. And building on an employment first (as John mentioned earlier) earn while you learn and having income available, with the philosophy that homeless folks do want to work and can work. If the client comes through the assessment and, typically, if they're chronically homeless with a disabling condition and they're matched to a permanent supportive housing program, they would likely receive a referral to our Social Security Outreach and Access to Recovery caseworkers. We are in the process of building that capacity, but they would go to the SOAR and then work with our WIPA or SEWICS to transition to work once they've obtained benefits. If they have benefits but they have extreme barriers to work, or otherwise need greater assistance, we use—we would refer them to the supported employment model, the SAMHSA supported employment model, which we have not fully implemented that, and it's in the development of getting inventory and understanding that. What we have implemented is the public workforce system. It's been embedded in our homeless response system, and we have a very unique relationship in Houston with Income Now. We have five partner agencies, four of which are extremely experienced in service delivery for employment in the homeless response system: Career and Recovery, Search Homeless Services, SER Jobs for Progress, Houston Area Community Services. And there is a lot of other community partners, as you can imagine. And then our workforce solutions career office, our one-stop office, they are actually part of the Income Now—they're employment counselors working at what we call our satellite hubs at the mass shelter programs so that, if a client or a household was referred for rapid rehousing and they are at the Star of Hope women's and families shelter, while they're working on their housing crisis they can immediately start on their job development, job search, and hopefully obtain employment to secure and maintain their housing.

So, in order to organize this kind of massive program management, we have several workgroups in our Income Now design that meet to make sure that we stay on track and reach our goals. With regards to

the Implementation Team, you can see on the top right, this is the different partners that are weekly meeting to case conference and to work on maximizing and strategies to, hopefully, place our consumers into job . . . permanent placements and other development along the way. The philosophy here is how to get a job, keep a job, and get a better job. So earn while you learn, for example, is something that we've recently added. We were able to leverage some funds through our Texas workforce commission to provide a work experience, paid work experience for people experiencing homelessness that we're launching right now as we speak. In addition to that, going back to our desire to have political will and for there to be ongoing advocacy and support, we developed a leadership team, which has served a really strong purpose of making sure we have collaborative funding and that all the team works together, and then the systems of care can work together.

To give you a little bit of a progress update on our coordinated access points—so, we have a coordinated access team and a project manager that works very closely with our HMIS and now with Income Now, and so the assessment has been built into HMIS and incorporates a housing assessment, so it's a one type of assessment. They don't go through and do a paper assessment for housing and then a paper assessment for income. It's one assessment, online, in HMIS. Then the matching, as I alluded to earlier—typically, the families or households that are being placed or referred to rapid rehousing are key candidates for our mainstream, competitive employment—or what we're calling the public workforce system—whereas the permanent supportive housing would first work on obtaining benefits. If they already have income, then they're looking at transition to work and maximizing their opportunities to work through a supported employment program. The system referral for the public workforce system is to one of seven hubs, and we'll talk about that in a second. We're calling them satellite workforce offices, and they're embedded in the homeless response system, and it's a companion piece between a person, an employee of the traditional workforce system, will be staffing alongside with one of their colleagues who've traditionally come from the homeless response system. And then the SOAR program is wrapping up. We were able to leverage some SAMHSA SOAR technical assistance, and we are deep into our capacity-building plan there.

With regards to the SOAR update, we invested with and worked with our HUD technical assistance for the 12 cities, we were able to do some research around how much it would take to meet the need and we have come to the conclusion that we need six to ten additional, dedicated SOAR staff to process the clients who need income, who are disabled.

With the supported employment, we're still on, really, the stages of just doing inventory and doing the research around the capacity.

With the workforce system we have, about, a good 6 months here of experience, so, as I mentioned earlier, we had a Texas workforce commission grant that helped fund what we call the employment counselor positions, and we also have employment navigators who help, really, the overall system and all the partners become more proficient and culturally competent when dealing with homeless populations. There was a gaps analysis done in advance to determine what our key points would be. Then we focused, with our workgroups, through the capacity building and design, and we have our satellite offices at the essential mass shelter programs in the homeless response system in our region and in our CoC. So there's the women's and families shelter, there are two different men's shelters, and then the youth and young adult shelter, and then there are other coordinated access hubs, which they would, when the client comes through, or the customer or homeless person comes through, and gets a referral for housing, they can automatically be referred then to one of our, what we're calling our high-demand workforce solution offices, of which there are three, that we have staffed by our Income Now



folks. So they have a dedicated employment counselor, either at the shelter, if they're checked in, or at a workforce solutions office.

To just give a little bit of background of what the system goals are here, for the workforce system goals, is to implement strategies that assist individuals experiencing homelessness to secure income as quickly as possible. The earn while you learn, the work experience, understanding that if the client is being rapidly rehoused—and our goal is to house folks within 30 days of their homeless experience, which we all know is very difficult—how are they going to obtain income in order to support their housing? So we've built an embedded a public workforce system to assist the clients. The workforce system and the homeless response system have shared leadership on this, and we have the process of training and working with our community to do a culture shift to understand that the attitudes of assisting people experiencing homelessness, that they can work and that employment first is a goal.

In the workforce system we have navigators, employment counselors who administer support services, we utilize Motivational Interviewing, we have on the job training—and this, we have slightly, we can use on the job training but we have a strong line item now for work experience, the difference being in work experience it's paid work experience, but it's not necessarily subsidized by the employer and doesn't have a full commitment to placement in that job with that employer but can help them either be placed with that employer or with other employers in the industry. And then the culture shift training is the measurement that we have for all of our team at Income Now and then the other parts of the community. So we have a total of 14 employment counselors and three employment navigators in the Income Now system, but they have many partners and colleagues at the workforce solutions office or in the homeless response system. And we're really trying to permeate out into anyone who is working in, with homeless persons around employment. So it's a, we started with a baseline survey earlier, at the beginning of this year, and all along the way we're testing people's attitudes and how they believe and their beliefs about a homeless person's being able to sustain employment and increase their income.

When you're thinking about this project, of course you have to think about all the different activities and what's the best way to staff it. So this slide gives you a little idea of how we're staffing the program. Me, as the program manager, I get the electronic referral from HMIS, I get hundreds of them. And then I assign them out to our hubs based on where the client can best be served, so obviously if they're in the shelter they're going to be referred out to their shelter hub that's onsite so we can deliver services with that household while they're stably housed at the shelter. Or, also, it can be in one of our high-demand workforce offices. The system navigators, they are, we currently have three which work within the entire workforce system and will assist with connecting folks with employment, so they can reach outside of our hubs. If they're in the suburbs, for instance, we have career offices, and the training and implementation of the services that we deliver—the services package.

This gives you a little bit of a schematic, in the Houston area, of where our different satellite offices are. There are seven satellite offices, and then if you add on top of that, there would be an additional nine career offices that would extend beyond this area that our navigators would reach.

So to kind of sum up, we are focused on really measuring this culture shift and understanding if we're making a difference by doing coordinated access at the, for income and housing. And we've been working with the Heartland Alliance and their social impact research to measure that.

And then, here is my contact information. John, I'm available to accept questions now and pass that over to you.

**John Rio:** Great, Gary, thanks very, very much. If you get a chance to pass that green ball over, that'd be great. You did, thank you. So, any questions, Operator? Why don't you see if we have any questions from the audience?

**Dawn:** Again, if you have a question, please press \*1 at this time. We'll pause for just a moment.

**John Rio:** And in the meantime, let me pose a question, Gary, that came up from the question box. For clarification, I think it is, the questioner asks, "You housed 2,200 chronic people in 3 years. Is that correct?"

**Gary Grier:** Well, I think the slide that we had was 3,000. Oh, I mean, yes, that is correct. There were two data points—one about the number of chronic homeless individuals that have been housed and the other was number of veterans that have been housed.

**John Rio:** Okay. And they were also curious as to what your current chronic homeless count is, if you know that. Approximately.

**Gary Grier:** I know it's, we went from about 1,200 on the point-in-time count to under, I think it's close to 300 now, but I don't have that data right in front of me and I hate to speak that out loud.

**John Rio:** Okay. Sure, we really need to be careful about that when we're considering the numbers, so thanks for trying to recall that. We had a couple of questions, Gary, and I'll pose generally to you. People were concerned around transportation barriers as it relates to employment. Do you have transportation challenges in Houston and, if so, how did you address them?

**Gary Grier:** We do. We have extreme transportation challenges. In our service delivery package are metro passes and gas passes—and transportation system is extremely important. Even with the metro—our bus and mass transit system—there are some gaps in there, with regards to, particularly with suburbs, suburban areas. So it constantly is a challenge and we're looking at whatever strategies can happen. In most cases the client who has, is using mass transit, will receive ongoing support, free bus passes, metro passes, can use the rail or the bus system. If they have an automobile, they're, they can use gas cards when they're in job search and when they're in their initial placement before they've received enough income to be able to handle that on their own. We also, John, have built in an incentives package so that if they, a household, has obtained employment and they retain that employment for 30, 60, and 90 days, at each interval they're eligible for \$100 worth of incentives that come in a form of a gift card. So that's pure incentives for placement and retainage.

**John Rio:** Great, Gary, great. And transportation is not an uncommon problem, as is the other, another question that we had, Gary, if you want to take a quick shot at. How do you handle substance use issues and sobriety? Is sobriety a requirement for rapid rehousing employment track?

**Gary Grier:** No, sobriety is not a requirement; however, if someone's not able to pass a drug test, that can be an immediate barrier. And, also, if they're actively using it may affect their housing stability if they're staying at a shelter. They would not be able to stay there if they were unable to manage that. But as far as rapid rehousing, it's not a requirement to have sobriety.

**John Rio:** So, it's treated as an issue with the individual; it doesn't necessarily mean they're excluded from the program.

**Gary Grier:** Correct, in fact, they are not excluded from the program, specifically, we include all of the clients who are assessed through coordinated access and they will have an employment counselor and then, as one of the, you know, their being able to obtain treatment and being able to work, that is all

something the employment counselor will work and manage, help them manage their resources on the employment side.

**John Rio:** Okay, thanks, Gary. Operator, were there other questions that came up?

**Dawn:** We do have a question from the line of Zachary Branch.

**John Rio:** Zachary, hi there.

**Zachary Branch:** This was from, good afternoon, that was from an earlier session, there. I just wondered why we're going back to on the job training when back in the big cities, like New York, Texas, or California, we had this in the late '50s, '60, and '70s and then doing retirement for military people we had this on the job training and paying them along the way, when they got out of the military. It seems like there's a big push right now. Maybe 'cause we saw things that worked for a short time, then all of a sudden got away from it, and now we gotta go back to it.

**John Rio:** Yeah, you know, sometimes it's better the second time around. But on the job training has become or has a renewed interest because it can help people learn a job, as well as subsidizing some of the extra costs that are borne by an employer. So it's become more of a viable strategy and it's all about, you know, trying to get people into jobs that are going to lead somewhere. There's more emphasis on that and that's one thing that's a little different than years ago when we used OJT. It was used less for the idea of career pathways, which is more the emphasis today. But, you're right, it's coming back. Operator, any other questions?

**Dawn:** Yes, we do have a question from the line of Danny Marquez.

**John Rio:** Hi, Danny, what's on your mind?

**Danny Marquez:** Good morning or good afternoon. It actually could be a question for you and for, I think Greg, who just spoke. He mentioned about some activities toward a culture change. One of the things that we have a challenge with in California, is our traditional WIOA career center operators, you know, have this perception about homeless individuals and their ability and motivation to work. And to me, that's an education and training issue. What activities are going on that, maybe, you might have done and, maybe, that they're doing in Houston?

**Gary Grier:** John, I have a very on-point answer for that. In Houston, we have a ten-part series, this entire year, basically once a month, to really look at how that creates a barrier for homeless folks and work through that on a variety of different topics. So what are the strategies that can overcome and, really, get that buy-in that a homeless individual can work. And in addition to that training that's offered to our Income Now specialists and then our greater community partners, we are also very involved in our navigators, who work within the system to do regular training and work out, when a homeless person responds to the workforce system, how they can connect with some of the service packages that we have at Income Now.

**Danny Marquez:** Thank you.

**John Rio:** Does that work, Danny? Does that help you out a little bit?

**Danny Marquez:** Yes.

**John Rio:** Good. Well, the idea of training as part of the response, there was an earlier question that was essentially asking about, how well prepared is the public workforce system to serve people who've experienced homelessness or chronic homelessness and the questioner was suggesting, I think, that the

workforce staff in the American Job Centers are not that well prepared and, it's, I think, to what Gary was saying, is that training is appropriate in such situations where we have workers who know something about the content of employment services, but have not necessarily tailored those services to homeless job seekers. Training and coaching can be a useful strategy to help bring them on board. And we have to invest in those kinds of trainings because, not only do we need to help those staff be able to better serve our client, but, simply, we don't have enough resources in the homeless assistance system to do it all ourselves. So we're going to have to work through these challenges, we're going to have to work through these partnerships. And I think our next speaker, Danielle, is with us and I think she's going to talk about that very issue—about the connection, and the importance of that connection, with the public workforce system. So, with that, Gary, I thank you very much, and we'll entertain some more questions after we hear from Danielle. So, Danielle, I'm going to swing the ball over to you.

**Danielle Winslow:** Alright, great, well thank you very much. I want to just double check that everyone can hear me before I get started. Fantastic, and I have the power. All right. Good morning and good afternoon everyone, I'm over here on the Pacific coast, so it's still a.m. for us. Again, my name is Danielle Winslow. I work for All Home, which is situated in King County, which includes one of our more well-known cities, Seattle, as well. All Home is the CoC for homeless services here in the area, and some of you may recognize us more by our previous name that just changed back in October, the Committee to End Homelessness. So, for a number of reasons, that name was changed, but very much, in part, due to the end of the 10-year plan to end homelessness, so it kind of earmarked a new chapter, a new philosophy, of really incorporating this is not just a committee work, but, again, our community work and having to get everyone involved.

Alright, so I want to start off today, by just providing a little bit of information for those who aren't familiar with what's going on in the greater Seattle and King County area. So I'm not going to go through all of these infographics one by one, but I do want to kind of highlight a couple. Back in November, we had, we were one of the cities to declare a state of emergency on homelessness, and one of the reasons is, unlike the trend nationally, we are seeing an increase in homelessness in our area. At our last point-in-time count, we had over 10,600 folks experiencing homelessness, and that includes folks staying on the streets of Seattle and King County and shelter and transitional housing. Of that 10,600 plus, there were over 4,500 that were unsheltered in our point-in-time count that just happened in January. So, just wanting to kind of provide that context, and I think one of the big things that I always like to highlight, just, again, not unfamiliar with national trends, we have a very disproportionate number of people of color experiencing homelessness, particularly African Americans who are five times more likely than their white counterpart, and our Native American and Alaska Native are seven times more likely. So those things become exceptionally important, particularly when we look at housing, but not only housing, when we're talking about employment and we know that, you know, there's much research and many statistics out there that's about the additional barriers that people of color face when going for jobs and that sort of thing. Another thing I'd like to highlight, before moving on here, quickly, is just that, of the folks that are accessing services through our homeless information management system, 97% of them are reporting that their last stable housing was within Washington State and 87% from King County. I know that we've certainly gotten a lot of publicity that we're having a lot of people coming from different parts of the nation, and so our data is not showing that to be true. So just kind of wanted to mention that, as well, as kind of a little setter, a state setter, for what we're working with.

So, a few more things. I think—not surprising to many of you—we are just seeing a boom in our, not only our economy, but also the average cost of rents in the King County area. So we've seen, on average, an increase of \$100 per month over the past few years. And there have been studies to show that that can contribute to about a 15% increase in homelessness or, certainly, unstable housing for every \$100

increase. And so we're certainly seeing that, and that has high impacts on how we can utilize the private market and then, also, the inflow of people who are experiencing unstable housing. I mentioned that our, the number of our point-in-time count, so that was a 19% increase from our previous year. So we are, unfortunately, under the circumstances we are seeing more and more folks experiencing homelessness and that includes more families also experiencing homelessness. We did see a slight decrease and stabilization for youth and young adults from last year, but just kind of get an idea of what we are working with here.

Another thing that I think is important to mention before I dive into the real meat of connecting employment to coordinated entry, is that Seattle and King County—we're actually in a very unique position where it was helpful to, I think, see Gary's presentation and kind of, probably what we hope to see happening in the next year or so. We're a little behind in their trajectory of where they are in Houston, where we're really starting to make some dramatic changes to the way folks are entering coordinated entry, and not only that, but also the way that we connect employment and education opportunities to coordinated entry. So a lot of the things that I'm going to talk about today are, right now, really great ideas and I think things we've also learned from folks like, in Houston and other partners that we've been listening to nationally and some of the beginning pilot programs that we've tried out over the past couple of years, but, really, I think we're going to see some really dramatic changes in the next 6 to 9 months and really have a better idea of how this is all going to work and what kind of tweaks we need to make.

So a few changes that I think are really pertinent to talk about to coordinated entry is, just back in April, so not so long ago, we actually started with a new HMIS vendor, which has really changed the way that we're working with our data. It's a different platform; it's through Clarity by BitFocus, and that's really shifted the way that we can access data and collaborate. And then, also, another big change that is happening that we're right in the middle of launching is, starting on June 27, so that is just over a week away now, we are moving from having our family system and our youth system being separated in their coordinated entry and merging those together in Coordinated Entry for All. What that will also entail is bringing on the veterans one list and then also the single adults, starting to fold our single adult population into coordinated entry and access for homeless services, which has not been coordinated up until this point. So we are in a very mobile situation at this point in all of those different things, and we're taking the opportunity to fold in education and employment right at the beginning of coordinated entry for all populations, so it's kind of our standard moving forward. And so folks that are coming on, to take on that work, this is what they're learning and this is what they're learning as a set expectation. So it's not something that is newly being adopted. We did get to start a little bit with families, and I'll talk about that in a little bit, but that is kind of where we are with Coordinated Entry for All.

I also just wanted to make note that, you know, we see the increase in, in our diversion, rapid rehousing, and even shelter to housing investments, which really rely on the private market and often are short-term assistance and, again, will require that families or households are able to continue their permanent housing on their own and oftentimes that is around income and, of course, employment being a huge part of that. So it's just a lot of different pressures of why, you know, we're seeing employment as really gonna be a key, a key strategy in helping us in our homelessness crisis.

So, moving on, I kind of mentioned a few of these things why employment is important. So I mention again that I work for All Home, and All Home is the CoC and also kind of outlines the strategic plan for our work in making homelessness rare, brief, and one-time. And so, part of our brief and one-time, so our second goal there, is really to focus in on employment and education opportunities with still moving, you know, having a Housing First philosophy, so not saying people have to have the

employment or income in place, but recognizing that that can happen either before, simultaneously, or as a stabilizing force for when people do access permanent housing. So that is certainly something that we are committed to within our larger strategic plan and strategies in ending homelessness.

An example of things that actually went well and what is, kind of, continued this motivation of saying, you know, employment as a key initiative, for a 2-year period that ended at the beginning, or the end of this last year, we had the opportunity from Building Changes to have a systems innovation grant, and what that is is the opportunity to kind of explore different innovative solutions to ending homelessness, and this is specifically for families and they are often short-term, 2-year programs to kind of give us a sense of if this, does this work, what modifications might we need to make, or does it not and is it something not to pursue. And in this circumstance, we had employment navigators connected with our rapid rehousing family programs and saw a lot of success there. Rapid rehousing providers often acknowledge the fact that they are not necessarily the experts in employment services, nor, kind of, what to focus in on—they were really focused in on housing. But one of the big things that also came out of that was, particularly in our system—and I imagine that is maybe unique to Seattle and others that don't have resources immediately available when a family or a household indicates that they are experiencing homelessness, that they need to access services—is that rapid rehousing often wasn't something that happened right away upon experiencing homelessness. It was offered to people who had been experiencing homelessness who were in shelter for some time, and so by the time those employment navigators started working with someone, someone may have not been thinking about employment for a few months, if not many months at that point. And so we were starting to take away, and many times people giving the feedback of, if only we got started on this sooner. If this family or this household had gotten this employment support, maybe rapid rehousing would have even been more successful because they would have income, or employment, or they would have been preparing for that in a more rapid way. And so that was some of those indicators of, hey, we need to bring this up the river a little bit into when we have first contact with families and individuals who are saying, hey I need to access housing resources. Well, what about starting a conversation around employment, as well?

Another thing that I just want to mention is that we've heard, you know, anecdotally and then also with different surveys, that people want jobs. There are so many different times that we've heard from families with individuals and young people that they're saying, yeah, I'd really like to get a job, like, that is my goal, my goal is to get into my own space. I don't necessarily want to go into a program where I have to check in all the time or have a lot of that type of support—that's not necessarily what's needed for me and where I am. So, you know, one survey that we do every year is Count Us In, and that's a youth and young adult count, and one of the survey questions there is around, you know, would you, are you looking for a job or improving your current employment situation? And nearly 60% of those young people said yes. We don't have that same type of data for, not comprehensive like that, for families and single adults but, again, anecdotally and what people are hearing within their case management and, of course, those individual stabilization plans, many that involve gaining employment or better employment for their stabilization in their housing situation.

The other thing I want to mention is that diversion works. We've had a lot of success with, you know, capturing that momentum right at the beginning, and I actually should mention that, again, unlike many communities nationally, King County diversion is offered to families, currently, who have already been experiencing homelessness. I know for many folks it is the call that is right before experiencing homelessness and it's at that shelter door and it's not going through that shelter door. Just, again, given our, the number of people that are experiencing homelessness and the limited resources we have, we have decided to limit diversion access to folks that are experiencing literal homelessness to explore at any point while they are at any place unfit for human habitation or in shelter prior to being connected,

while they're waiting, essentially, for a longer housing opportunity through our coordinated entry system. So, again, diversion is something that many folks have tried and for those that had enrolled in the first year, nearly 60% of them had a successful outcome. So, again, it is a decision that the family makes for themselves as to whether or not that is an appropriate route to explore, but of those that do connect through diversion, in our first year, we saw that nearly 60% found a different place. Now, I think people might have questions about what is the, you know, the success of that over the long term and that is something that we are just now starting to see, so I don't have a lot of information around that, but that's another reason why we think focusing in on employment can really help solidify some of those diversion opportunities and exits.

Alright, another thing that is happening in Seattle, to create a little more context before I really jump in to what we are doing right now as it relates to coordinated entry—one of the other opportunities that we're really grateful for having is the Connections Project: Home & Work, and that is through Heartland Alliance. I know Gary mentioned that really briefly, as well, as Houston is also another participant in this work where we've been working with Heartland Alliance and they've been able to provide technical assistance, bringing folks like our cities together to talk about really connecting employment to coordinated entry and employment and homeless services and different facets that that is being interwoven. So we've taken that opportunity here in King County. So All Home has really worked closely with Building Changes, and they've really been, kind of, our key partner in our community to lead this effort, along with our workforce development council and along with, you know, our King County government, City of Seattle government, and United Way.

Some of our big funders of homeless employment services are getting together on a regular basis, along with some of our key homeless employment providers, as well, to make sure to have that provider perspective and experience as we're starting to move some of these three goals forward, the first being connecting employment at the beginning of coordinated entry, and I should say, employment and training and education opportunities, particularly when it comes to young people. And then also aligning funding—right now there has been a lot of great work that has been done in the past, but many times under many different funding sources with different expectations, with different, you know, learning objectives, or outcomes, or objectives, with different timelines. And what we're really trying to do is, how do we bring those with similar language so we're looking at similar evaluations and that we can have that be more seamless, you know, both to make it not only easier on the provider who's managing multiple contracts, but also for the folks that are experiencing homelessness and are interested in finding employment and education opportunities, that they're not having to kind of figure out, am I eligible for this or that or does it look a little different over here versus over there. So we're also engaging in that conversation as a funder group.

The last thing that we haven't gotten to yet, since our Home & Work project is for a 2-year period and we are just now coming to a close of the first year, but really what we're aiming to look at is creating, now, that connection to job pathways—really bringing in the business organizations so that when folks are working with our homeless employment partners, that they have connections already built in and built up and we can really strengthen that, just in the way that I imagine many of you are trying to do that with, you know, landlords and kind of that housing landlord market-type way, as well, to have it more readily available.

Alright, so, the thing that I wanted to really, kind of, dive into a little bit more is as it relates to connecting employment to coordinated entry. Now, as I mentioned, we are just now really starting to get into the meat of this. We had the opportunity to start this a little bit earlier with our families' programs because, as I had mentioned at the beginning of the presentation, our family housing families

were within family housing connection, our young people within youth housing connection, and they were separate coordinated entries. What we're moving to, at the end of this month, is to have coordinated entry for all, where those are no longer separated. But, in the interim, we had the opportunity to start this work. And so a big part of that was trying to say, what are we going to, you know, how are we going to frame this conversation? Is it more questions on top of an assessment and a diversion conversation that's already pretty lengthy? You know, is it appropriate to ask every single person? Every single family? How do you really modify that when a response takes you one way or the other? So we really took on the philosophy that we have a diversion, that it is more of a conversation, and not so much a, let's fill out this form. And so, as you can see, this is not a, you know, a place for you to kind of check boxes, it's more of this free-flowing form. And this is really a tool that we developed to help with the training for folks that are at coordinated entry who are doing the assessments. We recognize that they are not employment specialists, they are not experts in employment, nor do we want them to be. Nor do we want them to spend too much time on this because we want to get folks connected as quickly as possible to those that are more specialized in understanding the different needs of people experiencing homelessness who are seeking jobs. So, what this is supposed to do, is to quickly identify, do you have earned income? If not, what other types of incomes might you have? And that could lead down different types of pathways and different conversations.

But, really, starting very broadly: would you like to explore a way to increase your income? If folks are not ready for this at this time, then we're not going to push this; however, we are integrating this in many, many of our conversations, so any time someone comes back to coordinated entry, perhaps to check the status of their housing situation, they update something, we're going to get engaged with this again, just as we would do with our diversion conversation. And so, you know, bringing this up in many different places, also having our shelter staff and other folks who are doing case management be, you know, thinking and starting to shift their mind to also thinking about what kind of employment and education opportunities could possibly arise. So, again, it's going to be, you know, chosen based off of, you know, client choice and whether or not they want to participate, whether this is something they can focus in on their time or interest in at this point. So after that first question of would you like to increase your income, if we say yes, then we'll say, do you think employment or, you know, training can help you increase your income? If that's the case, then let's go down some of these other routes that we have in the community around employment and education. If not, we want to go ahead and shoot someone off to say, okay, well let's, if that's not the way to increase income, what kind of, you know, are you eligible for SSI, SSDI, maybe basic food and go down, potentially, other benefits route. But if they do want to go into connecting with someone around education or employment, our biggest thing there is really finding out, you know, what are your largest barriers to education or training opportunities. And that's where we get into our different pathways here at the end. And we wanted to try to keep them very fluid, so while, the reason we have these pathways—Pathway A: light service requirements and Pathway B: Medium service requirements—the biggest thing that we have to differentiate these two is that we know that, in our community, we could not possibly serve everyone, if they said yes, with our homeless employment services.

**John Rio:** Danielle?

**Danielle Winslow:** I see we're running low on time.

**John Rio:** Yeah, we're running low on time, but I wanted to get in a question we have. What are the timeline targets for getting employment for someone who is unemployed who might come into the system? What would you guess around from initial, early contact to when they might actually get employment?



**Danielle Winslow:** Sure. Yeah, and so, when we're talking, so if someone comes into coordinated entry and they say, we need, I need housing and then we engage in this employment conversation, if they say that they're interested in that, they would get referred immediately to employment, whether it's a navigator to help them or if it's directly to WorkSource, and we've also been working with WorkSource, and WorkSource is our one-stop with workforce development, on expecting these folks. So we know that referrals, cold referrals in the past just don't work—go to this door and that sort of thing. So we've been working with folks that are already set up within the workforce development, or WorkSource site, to say...

**John Rio:** So would you think that it would take like 10 days to get to the service?

**Danielle Winslow:** You know, I don't even think it needs to take that long. It doesn't, if everyone connected quickly, I mean, it could be within 24 hours, essentially. And we're actually, as we go to a regional assessment spots, we are aiming to have folks be onsite, so it could even be that same day.

**John Rio:** Could be pretty quick, then. Okay, well, I, you know, great presentation, we're going to have to wrap up, and I appreciate your sharing the information about Seattle and the efforts to incorporate the employment into your coordinated entry. We do have some additional questions, but our time is running out, so what we will do is provide answers to those questions and include them in a posting with the, with the YouTube version of this webinar so you will be able to get the answers. And we appreciate you asking them. Kevin, are you with us? Would you like to make any closing remarks as we wrap up today?

**Kevin Kissing:** Sure. Just in 5 seconds, I'd like to thank our panelists for sharing this knowledge; it's really helpful to both HUD as we get out the word on coordinated entry and employment, and then also to our federal partners. And I also want to thank the panelists for bearing with us on the questions, and we will post any questions and answers we provide that we didn't have time for. So, thank you, everyone.

**John Rio:** Very good, Kevin. And, likewise, we want to thank everyone for coming today, and we will be having another webinar in August, and we invite you to that webinar, and if you go to the next in the series here is on the 18th of August. Thanks for doing that, Sandy. And we hope to see you there where we'll be talking a little bit more about the system performance measurement and income maximization—ways of measuring employment in a systemic approach. So we look forward to seeing you then. Thank you all, and have a pleasant evening.

**Sandy:** Thank you for participating in today's conference call. You may disconnect at this time.

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