

# Boston Career Centers Disability Employment Services Programs



## First Quarter Report FY 2008

- ✚ Unlimited Potential (UP)
- ✚ Employment Connections
- ✚ HomeWork Project
- ✚ Disability Program Navigator
- ✚ Project T.E.A.M.
- ✚ Year 13 – Pathways to MCAS Success
- ✚ Women Offender Reentry Collaborative

Programs operated by the Boston One Stop Career Centers for Persons with Disabilities:

- Boston Career Link, 1010 Harrison Avenue, Boston, MA 02119
- JobNet, 210 South Street, Boston, MA 02111
- The Work Place, 29 Winter Street, MA 02108

## Introduction

The Boston One Stop Career Centers operate several programs to assist individuals with disabilities to secure employment and/or housing. Through a variety of partnerships the Career Centers in Boston are responsible for delivery of employment services through several programs including:

- Unlimited Potential (UP)
- The Employment Connections Program
- The HomeWork Project
- The Disability Program Navigator Program, and
- Project T.E.A.M.
- Year 13-Pathways to MCAS Success
- Women Offender Reentry Collaborative (WORC)

JobNet's Vocational Rehabilitation staff also provides employment services to individuals who are visually impaired either directly referred to the career center from the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind (MCB), or come into the center requesting assistance.

The Boston Career Centers provide enhanced job placement services to persons with psychiatric disabilities, persons who are chronically homeless, visually impaired, physically disabled, economically disadvantaged, etc, and who struggle under the stigma of these disabilities. Access to services at a career center helps to reduce that stigma, enables these individuals to interact in a mainstream environment, and enhances their prospects to become productive members of our society.



## BOSTON CAREER LINK

Boston Career Link in partnership with Morgan Memorial Goodwill Industries (Goodwill), provides targeted populations – including those with identified disabilities – with independence and dignity through workforce solutions. As a career center, Boston Career Link (BCL) provides job placement and development services with respect to the types of workplace accommodation needed for success in the workplace, and uses its Career Literacy Workshop Series to ensure that customers are aware of EEOC rights and responsibilities. If a disability proves to be a barrier to employment or career success, Goodwill's Employment & Career Services (ECS) Team facilitates on-site workforce-related education; training and work-experience services. ECS programs provide training and support services developed around an individual's skill level, life situation and career aspirations. Job training programs are also designed to meet the needs of various industry sectors, including retail, hospitality and tourism and general business.

Employment programs through the Goodwill partnership facilitate three key pathway options:

- Individuals with developmental and other disabilities who require structured supports to work typically are trained and work at Goodwill. Over time, many transition to work in the community.

- Individuals with limited or no work history, low educational attainment and/or language barriers typically complete a work-readiness program as the first step to entering the workforce.
- Individuals with some work experience often enroll in programs that provide them with the basic financial, literacy and computer skills needed for entry-level administrative jobs.

Once customers enter the workforce, Goodwill provides ongoing support to help them keep their jobs and advance in them.

## **MICROSOFT UNLIMITED POTENTIAL (UP)**

### **Overview**

Microsoft's Unlimited Potential (UP) Community Learning curriculum was designed to provide a foundation for teaching basic to intermediate technology skills in a community-based hands-on manner. UP is funded through an partnership between the Microsoft Corp. and the Boston Private Industry Council.

UP is part of Microsoft's effort to promote digital inclusion worldwide and to bring the benefits of technology and technology skills to one quarter of a billion people by 2010. This includes helping individuals gain critical 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce skills needed for today's "knowledge economy" and to broaden digital inclusion. Lessons can be formally instructed, or delivered as part of a self-paced learning program, and focus on real-world skill development in the areas of:

- Beginning information, technology, and computer literacy
- Information and communications technologies
- Workforce development and preliminary technical certification preparation

### **UP Award & Services**

**\$30,000** cost-reimbursement grant sub-contracted through Boston PIC for services in CY07 (1/01/07-12/31/07).

Curriculum is facilitated on-site, in groups, designed to highlight:

- Computer Fundamentals
- Internet and World Wide Web Fundamentals
- Word Processing Fundamentals
- Presentation Fundamentals

### **UP Goals & Performance:**

<b>Goal</b>	<b>Anticipated Outcomes (@12mos)</b>	<b>Target Outcome to-Date (@ 6mos)</b>	<b>Actual Outcome to-Date (@ 6mos)</b>
1. Outreach & Assessment of youth; enrollment in BCL;	100 youth	50 youth	200 youth
2. Enrollment in the UP curriculum;	25 youth (25% of recruits)	13 youth	14 Youth
3. Graduates from UP curriculum;	20 youth (80% of enrollees)	10 youth	7 youth
4. Entered Employment w/ improved information	15 youth (75% of enrollees)	8 youth	12 youth

Goal	Anticipated Outcomes (@ 12mos)	Target Outcome to-Date (@ 6mos)	Actual Outcome to-Date (@ 6mos)
technology skills;			
5. Measured increase in both the quality and quantity of computer skills;	75%+ score on Proficiency Test		7 youth
6. Observe greater proficiency with the process of job search;			
7. Witness improved investment and career exploration among youth participants.			

Software is also used in BCL's Job Club curriculum for adult self-paced study, and to assess adult members for referral to Microsoft II / Computer Training for Employment (CTE) program.

### UP Implementation Observations

- **Challenges**
  - Sensory overload. Many of the students are being exposed to software that is far beyond their recent experience. With lesson plans, interactive screens and online audio, the coursework regularly needs to be offered in “bite-size” intervals, allowing students to review, absorb and understand how to interact with the manual, direct support and a computer at the same time. Parts of the lesson are reviewed in smaller parts for participants to follow more easily.
- **Effective Practices**
  - “Beginning at the End.” By focusing on the End-Projects on individual student interests, we reinforce the lessons and stimulate richer interactions.
  - The Evaluation establishes a baseline based on individual abilities as opposed to a common standard, and the End-Project then allows us to observe how much each participant develops from their baseline.
- **Lessons Learned**
  - The typing program is an extremely necessary complement to MUP. Many times, the absence of basic typing skills keep participants from keeping pace their written lesson plans.

### Recommendations / Next Steps:

- **Expand Goodwill's role beyond the Community Learning Curriculum as a Community Technology Center**  
 Microsoft's Community Technology Skills services through the Timothy Smith Network; Unlimited Potential/Youth and CTE-Computer Training for Employment/Adults all fall under UP's Computer Technology Center grants and services. These services also include:
  - *Microsoft Authorized Refurbisher (MAR) Donation Program*  
 MAR works with U.S.-based nonprofit computer refurbishers that recycle donated computers for nonprofits and K-12 schools. Microsoft donates media, certificates of authenticity, and end-user license agreements through the MAR program. Goodwill could partner with this program to refurbish donated equipment for organizational use, as well as donations to eligible individuals and families.

- **Integrate a Microsoft Innovation Center into Boston Career Link or an organizational Youth Opportunity Center**

Microsoft Innovation Centers provide the local community a comprehensive set of programs and services to expand workforce skills, create jobs, strengthen innovation and improve competitiveness. These centers offer software development assistance, business skills training, and employment programs for students, and market incubation via the local start-up community. [Learn more.](#)



## JOBNET CAREER CENTER

JobNet One Stop Career Center, in conjunction with multiple partners, operates several programs designed to assist individuals with disabilities to secure employment and/or housing. The JobNet Disability Employment Services Unit is responsible for delivery of employment services through several programs including:

- **The Employment Connections Program** - in partnership with the Department of Mental Health
- **The HomeWork Project** - in partnership with the Boston Private Industry Council and 14 other community-based organizations, and
- **The Disability Program Navigator Program** – a part of a state-wide, federally funded grant

In addition JobNet's Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors also provide employment services to individuals who are visually impaired either directly referred to the career center from the Massachusetts Commission on the Blind (MCB), or who come into the center requesting assistance.

For FY 2008, JobNet continues to provide enhanced job placement services to persons with psychiatric disabilities, who are chronically homeless, visually impaired, physically disabled, etc, and who struggle under the stigma of these disabilities. Access to services at a career center helps to reduce that stigma, enables these individuals to interact in a mainstream environment, and enhances their prospects to become productive members of our society.

### Program Highlights

- Thirty-four **Employment Connections** program participants were working at the end of the first quarter for FY 2008 with an average wage of \$13.60, range \$7.50 to \$49.00 per hour.
- Forty-four individuals are currently utilizing services of **HomeWork Project**, Sixty-four have used services (since the inception of the project), thirty-eight individuals have been housed, and twenty-one program participants were working in unsubsidized employment at the end of the first quarter 2008.
- Department of Neighborhood Development has awarded the **HomeWork Project** a total of 41 Shelter-Plus-Care Certificates (or housing vouchers). The original grant

was for 20 Shelter-Plus-Care Certificates and an additional twenty-one have been added.

**EMPLOYMENT CONNECTIONS**



**Employment Connections**, a unique partnership between the Division of Career Services (DCS) and the Department of Mental Health (DMH). This program was created to provide employment services to individuals with psychiatric disabilities who are consumers of the DMH system and are currently or were previously homeless. The design of the **Employment Connections** program is to assist this population to secure and retain full and/or part-time competitive employment.

**Program Statistics and Outcomes**

**Referrals**

**Employment Connections** provided services to 56 consumers of the Metro Boston Service Area of DMH between July 1, 2007 and September 30, 2007. Five of the program participants were newly accepted into the program during the first quarter FY 2008.

**New Program Participants for First Quarter FY 2008: 5**

Bay Cove	Cambridge/Somerville	Fuller	Lindemann	Mass Mental
0	2	0	0	3

**All active Employment Connections Program participants at the end of first quarter FY 2008: 56**

Bay Cove	Cambridge/Somerville	Fuller	Lindemann	Mass Mental
4	16	8	8	20

**New Referrals for FY 2006 – 2008**

FY 2006	FY 2007	FY 2008
9	2	5

**Active Program Participants for FY 2005 - 2008**

FY 2006	FY 2007	FY 2008
63	56	56

**Employment Outcomes**

FY 2008 continued to be strong for the **Employment Connections** program with 34 program participants successfully working at the end of first quarter FY 2008 and 43 individuals where employed at some time during the quarter.

The program participants were assisted to secure new jobs or were provided support to stay on previously secured employment. The wages of working program participants range from \$7.50 per hour to \$36.75 with an average hourly wage of \$13.60.

**Employment Connections** continues to be very successful assisting individuals secure and keep competitive employment. For first quarter FY 2008, it took the program participants an average 9 weeks to secure a job with a range of 0 weeks to 78 weeks. In keeping competitive employment, the **Employment Connections program participants kept their jobs, on average, for 22 months.** Reasons that individuals lose their jobs are due to company lay-off, the economy and not due to their psychiatric symptoms.

**Employment Connections program participants who were working at end of first quarter**

**FY 2008: 34**

Bay Cove	Cambridge/Somerville	Fuller	Lindemann	Mass Mental
4	11	4	5	10

**Number of program participants who were working at the end of First Quarter  
FY 2006-2008:**

FY 2006	FY 2007	FY 2008
32	36	34

**Wages for First Quarter FY 2005- FY 2007**

	Average Wage	Range of Wages
FY 2008	\$13.60	\$7.50 to \$49.00
FY 2007	\$12.47	\$6.75 to \$36.50
FY 2006	\$11.91	\$6.75 to \$38.50

During of FY 2007, **Employment Connections** assisted program participants to secure employment in the following occupations: Usher, teacher, housekeeper in a hotel, proof reader, cashier, administrative assistant, hostess, residential counselor, etc.. Previously assisted program participants continue to be employed as a veterinary assistant, home health aide, library assistant, security guard, chef, retail sales, peer counselor, etc.

**Program Participant Success Stories**

**SUZANNE- Employment Connections** Counselor, Sharon Tulchinsky, (Program Director)

Suzanne was referred to the **Employment Connections** program in April of 2007 by Marie Teixeira, case manager from the Fuller Mental Health Center. Suzanne’s work history consisted of tutoring, security guard, bank teller and office work. Some of Suzanne’s barriers to employment included being out of work for over three years, rusty computer skills and a medical regiment where by Suzanne only felt comfortable working 3 days a week. Suzanne and Sharon began to meet weekly for job search and Suzanne attended some of the computer work shops at JobNet to brush up on her computer skills. In addition, Suzanne reported that she had gained weight and did not have any interview

clothes to wear. Sharon referred Suzanne to Dress for Success where Suzanne was provided with a suit, shoes, a scarf and a new purse for job interviews.

After applying to many jobs and attending several interviews, Suzanne secured a job at BayCove Human Services – Center Club as a club house worker. Suzanne began her employment on September 4, 2007 where she earns \$11.00 per hour. Job duties include typing newsletters, helping club members with typing skills and job search and running groups. Suzanne reports that she is very happy with her new job and is very thankful for the assistance from the **Employment Connections** program. Sharon continues to provide post placement support.



## HOMEWORK PROJECT

The **HomeWork Project** is a demonstration grant funded jointly by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and is one of five national projects funded to provide housing.

To participate in this exciting demonstration grant, the individual must be chronically homeless, with a disability and be unemployed. Additional criteria include the participant's acceptance of support services in both housing and employment and a willingness to return to the world of work and to work with one of the employment partnering agencies.

Originally, the project is designed to house and employ twenty individuals and to assist an additional twenty individuals to secure employment. However the project has been expanded to provide housing to forty one individuals.

### Program Statistics and Outcomes

From July 1, 2007 to September 30, 2008, the **HomeWork Project** has enrolled four new individuals. As of the end of the first quarter of FY 2008, 29 individuals have been housed using the Shelter-Plus-Care Certificate, 7 additional individuals are in the process of being housed and an 9 individuals have also been housed on their own. Currently, 44 of the program participants are actively receiving services, in either the housing & employment track or in the employment only track.

DMH Housing and Employment	ABCD Housing and Employment	JRI-ALP Housing and Employment	Employment Only
19	9	7	9

A major component of the project is *employment*. At the end of the first quarter FY 2008, 21 individuals in the project were working in competitive employment. The average wage is \$10.32 with a range of \$7.50 to \$14.16. Additionally, thirteen of the individuals are working in competitive employment are working thirty hours or more. Some of the jobs held include cook, file clerk, janitorial, delivery, candle dipper, baker and working in the audio visual department of a hospital.

### JOHN

John was referred to the **HomeWork** project by Project Place in March of 2005. Prior to referral to the project, John was very successful at the Project Pepsi training program at

Project Place but had some issues with substance abuse and dropped out of the program. However, Project Place agreed to take him back and he returned to working with Project Pepsi.

John worked at Project Pepsi as a driver from March 2005 to June 2005 and from December 2005 to March 2006. John employment was on hiatus from June to December 2005 due his participation in substance abuse treatment. In March 2006, John secured a full time job as a delivery driver for Edible Arrangements earning \$10.00. As of the date of this report, John continues to work successfully as a driver for Edible Arrangements, has earned several raises and is currently earning \$14.50 per hour. John is provided post employment support by Project Place.

**Housing:**

At the time of referral to the **HomeWork** project, John was living at the Holy Family Shelter and had been residing there since February of 2004. Once John was accepted to the project he began to work with Mary Powell of ABCD to secure housing. John signed a lease on May 5, 2005 and moved into his own apartment on May 5, 2005 in Brookline, MA. John and Mary Powell worked together to furnish his apartment and budget his money.

Unfortunately, in August 2005, it was determined that John would have to move out of the Brookline Apartment as it was not in Boston proper. Initial housing guidelines of the project required the individual to live in Boston proper. He signed a second lease in September 2005 and moved into the new apartment in Boston.

In October of 2005, after living at his new apartment for two weeks, John began to drink at night, began cause disturbances in the new building and was asked to leave the apartment. However, as one of the HomeWork project partners is a substance abuse treatment program, John was assisted to get into treatment and his housing voucher was frozen pending discharge. After successfully completing substance abuse treatment, John was assisted to secure a new apartment and he moved in on May 9, 2006. John likes his new apartment and with the support of Mary Powell has been successful in maintaining his residence, sobriety and employment.

**DISABILITY PROGRAM NAVIGATOR**



The **Disability Program Navigator** (DPN) program is a partnership between the Department of Labor (DOL) and the Social Security Administration (SSA) and has been designed to better inform individuals with disabilities about programs and services that are offered at the One-Stop Career Centers and the community as they look to return to work. The Navigator is responsible for assisting the individual to access services and “navigate” the workforce development system. Other duties include developing linkages between agencies that provide services and employers to enhance job placement success.

The Disability Employment Staff at JobNet have been designated to perform the DPN function for the Boston Region and have begun interacting on a weekly basis at each of the Boston Career Centers, The Boston Career Link and The Work Place Career Center to provide support to the career center staff and to meet individually with persons with disabilities who are in need of assistance.

For the second quarter FY 2008, the DPN staff is excited to announce that the Disability Law Center will be providing training to customers from the career centers titled, "Self Help in the Work." This training is designed assist an individual to understand their rights under the American's with Disabilities Act (ADA), how to request an accommodation with a new or current employer and when to disclose their disability to their employer. The initial training will be held at JobNet but will also be held at the other two career centers.

In addition, the DPNs will be participating in the **Boston Disability Advisory Committee**. This group meets quarterly to create a dialogue/education between the Career Centers, state agencies and private non-profits agencies that serve people with various types of disabilities. Current participants include Mass Rehabilitation Commission (MRC), Department of Mental Health (DMH), Department of Mental Retardation (DMR), Jewish Vocational Services, the Boston Center for Independent Living, and other Rehabilitation Community service providers.



## THE WORK PLACE

The Work Place is dedicated to fostering economic growth and development in the City of Boston by developing high quality workforce development services to job seekers and employers. They operate a number of special programs that target such populations such as young adults, ex-offenders and homeless individuals through The Project T.E.A.M Program.

### PROJECT T.E.A.M.

This is a program that is housed at The Work Place Career Center. This project is a partnership between the Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance, the Boston Mayor's Office of Jobs and Community Services, Community Work Services, and Impact Employment Services. This program is designed to serve individuals who are homeless and are either receiving food stamps or are eligible for the food stamp program to stabilize housing and to secure employment through provision of employment and job readiness services.

Services that are provided include

- One on one case management
- Housing assistance
- Food stamps
- Substance abuse counseling
- Vocational exploration
- Employment Assistance
- Transportation assistance related to employment only
- Interview attire assistance
- Job searching techniques

During the past year Project Team has serviced over 113 homeless individuals. Sixty Two customers became employed and of those employed, 51 retained their employment. In addition, nineteen customers were enrolled into skills training. This is a 55% placement rate with a 82% retention of those employed.

### **Year 13 – Pathways to MCAS Success.**

The Work Place engages youth through two unique programs. Year 13, Pathways to MCAS Success, targets youth who are still connected to school but who have not yet passed the MCAS test or those who are struggling to do so. This program provides services both in the schools and at TWP. Youth is assisted with support services, referral to remedial assistance to master MCAS subjects as well as career counseling and assistance with part time/summer job placement.

Pathways to Success by 21 provides youth who have dropped out of school with assistance in career exploration, counseling and both educational and support services referrals. Although we are not able to clinically assess our customer's learning disabilities in the youth programs, the students that come in seeking services that demonstrate lower level learning skills are referred to the appropriate agencies for assessment and services. It is through our relationship with Boston district schools that we are able to target the needs of individual students that have struggled in the past, and help them achieve a successful future.

### **Women Offender Reentry Collaborative**

The Women Offender Reentry Collaborative at The Work Place works with ex offender women who have been recently released from incarceration. The WORC program serves a large population of self identified women who are recovering from substance abuse, have been diagnosed with a learning disability or a mental or emotional disorder. The WORC program offers individualized counseling services through their clinician. The WORC program works collaboratively with MRC and DMH in appropriately referring customers to additional services.