

# Considering Strategies to Integrate Vocational and Employment Services in HIV/AIDS Programs

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# How to Begin?: Federal/State Resources

1. Begin learning about the primary federal systems of employment and vocational rehabilitation services which can be utilized (and maximized) by people living with HIV/AIDS considering employment:
  - State/Federal Vocational Rehabilitation (Dept. of Ed/RSA)
  - Workforce Development/One Stop Career Centers (Dept. of Labor)
  - Ticket to Work (SSA)

# How to Begin?: Local Resources

2. Explore local and national models of community-based employment and vocational rehabilitation service programs:
  - Local Workforce Investment Board
  - Local District Office of State Vocational Rehabilitation Program

Seek out lists of the local community-based agencies contracted to provide employment and vocational rehabilitation services to these two systems.

# Partnerships and Collaborations

Agencies in your community may already have expertise and experience providing effective services that may be applicable to your client population's needs and interests.

**GET WITH THEM!**

Partner with them for mentoring of your program development, or their direct provision of the employment services needed in your program.

# City and County Economic Development

- Meet with representatives of your city and county economic development agencies.
- Request information and advice about existing services and funding streams for partnership with and development of new employment initiatives.
- Be prepared to present information about the unique issues, challenges and needs of people living with HIV/AIDS, including stigma, discrimination and fears related to disclosure.

# Add Pre-Vocational and Vocational Components to Your Existing Programs

Some examples:

- Computer access and training
- Volunteer and Internship Opportunities
  - Structured, including training, supervision and evaluation
- Provide work opportunities to consumers
  - Supplemental work (short and long term)
  - PT and FT jobs
  - Peer advocate positions

# Integrate Employment Needs Assessment into HIV Client Services

- Develop case management and/or client advocacy standards of care which incorporate ongoing assessments related to client need, interest, and ability to enter/re-enter the workforce.
- Provide training for case managers and peer advocates to increase understanding of basic vocational rehabilitation concepts and familiarity with community services and resources to address client needs.
- Provide meeting and training opportunities for HIV client services staff in conjunction with vocational rehabilitation and workforce development professionals so that they develop strategies to work together for the benefit of PLHA.

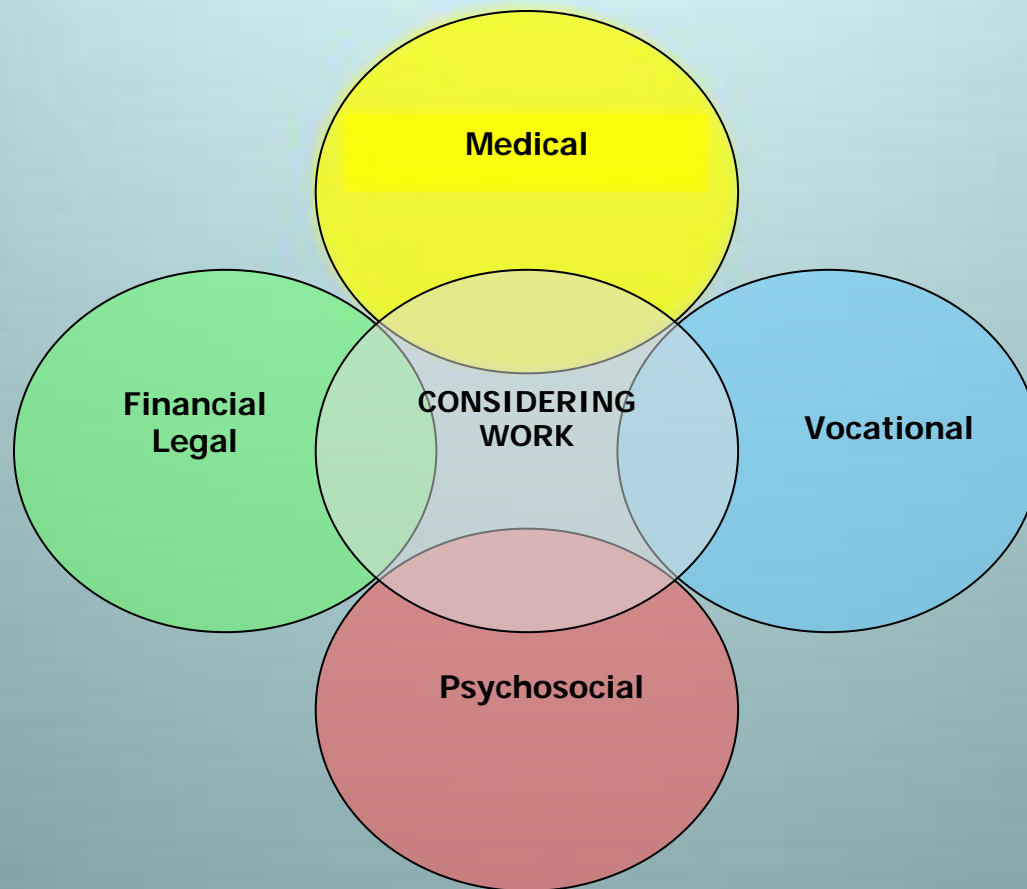
# Roles for Counselors and Peer Advocates

Support PLHA in making well-informed decisions about employment with educating, counseling or resource referrals in four domains:

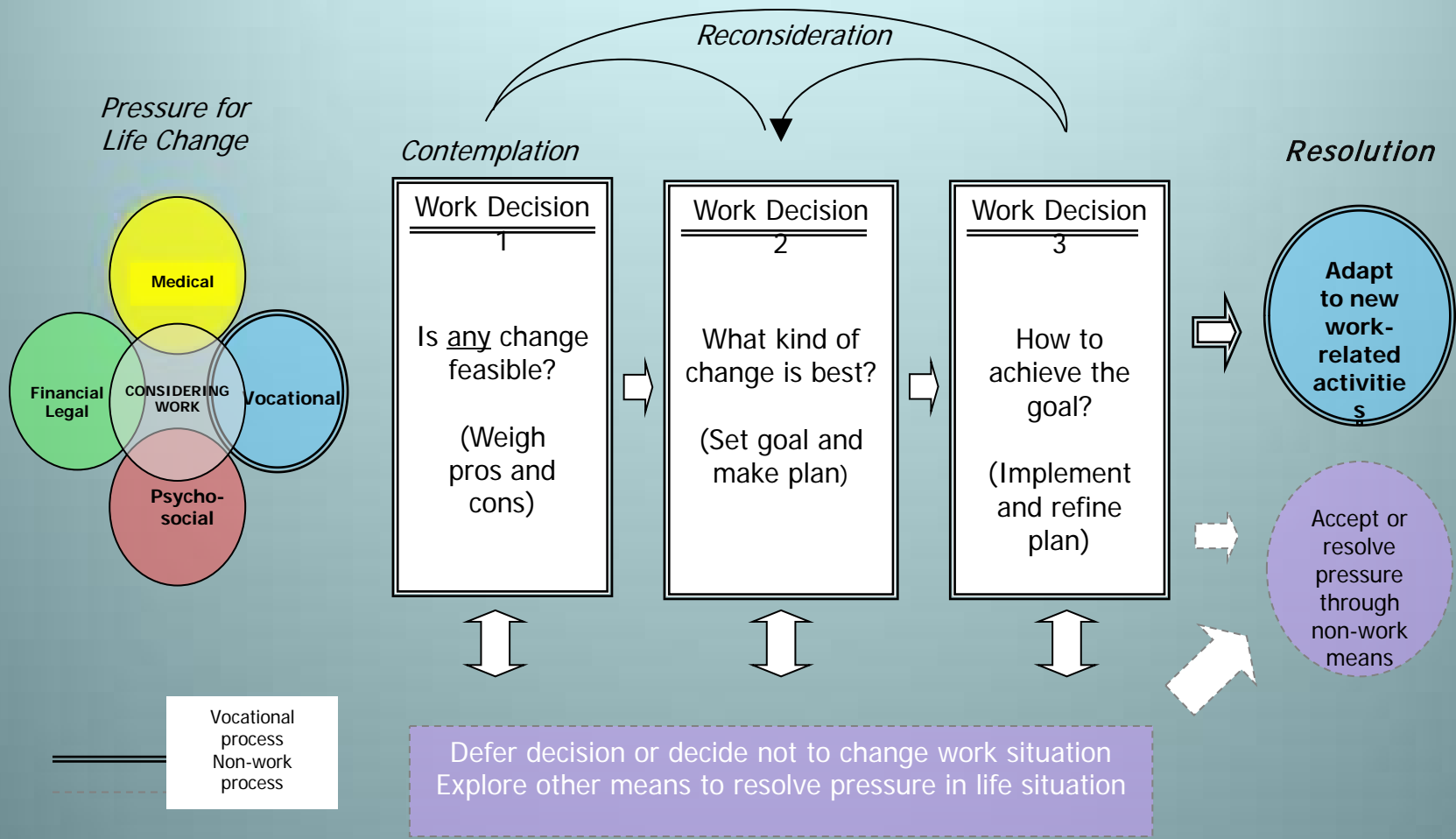
- medical
- financial/legal
- psychosocial
- vocational

# Four Domains of Influence

Can act as motivators or barriers:



# The Considering Work Model: The Stages of Change are Non-linear





# Facilitate Well-Informed Decisions

<u>Phase</u>	<u>Decisions/Activities</u>
1. Contemplation	Is any change feasible?
2. Preparation	What kind of change is best?
3. Action	How do I achieve the goal?
4: Resolution	Has pressure to change resolved?

# State Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Programs

- Provides help with job searching (direct services and other resources including clothing, transportation, supplies, tools, etc.)
- Can provide funds for job specific training or education
- Can provide resources for/access to assistive technology
- VR subcontracts with other agencies to provide services to specialized populations (e.g. Mental Health, HIV/AIDS)

# Understand and Facilitate Access to VR

- Develop liaison with VR to bridge service delivery
- Know VR system and eligibility requirements
- All individuals receiving SSDI or SSI are presumed to be eligible for VR services. It is not necessary to be receiving SSDI or SSI to be determined eligible for VR services
- VR eligibility is based on interference with ability to work (or maintain employment) because of physical, mental or emotional disability
- In some state VR agencies, eligibility language may also include learning disability, or history of substance abuse

# One-Stop Career Centers (WIA )

- Do not have to disclose HIV status or have a disability
- Largely funded by the US Dept. of Labor – authorized in a law called the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA). It replaced the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA)
- Nation-wide system developed to bring together local employment and training services that work with all people under one roof
- Resources provided include assessment, access to computers, employment databases, employers, job search training, support, and referrals

# Support Well-Informed Decisions with Benefits Information

- Provide access for PLHA to counseling on the impact of work-related activity on income and health insurance benefits, as well as other social services.
- Develop up-to-date knowledge about Social Security and other relevant financial, health care, and housing benefits and their work incentive rules and programs.
- Develop understanding of and strategies to address benefits-related challenges to working for PLHA.
- Understand and be able to communicate how PLHA can work AND be eligible for continuing financial and/or health insurance benefits.

# WIPA:

## Work Incentives Planning and Assistance

- There are local organizations in most of the 50 states, the U.S. territories and the District of Columbia

[www.workworld.org/wwwwebhelp/wipa.htm](http://www.workworld.org/wwwwebhelp/wipa.htm)

## Community Work Incentives Coordinator (CWIC)

- Provides information regarding work incentives that help plan transition to work with knowledge on impact of work on financial and other benefits.
  - Help to make an informed decision & a Plan to Achieve Self-Support

[www.workworld.org/wwwwebhelp/pass.htm](http://www.workworld.org/wwwwebhelp/pass.htm)

# Contact

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