

# **Employment, Unemployment, and HIV/AIDS:**

*Considering the Role of Workforce System*

*Professionals in Expanding Employment*

*Opportunities for Persons Living with HIV/AIDS*

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**30 Years of HIV/AIDS in the Workplace**

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*“The first 15 years of the epidemic were about dying - first quickly, then a little more slowly, but it was all about dying.*

*The next five years were about not dying...*

*It’s my hope and belief that this next era of the HIV/AIDS epidemic is about living, really learning to live fully, with HIV.”*

Eric Ciasullo, former board member  
National Working Positive Coalition

# National Working Positive Coalition (NWPC)

- Who we are:
  - Persons living with HIV/AIDS, service providers, educators and researchers in HIV/AIDS and employment
- Mission
  - Promote research, development and implementation of effective practices in employment services
  - Coordinate sharing and dissemination of this information
  - Advocate for work options and opportunities for people living with HIV/AIDS.

# Key Points About HIV/AIDS for Workforce System Professionals

- HIV is now considered a chronic illness, and research shows that being employed has potential positive health outcomes & reduces risk behaviors.
- With effective treatments, more people are living with HIV/AIDS but are underserved by vocational rehabilitation and employment services.
- Workforce services can play a meaningful role in HIV prevention & public health services.

# Best Option May Be Only Option

- Some PLWHA will be determined eligible and benefit from VR programs – some will not.
- Only some live near and access services from the few community-based workforce development programs for PLWHA.
- For many people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) in the U.S., the only employment assistance they may be able to access may be through the workforce system.

# History – 1980's

- 1981: First official reports of HIV/AIDS
- **16,301** cumulative known deaths reported in the U.S through 1986
- September 17, 1986: President Ronald Reagan mentions AIDS publicly for the first time, vowing to make AIDS a priority
- U.S. bans discrimination against federal workers with HIV in 1988

# History – 1990's

- **58,282** cumulative known deaths reported in the U.S. through 1990
- **48,371** known deaths reported in the U.S. during the year 1995 alone
- 1996 HAART era begins
  - Introduction of Highly Active Anti Retroviral Therapy (HAART)
- 1997 CDC reports decrease in annual deaths for the first time since the early 1980's

# History – 2000's

- The CDC estimates that more than one million people are living with HIV in the U.S.
- Through 2008, more than **617,025** people with AIDS in the U.S. have died since the epidemic began
- New infection rate stable – still approximately 50,000 annually between 2006 – 2009

# Context – Cases ↑ Resources ↓

- Numbers of individuals living with HIV/AIDS continue increasing: 1,178,350 estimated living with HIV in the U.S. in 2008 (CDC)
- Federal and state funding levels for HIV/AIDS care and prevention services are threatened, or have been cut
- 9,039 were reported to be on state ADAP waiting lists for HIV medication as of August 4, 2011 (National Alliance of State & Territorial AIDS Directors)

# History – 2010's

- Pres. Obama releases the National HIV/AIDS Strategy on July 13, 2010, the nation's first-ever comprehensive plan for responding to the HIV epidemic in the United States.
- Presidential Memorandum released on July 13, 2010 – includes a directive for the development of:  
***“recommendations for increasing employment opportunities for people living with HIV.”***
- Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis and Assistant Secretary Kathy Martinez (Office of Disability Employment Policy) present an HIV/AIDS Employment Roundtable at DOL on April 8, 2011.

# The Workforce System In the Fight Against HIV/AIDS

- Help to reduce the negative impact of HIV/AIDS and improve quality of life for:
  - Individuals, families, and communities
- Effective workforce services can play a significant role in impacting:
  - Health outcomes of individuals with HIV
  - Public health outcomes regarding HIV prevention
  - Economic and social costs of HIV

# Barriers - Social Factors

- Youth
  - Strikes many during key vocational development years
- Poverty
  - Social inequalities in health care
  - Lack of access to support
- Restricted opportunities
  - Employment discrimination
  - Lack of jobs in local communities
- Criminal justice - high rates of incarceration
- Unequal access to quality education
  - High dropout rates

# Factors in HIV Risk are Factors in Discrimination

Race/Ethnicity	Limited English Proficiency
Gender	Homelessness
Sexual Orientation	Sex Work
Age	Drug & Alcohol Problems
Poverty	Mental Health
Disability	Low Literacy
Nationality	Incarceration

# Disclosure Concerns

- Trust
  - Who could find out about HIV status?
- Control of Information
  - How do I explain why I haven't been working, without disclosing my HIV status?
    - Discussing gaps in work history in job interviews
  - When is it, and when is it not, in my interest to disclose my HIV status?

# Context - HIV Stigma

- HIV is often transmitted through sexual contact, which can increase stigma and discomfort for many.
- HIV stigma is an important factor influencing many facets of the course of the epidemic – including use of workforce services.
- It is essential that service providers are trained and sensitive to the role that stigma can play in one's ability to engage in services.

“It’s time to... confront the homophobia and stigma that all too often accompany this disease.”

*Jonathan Mermin, M.D.*

*Director of CDC’s Division of HIV/AIDS Prevention*

*CDC, August 3, 2011*

# Change Needs to Be Thought Out

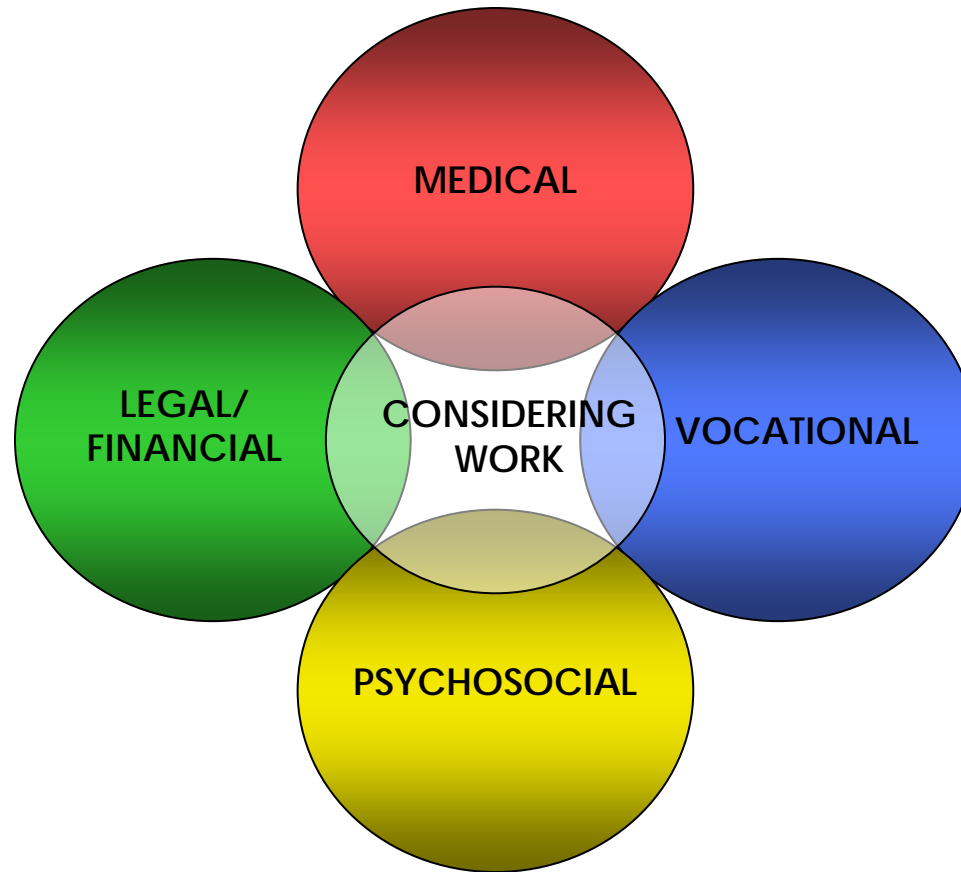
- The health and stability of PLWHA which makes considering work possible may result from a combination of benefits and supports which may change with employment:
  - Health Insurance
  - Access to meds
  - Financial/disability benefits
  - Housing supports
  - Counseling and case management

# Effective Practices

- Design services to contribute to well-informed, client-driven employment decisions and action plans.
- Access to resources, support, and referrals to consider and address needs in four areas:
  - Medical
  - Vocational
  - Psychosocial
  - Financial/legal

# Four Interrelated Factors for People Living with HIV/AIDS Considering Work

(Goldblum, Kohlenberg 2005)



# Vocational Factors

May:

- Not be able to perform past occupations
- Need assistance selecting employment goals
- Need training and education
  - GED, high school diploma
  - Limited English Proficiency
  - Vocational training
  - Certificate and degree programs
- Need job search skills and assistance

# Varied Levels of Need for Assistance

- Some PLWHA may be successful obtaining employment utilizing One Stop Career Center resources on a largely “self-serve” basis, after receiving an initial orientation.
- Some PLWHA may be successful obtaining employment if able to receive more individualized attention, support and follow-up.

# Effective Practices

- Facilitate well-informed career decisions with:
  - Assessment services to allow identification and understanding of abilities, interests, aptitude and challenges.
  - Job and labor market information made accessible for individuals.
  - Access to career counseling resources in formats and styles responding to individual needs.
    - Computer-based
    - Group-based
    - One-on-one

# Effective Practices

- Identify, encourage, and promote disability-friendly and HIV-friendly employers
- Prioritize living wage employment with employee benefits critical for PLWHA
- Provide training and consulting on
  - Rights and protections on the job
  - Disclosure
  - Accommodations

# Effective Practices: Post-Employment Supports

Provide post-employment supports critical to job maintenance, assisting PLWHA to develop problem-solving skills and adapt to changes related to:

- job demands
- health (treatment adherence, regular lab & medical appointments, self-care)
- personal life
- job market
- co-workers

# SSA: Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) Program

- WIPA's: local organizations were awarded contracts by SSA to provide work incentive and planning services to SSDI and SSI beneficiaries; 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)

- WIPA CWICs (Community Work Incentives Coordinators) can offer training and planning assistance on how SSA work incentives and other federal, state, and local assistance plans can help with transitions to work.

# Outreach

- Invite HIV service organizations' staff for open house/site visit events at One Stop Career Centers
  - Explore opportunities to streamline and customize referral process
  - Solicit ideas from local HIV contacts for how to increase accessibility of and engagement with One Stop Career Centers
  - Include contacts from vocational training programs and community colleges (student disability services, adult basic education, LEP)

# Outreach – DRCs/DPNs

- Disability Resource Coordinators or Disability Program Navigators
  - Present overview of One Stop services including disability-specific resources
    - For potential jobseekers on-site at HIV service organizations
    - For HIV service provider staff & administration
    - For the HIV service provider community at network meetings (e.g. planning councils, provider consortiums)
  - Include VR reps, CWICs and other community disability advocates and resources

# Outreach

- Suggest to HIV service providers that a meeting be convened to bring together workforce, disability, and HIV service providers and advocates interested in discussing feasible strategies within the community for cross-system collaborations and effective referral
  - Include multi-directional cross-training
- Create strategies for evaluation & ongoing development of cross-system referral & coordination

# Community-Based Workforce Programs (HIV/AIDS-specific)

- Limited number of targeted programs
  - Goodwill Detroit/Project HOPE
  - Positive Resource Center - San Francisco
  - CALOR - Chicago
  - Chicago House/iFour Program
  - Education for Life – Minnesota
  - GMHC – New York
  - Housing Works – New York
  - Harlem United – New York
  - The Alpha Workshops – New York
  - Action AIDS/Positive Action Program - Philadelphia

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# Resources

- AIDS.gov: Access to U.S. Government HIV/AIDS Information:  
[www.AIDS.gov](http://www.AIDS.gov)
- CDC Business Responds to AIDS/Labor Responds to AIDS (BRTA/LRTA):  
[www.hivatwork.org](http://www.hivatwork.org)
- National Working Positive Coalition:  
[www.workingpositive.net](http://www.workingpositive.net)

# Resources for Technical Assistance

- The National Working Positive Coalition (NWPC) can provide or refer for technical assistance on topics related to HIV, employment and vocational rehabilitation:

National Working Positive Coalition

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