

Cross-Sector Service Coordination Strategies: Key to Improving Employment and Vocational Rehabilitation Outcomes of Individuals Living with HIV/AIDS

Mark Misrok, MS Ed, CRC
National Working Positive Coalition

Annual National Rehabilitation Association Training Conference
Brooklyn, NY
September 20, 2013

National Working Positive Coalition (NWPC)

- Who we are:
 - People living with HIV/AIDS, HIV service providers, educators, researchers, and vocational rehabilitation and workforce development professionals, policy makers, advocates and employers
 - Focused on HIV and employment, working for the economic and personal well-being of people living with HIV/AIDS
- 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

Community-Based VR Programs (HIV/AIDS-specific)

- Limited number of targeted programs in the U.S.
(partial list)
 - Education for Life – Minnesota
 - Cascade AIDS Network – Portland, OR
 - Positive Resource Center – San Francisco
 - Chicago House/iFOUR Program – Chicago
 - Albany Damien Center – Albany, NY
 - GMHC/MATCH Program – New York
 - Housing Works – New York
 - Harlem United – New York
 - The Alpha Workshops – New York
 - Catholic Charities Community Services – Rochester
 - AIRS – Baltimore
 - Action AIDS/Positive Action Program – Philadelphia

A New Era of Coordinated Federal/State Resources for Employment, Health & Prevention Outcomes?

In the U.S., HIV/AIDS prevention and health care providers have rarely coordinated services with the primary federal/state 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 (U.S. Dept. of Education/Rehabilitation Services Administration/RSA)
- Workforce Development/American Job Centers, formerly called One Stop Career Centers (U.S. Dept. of Labor)
- Ticket to Work (SSA)

Cross-Sector Service Coordination Strategies

- Opportunities within & among federal, state, local and private agencies and programs
 - HIV/AIDS services (Ryan White Program, HUD/HOPWA, SAMHSA, CDC)
 - Vocational rehabilitation (DofED/RSA, state VR agencies, local district offices, Ticket to Work/Ens, WIPA, CBOs)
 - Workforce development (American Job Centers/One Stops, DEI, JobCorps, YouthBuild, WIBs, CBOs)
 - Education Institutions (adult basic education/GED, LEP, community colleges & other post-secondary)

Recommendations

- Regional/local networks
 - Working collaboratively to increase vocational skills and combat stigma
- Ensure expertise specifically related to HIV represented within vocational rehabilitation and workforce development systems
- Cross-training for HIV/AIDS service providers on vocational rehabilitation and workforce development systems
- Include employment status and supports in HIV-related health and prevention research
- Examine policies that limit vocational participation
 - Complexity of employment incentives
 - Lack of access/understanding of employment supports
 - Limited post placement services
 - Eligibility criteria for programs (e.g., VR)
 - Ability for Ryan White Grantees to link with VR services

VRCs Are Well-Matched to the Needs of Many Individuals Living with HIV/AIDS

- Enhanced training and expertise on, and experience with
 - Chronic health conditions and episodic disabilities
 - Invisible disabilities
 - Stigma and discrimination
- Individualized services
 - Assessment and goal-setting
 - Plan implementation support and follow up
 - Employment transition adjustment and post-employment supports

HIV/AIDS Service Provider Presentations to VR Staff

- Invite HIV/AIDS service providers to make in-service presentations for VR staff about
 - Issues related to employment and living with HIV/AIDS
 - Local HIV/AIDS programs and services
- Develop a liaison relationship with an HIV/AIDS service provider contact.
- To strengthen support for VR plans for employment, learn about local HIV/AIDS resources that may strategically complement and supplement other commonly utilized VR services and referrals.

HIV/AIDS Outreach - VR Leadership

- Invite HIV service organization staff for VR services open house/site visit events. Information presented can highlight:
 - eligibility requirements
 - available services
 - strategies that may help to facilitate the application and determination of eligibility process
 - best practices and opportunities for agency collaboration and referral.

Develop A VR Liaison to HIV/AIDS Service Providers

- If one VR staff person can function as a liaison to HIV/AIDS service providers, the potential for productive relationship building and bridges between service systems is significantly increased.
- The VR liaison to HIV/AIDS service providers can become an internal resource about HIV for VR staff, and a conduit for information about community HIV/AIDS services and resources.

Cross-Sector Outreach: One Model

- In collaboration with HIV/AIDS service providers, convene a meeting to bring together VR and independent living, workforce development, and HIV/AIDS service providers.
 - Include multi-directional cross-training
 - Explore opportunities to streamline and customize referral process
 - Solicit ideas from local HIV contacts for how to increase accessibility of and engagement with VR and other services
 - Include contacts from vocational training programs and post-secondary education institutions (student disability services, adult basic education, LEP)

VR Presentations for Consumers

- VR counselor presentations for HIV/AIDS program participants can
 - increase understanding about VR services and policies
 - encourage realistic expectations and well-informed employment and vocational rehabilitation plans
 - increase comfort levels of individuals concerned about confidentiality, stigma and discrimination
- Off-site VR counselor presentations send a message into the community (consumers and providers):

“We want to work with you - individuals living with HIV/AIDS are welcome.”

Resources

- U.S. Dept. of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy – Employment & Living with HIV/AIDS
 - <http://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/HIVAIDS/>
- NWPC Vocational Development and Employment Needs Survey (2008/2009 – in HIV/AIDS Employment Roundtable Report/U.S. Dept of Labor, April, 2011)
 - <http://www.dol.gov/odep/pdf/20110408.pdf>
- U.S. Dept. of Justice – Fighting Discrimination Against People with HIV/AIDS
 - <http://www.ada.gov/aids/>
- U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development – Getting to Work Initiative (for PLWHA)
 - <http://www.vpi.org/tap/gettingtowork/>
- The National HIV/AIDS Strategy
 - <http://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/onap/nhas>
- National Working Positive Coalition (NWPC)
 - <http://workingpositive.net/>

National Working Positive Coalition (NWPC)

workingpositive.net

Contact:

Mark Misrok, MS Ed, CRC

President, Board of Directors

(646) 403-9821

markmisrok@gmail.com