

# Creating the National Working Positive Coalition: The Need for Alliances

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# Background

- Funding for HIV/AIDS services do not include funding for employment services (Conyers & Datti, 2008)
  - Initially employment services not prioritized
  - Did not want to compete with public VR system
- PWHA and their services providers have limited knowledge about vocational services and options (Conyers & Datti, 2008)
- Eligibility for VR is complex (SSA, 2009; U.S. Department of Education, 1999, 2008)
  - Functional assessment
  - Comorbidity
  - SSA recipient status

# National Working Positive Coalition

([www.workingpositive.net](http://www.workingpositive.net))

- Established in 2003
  - Who we are:
    - Persons living with HIV/AIDS, service providers, educators, and researchers committed to improving the financial and personal well-being of individuals 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
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# Goals of NWPC

- Connect individuals who are interested in the economic advancement of people with HIV/AIDS
- Share a wealth of resources and knowledge
- Collectively have a greater impact on achieving our goal of improving educational, vocational, and employment opportunities for people with HIV/AIDS

# Working Groups

- Research
- Policy and Advocacy
- Employment Programs & Service Approaches
- Materials
- Education and Outreach

# Resources

[www.workingpositive.net/resources.htm](http://www.workingpositive.net/resources.htm)

- Advice and Information
- Work and HIV Websites
- Directory of Employment Service Programs
- Directory of AIDS Service Organizations
- Research Bibliography
- Abstracts of Research Manuscripts
- Ask the Experts
- Frequently Asked Questions

# Benefits and Challenges

## ■ Benefits

- Provides specific information for a targeted group
- Key resource for HIV/AIDS community
- Community needs based approach
- Wealth of resources, knowledge and expertise

## ■ Challenges

- Economic Resources
- Volunteer Board
- Risk of Insularity
- Need to align with other disability groups



# Disability and Employment

- Regardless of specific medical condition, many people with disabilities are interested in work, yet share the same challenges to employment (Conyers & Datti, 2008, Hergenratter & Rhodes, 2008)
    - Confusing work incentives
    - Lack of knowledge of resources
    - Stigma
    - Fears of the unknown
    - Limited funding
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# Episodic Disability/Chronic Illness

- PWHA share common challenges with those who have other episodic disabilities including (Escovitz & Donegan, 2005; Razzano & Hamilton, 2005):
  - Psychiatric Illness
  - Addiction
  - Multiple Sclerosis
  - Cancer
  - Chronic Fatigue
- Important to form alliances to target shared concerns of all people with disabilities

# Chronic Illness

- Ninety percent of health care is self care (Barlow, Bancroft, & Turner, 2005; Barlow, Wright, Sheasby, Turner, & Hainsworth, 2002)
- Many service systems are not designed to address the needs of those with chronic illnesses and episodic disability
- Need to join together to advocate for changes in the service delivery system

# Model

- Establishing a diverse executive board
- Effectively planning and executing regular meetings
- Targeting pertinent areas of interest and need (research, practice, education, policy) and establishing working sub groups
- Networking with key stake holders to educate them and connect with each other
- Developing state chapters

# Model

- The NWPC can serve as a model approach to addressing disability specific needs.
- The coalition can establish models in different states and share information from state to state to help improve employment outcomes and identify innovative ways to seek funding.
- Achievements related to HIV/AIDS services may be able to benefit others with chronic illness, and vice-versa.

# Need for Alliances

- To have a greater impact on disability policy and advocacy it is important to align with other disability groups.
- Please share any ideas or interest that you may have to facilitate this process.
- What are some of the ways we may be able to collaborate with your agency or research to improve employment outcomes for PWD?

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