
Promising Practice Fact Sheet – Workforce Development POP PROGRAM (Parks Opportunity Program) – New York City

Program

Description: Subsidized jobs program that includes a structured curriculum (STRIVE) on soft skills, resume-writing, work-readiness, interviewing, attire, etiquette, time management, health, and hygiene. Placements are with the city Parks and Recreation Department.

Target Population: TANF clients

Goal: To provide hands on, comprehensive training to prepare trainees for employment.

Cost: \$12 million from ARRA funds

Evidence: Unaware of any formal evaluation conducted on this program. Evidence documented is based on outcomes tracked by the POP program. Source: Greg Morales, Deputy Director for Policy Analysis and Fiscal Management and program website.

Caseload Data: Approximately 3,000 clients at any given time.

Assessment: Screened and assessed by employment counselors

Services Overview:

- This six month program provides employment services, classroom training, education, career counseling, professional mentoring, and job search assistance.
- Employment Counselors perform counseling, case management, referrals and follow-up as needed.
- Participants complete a two-week new employee orientation including park specific to tasks they do, customer service, soft skills, etc. Participants then complete a structured curriculum (STRIVE) on soft skills, resume, work readiness skills, attire, etiquette, time management, health and hygiene (annual health fair), interviewing, etc.
- Three-four days at worksite with one-two days/week with education and/or specialized vocational training (e.g. maintenance, horticultural).
- POP does not work with sex offenders or criminal backgrounds that preclude placement within Parks & Recreation.

Eligibility: Participant must be TANF client without active barriers to full-time participation.

Findings:

- Since its inception in 1994, POP's six-month training program has placed over 11,000 trainees into full-time positions.
- In FY10, 792 participants were placed into unsubsidized employment.
- In FY05-06, over 2,500 trainees were placed into unsubsidized employment through POP.

Implications for policymakers and program developers to consider:

- The importance of strong partnerships with training and employment partners.
- POP is an official GED Proctor Program, so participants may sit for their GED exam while they are employed at Parks & Recreation.
- POP has established specialty training programs that focus on disconnected youth (ages 18-24), non-custodial fathers, as well as participants interested in horticulture and emerging green sectors.
- Job developers (caseload size 75-100 which overstretches staff) work with individuals on unsubsidized employment.