

CITY OF HAMILTON
ONTARIO WORKS EMPLOYMENT SERVICES REVIEW
(Appendix to Report 2016-09)

EMPLOYMENT SERVICE DELIVERY PROGRAMS

ADDICTION SERVICES INITIATIVE (ASI)

Some OW clients are addicted to alcohol, drugs or gambling. Such addictions usually make it more difficult for OW clients to find and maintain employment. The ASI program retains one Employment Development Counsellor to help OW clients in this program retain their employment by interceding on their behalf with their employer. The Ministry of Community and Social Services is responsible for the evaluation of this program.

ONE-TO-ONE EMPLOYMENT COUNSELLING

Case Managers often refer their OW clients to Employment Development Counsellors (EDC). On other occasions the OW clients will meet with the EDCs after they have completed the Making Changes Happen workshop. The appointments allow the EDC to better understand the individual OW client's interests, skills, strengths and weaknesses. This information is logged into an electronic Word document that is retained by the EDC.

The EDC uses the information provided by the client to understand what type of work that interests him/her and develops an employment search plan which includes actions that the client should take in pursuing employment. This includes attending workshops or working with Job Developers to help secure full/part time positions, vocational training opportunities or volunteer positions. Any job search information obtained by the EDC from the OW client is entered into SAMS. This would include additional training, attending job fairs, and potential employers to contact.

At this time there are 25 EDCs positions at the City's Ontario Works Division. While 13 EDC are assigned specific duties such as Workshop Facilitators, Job Developers, Community Placement, Vocational Trainers, or with ODSP, the other 12 EDCs work directly with the OW clients to help determine which route best helps them find work and get off OW. The Counsellors typically see 21 follow up cases and 5 new intakes per week.

EMPLOYMENT WORKSHOPS

The City of Hamilton offers its OW and ODSP (Ontario Disability Support Program) clients the following three different workshops to help them find and retain suitable employment:

- **Making Change Happen (MCH)**
OW Clients either self-refer or are referred to this workshop by the generalist EDC. There are two facilitators leading this workshop. It is offered to OW clients deemed to have the most difficulty in entering the job market (i.e. those with the least marketable skills or those who have been out of the job market longer than two years). It is designed to make the participants improve their life skills and includes

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introducing concepts such as time management, communications, and social skills such as respecting differences of opinion and conflict resolution. The workshop facilitator attempts to engage the participants in class discussion and tracks their frequency and type of participation and records it in SAMS. Aside from learning and reinforcing important life skills, the participants are encouraged to investigate and explore their job interests. The MCH workshop is four weeks long, and usually runs from 1:30 to 4:00 p.m. from Monday to Friday. The maximum capacity for this workshop is 30 participants, but generally class sizes each range from 8 to 20 participants. OW clients who successfully complete this workshop are usually referred to continue with the Career Essentials workshop.

○ **Career Essentials (CE)**

OW clients are admitted to this workshop based on referrals from their Case Managers, EDCs and/or the Facilitators in the Making Change Happen workshop. It is designed to help OW clients to identify their skills and understand how these skills could lead to possible careers. It is led by two Facilitators. The CE workshop is four weeks long, with the classes running from 9:00 to 11:30 a.m. Monday to Friday. Normally, there are from 8 to 15 participants in each class. In week one, the Facilitator has the participants work through a series of PowerPoint presentations, individual exercises, group activities and group discussions to list their skills, interests and values as they relate to work. During the second week, the participants use what they have learned about themselves in week one to write out individual resumes, cover letters and complete job application forms. They are also taught the importance of references and how to get them if no one is prepared to act as a reference on their behalf (i.e. volunteering). Week three is interview week. This week is devoted to answering interview questions and understanding both general interviews and behavioural interviews. On Friday of that week, the participants have a mock interview with an EDC that they have never met. The interview is made to feel as realistic as possible. The participants are expected to dress appropriately, arrive on time, and answer a series of questions related to a job to which they have submitted a resume. Week four is devoted to job searches. The participants are shown different ways to job search: on-line, cold calling, and via networking. The participants are shown the Hamilton Business Directory. They are also taken to the computer lab where they are shown how to perform a job search, and apply for a position. At the conclusion of this workshop the Facilitator determines which of the participants is ready to continue onto the Applied Job Search workshop, Vocational Training, or Helping Hands. Some participants elect to perform independent job searches. These are referred to the two EDCs responsible. The CE Facilitators update SAMS to how the individual participants progressed in this workshop.

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○ **Applied Job Search (AJS)**

OW clients are referred to this workshop by their EDC (during One-to-one Employment Counselling), by the CE Facilitators, or by Vocational Trainers (see “Vocational Training” section below). The workshops are led by one of two facilitators. The AJS workshop is two weeks long and is usually limited to 10 OW clients. During the first week the participants learn to properly tailor job applications, resumes and cover letters for specific jobs. They are shown how to develop a portfolio of themselves so as to keep their job skills and experience “top of mind” and present these as needed in the different types of job interviews that they may face. They learn how to perform a geographic job search. In the second week they are told about and visit some of the different Employment Ontario agencies:

- a) Vocational Pathways Inc. (VPI) located at Rymal & Upper James – the OW clients are given a presentation on positive thinking and cover letter format;
- b) Mohawk Community Employment Services located at Barton & Centennial Parkway – the manager at this location performs personality tests and skills identification exercises;
- c) Employment Hamilton at Victoria and Main – the OW clients perform exercises which results in receiving three certificates: i) Workers Health and Safety Awareness Training in 4 steps; ii) AODA – Servability and Accessibility Standards for Customer Service; iii) Excellence in Customer Service (paid for by Employment Hamilton);
- d) Goodwill Employment Services at Upper Gage & Linc – attend a networking group;
- e) YMCA Careerworx representative comes to the OW Centre at 181 Main St. W and gives a presentation on LinkedIn and personal branding.

The OW clients also visit the Eva Rothwell Community Centre where they are allowed to take some clothing so as to be presentable in a job interview.

After completing the workshop clients are encouraged to join the Job Finders Club that meets every weekly Wednesday afternoons at the OW office at 181 Main Street West. The facilitators also take any interested OW clients on walkabouts. For example clients interested in working in restaurants google the various restaurants on a particular street, and with the support of the facilitator, the client cold calls all of the restaurants on that street. This often results in interviews and sometimes job offers.

HELPING HANDS

Helping Hands offers indoor home maintenance (i.e. house cleaning, some electrical and plumbing tasks) and outdoor work (i.e. lawn maintenance and snow removal) for

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the disabled and low-income senior citizens helping them to continue to independently live in their own homes. OW recipients trained and supported by OW Employment Services staff perform the work. The OW recipients are informed of the program by their Case Managers, the EDCs and by brochures in their monthly mail. The OW recipients interested in the program register to attend the Helping Hands information session that are held during the first week of each month at the Helping Hands Office located on the third floor at 181 Main Street West. The OW recipients attending the session are told about the benefits of the program such as learning new job skills and gaining work experience for a 26 week work placement period. They also get a \$15 per day stipend that is not deducted from their monthly OW/ODSP benefits, a monthly bus pass, a new uniform, safety boots/shoes, a phone card, first aid/CPR/WHMIS training, interview and resume training, and an employment reference.

The OW recipients that attended the information session are invited to a pre-screening one on one appointment with one of five Helping Hands Training Co-ordinators. During the interview, the OW recipients language skills are assessed (they must be at an ESL level 5), and they are told that they will need a Police Background Check (PBC), which is paid for by Helping Hands. The client is given the money for the PBC and a record of this is retained in SAMS. The PBC results are usually received within two to three weeks. Therefore, the following month, the OW clients are invited to return for a second meeting with their completed PBC and are asked to complete a Participation Agreement (PA). A copy of the PA and PBC are retained on file by Helping Hands staff. Note that if the PBC indicates that the OW recipient has had some trouble with the law, the Training Co-ordinators may eliminate the OW recipient from continuing further with the program (for serious crimes such as assault, rape, sexual assault etc.). If the crime is non-violent (i.e. burglary, theft etc.) the OW recipient may be limited to performing outdoor work only. During this second meeting, the OW clients are provided with the Guide and Manual unique to the job that they will be performing. They are then invited to return for three days of in class training at the Helping Hands Office. While undergoing their training they're fitted for and provided with uniforms and boot/shoes. The Training Co-ordinators review everything to do with the job for which they're training including the proper use of any equipment (i.e. lawn mowers, snow blowers etc.) along with WHMIS, CPR and first aid training.

Once the training is completed, the new Helping Hands recruits are ready to begin work. The Training Co-ordinators accompany them to their assigned job location. If needed they are provided with bus passes to enable them to get to their jobs. (Note that for jobs requiring the use of vehicles, such as lawn maintenance and snow removal, the new Helping Hand recruits are provided with small pick up trucks.) The Training Co-ordinators regularly check the work performed by their recruits (initially daily, later weekly) and provide additional training when and as needed.

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Whenever, the Helping Hands recruits have a break in their schedule, either due to poor weather or the property owner is sick or away, they are expected to come into the Helping Hands office and do job searches. To this end they usually work with Job Developers who get to know them very well. The Job Developers will assist them in finding suitable employment sometimes before their six months (26 week) work placement period has ended. Note that the work assignments for Helping Hands recruits can be extended by an additional five months. In addition to job search skills, the Helping Hands recruits are also provided with courses on stress management, time management and nutrition.

Due to all of the hands on training provided to OW recipients, the Helping Hands program is expensive.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

This program is also referred to as the Community Placement program. Currently, this program employs one acting Community Placement Co-ordinator (aCPC) who divides her time as a Job Developer. Unpaid volunteer work placements with various community non-profit or publicly funded organizations are offered to OW clients so that they may improve their skills and work related behaviours. Case Managers and/or EDCs refer their OW clients to this program's information sessions. The sessions are held every other Monday. Ten spots are available per session. After the session the aCPC performs one-on-one screening interviews with those interested in a formal Community Placement. The aCPC compares the interests, skills and employment goals of the OW client interviewed with the Community Placement opportunities available. The aCPC then arranges an interview between the OW client and the host agency. After the OW client has been interviewed by the host agency and has been accepted, the aCPC meets with the agency and the OW client to sign the Memorandum of Understanding, WSIB and Acceptance forms. The OW client is then issued clothing, grooming, transportation and any other required items for participation (i.e. funds for Police Clearance, immunizations, etc.) The aCPC then updates the notes in SAMS. Community Placements are generally of 6 months duration; however, they may be extended by 5 months.

So as to review the OW client's progress, the aCPC meets with the host agency at 1, 3 and 6 month intervals. For cases where the term was extended, additional meetings are held at the 8th and 11th month. Those OW clients who successfully complete their Community Placement now have a marketable skill, recent work experience and a reference. They are forwarded to the Job Developer to help in their paid employment job search.

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JOB DEVELOPMENT

The Job Developers role is to establish and maintain relationships with local employers so as to access the hidden job market for OW clients. Other organizations offer similar services to residents in and around the City of Hamilton. These organizations are funded by Employment Ontario, and include: Employment Hamilton, Goodwill/ the Amity Group, Mohawk College Employment Services, VPI Working Solutions, Wesley Urban Ministries, and YMCA Careerworx. The City's Ontario Works Job Developers are responsible s to find work solely for OW recipients.

Currently, the City has one and a half Job Developers. In order to distribute the work more equitably the two have divided the sectors so that one who divides her time as the acting Community Placement Co-ordinator) is responsible for finding work for OW clients interested in health care, customer services, food services, and retail. The other is responsible for finding construction, factory, technical, transportation, and security jobs. The Job Developers find new jobs by making cold calls to the various businesses in the City of Hamilton and surrounding regions; attending Chamber of Commerce meetings; and generally meeting with and networking with known and potential City employers. Some jobs arise via "repeat business". That is, employers that have successfully found new employees with the help of the Job Developers will call back to hire additional workers when needed. The Job Developers attempt to uncover the "hidden jobs". That is, jobs that potential employers want filled, but have not yet publicized on job search websites. The "hidden jobs" offer the OW clients a better opportunity at finding work, especially if the Job Developer is informed of them early enough so that the OW clients do not have to compete with others in the job market. Therefore, the Job Developers are in regular contact with potential employers advocating for OW clients.

When a potential employer wants to work with the Job Developer, they provide a job order. Using this job order, the Job Developer prepares the job posting. The name of the potential employer is not included in the posting. The posting is given a job number, a title, and presented in a distinctive manner outlining the type of work, job description, hourly wage, etc. The Jobs Developer ensures that the new positions are posted on the Jobs Hamilton website (<http://old.hamilton.ca/phcs/JobsHamilton/>) specifying that these positions are open to OW or ODSP participants only. Depending on the potential employer's preference, the resumes from interested OW or ODSP clients are sent directly to the employer, or they are first screened by the Job Developer to ensure they meet the potential employer's criteria. Once the resumes are delivered, the potential employer screens the resumes a second time and contacts the clients for an interview. If the potential employer wants to hire one of the clients, they inform the Job Developer by email.

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The ideal job sought by the Job Developers for their OW client base is a full time position, offering greater than minimum wages, is on a bus route, does not require a criminal record check, requires minimal formal education (i.e. Grade 12 or equivalent) and training is provided by the employer. It is very rare that the Job Developer find jobs meeting all of the above criteria. Therefore, as an incentive to hire OW clients, the City's Ontario Works division provides a maximum of \$4,500 per client to offset the cost of training and/or supervision. In addition, potential employers with WSIB coverage do not have to pay WSIB premiums for the employee during the first six months of employment. If the employee has a work related injury during this period, the costs are covered by the Province, and the premiums are not affected. These incentives are consistent throughout the province. Potential employers wanting to capitalize on these incentives enter into an agreement with the City. Copies of the agreements are retained by the Job Developers. The Job Developers visit the employers work sites regularly- usually once per quarter, and review the employers' payroll system to ensure that the OW client is in fact working. Half of the training incentive is paid to the employers after the OW client has worked for three months and the remaining 50% after six months. If the OW client has quit or been fired, the training incentive is pro-rated to reflect the number of days worked. The Job Developers also help OW clients and potential employers by arranging job fairs, employer information sessions and conducting mock interviews when needed.

EMPLOYMENT RESOURCE CENTRE

OW Clients seeking employment opportunities are provided access to the Resource Centre located on the third floor of 181 Main Street West. The centre is open Monday to Friday between 9:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., and is accessible to anyone looking for work, not just OW/ODSP clients. It is equipped with fifteen computer stations along with a fax machine and photocopier. The centre provides literature (i.e. pamphlets and booklets) on guidance for networking, communication, job search and interviewing tips and techniques along with some newspaper classified sections. There is also an OW Employment Services Clerk at the Resource Centre information desk that will provide some guidance to clients using the centre.

VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Case Managers flag OW clients that have no prior training or job skills but are motivated to pursue a career in one of the following five fields: Hair Stylist, Personal Support Worker (PSW), AZ Licenced Truck Drivers, Welders and Cooks. The Case Managers refer OW clients that have declared their interests to one of two Vocational Trainers.

The Vocational Trainer interviews the OW client and by reviewing the client's file to determine that the client does not qualify for other funding sources (i.e. OSAP, Aboriginal Funding, and Second Career Funding). Over the course of the meeting the

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Vocational Trainer determines whether the OW client is motivated and disciplined enough to succeed in a vocational program. If not, the client is directed to attend the "Making Changes Happen" workshop and returns to meet the Vocational Trainer after completing it. The Trainer documents this on the Vocational Training Program Referral form.

OW clients judged to be adequately motivated and disciplined are given the "OW Application for Training Funds (OWATF) package. The literature in the package instructs the OW client to select one of the five areas of interest noted above and visit three schools offering the program of interest. (The Vocational Trainer provides the OW client with a list of these schools.)

The OW client visits the three schools and collects the course outline including the refund policy as directed by the OWATF. The OW client does not pay the deposit to indicate an interest in the course. Note, these courses cover a period of six months to one year and tuition can be quite expensive (i.e. \$7,500 for a one year hair styling course).

The client is given two weeks to complete the OWATF and return it to the Vocational Trainer. At the return meeting the Trainer determines whether programs selected are cost effective and that the program cost does not exceed \$10,000. The Trainer discusses the completed form with the OW client and determines which school best fits the client, and then registers them for the course. A copy of the completed form is retained and filed by OW client name.

The Vocational Trainer logs the OW clients in the Vocational Training program on an excel spreadsheet. Two such sheets are used, one tracks active clients – those that have yet to complete their courses, and the other tracks those that have completed their course and are looking for work.

Note that the schools are paid 50% of the tuition fee two weeks after the start of the course, and the remainder one month later. If the OW clients drop out of a course, the tuition fee is treated as an OW overpayment and is recouped by withholding 5% of the client's monthly entitlement.

ODSP EMPLOYABLE SPOUSES AND ADULT DEPENDENTS

The Ministry of Community and Social Services deems this a mandatory program. The program is designed to assist the spouses and dependent adults of Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) participants in finding employment. One of two City of Hamilton Employment Counsellors develop an employment plan tailored for a particular

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individual, they help monitor each step in the process and update the ODSP case managers.