

## **HOPE VI Community & Supportive Services Best Practices – Job Training/Readiness Housing Authority of Columbus, GA**

### **Job Training Improves Family Self-Sufficiency**

The Housing Authority of Columbus, GA (HACG) struggled to provide residents with quality job training to help them gain meaningful employment and move toward self-sufficiency. Many residents did not have a high school diploma, and even when employed, worked in low-paying service industries with little or no benefits. Single mothers also struggled to obtain secure employment. To overcome this challenge, HACG staff met with representatives from various job training programs to explore how these programs could be utilized and/or modified to meet resident needs. The job training programs included Innovative Work Solutions, Inc. (IWS), Goodwill's Custodial Program and Goodwill's Work Adjustment Training (WAT).

IWS (a partnership with Columbus State University (CSU), Columbus Technical College (CTC), Muscogee County Adult Education and others) allows residents to earn a Customer Service Specialist certificate from CTC, along with college credit hours that transfer to CSU. The program teaches job skills that include computer skills, work ethic, building support networks, etc. The program even includes a shopping practicum with a field trip to J. C. Penney, where store employees helped participants select proper office attire.

The Custodial Program provides participants with a detailed and structured hands-on learning experience. It is certified by Spartan Chemical and offers a complete study of commercial cleaning, while incorporating other topics such as money management, leadership and soft skills. Participants receive a stipend for their work and assistance with job placement.

WAT allows HACG to provide employment training to the hardest to serve, including residents with addictions and physical and/or mental disabilities. Participants receive training in a real world environment, along with supervised case management and job training. Participants develop and sharpen their work skills while learning to become dependable employees. Participants are paid minimum wage during training, which allows them to learn the value of a paycheck and how to budget money.

As a result of these programs, residents qualified for higher paying positions. Graduates also gained confidence, poise and faith in themselves. One resident even started her own cleaning company after graduating from the Custodial Program and hired at least one other HOPE VI resident.

Due to HACG's numerous partnerships, the programs cost little – if any money. The main challenge has been sustaining resident involvement. To address this issue, staff invites representatives from the companies that hire graduates to attend the training to motivate and encourage participants. Word of mouth has also helped increased participation. With each graduating class, HACG learns something new and valuable.

**For more information on this Best Practice contact:**

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