

HOPE VI Community & Supportive Services Best Practices – Family Self-Sufficiency Duluth Housing Authority

Residents take STEPS toward Achieving Economic Independence

In 2005, it seemed as the Denver Housing Authority's (DHA) self-sufficiency efforts were not as effective as it hoped. Frequently, DHA staff observed people who wanted to go to work and capable of working fail to flourish in their jobs before they had sustainable success. After speaking with residents, DHA staff realized that many were held back by the feeling that they powerless and would not or could not succeed.

DHA staff learned about a workshop called STEPS (Steps to Economic and Personal Success) through The Pacific Institute. STEPS is a 15-hour workshop based on cognitive psychology that helps participants adopt positive beliefs, attitudes and behaviors. Its engaging methodology causes participants to examine their behaviors with specific emphasis on career and employment goals. Participants then learn a structured process to choose and change behaviors. As a result, they develop powerful internal motivation, perseverance in the face of obstacles and a tenacious desire to succeed. In the STEPS workshop participants dare to dream, set goals, and identify and overcome obstacles to success in order to build a positive future for themselves. The DHA partnered with a local employment assistance agency and Community Action program to begin running STEPS workshops for residents.

Although initially the DHA struggled to engage residents in the classes, staff has developed strategies to increase resident participation. Some strategies include posting positive flyers throughout the community, word-of-mouth advertising by residents who have already taken the program, and providing potential participants with in-depth information about the program at the time they are referred. Success stories include:

- A participant who began the program with no driver's license or diploma, a learning disability and clinical depression, and has now obtained a General Education Degree, driver's license, certification in office and technology training, and a full-time job as an employment counselor.
- A participant who began as a recluse battling anxiety and depression enrolled in college and obtained mid-level position with a company in Colorado. This individual reports that he believes none of this would have happened without the tools he gained from STEPS.

The DHA now has three CSS partners facilitating STEPS programs with an excellent success rate. The DHA's Labor Management Committee was so impressed with the training that they asked staff to facilitate the corporate version of the course for Housing and Redevelopment Authority staff. This course encourages staff to think positively and creatively about the challenges they face at work each day and allows them to serve residents more effectively.

For more information on this Best Practice contact:

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