



Moving Families Toward Self-Sufficiency: Effective Case Management Strategies

A MAKING CONNECTIONS PEER TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE MATCH BETWEEN
LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY AND CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

PEER TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE LEADS TO ACTION

*Part of a Series from the
Technical Assistance Resource
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The Annie E. Casey Foundation

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The Center for the Study of Social Policy, based in Washington, D.C., was established in 1979 with the goal of providing public policy analysis and technical assistance to states and localities. The Center's work is concentrated in the areas of family and children's services, income supports, neighborhood-based services, education reform, family support, community decision-making, and human resource innovations. The Center manages peer technical assistance as part of the Foundation's Technical Assistance Resource Center (TARC).

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BACKGROUND

Through the *Making Connections* initiative, the Annie E. Casey Foundation is working with Louisville, Kentucky, and several other communities across the country to improve outcomes for children and families living in tough neighborhoods. One of the principal aims of *Making Connections* is to link neighborhood residents with economic opportunities, social networks, and effective services and supports that can help families grow stronger and achieve what they want for their children. A central premise behind *Making Connections* is that residents need to be meaningfully engaged in efforts to make change happen within their communities.

As part of this initiative, the Foundation offers participating sites access to technical assistance that can help them reach their goals for strengthening families and neighborhoods. Peer technical assistance is a particularly valuable resource that *Making Connections* communities can use to address issues and solve problems they have identified in their own contexts. Peer technical assistance allows sites to meet with innovators in other communities across the country who have successfully achieved similar goals and to capitalize on the practical knowledge they have gained from their experiences.

On October 24–26, 2005, a diverse team of individuals from Louisville traveled to Chicago, Illinois, to participate in a peer technical assistance match that focused on effective case management strategies for families affected by public housing transformation.

Louisville is currently in the midst of its second major HOPE VI revitalization in an area formerly known as Clarksdale. The key entities involved in the effort—the Louisville Metro Housing Authority (LMHA), the Louisville Metro Department of Human Services (LMDHS), and the local developer, The Community Builders (TCB)—are all vitally invested in positive outcomes for residents and families.

After the completion of the first HOPE VI revitalization effort, Park DuValle, very few residents moved back into the community, raising concerns about how well

residents were supported during the revitalization process. The team wanted to evaluate its goals, methods, and partnerships and move forward with a more cohesive and comprehensive plan for the Clarksdale HOPE VI revitalization process.

The city of Chicago, with its *Plan for Transformation*, a \$1.6 billion revitalization of 25,000 units of public housing, offers instructive lessons on building durable partnerships to carry out a clearly articulated plan for helping families navigate the rigorous process of relocation and return.

SETTING THE CONTEXT FOR THE MATCH

Based on the current plan for Clarksdale, approximately 223 of the 680 units of new housing under construction will be public housing units, with former Clarksdale residents guaranteed first priority. Another 100 units of public housing will be built in adjacent neighborhoods, for a total of 323 families who must be ready within the next two to four years to qualify and live successfully in new neighborhood environments.

At the time of the peer match, it was unclear whether the site-specific requirements had been finalized and made public. However, it was assumed that they will be similar to those of Park DuValle, which require that residents be:

- employed or engaged in education or training that will lead to employment;
- able to fulfill tenant responsibilities and codes of conduct considered mainstream in private housing developments;
- in good standing as a tenant, including a clean housekeeping record and credit history related to housing issues and rent payment; and
- have no criminal record.

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building and the rethinking of
their strategic plan for case
management.

However, the demographics of relocated Clarksdale residents suggest that meeting those site-specific criteria will present numerous hurdles for many residents.

- Of 620 households, 86 percent are headed by single women.
- Of 1,400 residents, half are children under the age of 18, and half of those are five years old or younger.
- Almost 90 percent of the adults are unemployed.
- Only half of the heads of households have a high school diploma or GED.
- The average annual income of residents is \$5,642, or \$470 per month.

Indeed, the statistics regarding return at Park DuValle affirm the difficulties inherent in meeting site-specific criteria without special assistance. Although 200 residents from the original 1,100 households applied to The Community Builders as prospective tenants in Park DuValle, only 59 met the criteria for eligibility, followed through on the application, and moved into the new development. Another 22 families moved in but later left, including ten households that vacated or were evicted because of pending action on lease violations.

Embedded in these facts are the challenges of preparation: What are the most effective ways of preparing the Clarksdale residents to meet the requirements for return? Certainly, not all Clarksdale residents will choose to return, but for those who do—what kind of assistance do they need to make that a reality?

Though the Clarksdale revitalization is under way, the comprehensive case strategy plan to address those challenges can still be improved.

In light of the unforgiving timeline of HOPE VI efforts, *Making Connections* Louisville saw an opportunity to bring together the key players in Louisville and pair them with their counterparts in Chicago to facilitate team building and the rethinking of their strategic plan for case management.

THE CONSULTATION

Peer matches are an intensive form of technical assistance that is made available to *Making Connections* sites. They consist of structured opportunities for teams of people from two or more communities who are working on a similar issue to come together to exchange their expertise and practical knowledge in order to address a particular challenge that has been identified in advance. Careful preparation of a peer match greatly increases the likelihood of success. Before traveling to Chicago, a series of facilitated conversations helped the Louisville team to clarify its learning objectives and finalize the team's composition. Although the Louisville team developed the initial learning objectives, both teams acknowledged that their intention was to learn from each other in an atmosphere of true peer exchange. The Louisville team chose to frame its learning objectives in the form of key questions.

Learning Objectives

1. How is a mixed-income community built that includes ALL new neighbors and provides vulnerable families what they need to thrive, especially around getting and sustaining employment? Are there specific/different needs of public housing families?
2. What kind of comprehensive case management is required to accomplish this? How is this different from traditional case management? How do work and workforce supports fit into this?
3. What kinds of partnerships are necessary between community and public agencies? How can these partnerships be strengthened to better support families?
4. How do you create a shared vision in this kind of community among partners and families?

Participants

During the peer match, the team from Louisville received detailed information about the Chicago *Plan for Transformation* — both the overarching vision and the nuts and bolts of operations.

The Louisville team was comprised of 12 people who represent key stakeholders in the Clarksdale HOPE VI revitalization process. In addition to representatives from the Louisville Metro Housing Authority, Louisville Metro Department of Human Services, and The Community Builders, the team included the director of counseling for Career Resources Inc., the operator of the Louisville-area One-Stop Career Center; the local site coordinator and technical assistance coordinator for *Making Connections* Louisville; and a consultant for *Making Connections* Louisville who specializes in private/public sector connections.

The peer consultants from Chicago represented a mix of people from public and private entities engaged in case management and employment services for public housing residents, including:

- the Near West Side Home Visitors Program, a social service agency that provides both case management and employment services;
- Project Match, an employment program;
- the Cara Program, an employment program;
- the Heartland Alliance, a social service agency that provides both case management and employment services;
- Partnership for New Communities, a funding collaborative created to support the goals of the *Plan for Transformation*;
- the Chicago Housing Authority; and
- the Chicago Department of Human Services.

The peer match was facilitated by staff from the Center for the Study of Social Policy, in conjunction with an independent, Chicago-based consultant.

The consultation took place in Chicago from October 24–26, 2005, and included both group discussions, a neighborhood tour, and visits to community locations. It began with a panel presentation at the Partnership for New Communities followed by a reception and dinner. On the second day, the group visited the Near West Side for a tour of the neighborhood and a group discussion with the Near West Side Home Visitors Program. That afternoon, the team met with the Heartland Alliance staff. On the final day, the group visited the Cara Program for a tour of its facility and experienced “morning motivations,” followed by a discussion with senior staff members. Staff from Project Match joined the group for lunch, after which the Louisville team reflected on its experience and outlined next steps. The remainder of this report captures the main lessons the team learned while in Chicago and details its initial plan for moving forward.

LESSONS LEARNED

During the peer match, the team from Louisville received detailed information about the Chicago *Plan for Transformation*—both the overarching vision and the nuts and bolts of operations. Service providers from a variety of perspectives and backgrounds discussed their individual roles within the *Plan for Transformation* and spoke frankly about their successes and missteps.

Over the course of the three days, both teams frequently made reference to the difference in scale between the two cities. Because of the size of its population and the scope of its public housing, Chicago clearly faces certain challenges a smaller city like Louisville does not face. For instance, Chicago has multiple HOPE VI revitalizations under way at once, making the issues of relocation and return exponentially more complicated. At the same time, it can use its size to leverage more resources than a city like Louisville.

As a result of this difference in scale, the Louisville team had to, in effect, “translate” some of the information it received to fit its own circumstances. For instance,

in Chicago, they outsource all their case management services to private agencies. In Louisville, all case management is done by government entities—either by LMHA or LMDHS. In addition, the developer in Chicago is charged with the ultimate responsibility for providing social services (after a period of time) while no such responsibility exists in Louisville.

Chicago, in essence, offered an inspiring array of practices and experiences for further exploration and understanding. More importantly, it provided an image of what a passionate team of people committed to a shared vision can accomplish.

The Louisville team went to Chicago with four key questions and came home, not with a formula, but with a wealth of material from which to generate its own answers and the motivation to forge stronger alliances.

1. HOW IS A MIXED-INCOME COMMUNITY BUILT THAT INCLUDES ALL NEW NEIGHBORS AND PROVIDES VULNERABLE FAMILIES WHAT THEY NEED TO THRIVE, ESPECIALLY AROUND GETTING AND SUSTAINING EMPLOYMENT? ARE THERE SPECIFIC/DIFFERENT NEEDS OF PUBLIC HOUSING FAMILIES?

Lessons of the Near West Side

The Near West Side community in Chicago and its history of activism and outreach provide a useful lesson about the process of building a true, mixed-income community. Though anecdotal, it illustrates the many dimensions to this process and highlights the core challenges.

A History of Activism and Outreach

The Near West Side sits just a few miles west of Chicago's downtown loop, making it an attractive site for gentrification or downtown expansion. The first wave of outside interest came in 1988 when the Chicago Bears proposed tearing down a number of single-family homes to build a stadium. Lifelong residents, many of them senior citizens, came together to defeat this measure, and in the process developed

an advocacy and development arm for their neighborhood interests—the Near West Side Community Development Corporation.

In the early 1990s when the Chicago Bulls proposed building the United Center Stadium in the area, the community leveraged its unity to negotiate a deal that included replacement housing and the construction of a new branch library.

In 1997, the New West Side Community Development Corporation (NWSCDC) invited developers to participate in a “Showcase of Homes” with the purpose of creating a prototype for scattered-site public housing.

“We knew that gentrification was becoming an issue, which is why we wanted to bring in scattered-site public housing. We knew it would keep the big money out. It was a deliberate strategy on our part,” stated Ernest Gates, director of the NWSCDC.

The NWSCDC has always seen its mission as being broader and deeper than mere development. They have made a point of honoring and lifting up the contributions of ordinary, hard-working folks. Many streets and buildings, including the library are named after these citizen leaders. The community sponsored an essay contest where neighborhood children had to go out and interview residents to find out who these people were. “We want to convey to the children that you don’t have to do monumental things to make a difference,” stated Gates. The logo for the NWSCDC is a “phoenix rising from the ashes” and is carved into every building they develop.

The Importance of Site-Specific Criteria and a Social Contract

The Near West Side is also the site of the former Henry Horner Homes, one of the more notoriously mismanaged public housing communities in Chicago prior to the *Plan for Transformation*.

The Henry Horner Homes site is now being revitalized and reborn as West Haven.

Begun in 1997, Phase I of the plan for West Haven—100 percent public housing—is now complete. Phase II, a mix of public housing, affordable, and market-rate housing is nearing completion.

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Ernest Gates
Director, NWSCDC

When the site received its HOPE VI grant, Henry Horner Homes was being governed by federal consent decree. This decree supersedes all other public housing requirements, including rules for relocation under HOPE VI. Therefore, those original Henry Horner residents who return do not have to follow the same site-specific criteria as others who move into the renewed properties. Specifically, former Horner residents do not have an employment requirement.

Phase I of HOPE VI was designed so that 50 percent of the families would be employed and 50 percent unemployed. However, because of the consent decree, this plan was unenforceable.

“We thought that the non-working folks would follow the working folks. But in fact the opposite happened. Once the working families found out that if they stopped working, they would go to zero rent, they stopped working,” stated Ernest Gates.

Gates is a strong believer in the importance of a clearly understood social contract. “I have difficulty in giving people new housing without putting anything into the pot.”

He went on to point out the advantages of Louisville’s position. “You have the carrot and the stick because you control the housing. You have to have site-based selection criteria, and there has to be buy-in.” Gates made the point that market-rate residents will want to know who their neighbors are and what is expected of them.

He and his team were surprised to discover that Louisville did not yet have clear site-specific criteria. “That’s important to decide. You’re trying to prepare these people for something you don’t know. What I’m hearing is a recipe for failure if this is strung along until the very end.”

Site-Specific Criteria and Enforcement — More Than Tough Talk?

The importance of clear site-specific criteria was echoed by Meghan Harte of the Chicago Housing Authority when she said, “If you have the political will, set out expectations and be consistent.”

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Mary Howard
Senior Director,
Heartland Alliance

In addition to an employment requirement, some of the other requirements for residents in Chicago are:

1. Passing a credit check—many residents are unable to get utilities in their name;
2. Passing a drug test;
3. No lease violations; and
4. No police record.

However, consistency and enforcement of criteria have presented challenges to those involved. When asked about employment requirements, Mary Howard from the Heartland Alliance, a nonprofit social service agency with a human rights mission, offered a somewhat different perspective. “People who can work, should work,” she stated. “However, I don’t think it’s fair to put a number on something they have no control over. Our economy is horrible. It’s not fair to deny housing to someone because they can’t find employment. It’s a lot of tough talk really—at the end of the day, how do you keep it effective?”

Toby Herr from Project Match offered the results from recent studies done in Chicago on HOPE VI projects. These studies showed that a lot of people didn’t want to come back because they didn’t like the constraints of site-specific criteria. In addition, many people like the flexibility of the voucher program, which allows them to choose the location they live in and therefore the criteria they have to meet.

The Importance of Targeted Support Services

The Home Visitors Program in the Near West Side was created after the HOPE VI renewal plan for Henry Horner Homes was under way and it was apparent that some families were not “making it.” They were not getting the education and support services they needed prior to moving in. The property manager wanted a closer alliance with social services so that if the family had a problem with delinquent rent, it could receive assistance to work it out.

Originally, the Home Visitors Program relied solely on referrals from the property manager. Now it is using community outreach workers to knock on doors and connect with families in the streets and in the community, often receiving referrals from families themselves. Building relationships is a key facet of the program. Traditional counseling—client and case manager sitting across from each other in an office—has proven to be ineffective for this population. In West Haven, the outreach workers have genuine ties to the community, lending them that much more credibility with the residents.

Creating trust is essential in this model. “If you say you’ll do something, follow through,” stated Vorrícia Harvey, director of the Home Visitors Program. “Support people and be positive, but be straight with them. You must know both the resources and families so you can make a good match.”

The Importance of a Civic Infrastructure

“The challenge is not doing bricks and mortar and thinking that you’re building a mixed-income community. The challenge is to get them to interact. People get entrenched in their positions and have no desire to mix,” stated Ernest Gates.

In West Haven, as Phase II progressed and the market-rate and affordable homes began filling in, neighborhood leaders realized that the community was becoming polarized. Friction emerged over basic lifestyle issues. For instance, the public housing people tended to gather on front porches or street corners. The market-rate people tended to use their backyard, and resented the noise and intrusion on the sidewalks.

“Everyone talks about cultural diversity, but it gets thrown in the corner when you talk about poor black families,” said Gates. “An effort needs to take place to educate each other or you have a mixed-income community in name only.”

Because of this friction, Concerned Residents of West Haven, also known as CROW, was created. It established a venue for people to work out their differences and address long-term issues.

When CROW was first established, the group realized that it needed to get on the Local Advisory Council. The sitting president had been there for 30 years, and it was time for new leadership, according to many residents. People were being lost in the *Plan for Transformation*. They didn't know how to respond to new criteria—specifically how to be lease compliant or pay for gas and electric.

“We began telling folks, the key is self-sufficiency. The days are over when you don't have to pay rent or pay utilities,” stated Crystal Palmer, community outreach worker for the Home Visitors Program. Initially they had to use incentives to get people to come to meetings (specifically 13-inch televisions). Now they have people waiting to get in.

CROW developed a successful vehicle for resident education called the West Haven Feud, a game show-style event designed to help people understand the complexities of their lease. “We used scare tactics to get people there. We told them that their house was in danger of being lost and they needed to know their rights,” and it worked. Now the West Haven Feud is a yearly event.

Toby Herr of Project Match had a slightly different take on the goals of a mixed-income community. She takes issue with the idea that people who live in the same community need to be involved with each other socially. Instead, she promotes a more practical approach focusing on shared agreements and goals. “I don't want to talk to my neighbors. I'm not interested,” she stated. “However, you must have a vehicle to address complaints. Mixed-income communities tend to generate complaints. We haven't taken seriously enough the idea of conflict resolution. It's an art and a science. It's not a casual thing to do.”

Regardless of the outcome—peaceful coexistence or social connection—a civic infrastructure is critical in a mixed-income community. Most experts would agree that the process of building a mixed-income community cannot be reduced to a recipe or a checklist. Based on the experience of the Near West Side, it is clearly an evolving process, involving ongoing activism and education; targeted support services; a strong civic infrastructure, including a mechanism for communication and addressing grievances; and clearly defined expectations for all neighbors.

2. WHAT KIND OF COMPREHENSIVE CASE MANAGEMENT IS REQUIRED TO ACCOMPLISH THIS?
HOW IS THIS DIFFERENT FROM TRADITIONAL CASE MANAGEMENT? HOW DO WORK AND
WORKFORCE SUPPORTS FIT INTO THIS?

The Louisville team was very interested in the model and component parts of the Chicago case management system.

The Model

Molly McGrath, deputy director of the Chicago Department of Human Services (CDHS), presented the Service Connector model they employ to provide support for families involved in the *Plan for Transformation*.

Service Connector is a privatized case management program that is:

- oriented as a neighborhood-based program with 31 locations;
- focused on results and accountability in contracts; and
- anchored in continuous quality improvement.

The goal for families is to achieve self-sufficiency, meaning that families “will have income and benefits sufficient to reduce their dependency on public housing and other government subsidies.” Case managers find out what is important to clients and then help them figure out how to take the next step to achieve their goals.

The Service Connector program, modeled after the Home Visitors Program in the Near West Side, emphasizes outcomes as opposed to utilization, which represents a major paradigm shift for service providers. In Chicago, the concern goes even deeper than statistical outcomes—they are interested in “authentic transformation,” another relatively new term in social service and public policy parlance. McGrath described it as the difference between a family actually having more income and a case manager getting someone a job and counting it as a win.

The representatives from the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) and CDHS were unflinching in their assessment that not all providers “get it.” McGrath put it this

way, “How do I get everyone to understand that it has more to do with liberation theology than it does with public policy enforcement?”

CHA and CDHS actively educate and direct their providers to expand their understanding of their work. McGrath insists that providers constantly make new partners. “You have to convince me that you are making new partners every month. Do you know the ministers, the owners of the businesses? I fight fiefdoms—the notion that this neighborhood has always been served by this provider and that’s that.”

Both agencies expect their providers to be proactive and resourceful. “Providers will say, ‘What do we do?’ And we respond, ‘I don’t know, go figure it out,’” stated McGrath. They also expect their agencies to share intellectual capital through regular meetings with their peers.

The Component Parts

Because Phase I of the Henry Horner revitalization is largely complete, the Home Visitors Program no longer is involved in “move-in and move-out services.” The Heartland Alliance, a large social service agency, currently provides relocation services for several HOPE VI efforts. As a result of its size, it has the capacity to secure contracts for both relocation specialists and Service Connectors. Mary Howard, senior director of supportive housing, described these positions and what they provide residents.

Move-Out Provider: The job of this person is to assist those families moving out and provide case management 90 days before and after they move. They do all the paperwork while another provider does housing counseling. They make an introduction to schools for any children, secure bussing, and then transition the family to the Service Connector.

Service Connector: The major function of the Service Connector is to make sure families are lease compliant and that they have services while they are waiting to relocate. If they move to a new community, they are given a new Service Connector in that neighborhood. It is considered a safety net while people are waiting for tran-

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Department of Human Services

sition to new housing. The typical client load of a Service Connector is 55 cases with 25 to 35 active cases.

Move-In Provider: This provider works with the client one year pre-move and post-move. They help families meet site-specific criteria. For instance, if a resident had no work history, they would link the resident with a transitional employment specialist. Employment is one of the biggest barriers. There is a 30-hour-a-week work requirement. If a tenant loses a job, he or she has one year to make it right. What they hear from developers is that if they are good tenants, they are much less likely to kick them out. The typical client load is 30 cases.

At Heartland, most move-in and move-out specialists have a master's degree and at least five to seven years experience because it is fast-paced and the work is emotionally intense. According to LaRhonda Magras: "They have a gift of being honest and real with people. They can sit down with a person and say, 'Understand this—the crane is coming.'"

The Service Connectors and the relocation specialists have regular case management meetings during which they identify clients in need of special attention. They go on joint home visits, the primary case manager taking the other along. Joint home visits reduce family confusion.

The Heartland Alliance, like the Home Visitors Program, actively seeks out residents in the community. "We do cartwheels, stand on our heads. We have tons of 'meet and greets,'" said LaRhonda Magras. "We knock on doors, go to job fairs, home-buying fairs, health screenings." They also try to get parents involved through their kids. For instance, they are at the schools on the days report cards are handed out.

Resident Protections

In Chicago, resident protections are significant. Every resident is on the list for future developments somewhere. If they stay lease compliant, they are guaranteed a spot. Residents have priority to go back to the site they came from. When they are relocated, they can move into an existing CHA structure, take a voucher, or move

into an unsubsidized unit. If they take a voucher, a relocation specialist identifies five potential locations and then brings them to visit three.

Employment Program Models

One of the biggest challenges facing case managers is helping public housing residents secure and sustain gainful employment.

Both the Heartland Alliance and the Near West Side Home Visitors Program provide employment training and counseling as part of their comprehensive case management services. They each have a dedicated employment specialist and job developer.

At the Home Visitors Program, employment specialist Lorene Lyles focuses on career development, including résumé building, soft-skills training, and creating plans for addressing barriers such as transportation or child care problems. In addition, she helps people see the strengths and assets they already have, such as a history of volunteer work.

Lyles reported that her clients find one-stop centers very intimidating due to their size and level of activity. In her experience, public housing residents need a significant amount of mentoring and one-on-one assistance to be successful.

This is a point echoed by the Heartland Alliance, which has a Transitional Employment Program as part of its contract with CHA. In its experience, clients need that extra level of support and hand-holding to overcome barriers. In addition, they have discovered that many employers need certain assurances that these residents will be qualified employees. The Heartland Alliance has created a new program in which it secures employment for a client and pays the employer a stipend of \$6.50 an hour for the employee for four months. The goal is for the employer to take that individual on permanently at the end of the probationary period.

The Louisville team had the opportunity to meet with two private agencies dedicated to employment training that have taken different approaches.

The Cara Program

The Cara Program was founded in 1991 by Tom Owens, a successful businessman and entrepreneur. After working with Mother Teresa, he was inspired to help others in his hometown of Chicago achieve lasting, substantial success. Cara is run like a business—it's focused on achievements and attempts to simulate the rules and culture of the work environment in everything it does. Approximately 70 percent of its program graduates remain employed for more than one year.

Cara began as a job placement program for homeless individuals, but the founders quickly discovered that many of its clients were looking for more than a job—they were looking for personal transformation. The familiar refrain was “I’m sick and tired of being sick and tired.” Many of them were recovering alcoholics and substance abusers. Today, the program focuses on what they call the “five transformations”—Change your behavior. Don’t relax. Know the greatest truth of who you are. Look with new eyes. Think outside the box.

Cara guarantees that anyone who enters its program and follows its rigorous guidelines will be placed in a permanent full-time job with benefits. The only requirements are that clients be mentally stable, drug free for a minimum of four months, and motivated and determined to work full time.

The cornerstone of its program is a daily ritual called “Morning Motivations.”

At the beginning of each day, all Cara staff and clients gather in one room to uplift and inspire each other. Individuals stand up one at a time and respond to the question of the day. The day the Louisville team visited, the question was “What have you learned from being at Cara and how have you applied it?” They then conclude with a song of their choice. The whole experience is very jubilant, supportive, interactive, and, ultimately, an excellent team-building opportunity.

How the Program Works

The first five weeks are dedicated to “transformation training,” focusing on conflict management, time management, and altering negative patterns of behaviors and

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thinking. They also look at the entire constellation of clients' needs—housing, child care, medical, financial, transportation—and how that might impact their ability to get and keep a job. There is no discussion of particular jobs or placement at all at this point. The emphasis is on their internal transformation.

In the next phase, clients continue their transformation work, but they begin to participate in job search activities and job readiness training.

Throughout the program, if a client misses a day without attempting to resolve whatever conflict he or she has (court appearance, doctor's appointment, etc.), the person is immediately dismissed. One strike and you are out. "We want them to learn that most things can be addressed," stated Brandon Crow, director of client support.

The program does not end when the participant is hired. Cara provides ongoing support for one year after an employee is hired. To spur financial independence, Cara gives them \$50 to start a savings account in a bank. For every \$20 that the employee saves per month, Cara matches it with \$100, up to \$1,000. They must save for a year to receive this money.

Developing Corporate Partners

Cara has three full-time employees dedicated solely to job placement and developing corporate partners. They actively work with 60 to 75 employers in the city. In addition to traditional development methods, they also form partnerships with particular institutions to provide industry-specific job training. For instance, Cara has a training program in financial services provided by Bank One and has placed 22 clients in one year. It recently began a similar training program for commercial cleaning with ABM Lakeside.

If a company is skeptical or reluctant to hire an individual, they sometimes offer a free trial run where an employee performs the job for three weeks before the employer must commit to a salary and permanent placement. Cara pays the employee out of its own funds.

Cara staff consider themselves “sales people”—the challenge for them is to engage others with their social mission while convincing them that Cara also has a valuable product. They don’t spend any more time talking about their mission than they do talking about their clients’ needs.

Clean Slate

The team from Cara acknowledged that a program as rigorous as Cara is not necessarily a good fit for public housing residents. While many aspects of it are transferable (its emphasis on motivation and team building in particular), the “one strike and you’re out” principle simply is not practical for a public housing population. Additionally, many public housing residents are difficult to place in jobs due to felony convictions and lack of work history.

The Cara staff encouraged the Louisville team to look closely at one particular program it offers called *Clean Slate*, based on a program in New York City. *Clean Slate* is a neighborhood beautification and recycling business. The program was developed to provide real work experience for those program participants who were, for a variety of reasons, difficult to place. Many of the participants have prison records or no job experience at all. With *Clean Slate*, they can get critical job skills training in a protected environment while providing a valuable service to the community. Participants are called interns and are taught to see themselves as “ambassadors” and providers of customer service. They have a responsibility to greet 100 people a day. Of the first ten interns in the program, seven got permanent jobs.

The funding from this program comes from both public and private supporters as well as discretionary funds held by aldermen and community levies.

Project Match

Unlike the Cara Program, Project Match accepts everyone who comes through the door. Because of this emphasis on inclusion, it cannot rely on one single method or strategy for helping people find and retain jobs. “Everyone is different. You have to build in capacity for that,” said Toby Herr, director of Project Match.

Project Match uses a human development model in its work that in Herr's words says "We're all complicated people and our roles are quite interrelated." This contrasts with the very common "barrier" approach to employment in which employment specialists help people identify and overcome barriers to work, such as criminal backgrounds, drug abuse, victim status, and low skill levels. Toby Herr eschews this approach because "tons of people with these barriers work."

At Project Match, staff also believe that the pathway to stable employment is not a linear shot, but rather an evolving process that may involve several job losses. Their strategy is to get the client attached to them as a provider and then treat the first job loss as a non-event, with no shame involved.

They use a ladder metaphor to explain the pathway to economic success. Everyone has his or her own appropriate starting point on that ladder. The case manager's job is to get individuals always thinking about the next step up the ladder.

They have had to add lower rungs for those who aren't ready to work. In these cases, their approach is to look at the activities a person is already involved in and formalize them. For instance, if a person volunteers occasionally at their child's school, that person is asked to commit to a certain number of hours a week. "We build on what they are doing, and keep raising the ante. You have to figure out how to keep them moving," stated Herr.

Project Match has a contract to work with 150 residents of the former Henry Horner Homes. The Louisville team was very interested in how the "ladder" approach can work in a public housing community. In the Henry Horner community, Project Match staff use a "frequent-flyer" program. Participants earn points for completing personal goals. Every two months they have a celebration where people can redeem these points for prizes. They have discovered that the kids have taken to the process more than anyone and actually push their parents into going to the goal-setting meetings. This program has been very successful, but is also very time-consuming for staff. Herr added that it is important to be extremely strict about verification. If a resident has a goal to clean out closets, then someone must visit the house and inspect the closets.

"Everyone is different.

You have to build in
capacity for that."

Toby Herr

Director, Project Match

Summary

In Chicago, comprehensive case management has a number of significant characteristics:

1. It is results oriented.
2. It ensures no gap in services; the Service Connector helps maintain a continuous connection for relocated residents.
3. It is place based, serving the residents where they are.
4. It is strengths based and focuses on what is important to the client.
5. It involves a dedicated employment specialist and job developer.

3. WHAT KINDS OF PARTNERSHIPS ARE NECESSARY BETWEEN COMMUNITY AND PUBLIC AGENCIES? HOW CAN THESE PARTNERSHIPS BE STRENGTHENED TO BETTER SUPPORT FAMILIES?

One common denominator between all the agencies from Chicago—public and private—was the emphasis on partnership and collaboration. By looking at the *Plan for Transformation* as a whole, it's possible to extrapolate the elements that contribute to the success of its partnerships and, ultimately, to better services for families.

A Clearly Defined Model

CDHS created the Service Connector model and this is a known quantity among all providers. Having a clearly defined and specific model increases awareness among partners that everyone has the same mission and decreases the possibility of conflict and misunderstanding.

Effective Oversight

When asked how they handle conflicts and problems between providers, Molly McGrath stated: “Meghan [Harte, from CHA] leverages the right executives. When the mayor calls you, you come.” Effective partnerships require management. Some

entity must be responsible for nurturing partnerships, troubleshooting problems, and creating an atmosphere of teamwork and vision.

Regular Meetings

Consistent communication is essential for strong partnerships of any kind, but even more so in case management. Case managers meet to discuss shared cases on a regular basis, thereby ensuring better wraparound care and less confusion on the part of the resident.

Shared Tracking System

In Chicago, they use a shared tracking system, utilizing software called Salesforce.com, which is actually customer management software for sales people. All agencies that subcontract with CHA input data into this tracking system. Case managers only have access to the families on their caseloads. Then there is a more senior access. They only gather what they feel is truly helpful and useful. Case notes are not entered so inputting can be done by data technicians. There is no data lag this way.

Shared Intellectual Capital/Technical Assistance

All providers are required to share “intellectual capital.” The ramifications of this are threefold: providers increase their understanding of their work, they feel a sense of connectedness and responsibility to their peers, and they operate from a position of continuous improvement. Continuous improvement requires regularly questioning basic assumptions and addressing what is not working.

4. HOW DO YOU CREATE A SHARED VISION IN THIS KIND OF COMMUNITY AMONG PARTNERS AND FAMILIES?

In Chicago, it is evident that considerable time and effort has been spent formulating a vision. Beginning with the simple act of naming their process the *Plan for Transformation*, Chicago indicated to its populace that it takes this venture very seriously. It also appears to have a comprehensive communications strategy to back up this plan, including graphic materials of every kind and a logo of *CHANGE* that

appears on all their materials. The combination of CHA and *CHANGE* highlights again that this process is not the “same old, same old.”

A video created to describe the undertaking offers an instructive overview for newcomers to the process and once again reinforces the core message: “We mean business.”

Chicago understands that it must remake its image. It conducted a focus group with public housing constituents and discovered that many people don’t trust CHA and don’t want to be associated with CHA.

It also discovered it needed to convince providers that things are different—that the culture of mediocrity is no longer acceptable. “For a long time the public housing authority was the excuse people gave for not doing their job well. People used to sit in meetings all day and point fingers at CHA,” stated Meghan Harte of CHA.

A shared vision requires direction at the highest levels of governance and continual reinforcement and support. In Chicago, the Partnership for New Communities functions as a private support system for the *Plan for Transformation*. The partnership brings together business, civic, and not-for-profit leaders in a funding collaborative to support the goals of the Chicago public housing transformation.

Established in 2003, the partnership was created out of the belief that there is “credibility in collaboration.” It recognized that success in this new initiative would require the combined efforts of everyone in the community—not just those involved in public housing. Specifically, the partnership stimulates business and civic investment and involvement, strengthens the economic infrastructure, works to attract a broad range of homebuyers, expands access to child care and early education, and supports social services.

But a shared vision must be reflected at every level of involvement. In Chicago, resident groups like CROW in the Near West Side carry the message of *CHANGE* to residents when they go door-to-door making service linkages. Providers like the Heartland Alliance and the Home Visitors Program demonstrate that they “get it”

by their emphasis on authentic transformation, as opposed to just putting a check mark on results. Employment specialists carry the torch when they think outside the box and create innovative programs to address the special needs of hard-to-place residents like *Clean Slate* and the “frequent-flyer” program at Henry Horner.

In Chicago, a shared vision and the language of change started at the top, but it was supported and affirmed on every level, and continues to this day. The question is begged—can shared vision begin at another level? Can a group of providers or mid-level managers generate a shared vision for change that resonates with the public, every level of government, and the population they are serving?

PARTICIPANT REFLECTIONS

The facilitator set the tone for sharing reflections and “aha” moments: “The best thing is the chance to realize what’s possible. In Spanish, it is *‘si, se puede.’*”

The majority of the comments revolved around the nature of the partnerships in Chicago.

“I was impressed by their communication. Everyone knew that they played a piece in the story and that they were connected.”

“We have to get away from the silo mentality. No one agency has the answer. We have to find a way to link agencies.”

“It really has to be a working network—with accountability.”

“In certain departments we meet regularly, but what I heard from these people is that they have regular ongoing communication.”

“It takes a lot of deeper relationships. These people know what every Service Connector does. That’s how you get the buy-in.”

“We have money all around the table. Are we using the money that we have and leveraging things so we can think outside the box?”

“There is real value to group work. We could have support groups where people can come together.”

People responded to the vision behind the *Plan for Transformation*.

“In Chicago, it’s apparent that this is a big deal. Every agency has to commit to talking about this.”

“If they can do this at that level, there’s no reason it can’t be done. Sometimes it takes one person with a vision that could make things happen.”

“It hasn’t been made a big enough deal in Louisville.”

“Molly McGrath said don’t be afraid to make changes. I’m for turning it upside down. It goes above some of our levels. It hasn’t been set up like it should be. There should be write-ups in the paper.”

Some people were impressed by specific aspects of the certain programs.

“The ‘frequent-flyer’ card used by Project Match at West Haven is similar to our network card. How can we connect it to Louisville families?”

“I liked how at Cara they mixed the socially oriented terminology with the spiritual and emotional terminology. The two worlds can combine.”

Employment was also on their minds.

“My big aha is hearing about the role of the job developer. That’s a piece we need.”

“The letters of commitment from employers written during the HOPE VI grant writing process are meaningless. You have to carefully build and nurture those relationships.”

NEXT STEPS

In regard to next steps, the team members from Louisville determined that they had three major questions in front of them:

1. How do we change our processes?
2. How do we communicate better with each other?
3. Do we have the right buy-in to get this done and bring about change?

The team recognized that it was still disconnected. “This is our chance to learn from the lessons of Park DuValle and get past the ‘he said, she said.’ We’re still finger pointing,” reflected one team member.

But members were somewhat divided on how to build bridges. Some felt that they needed to bring in critical partners who were missing from the table right away, including the mayor, the developer, and the senior administrator of LMHA.

Others felt that the group that traveled to Chicago needed to work through any unresolved issues about its partnership first. Once the group was functioning smoothly, it would create its own vision and plan for change which it would present to others for buy-in.

Everyone agreed that the peer match provided a valuable opportunity to speak frankly and reflectively about the work and challenges facing Louisville in a way that hadn’t been possible before.

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WHAT IS *MAKING CONNECTIONS*?

Making Connections is the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s initiative to improve outcomes for some of the nation’s most vulnerable children and families. The initiative is conducted through deep and durable partnerships with selected cities and neighborhoods across the United States (for more information, visit www.aecf.org/mc). Several core ideas underlie *Making Connections*:

- *Making Connections* is based on the recognition that the greatest number of American children who suffer from “rotten outcomes” live in city neighborhoods that are in many ways cut off—disconnected—from the mainstream opportunities of American life. Thus, *Making Connections* is “place-based”—it focuses on specific neighborhoods in specific cities.
- *Making Connections* has a simple theory: children do better when they grow up in strong families, and families do better when they live in supportive neighborhoods. Thus, *Making Connections* strategies are aimed at helping families obtain what they need to be strong, and helping neighborhoods gain the resources they need in order to support families well.
- *Making Connections* focuses on three major types of “connections” that help families grow stronger and achieve what they want for their children. The first of these is helping families connect to economic opportunities and to jobs that provide income, assets, and an economic future. Research and experience suggest that this type of connection is unlikely without two others: strong connections to the social networks of kin, neighborhood groups, and other informal ties that sustain families when times get tough and connections to high-quality, effective services and supports that help families reach their goals.

Making Connections focuses on improving results for children and families in tough neighborhoods. Core results that *Making Connections* communities are mobilizing around include:

- Families have increased earnings and income;
- Families have increased levels of assets;
- Families, youth, and neighborhoods increase their participation in civic life;
- Families and neighborhoods have strong informal supports and networks;
- Families have access to quality services and supports; and
- Children are healthy and ready to succeed in school.

A key task in ensuring the success of *Making Connections* is making available the learning and technical assistance that the participating sites need to move forward with their work. One of the ways that the Foundation provides this kind of support is by making peer matches available.

WHAT ARE PEER MATCHES?

Since 1995, as part of a broader effort to rely more intentionally on the experiences of people working in the field, the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP) began working with several partners and funders to develop and offer a rather intensive form of peer technical assistance known as peer matches.

Peer matches are structured opportunities for teams of people from two or more jurisdictions who are working on a similar issue to exchange experiences and practical knowledge toward resolving a particular challenge that has been identified in advance.

The rationale behind peer matches is straightforward. Often, the people best able to provide hands-on help are the “doers” themselves—people from states and communities who have successfully addressed a problem or created an effective new policy or strategy. These are the people who have an acute sense of what has and hasn’t worked, and why and why not. They have developed good tools and strategies they can share. And they are usually eager to help others because of a strong sense of shared mission. But while good peer matches are informal, they are never

casual, using a carefully designed process and structure to focus the common interests, roles, and goodwill that exist among peers on producing meaningful change for a community.

Peer matches are a resource- and time-intensive strategy. Careful consideration of when, where, and how to use this approach is, therefore, always warranted. Experience has shown that careful preparation and execution of the matches are critical factors for their success. This approach tends to work best when the following conditions are in place:

- A specific problem or issue has been identified, and the people looking for help are at a key decision point with respect to the design or implementation of a state or community strategy;
- Stakeholders are invested in and have a high degree of ownership in solving a problem;
- The timing is right—e.g., a decision or action that will affect the community’s family strengthening agenda is going to be taken and/or someone needs to be convinced to take action; and
- A reasonably small number of people have the authority and ability to act on what they learn in the match.

To date, CSSP has brokered more than 60 peer matches on topics ranging from creating resident-led community development corporations and governance structures to establishing multilingual homeownership assistance centers and building integrated services models. As illustrated in the case summaries that are part of this series, peer matches help spread good policies and practice, build relationships among different stakeholders who may not always have a chance to work together, and enable people to put changes in place that improve results for children, families, and neighborhoods.

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