Jobs-Plus

Lessons from the Evaluation:
The Community Support for Work Component

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Why Community Support for Work?

Growing appreciation of “social capital” to individual and community well-being

Types

• Supportive (bonding) social capital:
  Mutual exchange, coping, help with “getting by” – e.g., lending money, sharing food or clothing; recreational activities and amusements

• Bridging (instrumental) social capital:
  Access to assistance for “getting ahead”
Jobs-Plus research (original demo) found...

Supportive social networks existed at all sites

- Friendship and exchange networks, but in small groupings
- Majority surveyed said they could “rely on someone for help”
- But also considerable distrust of neighbors (“I stick to myself”)

Supportive networks extended outside the developments (families and friends)

Bridging social networks were weaker

- Residents sometimes shared information about jobs, education, and training, but limited – especially on good jobs
Intention was to strengthen “bridging” or instrumental social capital through CSW

Infuse resident internal networks with information about job openings and how Jobs-Plus could help

• Get residents to “spread the word” among each other
• Essential to “saturation” – touching JP members and non-members

Foster mutual aid among residents to support work

• Get residents to help each other in tangible ways, such as: watch children after school; carpooling; waiting for a repair-person while neighbor is at work; etc.

Connect to external networks

• E.g., with business associations, church groups, others – to tap into networks with better information about job opportunities
Making CSW “real”

Confusion at the sites about exactly what to do

Difficult to build mutual aid networks

Confusion between “community building” and CSW

Decision was made to focus the effort more narrowly, in two main ways:

1. Institutional: Getting collaborative partners to modify policies and practices to be supportive of resident employment

2. Community coaches: Building trained and well-supervised cadre of residents to promote Jobs-Plus and real job opportunities through direct engagement with neighbors.
Changing partner institutions

Some examples

• Evening/weekend hrs to accommodate working residents
  – PHA community centers for education activities
  – Jobs-Plus program itself
  – Even rent recertifications

• PHA staff as partners: Getting the housing managers – and other staff – to promote Jobs-Plus participation and make referrals to the program

• Transportation: Getting bus routes/schedules changed for convenience of working residents; shuttle busses

• On site services: Bringing after-school program, CNA training, and other services on-site; helping some residents become family day-care providers
Role of community coaches

Publicize JP activities, rent incentives, and real job openings

- Knocking on doors and distributing flyers
  - Best when *discussed the content* with residents

- Talking with residents in informal encounters in the community, in the courtyards, on porches, stores where residents hang out

- A strong, visible, pro-active presence

- Helping with targeted *campaigns* (e.g., EITC)
Role of community coaches (continued)

Staging community events – but as venues for promoting work

- Picnics, basketball tournaments, health fairs, job fairs that offer opportunities to discuss work

Securing and supporting on-site services

- In LA program, arranged for GED and ELA classes
- Provided child care for participants during class
- Reminded residents about attending

Serve as eyes and ears of Jobs-Plus

- Relay information on problems neighbors are having that could undercut their work efforts – e.g., with food, or medical problems, or with their children
More recent efforts: social media

Using social media platforms to build “on-line community”

• A widely accessible place for residents to connect directly with each other to
  – Network
  – Encourage each other
  – Share jobs leads
  – Share information about work
  – Share success stories
Challenges

• Some residents resisted sharing personal information: don’t want people talking about them or “knowing their business”

• Some residents wanted to “keep to themselves” to “avoid trouble” with neighbors / not be associated with the development

• Coaches sometimes encountered political conflicts with the resident council; needed to be managed to avoid suspicion, resentment, turf battles

• Maintaining a sense of coaches’ autonomy from the housing authority was important for building trust
Summary

• Clearly specify coaches roles and responsibilities from the outset
• Select the right residents for the job
• Train them and compensate them
• Make the program staff ultimately responsible for the performance of the outreach workers
• Consider other institutional accommodations the program can make to support work
• Build liaisons with housing managers and other collaborative partners to support work