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# **Jobs-Plus**

## **Lessons from the Evaluation: The Community Support for Work Component**

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# Why Community Support for Work?

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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...

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## 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

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## 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”

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**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

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## 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)*

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## **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

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## 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

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- 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

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- 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