



The Jobs Activity Unit

Maria Moriarty—Jobs Supervisor

My unit is responsible to monitor progress for all work activity components. For this article however, we will spotlight our Job Search, First Step, and Work Experience Programs.

In our **Job Search Program** we assist clients with pre-employment skills and soft skills/life skills techniques. The Employment Network assists with funding part of the program. Their facilitators along with David James and Dianna Smetzer conduct all of the workshops. Our main job search Coach David James explains these workshops. (See David’s Write Up on page 2)

Along with those workshops, we provide the clients with labor market information, career counseling, and a vocational assessment of their career interests and basic skill levels of reading and math. The clients utilize the Job Link Center for job search purposes. Job leads from Lorain and surrounding counties are posted for all clients to utilize. Job search web sites are reviewed such as ohiomeansjobs.com and indeed.com. This collaboration between the partners has allowed us to use the expertise of several partners to benefit our clients.

Our **First Step Program** is designed to help individuals identify and address the common challenges that they can often face as they seek employment. In this interactive and supportive program, Common Ground Staff assist in addressing the following issues: Financial, Housing, Parenting Skills, Building and Maintaining Healthy Relationships, Techniques of Dealing with Stressors, Goal Setting, Problem Solving, Computer Skills, Career Counseling Needs, and Coping Strategies. As part of the program we have 2 psychologists who have one on one time with each participant to discuss their barriers to employment. Steps of how to overcome these barriers are given during this one on one time. This program has been very successful in moving our clients to self-sufficiency and making them more successful with ongoing assignments.

Our **Work Experience Program (WEP)** enables each participant to develop work skills (both behavior and job skills) that will enable that individual to obtain and retain employment and work ...Continued on page 3

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Employment Services

Dianna Smetzer—Employment Service Representative

As an ESR, I am the liaison between my customers and employers in Lorain County. That is, when a customer has to do volunteer work, I contact the employer, have the employer sign a WEP (Work Experience Program) contract, provide the customer with a job description and send a copy of the job description to our staff at LCDJFS. I am an advocate for the First Step program. First Step is a four week program that helps customers who have employment barriers gain the self confidence they need in order to find a job. I am also a co-facilitator for the Job Search program.

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What Do We Do To Help People Become Self-Sufficient?

David James—Employment Service Counselor

The question asked is “What do you do to help people become self-sufficient?” According to the people that come through Job Search and First Step, the most important thing I do is give them hope that they can be successful. Sometimes just a confidence boost is enough to get some folks over the hump and on their way.

The thing our participants mention time and again is that I listen to what they have to say and try to get answers for them. Thankfully, when I stop to visit with or drop a groupwise to an ESC, caseworker or child care worker about a client’s need, I usually get a positive and helpful response within 24 hours that I can take back to the participant to ease their mind.



The biggest part of my job is presenting the various job search skills workshops that are part of the Job Search program. Those workshops are:

Job Search Orientation: providing all of the information on the expectations of our agency and the Employment netWork to gain employment or earn a certificate from the program. Biggest challenge: breaking down the animosity of their being “forced” to participate.

Recognizing Transferable Skills: participants identify 21 specific skills, qualifications and accomplishments they possess that will make an employer money. Biggest challenge: getting someone with low self-esteem to recognize they have something to offer.

Resume and Cover Letter Writing: through the use of outlines and check-off sheets, helping folks put together a resume that is accomplishment based. We also have a very easy outline that will allow someone to create a general cover letter that can be easily customized in pursuing specific job opportunities. Biggest challenge: working with folks that have poor reading and writing skills.

Application Process: 90% of job applicants are eliminated within 3 seconds of the employer picking up their application by what they include or don’t include. We give a variety of tips on how to avoid getting screened out at this part of the job search process. Biggest challenge: getting folks do the research necessary and take their time to complete a neat and totally accurate application.

Job Interview Techniques: appearance suggestions and reviewing the most asked interview questions and how to approach them are discussed. We also do videotape practice interviews so job seekers can see how they come across to employers. Biggest challenge: people won’t use their notes to help them remember their answers.

Earned Income Tax Credit: 11 minute video presentation on EITC eligibility and follow up discussion of each person’s refund potential. Information on advanced payments and how to correctly complete the W-4 form when hired are discussed. No real challenges with this one. Clients are interested because of the potential pay off.

Job Search Jeopardy: reviewing material from the workshops to see what made the biggest impression and what needs to be reinforced. The interactive games are fun and educational. It is encouraging how much participants want to help each other out even though there is a competitive aspect to winning the prizes.

It is also my responsibility to complete the month-end Job Search and First Step reports and update the Job Search case files. All advocacy contact has to be logged with advocacy being offered in 19 different areas from attendance to checking case status to forwarding good cause support to resume preparation.

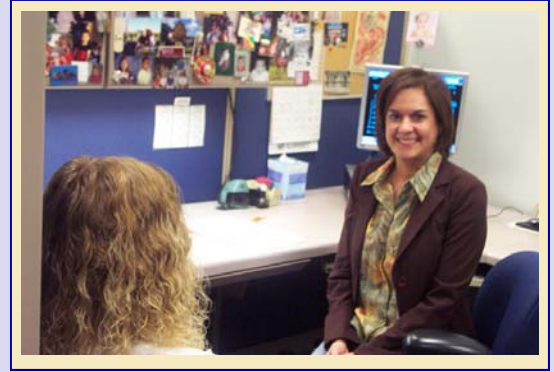
The Employment netWork has me involved in the UCR program, which is the orientation for people who have just been approved for unemployment compensation. My job search tools presentation can run from 25 to 50 minutes depending on the participation of the groups.

I’m never bored, often surprised, and consistently entertained by what I do and the people I come into contact with each day.

Employment Services

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This a four week program that helps to build job search skills for our customers. Some of the workshops include: Job Interview Techniques, Application Process, Resume and Cover Letter Writing. My department searches weekly for current job openings for our customers and post the openings in a common area of our building. I am also trained to perform routine vocational testing to measure skills, interests and aptitudes and abilities of customers.



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toward a better job. WEP is a program in which individuals work without pay at a job site in a public, private-non-profit or private-for-profit organization in order to gain work experience and training. A valid WEP assignment would have the following:

- A planned, structured activity with defined goals
- Time limited participation
- Meaningful tasks that help the person gain good work habits and job skills for employment and/or advancement to a better job
- Progress in the activity is to be documented
- Adequate supervision
- Actual work as main part of the activity. The work must produce an output for the employer. Work experience may be combined with classroom instruction relating to the work experience position, or relating to basic skills and abilities to successfully compete in the labor market.
- Hours of participation that are monitored and tracked by supervisor
- Periodic evaluation of progress in gaining good work habits and skills on a regular basis
- Periodic evaluation of progress leading toward employment on a regular basis

The goal of the WEP program is to prepare individuals for paid employment and to assist employers with free assistance in completing their job tasks.

Increasing our WEP sites will be very critical during this economic climate. State funding our agency received for our First Step Program and other training opportunities will end June 30, 2009. Therefore, creating new WEP sites will be very important. We ask that any employer that is interested in creating a WEP site in your place of employment to contact Dianna Smetzer, Employment Service Representative at (440) 284-4244.

Contact LCDJFS

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