

## Responding to Chronic Homelessness Project Profile

Focus on: **Income and Employment**

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### Homeless Opportunity Providing Employment ("LA HOPE") Los Angeles, CA

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#### **Activity Description**

*Why:* Integrated housing and services programs are best practice models for ending chronic homelessness. A best practice to meet the needs of chronically homeless people who are able to re-enter the workforce is "customized employment." Customized employment involves individualizing the employment relationship to meet the needs of the job seeker and the employer. Under this model, job development begins from the individual job seeker's perspective rather than the labor market perspective. The first step in customized employment is to get to know the job seeker for the purpose of developing a "blueprint," so to speak, of the job that will be custom tailored to them. The job developer negotiates a unique employment relationship based upon the parameters identified as conditions of employment for the person and the individual's contributions and meshing these with the needs of the employer, rather than looking for job openings. Support is provided to the job seeker and employer during the course of the employment relationship toward successful job retention and promotion.

*What:* The Los Angeles Homeless Opportunity Providing Employment (LA's HOPE) is a consortium of Los Angeles agencies working to integrate the permanent housing, mental health and workforce development programs serving the chronically homeless mentally ill population. The Community Development Department, on behalf of the City's Workforce Investment Board, was awarded a grant from the Department of Labor to develop customized employment programs, and the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles in partnership with the County Department of Mental Health will receive a grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development to provide permanent affordable supportive housing under the Shelter Plus Care program.

*Partners:* A consortium of Los Angeles agencies representing the public and private, community-based and faith-based sectors:

- The City of Los Angeles Community Development Department (WIB)
- Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles
- Goodwill Southern California, Inc. (Goodwill)
- Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health
- Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority

- Portals House, Inc.
- San Fernando Valley Community Mental Health Center, Inc. (SFVCMHC)
- Shelter Partnership, Inc.
- South Central Health and Rehabilitation Program (SCHARP)

*Significant Program Design Features:*

All services will be provided with sensitivity to the client's former homeless condition and current mental health and substance abuse issues and in a cultural appropriate manner with the goal of providing continuous improvement in their housing and employment status.

**Enrollment through Outreach at Shelters**

Outreach workers from Portals, SCHARP and SFVCMHC will identify LA's HOPE's seventy-six homeless participants at three of the region's continuously operated overnight emergency shelters.

**Housing and Supportive Services**

Participants enrolled are referred to the partners' existing wrap-around AB 2034 programs to stabilize their mental health issues and address other issues that they are experiencing (e.g. substance abuse, physical health issues, etc.).

Housing specialists from these agencies will help the participant's immediately secure permanent, affordable housing with supportive services in the private market using their federal housing certificate to pay the rent. Additionally, upon enrollment, LA's HOPE participants will receive mental health services, including medication support, 24/7 crisis counseling, case management, and move-in assistance.

**Customized Employment**

Once the participant is living in their own apartment and has exhibited evidence of their readiness to work, Goodwill's staff, in partnership with their case-manager, will begin implementing their customized job plan.

With their recognized expertise in providing employment support to individuals with disabilities, Goodwill will assess the participant's job readiness, work skills, work history, and areas of interest in relation to employment. The Goodwill job developer will begin to work with employers to secure meaningful employment commitments for LA's HOPE participants once they are able to seek competitive employment. Funding is available to provide both wages for *paid supported employment* as well as vocational training for the participants.

Business service reps are working now with employers to find food service, retail, and administrative positions that will fit the population.

### **Selected Funding Sources**

Department of Labor/HUD Ending Chronic Homelessness Through Employment and Housing Programs grant  
State of California AB 34 program  
State of California PATH program  
In-kind and/or financial resources from partners

### **Outcomes**

As of October 1, 2005:

- 73 enrolled
- 59 housed
- 9 searching for housing

### **Places Where Similar Work is Underway**

San Francisco: Hope House