

Transitional Jobs Programs

Transitional Jobs (TJ) programs are employment strategies that help people overcome employment barriers and transition into work through subsidized wage-paid, short-term employment that combines work experience, skill development, and supportive services. TJ programs are based on the assumption that everyone can work, but that some may need more assistance managing employment barriers. Barriers might include a lack of education, a lack of English proficiency, poverty, substance abuse, or a record of incarceration. Transitional jobs are supplemented with appropriate case management and supportive services, so that individuals can build off confidence gained from success in the workplace. In addition, TJ participants gain job-related benefits, such as necessary skills for the transition to full-time, permanent employment.

Transitional Jobs programs partner subsidized employment opportunities with supportive services to ensure success in the labor market.

The Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) administers one of the largest Transitional Jobs programs for ex-offenders in the nation.

Program Components

A comprehensive TJ program includes the following components:

- Orientation and assessment
- Life skills/job readiness training
- Temporary wage-paying, subsidized employment
- Case management and support services
- Career planning; unsubsidized job placement and retention/incentives
- Linkages to education and training.

Community-based organizations with the capacity to provide this level of programming, are the leading candidates for creating TJ programs. Examples, of Chicago CBOs with this capacity include Heartland Alliance, the Cara Program, and Central States SER. While programs tend to be based on a similar model, they can vary greatly in structure and funding. A program's mix of services should be tailored for a specific population. TJ programs range in length from three to nine months, at which time participants transition into unsubsidized employment.

TJ programs differ from "workfare" or "work experience" programs offering cash or benefits in return for work. Instead participants receive a paycheck. Salaries are typically close to minimum wage, and participants usually work only 20-35 hours per week. Earning wages means that program participants earn benefits, such as the possibility of earning quarters toward Social Security, or qualifying for tax credits. TJ programs also differ from other subsidized jobs because they combine work with a range of services—general support, career counseling, skills training, etc. Participants may need these services to be successful in finding and keeping an unsubsidized job.

Transitional Jobs Programs in Illinois

In Illinois there is a long history of using TJ strategies for job seekers who experience barriers to employment. For example:

- In 2008, the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) funded programs across Illinois for over 800 individuals reentering the workforce after incarceration.
- The Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) piloted TJ strategies, and currently funds four TJ sites in Chicago serving around 120 TANF recipients.
- Over the past five years, the Opportunity Chicago initiative has placed around 1,000 CHA residents in subsidized employment, a first step in the transitional jobs process.
- A partnership between the 2016 Fund for Chicago Neighborhoods and IDHS leveraged one-time TANF Emergency Contingency Funds to create TJ programs for over 1,500 Chicagoans in Summer 2010.

Transitional Jobs programs are flexible and allow providers to cater to specific client needs.

Resources for Developing Transitional Jobs Programs

Most TJ programs are funded with a combination of public and private funds, including: Federal TANF dollars; federal Department of Justice grants; state general revenue; City of Chicago corporate funding; Chicago Housing Authority; and private foundations. While transitional jobs had dedicated funding from the U.S. Department of Labor in 2010, Congress eliminated any federal funding for TJ in the Spring of 2011.

The most comprehensive resource for learning more about TJ and getting technical assistance for developing programs is the National Transitional Jobs Network: www.transitionaljobs.net

For more information contact the Chicago Jobs Council at (312) 252-0460 or visit us at <http://www.cjc.net>