

American Job Center Operator's Committee Meeting

Monday, March 11, 2024

Attendees Present: Debbie-Ann Anderson, Director/UCDHS, Barbara Bagger/Literacy NJ, Catherine Hart/HACE, Nikea Young-HACE, Ratyeeman Ward/HACE, Lisa Hiscano/Union College of UC, Marlene Loff/Union College of UC, Isaias Rivera/Union College of UC, Scott Kuchinsky/Plainfield Public Library, Jonathan Marquez/Driving Academy, Syreta McClain/UCVTS, Crystal Orr/Urban League of UC, Clifton Alexander/Urban League of Union County, Tony Staynings/Edison Job Corps, Katia Theodore/CCCC, Jasmine Lee-Simon Youth Academy, Nakaya Bligen/Simon Youth Academy, Cassandra Casella-Simon Youth Academy, Juanita Vargas/UWGUC, Alejandra Londono/UWGUC, Karlicia Thomas, NJ Re-entry Corp

State Representatives Present: Juanito Chiluisa/NJDOL, Isabel Jimenez, NJDOL, Raul Ludizaca/NJDOL, Ingrid Macias/NJDOL, Anthea Williams/NJDOL

DHS County Representatives

DHS Office of the Director Present: Karen Dinsmore, Melissa Lespinasse, Jeffrey Jackson, Allison Maguire-Zuczek

American Job Center Present: Robert Croom, Nasrene Mondol, Carolina Marin, Sharon Best

Division of Social Services Present: Rhonda McClain, Scott Dinardo, Amedio DiCosmo

Division of Youth Services Present: Latoya Bennett, Jasmine Sowah, Ashley Mooney

Division of Individual & Family Support Services Present: Elizabeth Paskewich

I. Welcome & Introductions

The meeting was called to order by Debbie-Ann Anderson, Director of the Department of Human Services. All attendees introduced themselves.

II. Role of Operator – Committee Role

- Director Anderson explained the Operator is the Union County Department of Human Services, whom is charged with providing an integrated approach as the system connector of the American Job Center (AJC) network services to Union County residents. This is the first American Job Center Operator's Committee meeting this year convening the network.
- The Operator looks to streamline customer intake, resources, and make system improvements to align with both the Services and Business teams.
- Melissa Lespinasse, Assistant Director/UCDHS stated the functions of the Operator as required by the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Discussion followed on the coordination and collaboration efforts that are required of the Operator:
 - Coordination of services that are inclusive and customer-focused under the AJC Operator System;
 - Facilitates a seamless integrated partnership system;
 - Develops and implements operational policies of an integrated system that focuses on systems, performance, communication, case management, and using technology to achieve integration/service expansion;
 - Functional alignment of AJC services, teams, and scope of services;

- Focus on prioritizing the hardest to serve populations including persons w/ disabilities and removing barriers; and
- Develop improvements, training, and cross training of AJC staff; and
- Compliance with goals of the NJDOL State Workforce Development Plan and Union County Workforce Development Board Strategic Plan.
- The Committee's participation assists with better outcomes for the AJC system customers, both job seekers and employers as an integrated approach to strategies preventing duplication.
- Partners invited to the meeting are part of the core partners required by WIOA and agencies/organizations that are currently funded, affiliate AJCs and organizations that provide referrals to the AJC to access services.
- Director Anderson emphasized that strengthening partnerships builds upon the county's Human Services ecosystem of available services where employment and training are important for residents to obtain self-sufficiency.
- This Committee provides a safe space for all, bringing truth of experience and system improvements that are needed.

III. American Job Center System and Customer Flow

- Robert Croom, Director of the American Job Center, introduced team members and discussed AJC services. Client eligibility assessment and certification are provided through the AJC. Options for service access are both in person and virtual appointments. Certified eligible customers can access employment and training opportunities with supportive services.
- Business team strategies assist with finding employers and jobs that fit the customer's needs and skill levels.
- The client flow process within the AJC system will be drafted in a matrix with assistance from the AJC and partners over the next few meetings.
- Ms. Lespinasse collected the Survey of Available Services from participants at the meeting. The survey was emailed through the Office of the Director to the Committee with the meeting invitation. Surveys were re-distributed to fill out and return prior to next meeting.

IV. Vendor Services & Open Discussion

- Providers were encouraged to talk about their experiences with the AJC system and services offered.
- Providers were encouraged to talk about UC residents accessing services and operations system improvements.
- Karen Dinsmore, Assistant Director/UCDHS, facilitated the Committee discussions and common themes of the Operator, AJC Network and partners for system improvement.
 - Staff leaving, retirements of long-term staff, and job transitions have impacted the workforce, both county and partners.
 - Contact information for the Operator, AJC and Partners - who to contact and when
 - Effective and open lines of communication are essential for the system to operate seamlessly
 - Have the ability to know what services are available/where they are available, and any staffing changes
 - Customer response improvement - to receive a response even the service is not provided directly, the customer should have a roadmap to where they need to go
 - Clarify eligibility, co-enrollment, funding, and standardized referrals
 - Technology and customers that need in-person assistance
 - Work First NJ - GA/TANF system flow and procedures
 - Celebrate successes and keep positive

- Look at other models for AJC network that are working
- Meet more regularly for updates

V. State Partners Introduction and Functions

- The NJ Department of Labor (DOL) partners involved in Operations, Employment Services, On the Job Training (OJT), Veteran's Services, and Technical Assistance were present.
- NJ DOL discussed programming supporting the AJC network.
- Employment Services, Unemployment and Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Wagner-Peyser services were explained. Benefit question contact information was shared.
- NJ DOL Marketing services, OJT, Rapid Response and Return and Earn programs were also highlighted.

VI. Next Steps

- Completion of the AJC Operator's Committee Service Survey to gather feedback on today's discussion and services available.
- Begin development of the AJC Network's Client Flow Matrix.
- Committee Meeting Schedule – The meeting schedule for the remainder of 2024 has been established. Meeting Invites will be sent after the meeting.
- Begin development of Establishing AJC Operator's Committee Goals.

Next Meeting: Monday, April 14, 2024 – 8:30 a.m., Warinanco Sporting Center, Roselle, NJ