

UNION COUNTY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD
AMERICAN JOB CENTER PARTNER COMMITTEE
KRYSTAL CANADY, CHAIRWOMAN
MEETING MINUTES: TUESDAY, OCTOBER 5TH, 2021 10:00AM

Committee Members

1. Krystal Canady - Committee Chairwoman, The Gateway Family YMCA
2. Perle Almeida, American Job Center
3. LaChelle Thompson, Elizabeth Housing Authority
4. Tina Lopez, Division of Social Service
5. Colleen Clayton, The Gateway Family YMCA
6. Scott Kuchinsky, Plainfield Public Library
7. Robert Croom, American Job Center
8. Christina Topolosky, UCDHS/DIFFS (CSBG)
9. Nicole Augustine, UCHS/DIFFS
10. Veronicah Mwaniki, International Rescue Committee
11. Cathy Waters, Urban League
12. Nancy Berkenfeld, Elizabeth Public Library
13. Christine Backiel, Bridgeway Services
14. Marcela Nunez, Youth Forward
15. Dee Perez, Proceed Inc
16. Isaias Rivera, Union County College
17. Debbie Walter Union Public Library
18. Yunia Labaut, Workforce Advantage
19. Kamili Williams, Division of Social Services
20. Marlene Loff, Union County College
21. Lisa Hiscano, Union County College
22. Julio Sabater, Workforce Advantage
23. Alma Wilson Ward, Easter Seals
24. Nasrene Mondol, American Job Center
25. Cyndy Walsh Rintzler, Inroads for Opportunities
26. Gino Elmarassy, American Job Center

UCWDB Staff

Meredith Barracato
Antonio Rivera

Meeting Summary

- I. **Welcome and Introductions:** Chairwoman Canady welcomed everyone to the second AJC Partner's meeting.
- II. **Review and approval of August 17th, 2021 Committee Meeting minutes:** Motion was made by Cathy Waters approve the August 17th 2021 Committee Meeting Minutes. Robert Croom provided the second motion for the August 17th, 2021 meeting. Motion carried.

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III. Labor Market Information: Meredith Barracato reviewed slides that focused on the Union County labor market from August 2021 (see attachment) and the fastest growing and declining jobs. Meredith Barracato also reviewed additional information on certifications in demand, cities with the most job openings, unemployment claims reports, and information on software and programming skills in greatest demand.

IV: Review of the Strategic Plan Sub-Strategies: Chairwoman Canady reviewed the PowerPoint slides and expressed the importance of obtaining feedback from committee members. Meredith reviewed the strategic plan goals.

Isaias Rivera asked about the co-enrollment process. Meredith Barracato explained that participants such as youth could enroll in youth services and enroll in an occupational training program. Meredith Barracato explained that the Literacy Committee is breaking down the co-enrollment process to create a more straightforward, more unified procedure for all partners to follow. Isaias Rivera added that both the youth and adults should be kept separate when providing services because there is a different dynamic when they are together.

Tina Lopez asked if there was any backend data to the information that was presented. For example, what are some of the barriers facing the clients or the client's background? Tina Lopez also shared that Summit NJ has lots of jobs, but there is limited transportation to that area in the county. Chairwoman Canady shared that she was also surprised by that information on the job postings. Dr. Lisa Hiscano said there are large healthcare providers, which can be a reason for jobs in Summit NJ. Chairwoman asked how often does that data come from the Department of Labor? Meredith Barracato said monthly.

Nancy Berkenfeld asked if government job postings are available because clients are asking for civil service jobs. Tina Lopez added that there is usually not enough turnover in civil service jobs and the need to point people to the Civil Service website <https://www.state.nj.us/csc/seekers/jobs/announcements/> for those opportunities. Isaias Rivera shared with the committee the League of Municipalities' website has government jobs posted across the state. <https://www.njlm.org/Jobs.aspx>. Christina Topolosky added that government jobs are not posted as often, unlike job postings from big companies. Chairwoman Canady mentioned that more people will be returning to the workforce now that the stimulus funding has ended.

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Robert Croom provided some feedback to the committee on the sub-strategies. In particular, Robert discussed the following sub-strategies:

SS #4 – Increase level of wages or stipends- It's important to provide more community residents supportive service resources such as childcare, aftercare because, based on client feedback, there is a need for childcare services. Colleen Clayton from The Gateway YMCA agreed and offered information on the childcare services the YMCA provides.

Meredith Barracato asked the committee members if everyone agreed that childcare/aftercare and transportation are the most critical supportive services. Isaias Rivera mentioned that technology is a significant issue. Chairwoman Canady added that housing is also another significant need in the county that the YMCA has provided support. Cathy Water added that Urban League also provides rental assistance to county residents. Veronicah Mwaniki discussed challenges with the mental health concerns from clients and needing supportive housing. Tina Lopez mentioned that social service staff has been doing wellness checks on clients, and the significant problem clients share is substance abuse issues and mental health. Chairwoman Canady mentioned an uptick in clients concerned over chronic diseases such as diabetes and blood pressure, and the Gateway Family YMCA offers services.

Antonio Rivera discussed how the UCWDB could make policy recommendations based on the needs discussed at the committee meetings. The following is a list of recommendations based on the committee member's discussions.

- Development of specific supportive service sub-strategy.
- Update of current Supportive Service policy.
- Streamline the process for supportive services referrals.
- Identify the partners, what resources they have available, and the cost for those services.
- Establish an MOU/contract with partners/purchase order
- Create an interagency referral mechanism.
- Inventory of what services are available
- Map the referral process
- Supportive Service inventory
- Job seeker/Resource database (Google Doc)
- Make client information (jackets) available to partners so they can
- Create an evening resource fair for clients who can't navigate the various systems
- Redefine the role of career coaches

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- Provide training to all partner staff on the new systems, referral process, and database
- Create a baseline educational strategy among all the partners
- Allow for supportive service agencies to be present at AJC Job Fairs
- Conduct surveys to clients regarding their supportive service needs, preferences, and preferred methods of service delivery.

Chairwoman Canady agreed with needed a streamlined system because resources are available, but the staff does not know what is there to support their clients.

Julio Sabater added the need to identify the role of the case manager at the AJC. Mapping the referral process and who can contact whom at the locations. Based on the possible Congressional approval of the Human Infrastructure Bill, there is potential for more resources. As new resources come in, there is a question of capacity and who would be driving the process, and what their role will look like? He recommends looking at the social service model because it has been successful when meeting the clients' needs. Antonio Rivera reminded everyone that the AJC has supportive services funding that clients can utilize immediately but need to identify the service opportunities, cost, and what that process looks like. Partners should do referrals from the case manager to the case manager that the MOU supports. We need to develop a whole new supportive service policy and do a resource inventory of what is available.

Nancy Berkenfeld wanted to know if the AJC worked with DVRS to help individuals with disabilities with job search and attainment. Christine Backiel from Bridgeway provided information on what the organization does.

Director Rivera mentioned that the AJC has funding in place to provide services, and the committee should focus the conversation on how the partners can work with and what those services are. In addition, it's important to identify staff from each agency that to ensure effective interagency communication. This model can be done to assist clients with housing, mental health concerns, etc. Supportive service funding cannot be used for technology services. Julio Sabater agreed with Director Rivera and mentioned that it's essential to map the services. Julio Sabater mentioned that the One-Stop should look at the welfare-to-work model at Social Services because it seems to work.

Chairwoman Canady agreed with Julio Sabater and asked about the status of hiring a new AJC Director. Director Rivera mentioned they are down to the final interviews, but he does not know when someone will start. Director Rivera mentioned it's essential to move forward regardless of the AJC Director because

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the committee can recommend strategic actions for the UCWDB to approve. He added that several topics had been mentioned that could be created into sub-strategies for the strategic plan.

Julio Sabater asked about doing a comprehensive needs assessment so partners can understand the supportive service needs, and the One-Stop needs to be the lead agency. Director Rivera mentioned it's important to understand that all partners must assist clients collectively and not put the task on one organization or select persons. Chairwoman Canady added that the One-Stop needs support from the partners, but she believes the One-Stop is the driving force.

Robert Croom reviewed SS-19 and SS-23, which discusses having more staff training to have a better idea of what a career coach is and how to conduct assessments and the new business unit. The Business Unit will be working with the career counselors to funnel clients to the job opportunities the business unit develops.

Nancy Berkenfeld discussed the various training and ESL programs offered by the Elizabeth Public Library.

Debbie Walter asked if it was possible to create a database of resources for job seekers. Director Rivera mentioned it could be created, but first, there needs to be an interagency referral system. Nancy mentioned that all libraries have job search data that they can use to find jobs and descriptions. The Elizabeth and Union Public Libraries have a laptop loaner program. Scott Kuchinsky added that the clients need more support to the point of hand-holding because there is a list of resources, but clients have a hard time using it.

Tina Lopez mentioned the importance of getting client feedback on how they would like services to be delivered.

Nancy Berkenfeld suggested bringing in the Jewish Family Services because they also have a job search program. Meredith Barracato mentioned there are lots of organizations that UCWDB has been recruiting.

Chairwoman Canady mentioned it's crucial to have AJC decision-makers at the next meeting and commitment from them. Director Rivera mentioned there are several AJC and Human Services staff on the call who play a critical role in the process of the AJC Network. Chairwoman Canady asked the AJC staff if the discussion today sounded plausible. Nasrene Mondol mentioned that the AJC has been looking at a model that works, and they found collaboration has

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made a difference with partners. She highlighted the project with the Plainfield Public library and the importance of feedback from staff and clients. Scott Kuchinsky added that AJC had developed great systems due to COVID-19, and communication between partners is key to developing these systems. Perle Almeida mentioned it does take a village, and during the job fairs, they were getting feedback from the job seekers, and there is lots of work ahead of them.

IV. Meeting Schedule 2021 Chairwoman Canady reminded everyone the next meeting would be held on Wednesday December 1st 10:00am.

V. COMMITTEE ADJOURMENT