

**Department of Human Services  
Union County American Job Center  
Monthly Partners Meeting  
May 15<sup>th</sup> 2020**

The meeting was opened with a roll call and welcome by Elton Armady, Director, Union County American Job Center.

**IN ATTENDANCE**

Elton Armady	Union County American Job Center
Meredith Barracato	Union County American Job Center
Kamili Williams	Union County Division of Social Services
Tina-Marie Lopez	Union County Division of Social Services
Debbie Ann Anderson	Union County Department of Human Services
Melissa Lespinasse	Union County Department of Human Services
Julio Sabater	Workforce Advantage
Herb Caesar	America's Small Business Development Center
Hector Smith	Edison Job Corp
Cathy Waters	Urban League
Alison Milan	International Rescue Committee
Jasmin Lee	Simon Youth Academy
Isaias Rivera	Union County College
Lisa Hsicano	Union County College
David Moskowitz	NJ Department of Labor/Employment Services
Ally Blumenfeld	Elizabeth Public Library
Perle Almeida	Union County American Job Center
Scott Kuchinsky	Plainfield Public Library
Juanito Chiluisa	NJ Department of Labor/Employment Services
Karen Robinson	Youth Forward
Antonio Rivera	Workforce Development Board
Edward Faver	Division of Rehabilitation Services

A PowerPoint slide presentation of the following information was shared with attendees:

**NEW LEVELS OF PERFORMANCE FOR THE CORE WIOA PROGRAMS**

These pertain to the CORE Partners that have to report performance.

There have been changes made to the Levels of Performance Goals between PY'2020 to PY'2021. Mr. Armady reviewed some of the changes.

***Overcoming Barriers***

Nine of the most common barriers:

1. Uncomfortable with virtual systems; relearning ways to apply for jobs
2. Remote learning; being comfortable with remote learning/being disciplined
3. Wage expectation; clients are refusing job opportunities due to previous pay or UI benefits pay more than previous job
4. Lack of computer skills; need basic computer skills to apply for jobs or new job requirements
5. Lack of Technology (Computer and Wi-Fi); households do not have the tech tools for job search
6. Child Care; limited child care in addition to remote learning requirements
7. COVID-19 concerns; fearful of workplace conditions
8. Mental Health; pandemic taking a toll on mental health
9. Transportation; previous means of transportations are limited or concerning

Mr. Sabater (UCC) stated the lack of language proficiency is becoming more of a barrier when applying for online jobs.

Ms. Barracato (AJC) asked if anyone has been successful with solutions or been creative in overcoming any of the barriers?

Mr. Smith stated Job Corps has been able to deliver approximately 178 Chromebooks to their students working online as of 11/12/2020 and have provided Hotspots to those students who are technically challenged. Job Corp also offers transportation services for testing, etc. and has been successful in assisting a large number of people in obtaining online (technical) and distribution center positions (HVAC).

### **PARTNER STATUS UPDATE**

**Employment Services** –Through the RESEA Program, ES is primarily assisting customers with their needs, as well as referring them to training as much as possible.

Mr. Armady asked if they have found that people are accepting of opportunities and trying to return to work, or are they riding out unemployment. Mr. Moskowitz responded customers have reported that with the holidays approaching they are having a hard time finding openings. Also the pandemic is causing problems in various industries, but for the most part people are still looking for work.

**Youth Forward** – The Youth Forward Program is up and running. They now accepting referrals through the website. There is a registration link on the website, which Ms. Robinson will email to everyone. Youth can register through the link. Once registration is completed, someone will reach out to them within one business day.

The program is providing informational orientation to organizations so they will have an idea how the program works and what services are provided. Youth Forward is also currently administering CASAS testing and is getting ready to do eligibility for many of the youth.

**Simon Youth Academy** – The Academy has been doing well with enrollments, although they have had to drop students do to inactivity in their classes. A recruitment email was sent to local school districts which produced many leads from guidance counselors.

Ms. Lee thanked Ms. Robinson and the Youth Forward Program for their help with recruitment, uploading UC Works, CASAS Testing, etc.

Ms. Lee is also assisting students who want to work with completing job applications, resumes, etc.

**Job Corp** – In regard to recruitment, Job Corp has set up virtual tours of the campus and outreach admissions counselors and their managers throughout NJ have Google Classrooms to conduct orientations.

They also have a classroom that has inspirational and motivational tools and activities. They found during this pandemic youth want to talk and express themselves so they created a forum that allows them to use this platform share and talk with counselors.

Along with their Career Transitional Team, Job Corp has created a pathway under My Pace Program, a program through a Google Classroom that allows them to talk about their careers, education, the military, etc. The consistent communication and interaction with them keeps them interested and engaged.

Job Corp is distribution centers throughout the state such as Amazon, Coca Cola, Frito Lays. Three people have been hired this week.

They also have speakers from the community come in to speak with the students and are very active with the NAACP, who are setting up a scholarship for students will be presented at the January, 2021 graduation. A representative from Microsoft spoke with students through Google Classroom.

**UCC** – One of the barriers UCC is having success with is the mindset. A number of students are unemployed due to layoffs. What UCC tries to make sure they understand is the world is changing, their skills are transferrable, and they have to reinvent themselves. He stated companies are hiring!

Mr. Rivera shared a link in the Chat regarding Remarkable Foods virtual hiring event. The event will take place on November 17 through November 19, 2020 at 10:00 am. They are seeking to hire 100 employees. UCC is partnering with AJC Career Counselors to register and certify applicants before the event

UCC is currently offering Soft Skills classes and has been awarded the NJ Ensures Grant. This will allow them to offer Supply Chain Management, Patient Care Technician, and IC3 classes.

**America's Small Business Development Center** – The Center is encouraging entrepreneurship; once you have this skill set you can develop opportunities in all respects.

Mr. Caesar will be conducting a financial literacy seminar on Wednesday, November 18, 2020 at 4:00 pm. In these troubling times, it is important to be aware of your credit because people will still rely on that as a means to be able to assess you. The seminar will give insight on how to keep on top of your credit and on budgeting skills.

The Center will be hosting several seminars throughout the state at different regional centers. Mr. Caesar will cover eight urban areas.

America's Small Business Development Center received CARES money and is evaluating ways to utilize the money that will enhance peoples' skill set. Mr. Caesar stated they are in the process of a strategic planning program to determine how to move forward and they will be going digital, as they have to adjust like everyone else.

Partners Meeting Minutes – 11/13/2020  
Page 3

**Workforce Advantage** – Workforce Advantage specialized in the hard to serve, limited English speaking population, which has become a serious challenge.

Workforce Advantage has developed NewRow, a user friendly platform and has also began using Quizlet, a new application. Mr. Sabater shared they are spending a lot of time working with students teaching them how to maneuver and navigate through digital applications. He also stated Workforce Advantage had to develop "how to" videos in Spanish to assist students.

This new platform and application can be used with different devices such as; desktops, laptops, and smart phones.

To date, the orientation rate has been excellent. There are several people on the waiting list. There is a high demand for IC3 and Microsoft Office Specialist.

Workforce Advantage has been receiving numerous job orders, including those from various county One Stops. These job orders are distributed to all teachers. Teachers are coaching students on how to apply for positions online.

As students learn the language and digital skills, they are also learning job search and job development.

**Plainfield Public Library** – There are three major programs up and running. The Plainfield Library is open as a GED Testing Site. Scott Kuchinsky is a chief examiner and can sign waivers for minors.

GED is available in Spanish, must register through GED.com.

The ESL Program is doing very well. Seven students have received their citizenship.

IC3 is an industry recognized entry level Digital Literacy Certification Program.

The Library is currently running two evening program under the Workforce Learning Link.

Mr. Kuchinsky stated a lot of their former students are returning.

**Elizabeth Public Library** – The Elizabeth Public Library opened in July with most services available, but is currently closed to the public. The anticipated reopening date is Monday, November 30, 2020.

Virtual services include; TASC and ESL classes, English Conversation Group, job search assistance, and mobile printing. People can still pick up books

**Workforce 55+** – Workforce 55+ is continuing to do job search with participants who are at their sites and is seeking training for all others. One issue is most participants don't have the necessary technology.

**Reconnections** – Reconnections has been open since June and is now able to see approximately fifteen clients, with social distancing.

Reconnections primary recruitment is through parole. The State released approximately 2,000 ex-offenders from the prison systems, with 132 coming into Union County.

Reconnections services/activities include; employment workshops, mentoring sessions, life skills, and legal workshops. These services/activities are being held in house and virtual.

Reconnections has recently partnered with Blessed Ministries in Newark, whom received a two year grant from the State of New Jersey for the Pathways to Recovery Program. The Program is for persons and families affected by the opioid problem. Services provided include employment services training and job placement assistance.

Pathways to Recovery also has a PEER Recovery Specialist Training Program. It is a 50-hour class – 20 hours of employment training and 30 hours of certification training. Upon completion of the program, salary for the PEER Recovery Specialist is \$17.00 hour. If interested, please contact Ms. Cathy Water, Reconnections, at (908) 351-7200.

Partners Meeting Minutes – 11/13/2020

Page 4

**Community Services Block Grant** – There is an active RFP for services, public opening commencing at 11:00 today.

The Federal poverty guidelines has increased to 200% of the federal poverty guidelines.

Services released are similar to those currently funded with an addition for financial literacy. These services will be in place as of January 1, 2021.

As the RFP process commences, there will be more of an update.

In regards to COVID barriers, etc., several task forces have been developed through the Department (CSBG); Food and Security Task Force, Union County Consortium, and the Public-Private Partnership Task Force.

Emergency holiday food distributions will take place on the following dates:

Saturday, 11/14, 9:00am - Union County Vocational Technical Institute

1:00pm – Assemblyman Gerald A. Green Building (Rotunda-walk up)

Saturday, 11/21, 9:00am – Kean University

Additional dates for food distribution, COVID testing, flu vaccines, and walk-ups will be posted on the website. Ms. Lespinasse will share the links.

**Housing Authority of Elizabeth** – Currently all waiting lists for Section 8 and Public Housing are closed. The Housing Authority is partially opened. They are taking phone calls and servicing people at the door, but are not allowing the general public to enter.

The Housing Authority is working on the Job Plus pilot training program. They are working closely with the County and other agencies in getting basic infrastructure and foundation built up to create partnerships and linkages for services for clients at Mravlag Manor.

If any agency is in need of people to fill slots, please share that information and your program with Ms. Hart.

The Housing Authority is continuing with their food distributions. They are held the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of every month at Mravlag Manor.

**International Rescue Committee** – IRC is working with Youth Forward and the AJC to get In-school Youth registered for the WIOA Program, will soon be working with adults.

In terms of employment, IRC is up and running and developing new employee partnerships. Some clients are ready to go back to work but a lot are still very hesitant due to COVID and child care challenges.,

**Workforce Development Board** – The NJ Endures meeting has been rescheduled for Monday, 11/16/2020

Ms. Barracato requested everyone continue to send her their flyers, informational pamphlets/booklets, etc. and she will share with partners.

The December Partners Meeting is cancelled. The next meeting will be held in January 2021, date TBD.

Respectfully submitted,

April L. Hayes, Administrative Aide/Workforce Learning Link Instructor  
Union County One Stop American Job Center