

AIMHIRE FRIENDSHIP PLACE



HOUSING FIRST PARTNERS CONFERENCE

PRESENTATION



What is Jobs First?

Why use a Jobs First model?

Grants and Programs

Getting Participants Hired

Employer Partners

Discussion

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Benefits of Jobs First Program



- **Mirror of Housing First Model**
- **Protects participant from vulnerability to delays or changes in resource availability**
- **Personal benefits**
 - Builds self-reliance and connection to community
 - Builds autonomy, rebuilding on their own terms
- **Housing benefits**
 - Qualifies participants for RAPID
 - Works with permanent supportive housing
 - Allows greater access to ERAP
 - Speed and responsiveness serves participants facing eviction

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Benefits, continued



- **Income and benefits** = greater access to recovery resources
- **Employer insurance** = greater access to medical and mental health providers
- **Harm reduction** includes empowering participants to create budgets, make responsible choices, build personal accountability
- **Access to funds does not equal relapse:** isolation, desperation, lack of empowerment can be addressed by employment
- According to a **2012 NIH Report** on SUD treatment:
 - Employment is one of the best predictors of positive treatment outcome:
 - lower rates of relapse,
 - less criminal activity, and
 - fewer parole violations among employed compared to unemployed persons.

"Securing employment is not only one of society's priorities for SUD affected persons, it is also consistently cited as a top priority by SUD affected individuals at all stages of recovery."

Rate and Predictors of Employment among Formerly Polysubstance Dependent Urban Individuals in Recovery, NIH, 2012

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Jobs First is Participant-Centered



Our participants

- 90% want a position in their existing field
- 95% want a job as soon as possible
- Experience caps on income due to housing voucher status
 - Jobs First allows those with vouchers the chance to graduate out of PSH
- Limited agency over food security, healthcare access, internet access, connection to friends and family
 - Many rely on SNAP, SSI, SSDI for income
 - Average SNAP benefit allowance per month in **2011**: \$134
 - Average SNAP benefit allowance per month in **2024**: \$200

*Participants say: "I just need a job." "I will work any job."
"I need something ASAP."*

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AimHire History



- **Founded in wake of 2008 financial crisis**
 - Profile of homelessness changed in DC
 - Massive spike in economically displaced folks who were homeless but did not qualify for many services
- **Friendship Place was founded as a housing provider only,**
 - We realized we needed to provide job services
 - We taught ourselves, developed best practices
- **Founded as a branch of the Welcome Center**
- **Became its own division in 2011** with one staff and an intern, plus volunteer support

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AimHire Vision and Growth



- Started with **Core**, private funds, this model showed us the performance potential, \$250k annual for 2-4 staff and participant costs
- First expansion with **Family Fund**, allowing us to serve people in homelessness with dependents, direct connection with RAPID rehousing, \$100k yearly for one staff and participant costs
- **HVRP- DOL**, \$380k annually for 3 years, serving veterans, expanded geographical footprint to NOVA and MD, 3 additional staff
- **Jobs First with DC DOES** allowed for expansion of services to DC residents - \$250k for 1 year pilot grant, 3 staff
- **Youth Lift/Lift+** allows us to serve homeless youth to ensure housing stability upon exit, \$140k annual for 2 staff

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Grants To Look For



How we found these grants

- Close partnership with development, board, advocacy
 - Application process
 - Goal setting
 - Adapting to geographical area
 - Outreach methods
 - Finding participants
- Searched for grantors
 - Federal, State, local, private, congregations
 - O'Neil Funds, Bezos Fund



Bridging Grants and Programs



- **HVRP and SSVF**: natural partners
 - 90% of HVRP participants are in-house SSVF referrals
- **Housing First** model for veterans at AimHire Friendship Place
- SSVF model uses for Rapid is based on the Housing First Model, as is PSH, and both synergize well with Jobs First

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Program Identity



- **HVRP, Families, Youth, Core:** four populations served by one whole
 - HVRP, Families, and Youth serve particular populations
 - Core intake qualifications: actively seeking employment, local to DMV
 - Helps ensure new participant referrals are always coming
- Participant recruitment is maintained at a steady pace while allowing for the flexibility to serve particular populations with specific needs

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How You Can Build A Jobs First Program



Jobs First is a great way to launch a **workforce development initiative** in your organization

- It is fast: 45-day average time to placement in 2022-2023
- It is cheap: DC Jobs First annual budget of 250k served 116 participants, 75 jobs. Avg of \$2,100/participant.
- It is effective: Average pay rate of \$19.50, 68% retention after 1 year

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AimHire Process



Getting started – first steps for participants

- Attend orientation: walk-in or dial-in, less than 1 hour
- Complete intake: 3 pages for Core intake, 15 pages for Jobs First, minimal paperwork and ID ask, done on orientation day
- Assignment to employment specialist
- Completes job readiness track: resume, tech, mock interview
- Financial assistance to remove barriers
- **Participant is Job Ready**



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AimHire Process, continued



Path to success

- Weekly check-ins with staff, 5 job applications a week minimum
- Job leads
 - Hiring events
 - Career fairs
 - Employer connections communicated through check-ins and newsletter

• Participant gets hired

- Participant remains in retention for 1 year



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On-site Services



- **Computer Lab** - narrowing the digital divide
- **Clothing Closet** - focus on day-to-day wear, not just interview attire, plus cold weather gear and sanitary items
- **Kitchen, coffee, food** - customer service builds trust and sets the tone for participant-centered services
- **Volunteers** - 3 volunteers offering 6 hour shifts, 5-8 more offering 2-3 hour shifts allows us to serve more participants quickly and responsively, builds community

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Financial Support for Participants



- **Phones** - unlimited data, case/screen protector, email access.
No phone = no job.
- **Transportation** - Metro, Gas, Uber/Lyft (limited)
- **Clothes, tools, textbooks**
- **Licenses, certifications, IDs**
- **Grocery cards** (limited)
- Will it get them a job they can keep? **Spend the money!**
- Spending is low during job readiness, spikes during hiring process, critical for the first month for job retention
 - Average participant spend/week during job search period: \$45
 - Average participant spend/week during onboarding period: \$120



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AimHire Volunteers



- **Resume Prep**
 - 80% of incoming participants have a resume, but needs changes
 - Short and sweet, simple format
 - Coach participants while they work
- **Technology Assistance**
 - Digital divide is one of our participants' biggest barriers.
 - Hands-on coaching removes this barrier and gets them to work
 - Full-length digital literacy courses take a long time, a little assistance goes a long way
- **Interview Prep**
 - Mock interviews
 - Fast and more efficient path to success
- **Offsite volunteering:** Remote assistance, donation drives, sharing job leads, career fairs
- **Volunteer sources:** congregations, student groups, friends and family, board member

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AimHire Staff - Employment Specialists



- **Strategy:**
 - Apply for the right jobs at the right time,
 - Key participants into the right networks and opportunities,
 - Encourage consistent searching and follow up
- **Coaching:** encouragement, support on hard and soft skills, walking through how to overcome fears, failures, setbacks, follow their vision
- **Connection:** to resources, other participants, community support, emergency aid
- **Accountability:** helping participants understand that only they can keep themselves employed

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Participant Responsibilities



- **Weekly check-ins**
 - Participant must contact staff 1/week through phone, email or appointment
- **5 job applications/week**
 - Minimum required for hire within 90 days, more is better
- **Consistent progress**
 - Repeatedly lapsing in communication and effort usually indicates that the participant is not ready for a Jobs First program
- **Goal of getting hired within 90 days**

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Employer Partners



- Second chance hiring
- Small businesses
- Strong communication from HR
- Aligned with mission – veteran hiring initiatives, DC resident hiring initiatives
- Standout partners:
 - Pelenti Group: small, local janitorial contractor – 18 hires in 2 years
 - Didlake: large disability employment staffing, city and federal contracts – 5 hires, long time to placement, high job retention
 - AKA Hotels: mid-size hotel chain operating multiple DMV locations, 6 hires since Feb event, more pending
 - Mainline Security: family business, security licensing, security agency contacts and placement – 10 placements since 2023

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Hiring Events



- Partner company schedules a day to come to AimHire to interview candidates for job openings (sometimes done at company site).
- Will either feature interviews on-the-spot, or applications and follow-up interviews
- Available only to AimHire candidates, or Job Ready referrals:
 - Job Ready = resume, phone, interview attire, ready to interview
- Smaller, targeted hiring events have better results
 - December 2022 Amazon hiring event: 27 attendees, 2 hires
 - August 2023 Pelenti Group hiring event: 6 attendees, 4 hires

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Participant Stories



- Curtis Robinson: placed in food service in 1 week, opened up ERAP, stabilized housing, story featured in Washington Post Helping Hands
- Participant Sam S. connected with staff and volunteers, support for mental health, community, avoiding relapse, escaped DV



Conclusion



- \$100k-\$250k all that is needed to start Jobs First
- Participant centered, harm reduction, functional recovery
- Independence, security, stability, community
- A single staff member with a handful of volunteers can start serving participants seeking jobs

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