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September, 2008

Health, Homes and Jobs for Homeless New Yorkers

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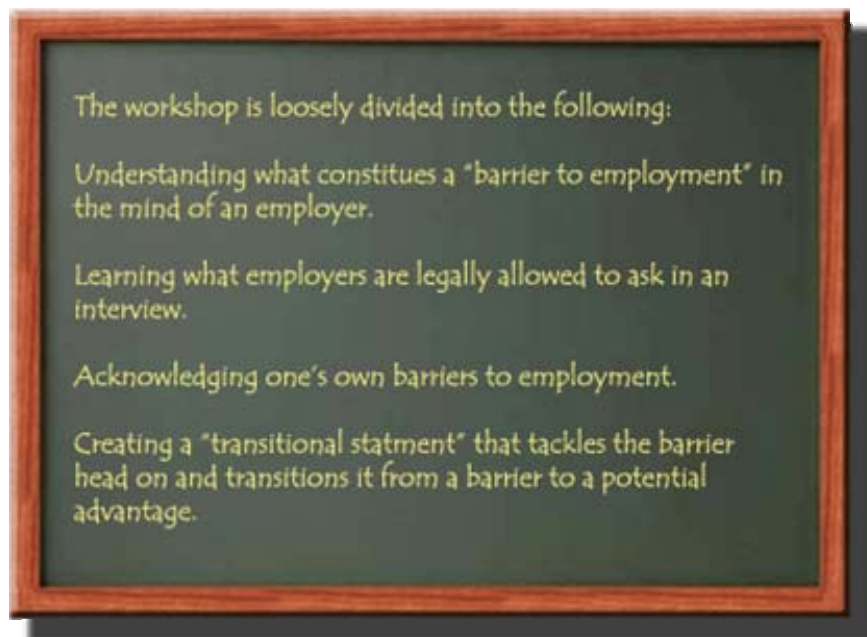
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Overcoming Barriers to Employment

Finding a job in this downturn is tough for most New Yorkers but what if you don't have a High School diploma...never had a job "on the books"...have a criminal record...don't have any references? These are some of the barriers Project Renewal clients face and that's why our Next Step program started a workshop on "Overcoming Barriers to Employment." Initially conceived to focus on helping clients discuss their criminal backgrounds during job interviews, it was later expanded to include other barriers to employment such as gaps in employment, little or no work history, and more.



**Next Step Clients
Barriers to
Employment:**

97% of participants were homeless when they came to us.

62% self-reported a criminal background.

59% had a history of substance abuse

47% read at a 5th Grade level or less.

Results:

It's too early to get hard numbers but the fact that we're maintaining our number of job placements in a tough market speaks for itself. With one-on-one sessions, classes, coaching, counseling and workshops that cover everything from resumes to interview skills and even subway fare, the results show our program is working:

- 314 job placements were made between July 2007 and June 2008
- 76% of clients placed in jobs last year stayed on the job for 3 months compared to 50% for similar programs nationwide.
- Our "Overcoming Barriers to Employment" Workshop served 209 people between its launch in October 2007 and June 2008.
- The average starting salary was \$9.30/hour.



Laura's Story

At 27, Laura has been through a lot. After graduating high school she briefly attended Lincoln Technical School to pursue an interest in computers. But soon her grandmother passed, her family's home was foreclosed and she, her boyfriend and two infant children were left homeless. They moved from shelter to shelter, trying to make it and stay together. It wasn't until she found an apartment and began volunteering as a Computer Teacher's Assistant at Lenox Hill Neighborhood House that she heard about Project Renewal.

When she came to us, she had little more than a high school diploma and a determination to find a full-time job in computers so she could get off welfare. For the next three months, in addition to her volunteering at Lenox Hill, she began taking computer training courses at Project Renewal. "They even paid for my accreditation test," she stresses. George Avent, Coordinator for Job Placement Services, helped put the finishing touches on her resume and enrolled her in a job interview skills class. He also found her an internship at a neighborhood computer repair store. After her internship, "George helped me a lot with getting temp jobs and consultant work." But then the Human Resources Administration (HRA) assigned a job to Laura cleaning up garbage in the park. She was required to go through the process of orientation but during every appointment, meeting or class, she used the interview skills she'd learned and gave the people at HRA her resume. Finally, her persistence paid off. She was given a clerical test, an interview, and a job in the field she wanted.

Today Laura is the Computer Resource Center Coordinator for the Tony Dapolito Recreation Center, teaching computer classes to seniors, adults and kids. She and her family live in Harlem and her two children are now in school. "I still have goals I want to accomplish, but I feel a lot more secure and comfortable." Laura could have stayed on welfare. She could have given up. But she wanted a job, a home, security for her family. She just needed a network to help her. "Without everything Project Renewal did for me," she says, "I wouldn't be where I am today."



Financial Planning Association Assists our Clients

"How do I open a bank account? Why is all this money taken out of my paycheck? How do I pay off my credit card debt?" These are all questions asked by clients in our Next Step Employment Program. With our help, they've prepared for job searches, gone on interviews, and landed a job. Now they face the next challenge: money management. After years of homelessness, out of the workforce, or maybe never in it, our clients need the basics on how to achieve financial health.

Project Renewal partners with Financial Planning Association members who volunteer their time and expertise as teachers in our Money Management program. Volunteers, all certified financial planners, teach our clients skills and techniques including how to open a bank account, how to file taxes, how to repair a credit history, and other topics designed to build confidence and reduce the stress of managing money.

Financial Fitness Workshop Saturday, October 4

FPA's partnership doesn't end with volunteering. The New York chapter of the Financial Planning Association has selected Project Renewal as the beneficiary of the proceeds of the annual Financial Fitness Workshop for the last five years. Each year, over 200 FPA attendees spend a day honing personal finance strategies while supporting Project Renewal's job training and employment program. We're grateful to the New York Chapter for continuing support of Project Renewal. The workshop is open to all and there's still time to register! [Click here to learn more](#)



For more information, email robin.lee@projectrenewal.org

Yes, I wish to make a gift and help end homelessness.

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