



## DMHAS Learning Collaborative: The Power of Collaboration Employment Series

On Tuesday, September 12<sup>th</sup>, the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services hosted a learning collaborative, on employment, that was led by Carl Palmer, a Bridgeport Housing First Case Manager. The agenda for the event included discussing the following: (a) barriers and benefits for clients seeking employment; (b) strategies for clients to search for employment; (c) application and job interviewing tips for clients; (d) what should be discussed; and (e) networking with support. Palmer asserted that some of the barriers to employment that stand out to clients include: attitude, age, criminal record, disabilities, drug and/or abuse, education, employer biases, housing issues and homelessness, job search skills, a lack of basic and employable skills, limited English proficiency, long-term welfare recipient, mental illness, childcare assistance, no transportation, gaps in employment and pressure from others to go to work. In spite of some of these barriers to employment, there are significant benefits to being employed. Clients can obtain stable employment if they assess the type of support they will need, prior to obtaining employment.

There are significant benefits to being employed. However, clients should realize that looking for a new job requires work. In order to secure a job, clients should compile their work history, write a resume, submit a paper or electronic application and have an interview. Clients should prepare for interview questions they might be asked, as well as disclose information that is important for the employer to know when it is related to effectively performing tasks assigned to the job, if hired. Clients with a criminal history should let the employer know if they have a criminal history if they are asked about this. Interviewers usually want interviewees to be honest and open when asked about a criminal history. An employer may choose to give a person a job because he/she was honest about a sensitive topic.

Networking is important when seeking employment. Clients should ask people in their inner circle if they know of anyone hiring. Clients may attend the American Job Center, a local library or utilize job boards for networking opportunities.

Helpful tips for clients seeking employment:

- Create an online profile on websites such as Indeed or Snag a Job
- Attend free classes at the American Job Center
- Utilize free online career assessment tools
- Seek support from individuals that want you to succeed in your search for employment.

Although clients might have challenges when seeking employment. Many challenges to employment can be overcome with support, resources, networking gainful employment can be obtained.