

JOBS AND EMPLOYMENT WORK GROUP OF OP HOMELESSNESS COALITION

2016 PLAN OF ACTION STATEMENT

Strengthen attachments to jobs and income: Linking individuals and families with stable income and employment is a critical tool in the fight to prevent and end homelessness. In addition, many individuals who are homeless may be working but not earning enough to keep a stable roof over their heads. Better jobs are important.

BACKGROUND

At the time that the OPHC Strategic Plan of Action was developed this topic was among those selected as a priority for the OPHC, but work on this was deferred until other initiatives were begun. In 2018 this topic is being added. Following initial discussions we have the following items to propose for the coming year.

- A. We recommend that the initial bullet point (see below) for this topic in the original Strategic Plan, which addresses services, not jobs and employment, be moved to the Service Intersections work group.

Work with case managers across providers and township staff to ensure people are getting all the public benefits for which they are eligible including TANF (cash assistance/welfare), SSI (disability), SNAP (food stamps), and childcare assistance

- B. We present our draft action items and request that these be adopted as our plan for the coming year.

The Jobs and Employment Committee will:

- 1. Work with employers who are hiring entry-level and other new workers to better understand the challenges that they face in getting and retaining reliable and qualified workers.*
- 2. Work with agencies and groups providing training for jobs to discuss our findings and build better collaboration between companies, training programs and people seeking work.*
- 3. Explore opportunities for vocational training partnerships with the high school and local colleges.*
- 4. Grow pool of local employer partners. Recruit within congregations and business districts.*
- 5. Provide coaching and other supports to employers to set both parties up for success.*
- 6. Recognize that many people are seeking a job with a living wage and benefits and find ways to educate and advocate for this issue as well. This may involve governmental structural change.*

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- C. We propose that the Oak Park Homelessness Coalition co-sponsor and publicize the showing of the award-winning documentary, *Zero Weeks* (www.zeroweeks.com), to raise awareness of the need for a national policy on paid family leave, one of the key reasons that people can fall into poverty and homelessness. This showing could be scheduled for next fall.

People should not have to choose between caring for loved ones in times of need or keeping a job. In terms of structural change, a policy of governmental paid family leave is needed. The US is the only country (except Papua New Guinea) that does NOT provide a national paid family leave policy that offers multiple months of paid leave to care for loved ones. Models of best practices are being developed in states that have adopted this policy; it is now under consideration in Illinois and the US Congress.

ZERO WEEKS, a new award-winning documentary by Chicago-based filmmaker Ky Dickens, demonstrates the need for state and national paid family leave policy. Screenings of this film can be arranged. OPHC could be a sponsor of any future screening of this film to educate the public and the business community.

For more information about the film, also see this link:
www.zeroweeks.com/resources

JOB AND EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Teresa Powell, chair
Christian Harris, Owner, Maid-Pro
Betsy Kelly, Job Developer, Housing Forward
Barry Koren, Time Exchange Project
Cate Readling, Park District of Oak Park
Beth Stewart, Rush Oak Park Hospital