

Middlesex County
One Stop Operations/ Workfirst Collaborative
March 28, 2013
1:30pm

County of Middlesex
Office of Workforce Development
550 Jersey Avenue, New Brunswick, NJ 08901
WIA Conference Room B

Attendees: Jane Brady, Baden Almonor, Vivian Coleman, MaryAnn Connors, Janice Fishbein, Patricia Foster, Carla Ghee, Sharon Hartman, Veronica Jones, Adrienne Keaton, Chris Murphy, John Ross, Miriam Ruiz, Sandra Ruiz, Michelle Suskind, Kelly Wilkinson, Sandra Woods, Jean Zwingli

Staff: Helina K. Wisniewski, Secretary

Adrienne Keaton called the meeting to order at 1:40 pm.

Review and Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the December 6, 2012 One Stop Operations Committee were presented for approval. MaryAnn Connors made a motion for the approval of the minutes of the December 6, 2012 meeting. John Ross seconded and the motion carried.

UI Issues – Carla Ghee

Carla Ghee indicated there will be UI extensions through December, 2013.

The Unemployment Office located at 550 Jersey Avenue in New Brunswick, was notified by the State in February, 2013 it will be closing their office within six months. The Adjudication Center will be transferred to Trenton. On site UI operations will cease to exist in New Brunswick. The closest UI location for the public to go to then, will be the Perth Amboy One Stop Career Center located at 161 New Brunswick Avenue, 3rd floor, in Perth Amboy. Currently, customers walk, ride bikes and get public transportation to the New Brunswick UI office. It will be difficult for these people to get to Perth Amboy. Customers who come to the New Brunswick One Stop for UI concerns will be encouraged to use the courtesy phones in the lobby or call the Call Center from home (which is a toll call). If customers call from home and are unable to speak to an agent right away, a call back system is in place whereby an agent will return the phone call within twenty four hours. The New Brunswick UI office sees well over 100 people per day.

The office is very slow at the moment but once Spring Break arrives the office will be very busy again.

Jane Brady indicated she is trying to stop the move because there is no rational reason at all to close the New Brunswick UI office and keep the Perth Amboy UI office open, which does not serve as many people and has parking and transportation issues.

The WIB Executive Board sent a letter to Commissioner Harold J. Wirths asking him please to explain why the Department of Labor is closing the New Brunswick UI office. To date, no response has been received on this issue.

Hurricane Sandy NEG - Jane Brady

Middlesex County was given \$316,000 to hire individuals to help towns that were impacted by Hurricane Sandy. Carteret and Woodbridge were the only two towns that responded asking for help. Currently, Carteret employs six people and Woodbridge employs nine people earning \$15.00 an hour through the NEG. The towns employ the individuals and then we reimburse the towns. Both towns are happy with their workers and say they are doing a great job. The NEG contract with the federal government is scheduled to end on April 29, 2013. We are hoping that a request for an extension will be approved.

Literacy/Learning Links – Jane Brady

The Learning Links for Middlesex County are located in the One Stop Career Centers in New Brunswick and Perth Amboy. We are still not serving the number of people recommended by NJDLWD. One area that we are trying to increase the number of people served in, is basic computer skills training, particularly for senior citizens who are looking for employment. Both locations are fully subscribed in the morning, but filling afternoon sessions are becoming very difficult due to parents having to be home for school aged children that get home before the end of the afternoon session of the Learning Link. In addition, generally people prefer to attend classes in the morning rather than the afternoon. The Learning Links are open from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm. Customers collecting Unemployment benefits must attend 20 hours a week to in order to continue receiving their benefits.

The State of New Jersey has declared literacy as a priority in their new plan. A recent study was completed by Montclair University for the SETC. The study stated that there is a great concern for literacy in New Jersey. The SETC endorsed the report. The State will not allow us to serve illegal immigrants in the Learning Links. The Learning Links are state funded.

Literacy training for adults funded by a WIA Title I I grant is also provided through the Middlesex County Consortium which includes the Boards of Education in New Brunswick, Perth Amboy, East Brunswick and South River.

MCC Health Occupations Grant – Jane Brady

Mary Ann Connors indicated Middlesex County College is in their third year of a five year grant with nine other partners. The next cycle of the Medical Assistant program will start in June, 2013.

MCC is trying to implement a Certified Nursing Assistant program which is a labor demand occupation, although it is a low wage position. The State has a list of previous instructors that are certified to teach the CNA program that they are sharing with the college. The equipment has been ordered for the program. Once approved by the State, the CNA program can begin.

Jane Brady stated there will be an Impact Study for this grant, which will begin in its fourth year. The study will have two groups. For every 3 people found eligible for the program, only 2 will be served. The first group will be the Control Group. These will be people that are eligible but will not receive services through the grant. The second group will be those who received the services. Mrs. Brady does not agree with the Impact Study at all.

Job Fairs – Jane Brady

Mrs. Brady reported that the WIB held a job fair at the Radisson Hotel, on 21 Kingsbridge Road, in Piscataway, on Thursday, March 14th, 2013. The job fair was highly successful. It was attended by 32 companies and 400 job seekers.

The WIB will be holding another job fair at the Woodlot Park and Recreation Building, on 124 New Road, in Monmouth Junction, on Tuesday, May 14th, 2013.

Mrs. Brady is considering having a job fair solely for hotels and restaurants in Middlesex County. The only concern is that job seekers may not come because of the low wages. It is anticipated that there will be Incumbent Worker training for those employees to move up, in to better positions. It has been reported that some immigrants refuse to move up in their positions in this industry because they feel they might not do well and lose their jobs all together.

The Special Olympics and the Super Bowl are coming in 2014 to New Jersey. As a result there will be many different positions in hotels and restaurants open in Middlesex County.

WorkFirst Update – John Ross

1. The TANF Participation Rate for February was 20%. The State's rate was not available as of the date of this meeting. This is an improvement over the past few months when the rate ranged from 17% to 18%. Some observations ultimately related to the rate of attendance are as follows:

John Ross noticed an increased number of absentees during the recent flu season. Unfortunately, flu and related illnesses seem to run through families but are documented, so the absences are excused absences.

More attention by TANF Vendors is needed to place clients in worksites while completing Job Search. Once clients leave Job Search, they are not in a countable activity unless actually placed in a worksite.

TANF counselors will be requested to review the most recent Denominator Report and address clients who are marked as anything but "full participation".

2. Monitoring has been completed for the Programs operated by the College and Adult Learning Center. Both Vendors have a period of review prior to response, so it is not appropriate to discuss issues other than what has been discussed in conference and agreed upon. Both Vendors project to have a surplus of funds at the conclusion of the year. As a result, alternative activities will be added to their service delivery to include training computer illiterate clients in basic computer operations. It is anticipated that these classes could begin as early as the middle of April for the College and shortly thereafter for the Adult Learning Center.

Open Discussion/Other Business

- Bobbin Paskell, Assistant Director of Systems for Coming Home of Middlesex County, Inc. indicated the agency is a non-profit organization located at the County Administration Building, 75 Bayard Street, 2nd Floor in New Brunswick. She indicated there is a new database system called

HMIS (Homeless Management Information System). The State also has a statewide collaborative HMIS system, as well. It was decided that the County leave the State HMIS system because it wasn't capturing the data the County was looking for, for planning purposes. The HMIS system looks into employment and educational levels of individuals who are entering the homeless services systems and includes individuals who are at risk of becoming homeless.

Bobbin is also the Chair for the Prevention and Diversion Subcommittee of the Housing Continuous Care Committee. There are two sides to prevention. One of the components is to increase economic opportunities for individuals entering the homeless system or who are at risk of becoming homeless. She is looking for us to help her in finding employment opportunities for the homeless population. Ms. Paskell can be reached at (732)745-4139 and her email address is bobbin.paskell@co.middlesex.nj.us.

- Sandra Woods, SCSEP Resource Specialist (Senior Community Service Employment Program), reported that in her program the host agency works with 55+ individuals who need to enhance their skills in order to find employment and achieve economic independence, at no cost to the agency. Applicants receive \$7.25 an hour and are assigned to an agency for about 20 hours per week. The host agency agrees to provide an orientation, instruction and training to each participant. A participant is assigned to an agency until skills and development goals are met, or until he/she finds employment. Sandra is looking for about 20 applicants. Currently the clients being served are mostly from the Perth Amboy area and do not speak English.

Adjournment

The next committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday, June 27, 2013 at 1:30 at 550 Jersey Avenue, WIA Conference Room A. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:45 pm.

Information/Handout Distributed to Members

- Meeting dates for 2013

05/24/13