U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES

OWRA Online Work Readiness Assessment

Using the Online Work Readiness Assessment (OWRA) Tool to Address Significant Barriers to Employment

Question and Answer Session

June 6, 2018

Q: *How do we access the webinar materials?*
A: All the materials from today's webinar including the slide deck, transcript, and recordings will be available on the OWRA website after this webinar at https://peerta.acf.hhs.gov/owra/owra-video-resource-library.

Q: *How do we request an OWRA demonstration or additional information about OWRA?*
A: For an OWRA demo, you can contact the OWRA Help Desk at 1-866-989-6972 or owra@icf.com. The OWRA website https://peerta.acf.hhs.gov/owra also has a lot of useful information about OWRA.

Q: *Does DC DHS have MOUs among the partner agencies?*
A: Yes, we have MOUs with partner agencies if we are asking for a specific service. For example, we have a MOU with DBH (Department of Behavior Health) because we are asking that their staff are co-located at our sites where the assessments are performed for immediate access to behavioral services for customers.

Q: *What are the best practices or tips that DC used to establish effective data sharing with other agencies?*
A: We are still working on this. Some agencies we have been successful in using the vehicle of MOUs to establish effective data sharing.

Q: *What data do you have to demonstrate that participant outcomes are improving (i.e., more are moving toward self-sufficiency) since the adoption of OWRA?*
A: DC DHS - We have data that demonstrates more customers are connected with a TEP Provider appropriately since the adaption of OWRA. **Employ Milwaukee** - Our data is currently being evaluated for the IRES pilot, so we do not have data to share at this time.

Q: *Is there a partnership in place between you (Employ Milwaukee) and employers to secure employment for participants with criminal backgrounds?*
A: There is currently no formal partnership with any employers. We have done many different things to connect with employers such as:

- Invited them into our local House of Corrections to talk about the potential pipeline of employees and how to connect with them while still incarcerated
- Held employee hiring events at the Department of Corrections
- Held an employer expo where employers where invited to meet with 25-30 local agencies that work with the reentry population to identify ways to access this pipeline of employee candidates
- Worked to create on-the-job training opportunities with local business and through industry advisory boards
- Presented to HR recruiters and Industry Advisory Boards on the reentry population and how to have the conversation with their customers regarding this talent source

Q: *How does Employ Milwaukee conduct assessments pre-release (i.e., videos, in-person)?*
A: OWRA assessments are completed both face-to-face and via video conference. Wisconsin has 37 adult prisons and we use video conferencing for the institutions that are far away. When we conduct face-to-face pre-release interviews, we can bring in our computers to complete the assessment so data entry is not necessary later and all pertinent information is captured.

Q: If you use the tool and get the client motivated, how are you finding them jobs? We just don't seem to be able to find jobs even if we have trained clients. Felonies are our biggest barrier.
A: Employ Milwaukee - The unemployment rate in Wisconsin is currently at 2.9% which is below the national average. Employers are in a position where they must begin to consider non-traditional talent sources to meet their demands. We educate employers and assist them with talent matching. In our programs we are also able to provide continuous supportive services for a period after the individuals have connected with employment. So, it's not as if there is no support once participants have connected to employment.
We also have some funding for On-The-Job Trainings (OJTs) where we could assist the employer during the training period which is attractive to some employers. There are also opportunities to help individuals gain industry recognized credentials that employers seek at no cost to the employer.

Q: *What education level of workers is ideal to successfully conduct the OWRA tool with participants?*
A: DC DHS - We have bachelor level workers conducting the OWRA with a work history in human services. **Employ Milwaukee** – All of my staff have post- secondary degrees. However, with adequate training to include MI, it is my belief that anyone with a high school diploma or above could administer the tool.

Q: *What did the motivational interviewing (MI) and coaching training provided to staff include?*
A: DC DHS - The MI training included: definition of MI; five principles of MI; OARS-Plus of MI; stages of change; genogram and ECO map; feeling wheel; needs wheel; and Maslow's hierarchy of need. We demonstrated and the staff practices tools such as the decisional balance and readiness ruler. The coaching training included: mobility mentoring; Bridge to Self-Sufficiency Tool; coaching exercises; goal setting in practice; and outcomes measurement. **Employ Milwaukee -** The Alma Institute provided a Healing Focused Care Package, which included 2 days of MI training, 1 day of Trauma Awareness, 2 days of Trauma Wellness, 1 day of Healing Focused Care, 2 half days of Cultural Reverence and 1 day of reflective supervisions. The MI training covered the MI Spirit, Four Process Model, OARS, Eliciting Change Talk, Avoiding Discord and Disengagement, and Fidelity tools. This training occurred in May 2017, we subsequently had ICF come in to do some additional MI training in January 2018.

Q: *What vendors did you use to provide the MI and/or coaching training?*
A: DC DHS - We are working the EMPATH out of Boston to provide TA (via: telephone conferences, webinars and site visits) on MI and coaching. EMPath and Integrating Innovative Employment and Economic Strategies (IIEESS) recently completed a site observation visit and they are returning later this month with feedback and more coaching training. We also use internal team members to provide the MI training for staff and reinforce the training during supervision. **Employ Milwaukee -** The Alma Institute in Milwaukee.

Q: *How do you measure the effectiveness of the MI and/or coaching training? Can you share any post questions you ask workers to assess transfer of knowledge and skills?*
A: DC DHS - We measure the effectiveness of the trainings by asking the supervisors to include lessons learned in their supervision sessions with staff. For example, the coaching team's supervisors observe

staff: customer sessions, complete an observation tool and discuss it with each staff during supervision. We maintain data for each training and ask the supervisors to discuss if they have seen an increase in use of tools and lessons taught and they provide examples. Note: supervisor and staff trainings are held at separate times. Each staff that attend the training must complete a Staff Training Evaluation in google. The questions include: (1) How useful will the objectives of this training be to your work with customers? (2) Please describe one situation or customer need in which this training will likely be useful. **Employ Milwaukee -** Currently, it's through observation and role play done with staff in team meetings. In my previous place of employment, peer learning groups were established to reinforce MI skills. Peers were paired up and they recorded role plays with each other (one being the client and the other the interviewer). The recording was shared with the larger group and each team member completed a skills observer sheet. Each team member provided feedback regarding observed MI skills, always beginning with the interviewer identifying what they thought that they did well on.

Q: *Have you worked with Tribal TANF agencies and how did you assess and work with those clients and outside resources collaboratively?*
A: Several tribes were consulted in the development of the OWRA tool. The tool was also piloted in the Quinault Nation and Turtle Mountain Tribe. Feedback garnered from the pilots informed the refinement of questions and assessments to make it applicable for tribes.

Q: *Do you feel that the OWRA tool needs to be modified or is it useful as is for Indigenous populations or Spanish speaking populations?*
A: We understand that several organizations that are using OWRA rely on the use of a language line for native speakers who administer the tool.

Q: *How long does it take to complete the OWRA assessment with a client?*
A: It can take 30 – 60 minutes depending on the workers' experience administering the OWRA tool and the amount of information provided by the participant.

Q: *Does OWRA allow the user to pull statistical data/reports?*
A: Yes. The OWRA tool has a comprehensive reporting module that can be customized to meet the needs of the organization.

Q: *How often should the assessment be administered?*
A: This is dependent on the organization. Ideally, the tool would be used for each interaction to accurately capture the any changes to the participant's circumstances.

Q: *How effective has the OWRA been in states so far that you know of?*
A: There are OWRA case studies published online at https://www.peerta.acf.hhs.gov/owra/owra-success-stories that can provide additional information about the tool's effectiveness, tips for integration, and lessons learned.

Q: *How does the OWRA tool account for the legalization of marijuana in some areas?*
A: The questions in the tool related to substance use are primarily related to behaviors around use, including alcohol and marijuana, to help gauge the extent to which such use may impact employment.