

Using Intensive Vocationally-Focused ESL to Fast-Track Workforce Development Skills for Refugees **Webinar Transcript**

MAY 30, 2013

Coordinator: Welcome and thank you for standing by. At this time all participants are in a listen-only mode. During the question and answer session, please press star 1 on your touchtone phone. Today's conference is being recorded. If you have any objections, you may disconnect at this time. And now I would like to turn the meeting over to Ms. Louisa Jones. Thank you.

Louisa Jones: Good afternoon everyone or good morning depending on where you are. Before we get started I just wanted to let everyone know that the question and answers, you can actually submit any questions throughout the entire Webinar online using the Webinar platform.

As you can see with this screen, you can actually go up to the Q&A tab at the top and then type in your questions and then it will actually be submitted to the team in the room. And then we'll actually make sure it gets put into the queue for answering.

We may or may not be able to get to all questions but we will make sure that those questions get on to our speakers to get some answers back to you at some point. And at this point, I would like to turn this over to Kenneth Tota, Deputy Director, Office of Refugee Resettlement.

Kenneth Tota: Thank you Louisa. Hello everyone and welcome to the Office of Refugee Resettlement Webinar: Using Vocationally-Focused ESL to Fast Track Workforce Development Skills for Refugees.

My name is Ken Tota. I am the Deputy Director at the Office of Refugee Resettlement. This Webinar is sponsored by the US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Refugee Resettlement.

Throughout the Webinar, you may submit questions virtually using the Q&A submission form on the Webinar platform and we will be ensuring the Power Point transcript and audio files from the Webinar, will be made available in the upcoming weeks on our ORR Web site.

ORR has, for the past few years, really focused on building relationships with ACF programs and other federal departments to help leverage support and services for refugees to ensure a successful path to self-sufficiency.

One focus has been to build stronger relationships with the Office of Family Assistance and the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) programs as we note that approximately half of all refugee arrivals actually may access TANF for a period after arrival.

We have worked closely with OFA, the OFA director and staff and have presented at several Regional TANF conferences to facilitate greater collaboration and information sharing.

Over time, we realized how important a greater outreach is to our mainstream service providers serving refugees and recently awarded ITF TA grant to help us have broader outreach with TANF programs.

We hope that this collaboration will be very helpful in sharing best practices and today we are - with this Webinar, we are very pleased to provide an overview of Vocational English as a Second Language Immersion Program, known as VIP, in San Francisco, California.

The VIP program is a collaboration between the San Francisco Human Services Agency, HSA, Arriba Juntos, and the City College of San Francisco. The VIP program is an 18-week intensive English language immersion program that focuses on teaching the vocabulary and the cultural norms of the workplace.

I am joined today on the Webinar by Lynn Levey from the San Francisco Human Services Agency. Lynn has spent more than 20 years teaching adults English as a Second Language, job search skills, life skills

and career education, helping people find jobs and achieve their goals at work, at home and throughout society.

Lynn has worked as a Vocational English as a Second Language (VESL) Immersion Program (VIP) coordinator at San Francisco Human Services from its inception in April 2000 until 2010. VIP was chosen as one of the top hundred programs in the 16th annual Innovations in America government award competition in September 2002 and was a recipient of the Student's Success Award from the California Community Colleges in 2001.

Lynn is currently working at HSA's Jobs Plus program teaching single adults who receive government assistance job search skills and helping them get jobs. Before coming to HSA, Lynn was VESL coordinator at the Jewish Vocational Services and an instructor at the City College of San Francisco, Golden Gate University and Goodwill Industries.

Lynn has co-authored a job search skills textbook and workbook for ESL students, "Apply Yourself: English for Job Search Success," and it was published in 1996.

She has presented at numerous conferences and meetings on the topic and we are very, very pleased to have her today as part of this Webinar. And please let me pass it over to Lynn Levey.

Lynn Levey: Well, thank you so much and I so appreciate the opportunity to do this presentation and to talk about best practices of the VIP program. I am going to be focusing on the period of time from when VIP began in 2000 to 2010 which is the time that I coordinated the program.

And so again, I would just like to say that the individuals and the students who participated in VIP had a huge impact on all of us who worked with them. Their courage, their motivation, their determination and their sense of humor changed all of us and I imagine that those of you who are listening share that passion about developing programs that help limited English speakers and refugees have satisfying employment and meaningful self-sufficient lives here in the US.

The things I am going to be talking about today are on the slide here. I am going to talk a little bit about the history, the students that we serve, the collaboration. I am going to show a DVD and talk some

about the program design, instructional components, work participation and outcomes, contact information and then questions and answers.

In terms of the history, VIP started in March 2000 and it was basically in response to the change in welfare legislation that said that limited English speakers on welfare could only participate in welfare for two years at one time.

And we realized that the classes that our clients were in were not providing them enough language for them to be successful at work in those two years. So we implemented a new program that focused more on intensive vocationally related classes.

The program went through another major change in April 2008 with the implementation of work participation requirements for welfare recipients and that is when we incorporated the work participation element into VIP. And you will see a lot of that demonstrated in the DVD that I am going to show in a few minutes.

The students that we serve, all of them are receiving welfare. Some of them are on CalWorks, which is California's version of TANF, adults with dependent children, and some of them are in a program that we have here in San Francisco called Personal Assisted Employment Services (PAES) which is for single adult welfare recipients who are ready to work.

Our students come from diverse ages, languages, educational and socioeconomic backgrounds, sort of divide them into two major groups. One of the groups is people who have been here for a long time, could be 5 or 20 years.

Basically most of them have less education, maybe not that much work experience and tend to be isolated in their language and cultural community. And the other group of students are more recent refugees and immigrants, usually tend to be well-educated, have good computer skills, stronger work histories but they lack the knowledge of the American workplace and they lack in the American work experience.

There are three main aspects of VIP that I believe have made this such a successful program. One of them is the instructional component, the fact that we have the expertise of City College, both instruction and curriculum development.

The other one is the work participation components of the program - that students have real life experience at the workplace. And the third is the collaboration. VIP is a collaboration between the San Francisco Human Service Agency, the agency where I work, which provides the referrals and the overall coordination of the program, Arriba Juntos, which is a community based organization that provides the daily coordination of VIP. It (Arriba Juntos) is the employer for some of the work participation sites. We have the facilities at Arriba Juntos location. They provide case management on a daily basis and the development of the worksite and relationships with employers.

City College provides the instruction, curriculum development, language assessment and also placement services. And we also have local employers, a very important component of the collaboration that provides the worksites and the supervision.

So next what we would like to do is show the DVD so that you all can see the programs in action. And you can see the students actually speak for themselves and talk about what participation the VIP has meant to them. And the link should be on your computers right now.

Louisa Jones: And so you will not be able to click the link directly but if you type that into your Internet browser (<http://tinyurl.com/ORRWebinar>) it will bring you to You Tube and you will be able to watch the video. The link is also accessible in the upper right-hand corner of your screen in the handout section. If you download that file, you will be able to click the link directly.

Please note that if your place of work or at the location you are at has a firewall, you may not be able to view the video at this time but with the link you will be able to access it in the future. So we are going to take about 8-1/2 minutes to watch this DVD right now and we will be back with you shortly. Thank you.

And for anyone who just joined us, this is a reminder that we are going to watch this video that you can access through the link that you see on your screen. You will not be able to click that link directly but if you type it into your Internet browser, you will be able to see it. Thank you.

For those of you who are having difficulty accessing the video, we will make sure you have the link following the Webinar and we have just about two minutes left in the video. Thank you. Lynn Levey will continue her presentation in one minute.

Lynn Levey: Okay. Well, I hope those of you who were able to access the video enjoyed it and got a really good sense of what the program's about and for those of you who were not able to access it, I strongly encourage you to look at it after the Webinar because it really gives you a feeling and a sense of the program in action.

For the rest of the presentation, I am going to talk more specifically about different aspects of VIP. On the first one, I am going to talk about the program design and basically in the morning the students go to their ESL classes.

There is an hour of regular English as a Second Language and then there are two hours specifically focused on the vocational ESL. A very important part of the instructional conception is that the students will take their classes as a cohort.

So the students do not - it is not open entry, open exit which is what we have in a lot of more traditional ESL classes, but basically the students start and they move through the 18 week program as a group. And that really increases the ability for maximum language acquisition because you are able to continue where you left off as opposed to having to review a lot every day for the people who were not there the day before.

We have a maximum of 20 students in a group and we have intensive case management onsite and that is one of the key elements of the collaboration, is that there is daily case management at Arriba Juntos.

So if there is any kind of problem at all with any student's participation, it is immediately addressed. And one thing we found, we have a very strict attendance policy which is based on the expectations at an American workplace. And if there are issues around attendance usually they reflect barriers that the students are going through. And if we could address those barriers, then the student is in a much better place to be successful once he or she starts employment.

So, for example, we have this one student who was in the program for a couple of weeks and she was doing really well and then she started coming late. Every day she was late. She seemed really distracted, so after the first couple of days of this the case manager took her aside and talked to her and said, "You know, what is going on?" And she said, "Well, my daughter just changed her childcare center and she is really unhappy with the provider and you know, she cries every day when I leave so it is really hard for me to leave and when I am in school I am distracted because I am worrying about her."

So because we had all these additional resources, the case manager at Arriba Juntos was able to talk to the case manager at HSA who was able to work with the client to get a different child care provider for her child. Once the client knew that her child was fine, she participated greatly in the program. So it is that additional support that our students really need to be able to deal with the barriers they have or the issues that come up.

Then after the morning component, which is the English language learning, the students have 20 hours per week at the worksite which includes five or six, depending on the level, hours of workplace location ESL. And the students go to nonprofit worksites with a job coach onsite.

In terms of work participation, there are two different work participation components. One is for the lower levels, levels one, two and three. They go to the worksite as a cohort. And the emphasis there is on the English language employer expectations, the soft skills, but it is often not at all related to the student job goals because they are going as a cohort and there might be students who have five or six or ten different job goals in that one group.

But we feel like because they are lower levels, it is important for them to go as a cohort to one site and have the experience as a group. When the students reach level four, which is the highest level in VIP, they have a targeted vocational assessment. They meet with a career counselor and an interpreter. And

they determine their short and long term job goals. And then as much as possible, we try to place them in work participation sites where - that are connected to their job goals.

So for those of you who saw the DVD, the woman who said she wanted to be a teacher was working in a school as a teacher's assistant and I am not saying we are always able to do that but as much as possible, we want to place them at that level and worksites that relate to their short or long term job goals.

So there is the morning ESL and vocational ESL and then there is the afternoon vocational ESL component, and that is related to the student's worksites for levels one, two and three.

So it focuses on job - workplace readiness, general vocational language, cultural understanding and customer service, and they also do work preparation. They do job search skills, applications, interviews and then the component in the afternoon is more directed towards their specific work situations, so that would be the next slide.

And that is the work component at the worksite. And we try, as much as possible, to have this done at the worksite and the food bank is a really good example because all the students, they would - after their first three hours of instruction, they would go to the food bank. They have their lunch there then they do their work participation work.

And then when the work participation work was completed, they would have their vocational ESL one hour a day that was directly related to the situation at the food bank.

And prior to the beginning of that work participation site, one of the City College instructors went and met with the supervisor, also went to the site and shadowed the workers so that she had an understanding of what kind of curriculum vocabulary, cultural understanding, et cetera, the students would need and developed a curriculum that was specific for the food bank.

And during the student's time at the food bank, there was communication between the instructor and the supervisor of the food bank. And actually at one point, it was interesting. The supervisor, the one that was on the video, he talked to the instructor and he said, "You know, the VIP students, they are great. They work really hard, but they do not really communicate very much with the coworkers, like,

when they take their breaks and everyone's in the cafeteria. They do not really do any of that chitchat. And at the food bank, we are a family and so we really expect that kind of camaraderie among the coworkers. Do you think it would be possible for the instructor to teach the students how to chitchat at the workplace? You know, talk about your weekend. Talk about your family."

And so the instructor did that and the students had a real life situation where they could practice that kind of socialization at the workplace. Yes, incorporation of SCANS. SCANS was government research project that was done where the government agency researched a lot of different employers all around the country to determine what skills are needed by employers for workers in the 21st Century. And a lot of the focus was on soft skills, like, team player, taking initiative, following directions, asking for clarification. So in terms of VIP, a major instructional component is incorporating those SCANS skills into the daily working of the VIP program.

So the classroom is modeled on a workplace. There are teams that - each class is divided into teams and there is a group that makes the coffee, a group that tidies up the classroom, a group that takes attendance. And it is an opportunity for the students to really use those soft skills on a daily basis working in teams and using real language to communicate about doing those jobs together.

We also, part of the way to incorporate those SCANS soft skills is in project-based learning and we do a lot of project-based learning in VIP and the culminating project every semester in VIP is a job fair.

And the higher level students in VIP create companies to present to the job fair. They decide on what companies together. They make job descriptions. They make business cards. They have posters that represent their companies.

And then the lower level students go to each of the companies and they apply for jobs in those companies. They ask questions about the job openings, et cetera. And so it is really a way for students to work together as a group to build community.

For students in the lower levels, they could sort of see where they could get to in the future and for the people in the higher levels, they can see how much they progressed from when they were in level one or level two.

So it is really a great way to incorporate some of those skills for the students to be using real language and real skills that they will have to use at the workplace in their English language learning component.

The goals of the work participation component are for the students to gain familiarity and experience at a real American workplace, for them to improve their English listening and speaking skills in real situations with what the students called real people.

You know, they do not exactly consider their teachers real American speakers because their teachers can speak slower and more clearly and this and that, so it really builds their confidence that they are able to communicate with regular people in a regular workday.

And it helps them build their soft skills and also get some on-the-job training and also just to understand what their expectations are, both culturally and on a day-to-day basis at the workplace.

In San Francisco, we have a Jobs Now program and initially - it is a subsidized employment program. It was started by the Obama Administration in the first year, I think, of his first term of office and it is been continued by San Francisco.

And it is a subsidized employment program that includes private and public - it includes private and non-profit employers who get a \$5000 subsidy for hiring our students. They get \$1000 a month for the first five months of employment.

It also includes public sector, temporary jobs and internships in non-profits. And the VIP students are eligible to participate in this program both once they complete VIP or for those who go on to some kind of vocational training, afterwards they can still access the Jobs Now program, once their English has improved if they are still receiving Cal Works or PAES.

I would just like to end to show some pictures from the work participation sites that hopefully most of you saw on the DVD. But these are some pictures of the VIP students at the food bank where they work as food sorters, team leaders and maintenance workers.

And these are some pictures from Arriba Juntos where they do clerical work or they also work in the - Arriba Juntos has a store - computer lab assistant or the clerical aid for the teacher.

And this just shows the outcomes from July 2003 to 2009. The yearly enrollment was about 190. Ninety-two percent completed. Eighty-one percent increased one or more ESL levels per semester. And 98 percent rated satisfaction with the program at three or above on a scale of 1 to 5.

And just before I give you the contact information, I just wanted to summarize, repeat again, that I think the three components of VIP that made it such a successful program were the classroom - well, the instructional component, having a cohort, having a really strict attendance policy, not having open exit, open entrance - open entrance, open exit, and to model the classroom on a workplace and to strongly incorporate those SCANS skills and project based learning, the work participation component and collaboration.

Contact information, if you have further questions about VIP, you can contact me and there is my information, or you can contact the current VIP contracts manager, Marlen Sanchez. So again, I would like to thank you all for participating and I am open to any questions you might have.

Coordinator: Thank you. We will now begin the question and answer session. If you would like to ask a question, please press star 1. Please unmute your phone and record your name clearly when prompted. Your name is required to introduce your question. To withdraw your request, you may press star 2. And it'll be one moment for the first question please.

Louisa Jones: And we will actually only be taking questions via the Webinar platform today, so please enter your questions in the Q&A panel at the top of your screen. Thank you. And the first question is for everyone, in terms of all the materials available, the Power Point, the audio recording, the transcript, as well as the Power Point, will all be available on both the ORR Web site and the Welfare Peer TA network Web site in approximately ten days.

We expect those to get posted and we will let all participants know at that point. And we'll also make sure that that includes the link to the video. One of the first questions, Lynn, that was asked is, does ESL class attendance count in WPR or Work Participation Rate? And can you explain that a little bit about how that works?

Lynn Levey: Okay, well, when I was coordinating the program in 2008, 2009, 2010, it did not count as part of the work participation component. It didn't count and so that is why we started the 20. They had to have 20 hours a week of core activity which was the - at the work participation sites.

I think the regulations have changed but I am not really clear about what the new regulations are. So I think that might be - that is something, you know, to do - you could certainly contact Marlen Sanchez who's coordinating the program now and she would have more information about what counts as part of that - those welfare requirements.

Louisa Jones: Thank you. The next question is has your program needed to adjust your ESL offerings to respond to changes in the workplace such as new technologies or the growth or decline in different types of workplace opportunities?

Lynn Levey: Well, we've definitely had to modify the program in terms of new technologies. I mean, just in terms of doing a job search, now you really need to know how to fill out an online job application and you need to be really, really much more computer literate than people needed to be in the past.

So we have a computer assisted language learning lab and we have computer components as part of our program and definitely we've had to change the way people do job searches because that has really changed.

In terms of the different jobs that are available, mostly - most of the vocational ESL that we teach is not job specific so those general customer service skills and the soft skills that I talked about and the basic English language functions, et cetera, haven't really had to change, but certainly how you do a job search and the need for technology skills has changed.

Louisa Jones: Thank you Lynn. Some more questions. They are flooding in - one of the questions is in terms of the participation hours, how are they counted by your agency for TANF? Is it classified as training, job readiness or work opportunity? How are all those hours classified?

Lynn Levey: Well, the work participation where they are actually at the worksite was work participation and the ESL, the language learning is part of training because it is vocationally based. So it is certainly - they are learning the English language for the workplace so that is counted as training hours.

Lynn Levey: Work participation component, when I was coordinating the program, was all paid. I think at this point, it might - it is definitely paid for the higher levels. I am not sure if it is also paid for the lower levels that - but it is - either way, it counts as work experience.

Louisa Jones: Great. And in terms of – there are two questions here in terms of assessing a student’s language level. What test do you use and how do you assess how far they are progressed?

Lynn Levey: Well, we’ve used the CASAS test, which is, I think, a California test. City College has placement tests so after - at the end of each level, City College instructors administer that placement test. And there also is a speaking test that was designed by the VIP instructors that they also carry out in terms of assessing student’s speaking level.

Louisa Jones: Thank you. We have another question about pressure to get clients self-sufficient in a short period of time. Do you have any suggestions for people who have to have a shorter program timeframe such as 18 weeks - shorter than 18 weeks?

Lynn Levey: Well, actually for a lot of our students, they went to the program for up to two years, so 18 weeks was one, you know, progressing one level. But to really get self-sufficient, it takes, you know, it takes quite some time for most people. I mean, if you have a shorter period of time, obviously less English acquisition is going to be able to happen.

So I think the more intensive the program is, the more strict it is around attendance and just sort of general soft skills and behavior and all those, it will help the students be more ready for a workplace.

But if you have less than 18 weeks, or even if you only have 18 weeks, it is really hard for students to get to a place where, certainly in a city like San Francisco, they could have a job and be self-sufficient. It might be less true in cities and states where the cost of living is not quite so expensive.

But, you know, and there are low level jobs where you do not need to use that much English but really we found in San Francisco for people to be self-sufficient, they need to be - have pretty - you know, at least intermediate level English skills.

Louisa Jones: Great Lynn. Got a few more for you. In terms of, what is the greatest challenge that you had to overcome when you implemented the program when it began in 2000?

Lynn Levey: That is a great question. I think - well, I do not know what I would say is the greatest challenge but I think being able to really build a very strong dynamic collaboration because, you know, it was - initially, there were actually four different agencies because initially Catholic Charities was also part of the collaboration - and they were really a powerful component.

And at a certain point, everything had to be consolidated into one worksite which - so it was just at Arriba Juntos but being able to really maintain a strong collaboration meant the we had to have - and we had to learn that over the process that we had to have regular meetings so that we had to have full communication among all the partners because the key to the success of the program was the success of the partnership.

So I think that was one key challenge, to really take the time and put the effort into building that partnership. And then I think another big challenge was when we needed to bring in the work participation component.

Even though in the long run that has really strengthened the program overall, that was very challenging because we had to deal with a lot of different forces in terms of getting the money to pay the students, to having the worksites that worked for the students, coordinating the teaching with the work participation. So I would say those were two important challenges.

Louisa Jones: And I think you touched on this a little bit but what did you do in particular to build a relationship with employer partners?

Lynn Levey: Well, one of the strengths of the partnerships is that we were very based in the community. As I said, we were based in the community with Arriba Juntos and also with Catholic Charities, both organizations having very strong ties to the community and to employers in the community and also workforce development department had strong ties with employers as well.

So I think being able to initially work with organizations that already had those employer connections and then it was a win/win situation for the employers because they were having our students working at

their sites which meant that they were - and the students were not paid by the employer, so they were in an internship situation but they were actually able to provide a lot of services to the employers.

And then strong communication between Arriba Juntos and the employers in terms of what was happening with the students on a daily basis, was another important aspect.

And then the fact that we had the English classes in the morning so if there were language issues that came up or even other kinds of issues that came up at the worksite, the case managers were there every day in the morning to talk with the students and resolve any problems.

Louisa Jones: Thank you Lynn. Here's our next question. Where did your funding come from? How is all this program funded?

Lynn Levey: Well, that is something that my manager would be able to answer a lot better than me but I know a lot of the funding was coming from Cal Works. And the funding for PAES comes from our general assistance (GA) funds and from food stamp (SNAP) funds. But in terms of more specifically about the funding, that would be a question to ask Marlen because she's working with the program now.

Louisa Jones: Thank you. Our next question is how has the program accommodated clients who are illiterate in their own language and have no English language skills?

Lynn Levey: Good question. Well, basically - at different points in the program we've had a literacy component as part of VIP. But actually there is a very small number of students that have fit into that category as time has gone on.

So what happens with the students who are at literacy levels, they start out at City College. And they do their literacy level instruction at City College and then once their language skills are up to level one, they join VIP.

Louisa Jones: In terms of some refugees, it is hard for them to use computers or other technology to actually look for jobs. What would you advise refugees to engage in job search activity or how would you recommend other agencies to work with them?

Lynn Levey: That is a very challenging question. I mean, I think there are - well, I do not know what resources are available in other cities. I know in San Francisco, we have OneStop centers where you can go in and get one-on-one assistance applying for jobs online.

So I do not know if there are resources like that in other cities. I mean, it is very hard to - if you're not technologically literate. I mean, it is amazing to me how many more students in our program, both limited English speakers and native English speakers, know how to use computers.

But without computers, I think you have to - without computers and without language, there - I mean, I can't really think of how someone would access jobs until your language was a little bit higher level. I mean, I guess you could do some kind of childcare or factory work or things like that but you do not really have that kind of factory level jobs here, which is why, you know, we initiated VIP. Because we felt like for somebody who has no language or very little language, to be able to find a job and be self-sufficient on their own is, you know, I do not know how you would do it in this day and age.

So I guess my answer is, you know, I mean, the way we've dealt with the issue is we've just put the resources, which luckily we've had them, to help people gain those language skills and those computer skills, not to necessarily to an online application on their own but at least with assistance to be able to apply for jobs online.

Louisa Jones: That is great, Lynn. This may answer several questions. Several people are interested in being able to access your - replicate your program. What kind of general tools would you suggest to people if they wanted to kind of do your program somewhere else?

Lynn Levey: Well, you know, we - City College was paid to develop specific curriculum for VIP. So I know that that curriculum is available to the public. I am not exactly sure where or how, but if somebody wanted to email me or call me, I could definitely get the City College person - I could get you in touch with the City College person who could, I think, some of the stuff might be on their Web site or there might be other ways to access that curriculum. But the curriculum was developed specifically for VIP at the level one, two, three and four, and that is publicly accessed curriculum.

Louisa Jones: Thank you. We have gotten a lot of questions about your cohort model. Could you walk through that again, so sort of explaining how that works?

Lynn Levey: Yes. Okay, so what we would do is we would get referrals from what we call our case managers here at San Francisco city and county human services agency which is the workforce development division which is what I work with.

All of our Cal Works and PAES clients have what we call employment specialists. So they refer people to VIP and then those students are sent to City College for special VIP language testing.

And once they are tested and we assess their language, then they come to an orientation for new students, which we have - well, which, when I was coordinating the program was every 18 weeks.

They would come to that orientation and then they would begin their classes as a cohort so that meant that if it started in May, it would go for 18 weeks until the end of that semester and if they were new students who were interested in being part of that cohort, they would go to City College classes until they were ready for the next VIP entry point.

At different points in the program, we've actually set up a midpoint entry, so after nine weeks, we would have new students enter that point because they needed to access services sooner. But we definitely did not have a weekly entry or even a monthly entry because it made the language acquisition harder.

But if you do need to have more entry points my suggestion would be to do it on the same, you know, if it is every four weeks or every six weeks or every nine weeks, whatever it is, to do it on the same day and have all the new students come at the same time.

Another option, depending on resources, is to have students who are waiting for the entry point to be in a class and then to, you know, to be in a different class but we've used City College for that purpose, for people who are waiting to get to an entry point.

Louisa Jones: Thank you Lynn. Another question is, in general, how your clients and participants support themselves while they are going through the program. Is it mainly because they are on Cal Works or

TANF cash assistance or is it because they are also working? How do they spend so much time in your program without actually getting paid?

Lynn Levey: Yes, well, everybody in the program is either on Cal Works or on PAES. So they are getting their welfare grant, and then for some of the work participation jobs, or maybe for all of them. I do not know how it works right now - they do also get paid an additional amount of money for those jobs. I think it is the San Francisco minimum wage is what they get.

But they just - they - I know. I say, "How can you survive on that grant?" But people somehow manage to do it. But all of the people in our program are on Cal Works or PAES.

Louisa Jones: Great. Thank you. Another few questions we've gotten have been about your attendance policy. Can you go over that again and also touch on how you think you get people to stay engaged in coming to the program?

Lynn Levey: Well, the program is mandatory. So if you're a limited English speaker and you're receiving Cal Works or PAES, you need to participate in VIP. So that is how we - I think - the students really like the program and they feel like they are getting a lot out of it.

So - but also, they have to follow the basic guidelines in order to stay in the program and in order to continue getting their grant. The attendance policy is discussed during orientation. The students sign a contract or an agreement and I can't remember the exact specifics but basically they have to call their case manager at Arriba Juntos before class starts if they are going to be absent or late.

And if they do not call, that is a no show/no call and they meet with their case manager. If it happens again, they meet with their case manager at HSA and they could be sanctioned if they do not follow the policy.

They - if they are absent, they have to bring in verification of why they were absent. If they know in advance that they are going to be absent, they have to fill out a form requesting that absence and the amount of absences is very small. It is, like - I can't remember what it was but it was something like they have to attend at least 90% of the classes or something like that.

Of course, if somebody gets the flu or, you know, they have to be in court of something like that, there is a flexibility around it, but basically, it is really strict because we feel like that is the only way that students are going to be able to progress and also it is a model for the workplace.

And if you're in the first six months you're working, if you're absent a lot or any time that you're working, if you're absent a lot, you're not going to succeed. So - and it is a cultural - I mean, in addition to it just being necessary for language acquisition and for understanding what's going on - what's expected in the workplace, there is also - we have to deal with some deep seated cultural things that are hard, like in many cultures, if your children are sick, that absolutely comes first, you know, understandably.

And in our society, we do not have a lot of mechanisms to really help with that. But we do have, you know, we do have childcare services. We do have sick childcare services. We do work with the students to have backup childcare. But we feel like we really have to have the attendance be really strict in order for them to progress with their English and be successful once they go to work. They have to have all those - everything in place so that they can attend every day.

Louisa Jones: Great Lynn. A few more questions. You spoke about the curriculum that VIP uses and you also referenced a curriculum that is available to the public. Can you just reiterate that?

Lynn Levey: Well, basically when we were developing VIP, the City College instructors developed curriculum for each level - level one, level two, level three and level four, and it was a vocationally based curriculum that, you know, dealt with all the basic things you need to learn in acquiring English language skills but from a vocational frame.

So that curriculum I know, that is a public access curriculum so if people are interested in finding out more about it, if you just email me, I will talk to the City College VIP coordinator and find out how you can get access to that, you know, what's available and how to access it. So basically the answer is email me.

Louisa Jones: Thank you. That is a good answer. There have been some questions about the job coaches, how they are funded, who they are. Could you touch on that a little bit more?

Lynn Levey: The job coaching is from Arriba Juntos so basically it is part of the contract with Arriba Juntos that they provide job coaches and one of the worksites is at Arriba Juntos so they are able to have job coaches there but also there is a job coach who, when I was coordinating, went weekly to the food bank and they would supervise and if there were any issues, would meet with the students there as well.

Louisa Jones: Great Lynn. We are going to ask about two more questions and then perhaps start to wrap up here. How many students do you serve per year in VIP?

Lynn Levey: How many students?

Louisa Jones: Yes.

Lynn Levey: Yes. You know, that - from when I was coordinating, it was about 190 per year. I do not know what the stats are now but that is something that somebody could email Marlen and she'd be able to answer in terms of what the current stats are.

Louisa Jones: And in terms of teacher training, how do you make sure that the teachers and the job coaches are completely prepared to with these clients?

Lynn Levey: Great question. Well, that is the main reason why HSA decided to collaborate with City College and have City College instructors do the entire instructional component including the test- the placement testing, the - and the curriculum development because the instructors at City College all have Masters, not that an ESL teacher would necessarily have to have a Masters but they've all had in-depth training and a lot of experience.

And so they have a lot of expertise in terms of teaching our population, teaching ESL, teaching vocational ESL. City College has a whole vessel of programs.

In terms of teacher training, if the teacher's do not come from City College, I mean, there're a lot of ESL teachers who are trained who do not have their Masters, and I know some work at community based organizations.

I just think - I would think it would be possible to hire teachers who are already trained and then if you have a curriculum that you want to use or some books or some binders or some guidelines, you could use that in addition. But I come from an ESL background so I know that there are lots of ELS teachers out there who've had really strong training.

And I would highly recommend, you know, hiring people who have been trained, if possible, instead of trying to do the training themselves, because I just think a lot goes into the training of a, you know, of instructors.

Louisa Jones: Great. Thank you so much Lynn. I think we have a lot of great info today. We are just going to ask you to answer two brief poll questions about the Webinar today and then Kenneth Tota from the Office of Refugee Resettlement is going to close us out for the day.

So the poll questions will be on your screen momentarily. Great. Thank you for your participation in the poll. We will now have Kenneth Tota join us again and close out the Webinar.

Kenneth Tota: Yes, this is Kenneth. Just really want to take an opportunity to really thank Lynn for a really great presentation. We were, I think, very, very lucky to have you today. And also want to really just thank all the participants for being a part of the Webinar and really thank you.

I think there were some great questions that came out of this. We definitely really hope this Webinar was certainly beneficial to you, certainly the work you do and the communities that you serve and certainly all your work with refugees.

I am just looking at the polling and it does look like actually there were some - most did find the presentation very, very beneficial. So we really appreciate that. We hope this is kind of the first in a series and we would definitely welcome any recommendations on additional ones that certainly can be helpful to the work you do. Just want to thank ICF, certainly Lynn and - on behalf of Refugee Resettlement. Thanks for participating today. Thank you.

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