Career Services Committee Meeting Minutes - 9/22/26

In attendance: Nathan Andary, STCC; Shawntsi Baret, Springfield Works,Meghan Donnelly, BCC, Jeffrey Hayden, HCC, Kirsten Joyce, Bridge to Prosperity (Springfield Works), Eneida Molina, Springfield Works, Ben Ostiguy, HCC, Cynthia Ray, MassHire Franklin Hampshire, Pamela Schwartz, WMNEH, Kate Smith, MassHire Holyoke

Note: Apologies for some gaps in the minutes - notes were lost in transition between devices so a reconstruction got most but not all!

Program Updates

Bridge to Prosperity Program (via Springfield Works)

This is a statewide program to support workers who receive public benefits and face barriers in their careers due to public assistance benefits "cliffs." Right now, there is an exciting opportunity with 16 slots available in western Mass, with a deadline of enrollment by December. Read more about the criteria and how to express interest in this flyer here.

Holyoke Community College:

See this link to a comprehensive listing of job training https://www.hcc.edu/courses-and-programs/workforce-development/free-job-training-programs

MassHire Holyoke:

MassHire Holyoke was recently awarded a 2 year grant from the City of Holyoke's Opiod Abatement fund to provide programming through a Community Ambassador Program. We are administering these funds in conjunction with MassDevelopment.

The program will enroll 30 individuals per year as "ambassadors". They will receive job readiness training and be deployed into the city to assist individuals in need with information and assistance (i.e. referrals to housing and shelter programs, information on how to apply for Snap, where to go for job search assistance etc.). The ambassadors (along with a program coordinator) will also be participating in city wide clean up and beautification initiatives. Along with the job readiness training, the ambassadors will participate in an occupational training with the opportunity to earn a nationally recognized Custodial Skills credential and will work with the MassHire team for assistance finding training related employment.

MassHire Franklin Hampshire:

WCTF Grant: Recruiting for 6-8 individuals 50+ years of age interested in patient advocacy. This is an on-the-job training (with Community Health Services) that includes work readiness training through the Career Center.

We are celebrating Veterans Month in November with the following events:
A Job Fair at GCC on Thursday, November 12th from 11a-1p. Veterans only for the first half hour, then all are welcome. 30+ employers to participate

Resume Prep Workshop for Vet's (date to be determined in November
benefits of hiring Vets for Employers Workshop (10/5).

Resource Room: staff assisted job search, including assistance with online job applications.

Services provided at other affiliate locations:
Expanded hours/Services @ Greenfield Public Library, includes a quarterly small job fair
Workshops and job seeker services at Forbes Library on Wednesdays 10a-1pm
Community Action WIC office in Orange, MA on Thursdays: Walkins from 8:30a-12:30p and 1p-4p by appointment

Berkshire Community College

Seeing challenges with our transportation due to a lack of reliable drivers, even with strong incentives. We have a CDL licensure program through our BCC workforce development that the BRTA will pay for if graduates sign on with them. Graduates will also get a $1,000 sign-on bonus, but we continue to struggle with getting drivers to stay in Berkshire County.

Students have already missed classes due to cancelled bus lines due to drivers calling out or being sick. Students have shared that they have also struggled getting to work on time due to late or cancelled bus lines, as well as not being able to pick up their children from the bus stop on time. BCC is working with MA Hire and our Career Services Coordinator here at the college to be able to get more students interning/working here on campus so that they don't have to be taking multiple busses to and from school, work, and home.

Seeing increases in student visitors to our Campus Cupboard and have already had quite a few students come on the radar already who are unhoused or at risk of being unhoused.

Amazing collaborations continue with community partners who work tirelessly to get our students the help they need.

Western MA Network to End Homelessness Updates

State budget/legislative session:
With August legislative recess just behind us, work is now revving up for the next Legislative Session (begins in January), working to determine re-filing of bills (e.g., Access to Counsel, Rent Control, Transfer Fee on Affordable Housing) and lead sponsors. Budget work for the FY28 budget is also in its earliest stages. Work also continues on the FY26 supplemental budget, especially for funding of the emergency winter shelter needs (HLC just issued a request for proposals for

HUD's continued attack on our Continuums of Care (CoC):
Read on the Network's latest blog post for the update on the litigation and current status of CoC funding

Next meeting date: Tuesday, December 15, 11 am