

Employment Subcommittee Human Services Coordinating Council

Tuesday, August 9, 2016 at 10am
125 Putnam Pike, Dayville, CT 06241

Members Present: Holly Fish (United Services), Rich Tariff (EASTCONN), Deborah Monahan (TVCCA), Carlee Drummer (QVCC), Tomest Maskell (Dept. Of Corrections), Virginia Sampietro (EWIB), Linda Lamoureux (Quinebaug Valley Arc)

Others Present: Scott Jackson (Dept. of Labor Commissioner), Hoween Flexer (NECCOG), Sam Alexander (NECCOG), Eric Sanderson (NECCOG)

Called to Order: 10:07am

Introduction of Members Present

Introduction of Guest Speaker: Scott Jackson, Commissioner, Connecticut Department of Labor

Presenter: Scott Jackson

- Eastern Connecticut collaborates better and in more areas than other regions
- 5.8% unemployment rate does not reflect the real number – has little value
- Jobs numbers are almost restored to post-recession, however the new jobs are lower paying, part time jobs

What do we know?

- Organizations are working together
- There are strong partnerships
- A caring environment is provided

Where do we want to go?

- There is a need to create long term gains
- Eliminate Obstacles
- Enhance 2nd chance opportunities

Obstacles:

- Bias of manufacturing occupations
- Push for everyone to go to college
- Discouragement by High School Guidance
- Lack of Basic Skills – High % of student taking remedial math and reading

Discussion:

- The state is having a revenue problem post-recession
- There are areas of growth and decline
- Less young persons are going into manufacturing, stigma with entering the workforce out of HS
- The median age of a manufacturing worker is 55 – will soon create a gap

- Between 2010 and 2015 fewer people were hired in manufacturing
- How do we rebuild the chain of manufacturing
- The multiplier for manufacturing jobs is greater than other sectors
- There is a stigma attached to manufacturing employment
- The state is investing heavily in manufacturing
- Trust must be established through regionalization of services
- DOL has apprenticeship programs that persons in need of work can participate in
- Most candidates don't get hired because they lack experience, but you can't get experience without an opportunity, apprenticeships can address that
- More partnerships are needed for the apprenticeship program – placements are fully funded by DOL
- A push to get more women in the manufacturing workforce
- Educational systems track the “bad” students
- Student who don't graduate are more likely to become involved in the criminal justice system
- Incarcerated persons face the same challenges on top of their criminal record
- Employability and adult education is not integrated into the prison system
- Disclosing Criminal records on initial application is banned in CT, but many large companies still have it on their online applications
- The job search process has become much more cumbersome and complicated, personal interaction with the hiring manager is virtually non-existent
- Do the Dept. of Ed. And Dept. of Labor communicate about the work-force and community college bias
- Not everyone has to go to a 4 year college
- 2 year and certificate programs are also valuable
- Parents and Schools are not encouraging students to attend community colleges
- There is a perception of failure if they don't attend a four year – labelling
- There is a need to also reach adults who didn't complete school or need a skill
- Expand adult education programs
- There is a need to understand who are partners are, and this must include school districts
- Many college students are not ready for college level math or English
- There has been a de-emphasis on basic skills, over testing, etc.
- 3rd grade reading levels are the biggest indicators of student success and graduation
- Should primary and secondary education be here for the discussions
- Should there be a skills assessment given in high school to catch the educational gap earlier
- Do HS diplomas show education or skills obtained to be good students and workers
- There is a complacency within school districts, lack of education for parents, they don't know how to advocate for their children – where to turn when there is an issue
- Failing students is lost opportunity for them and the state economy
- Not educating all students cost more in the long run; incarceration costs, social welfare programs and assistance
- Many people from the region whom lost their manufacturing jobs, had little education or transferrable skills, many did not receive assistance and fell through the cracks – there was no economic recovery for them
- Not a lot is done to address older adult unemployment

- Many issues associated with underemployment and unemployment is generational
- Federal Legislation has changed the name and hopefully the stigma of DOL office, with a name change to the American Job Center (unemployment office)
- Assist in helping people hone existing skills and develop new ones
- DOL needs to make sure classes address a variety of skill levels; i.e. computer, typing with a registration process that asks about knowledge level so classes flow well and persons do not get discouraged
- A more welcoming environment is needed in DOL offices as clients are usually already in a vulnerable place – good customer service is a must
- There need to be more opportunities and less discrimination towards individuals with disabilities, many of which can and want to work
- Instilling hope with clients is most often the difference between success and failure
- All levels of service must provide respectful and targeted service; education, human services and state offices

Where do we go from here? (Next Steps):

- There are enough resources for the state, organizations and citizens to do well
- We need to re-evaluate the services and reallocate resources to successful programs
- Do we have the wherewithal to make the hard choices?
- State and human services need to examine where the resources need to go
- Focus should be on providing quality services, with long term gains, not providing any program tied to funding
- It is better to do a few things well than many things poorly
- There needs to be a willingness to change, not having so much overlap in service
- Partnerships need to be strengthened and services should be provided to person by organizations that do it best
- The current system is a logical outgrowth of grant-directed organizations
- RBA- past performance metrics could be used to correct over funding and not performance based funding