

PALMER COURT EMPLOYMENT PILOT DEVELOPMENT & IMPLEMENTATION OVERVIEW



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Executive Summary

Introduction

In early 2010, plans were developed to provide supported employment opportunities for formerly chronically homeless individuals living in permanent supportive housing. Chronically homeless individuals are a small subgroup of the overall homeless population. Palmer Court was selected for the Employment Pilot with the vision that “all permanent supportive housing residents will have access to increasing their income through employment.”

In March of 2011, the Palmer Court Employment Pilot *officially* started and has since been experimenting with new and improved methods of providing services to the formerly chronically homeless individuals. In this first year, the pilot has generated jobs, supported residents’ pursuit of employment, and provided opportunities for increased access to supportive services.

Baseline Data – The Palmer Court Residents

March 2011 was the starting point for data collection and tracking pilot outcomes. Basic demographic, employment, education, public benefit use and work interest data were collected for the 220 residents present at the start of the pilot.

The 55 individuals with children were primarily female, nearly half had no high school diploma or GED and two thirds reported fair to poor mental health. Of the 165 other residents most are male and have completed their basic education. Just over one third of the residents currently receive social security benefits for significant mental and physical health issues, most receive food stamps but only about half have medical coverage. Since the start of the pilot approximately one quarter of the population has changed. New residents are incorporated into the pilot and evaluation as they arrive.

Twenty-eight (12.7%) residents were employed at pilot start. Most residents had not been employed in the two years since coming to Palmer Court and just over half had worked rarely or never in the three years prior to arrival. As reported by Palmer Court Case managers about 50% of residents were not at all focused on employment. Many residents also showed no interest in work, were not able to engage in work or work activities and were not currently engaged in any work activities (See Attachment 1). This is the population to whom the employment pilot was initially offered.

Year One Findings

During the first year of the employment pilot data were collected from many different sources including: case manager reports on employment and employment readiness, service provider reports tracking resident employment and employment related activities, interviews with 31 key stakeholders and two rounds of focus groups with Palmer Court residents.

Caseworker reports indicated 20% of residents had increased their interests or abilities relative to work during the first pilot year. Onsite service providers and employment readiness activities such as computer classes, life-skills workshops, and a work discussion group called “Work and Donuts” supported such growth.

Employment activities increased as 114 new jobs were reported and tracked over the year. Most of these positions (79) were provided through Valley Services, a local non-profit

agency. Utah's Department of Workforce Services (DWS) created 15 positions and 20 jobs were independently secured by Palmer Court residents, although several had been previously assisted by DWS or Valley Services workers.

Experiences of paid employment grew slowly over the first months of the pilot and peaked in July 2011 when 45 residents (21.1%) of residents were employed. Employment numbers declined as summer jobs ended and transportation became more difficult through the winter. The number of people experiencing any connection to employment is as significant as current employment. By April 2012 77 (29.6%) residents had experienced employment, a 175% increase over baseline.

Residents participated in two rounds of focus groups. The differences in responses between the first and second round of focus groups reflect a substantial increase in the "culture of employment" experienced at Palmer Court. Resident responses shifted from being primarily focused on internal issues and personal safety to exploring ways to engage more in society.

Key stakeholders provided insights regarding the design and early implementation of the pilot. Cultural, relational and practical dynamics all played a part in the process of growth that was very challenging but is making progress. Others who attempt such an endeavor could learn much from those who experienced the culture clashes between agencies, the ups and downs of relationship development and the realities of the extensive practical resources needed to take on such an effort.

LESSONS LEARNED

The Employment Pilot focused on a specific population with unique needs that must be considered in designing such a project, results take time. Some insights from year one include:

Pilot Design

1. Interagency collaborations experience culture clashes as norms within each agency are challenged and stretched to accommodate cultural differences.
2. Large undertakings such as this need a project director who functions as a full time organizational hub or back-bone around which the project evolves.
3. Those with firsthand experience with the day to day lived realities of the chronically homeless individuals need to have an equal voice as the program is designed.
4. Case management style at the PSH facility matters.
5. The case manager to client ratio may need to be adjusted to determine if workload increases due to employment activities might overwhelm the system.
6. Residents and resident views need to be incorporated in the design process.
7. Chronically homeless individuals are not uniform in their needs relative to employment.

Pilot Implementation

1. Simply relocating mainstream services onsite doing "business as usual" assuming residents will then be effectively served is not enough.
2. Changes in the "culture of employment" at Palmer Court have happened.
3. Once interest in jobs is shown it needs to be readily available as interest wanes quickly.
4. Most Palmer Court residents need a very supportive, gradual entrance into work
5. Many tenants express a desire for full-time and higher paid employment.
6. Employer partnerships are being developed and need to be maintained.

Pilot Evaluation

1. Outcomes fluctuate rapidly and can be small and must be measured over long periods.
2. "Progress" is not linear. There are many small steps both backwards and forwards.

INTRODUCTION

As part of the State of Utah's Ten-Year Plan to provide housing opportunities for the estimated 1,900 chronically homeless individuals living in Utah in 2005, over 600 units of housing has been secured. Beginning early 2010, plans were developed to provide supported employment opportunities for the formerly chronically homeless individuals living in permanent supportive housing. Palmer Court was selected for the Employment Pilot with the vision that "all permanent supportive housing residents will have access to increasing their income through employment."

Palmer Court initially housed approximately 154 adults who had been specifically identified as chronically homeless and 66 residents who had been displaced from a local single room occupancy (SRO) hotel for a total of 220 residents. The chronically homeless individuals represent only a small portion (about 10%) of the homeless population yet require a much higher portion of the overall resources allocated to meet the needs of the homeless. Since its opening, most Palmer Court residents have been identified as chronically homeless, concentrating a group of greatly challenged individuals in one location.

While other permanent supportive housing facilities in Salt Lake City house residents with similar backgrounds, it should be noted that Palmer Court is the one site that houses *families*. Families with children under 18- single parents especially- face significant challenges in attempting to secure and maintain employment. Scheduling conflicts and limited childcare options are only two of the many barriers to employment for parents with young children. Differences for this unique group will be identified as appropriate.

In March of 2011, the Employment Pilot *officially* began implementation and has since been experimenting with new and improved methods of providing services to the formerly chronically homeless individuals. Over the course of the last year, the Employment Pilot has generated jobs, supported Palmer Court residents in their pursuit of employment, and provided opportunities and increased access to supportive services.

Baseline Data & Resident Demographics

Baseline data for the Employment Pilot were collected between mid-February and mid-March 2011. The purpose of collecting the baseline data was to gain insight into the initial demographic composition and employment situation of the residents living at Palmer Court and capture a snapshot, a starting point for later comparison and evaluation.

Within Palmer Court itself, there are two distinct groups of residents: those with Section 8 vouchers (n=165) and the "rent-by-the-week" individuals (n=66), who came from the SRO hotel. The rent-by-the-week individuals were considered separately as they were typically single, adult men with significant employment histories and who had been housed until the SRO was closed. This was not the case with residents who had previously been chronically homeless and were given Section 8 vouchers to live at Palmer Court. Within the Section 8 group were residents with children under 18 (n=55) and those without children (n=99). Analysis of

baseline demographic and other data for the three groups provided insight into the composition of the overall population.

Palmer Court Residents - Basic Demographics at Baseline

Adults with children – Section 8 (n = 55)

- 78% female; average age - 32;
- 47% have no high school diploma or GED;
- 34.5% report fair to poor physical health;
- 64% report fair to poor mental health;
- 27% receive disability

Adults without children - Section 8 (n = 99)

- 70% male; average age – 49;
- 80% have a high school diploma or more education;
- 56.5% report fair to poor physical health;
- 66% report fair to poor mental health;
- 33% receive disability

Adults without children - Week-by-week (n = 66)

- 74% male; average age – 48;
- 77% have a high school diploma or more education;
- 50% report fair to poor physical health;
- 56% report fair to poor mental health;
- 42% receive disability

Public Social Service Usage at Baseline

- 170 (77%) received food stamps;
- 13 received General Assistance benefits;
- 9 received Family Employment Program benefits;
- 113 received Medical benefits;
- 6 received Unemployment

Employment History

- 53% rarely or never employed in three years prior to coming to Palmer Court
- 77% rarely or never employed since coming to Palmer Court
- The unemployed stopped working on average 12 months prior to arrival
- Those without children were more likely to have been employed at some point

Current Employment

- 28 (12.7%) residents were employed at the time of the baseline
- The average wage for workers was \$8.00 per hour with 7 (25%) of the employers offering health insurance

Current Unemployment

- Primary reasons stated by residents for current unemployment focused on physical/mental health issues, lack of good jobs available, concerns about impact of work on disability payments, raising children, being retired, alcohol and other drug issues
- Among the unemployed 77 could list specific employment related activities they had completed in the past month

Update on Palmer Court Resident Population

Of the original 220 residents present at baseline, 49 (22.3%) are no longer living at Palmer Court. Reasons for leaving include abandoning apartment (9), eviction (7), death (5), moved out of state (5), moved to other Section 8 housing (4), moved to senior housing (3), incarceration (2), and other reasons (14).

Another factor effecting the composition of the Palmer Court residents is that when residents from the SRO move out these apartments are being filling with residents who have been chronically homeless. This change in population will be taken into consideration as the evaluation continues as it could affect the overall impact of the Employment Pilot at Palmer Court. Aside from the changes associated with rent-by-the-week individuals, the characteristics and demographic makeup of the resident population at Palmer Court has remained relatively stable over the course of one year.

YEAR ONE OUTCOMES: MARCH 2011- MARCH 2012

During the first year of the employment pilot data were collected from many different sources. The current six Palmer Court case managers (no additional case workers were added when the Employment Pilot was initiated) were asked to complete baselines for each resident as well as brief updates every six months to track changes and progress. Palmer Court case managers and service providers from many of the partner agencies submitted regular reports tracking resident employment and involvement in employment related activities.

To gain more substantial feedback regarding the design and early implementation phase of the Employment Pilot, it was decided that an additional component would contribute to the evaluative process. With this in mind, many of the key stakeholders in the Employment Pilot were interviewed to gain a variety of perspectives on the development of the pilot. Palmer Court residents also participated in two rounds of focus groups to gain their perspectives on pilot activities.

CASE MANAGER PERSPECTIVE & EMPLOYMENT READINESS

In addition to gathering concrete employment data, the Palmer Court case managers were asked for their perception of the clients' progress by completing a simple four question update every six months. Case managers were asked to complete this portion of the update based on their personal interactions and observations of their clients. Three questions ask the

case manager to evaluate the residents’ interest, ability and actual activity in employment or employment related activities. The fourth question involves the “Stages of Change” from the “Stages of Change and Vocational Recovery for Homeless Job Seekers and Workers” worksheet provided by John Rio. This scale ranges from “pre-contemplation” (indicating resistance to discussion about work) through “relapse prevention,” (actively seeking to remain employed).

Comparisons of the overall Palmer Court population at baseline and at one year shows relatively little change in the distribution on any of the four questions. (See Attachment 1) However, there are 167 residents who were at Palmer Court from the March 2011 through March 2012 and were evaluated by their case manager at both times. As reflected in Table 1, there has been some significant movement both towards and away from employment/employment related activities. Interestingly, residents’ “ability” to engage both improved the most and declined the most. “Ability” often relates to physical and mental health issues, always a significant concern for chronically homeless individuals.

Table 1: Resident relationship to Employment or employment related activities

	Moved toward employment/Engagement	Stayed the same	Moved away from employment/engagement
Level of Interest	35 (21.0%)	82 (49.0%)	50 (30.0%)
Level of ability	37 (22.3%)	74 (44.3%)	56 (33.6%)
Current level of activity	32 (19.2%)	100 (59.9%)	35 (21.0%)
Stage of Change	35 (18.2%)	91 (54.5%)	50 (30.0%)

The fluidity reflected in these responses is typical of individuals living with chronic mental and physical health issues and other significant, ongoing life stressors. It is not uncommon for individuals to move in and out of work readiness very rapidly, even in a matter of days. While it would be difficult and largely inaccurate to categorize individuals in any concrete manner, this set of questions demonstrates the need for a broad spectrum of services and resources as individuals require different types of support at different levels of readiness. Over the course of the first year, the Employment Pilot has made significant additions to the services offered at Palmer Court. (See Attachment 2: Service Clusters)

PRE-EMPLOYMENT ACTIVITIES

In addition to onsite employment services, a variety of pre-employment activities have also been made available to residents at Palmer Court. These supportive services are crucial for residents who may need to develop additional skills before seeking employment or for those who must simply focus on personal health and recovery. As part of the Employment Pilot, agencies such as Vocational Rehabilitation, the University of Utah’s Occupational Therapy Department, and the LDS Church have offered different types of skills-focused classes and workshops onsite at Palmer Court.

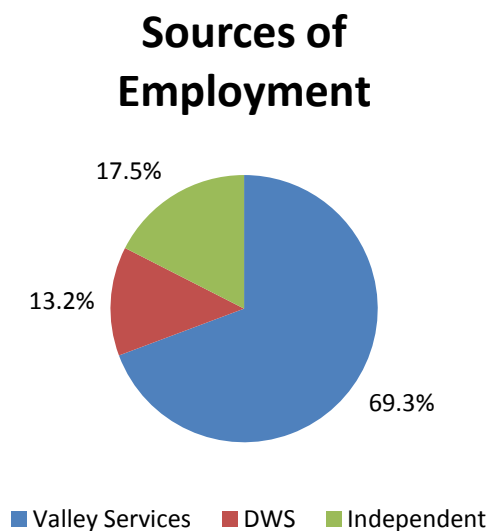
- Computer classes
- Life Skills Group
- Driver’s license assistance
- Work & Donuts Group
- Benefits Planning
- Budgeting Workshop

Through feedback from onsite service providers, case managers, and the residents themselves, it has become clear that these pre-employment activities are viewed as beneficial and an important component of fostering a holistic “culture of employment” at Palmer Court.

TYPES OF EMPLOYMENT

At baseline 28 (12.7%) residents were employed. During the first pilot year 114 new jobs were reported and tracked. These jobs ranged from one-day / one-time jobs to permanent full time employment with benefits. Data for the first year indicate that employment has come through three distinct sources: 1) Valley Services, 2) the Department of Workforce Services, and 3) independent employment.

Valley Services is a Salt Lake County based non-profit whose mission is "To enhance recovery and independence for people with mental health and other life challenges by providing employment through viable businesses delivering exceptional customer service." The involvement of Valley Services as a partner agency has been acknowledged as one of the primary successes of the Employment Pilot and, indeed, their agency has facilitated 79 (69.3%) jobs over the course of the year. Valley Services has provided some of the jobs through contractual partnerships with Vocational Rehabilitation and The Road Home. These positions were designed specifically to meet the needs of Palmer Court residents. For example, 15 of the 79 jobs have been located onsite at Palmer Court and several have been offered as temporary employment opportunities with financial support from Vocational Rehabilitation.



The Utah Department of Workforce Services (DWS) has also contributed to overall job creation at Palmer Court. DWS personnel have successfully developed and filled 15 (13.2%) jobs over the past year for Palmer Court residents. In addition to job development, DWS has reallocated significant funds and personnel to assist Palmer Court residents in successfully obtaining and maintaining these positions.

A portion of the job opportunities over the past year have been obtained by the residents themselves. Of residents who have been at Palmer Court at any time during the past year, 31 (11.9%) were employed at entry. Palmer Court residents have independently obtained 20 job placements during the pilot year. Service provider reports indicate that some who obtained employment on their own had also accessed DWS and other provider services in preparation for employment such as help with a resume, finding job openings and securing bus tokens for transportation.

EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES

The Employment Pilot design is based on the assumption that all Palmer Court residents have the capacity to work, now or at some point in the future. "Employment" was defined as a person having received any taxable income from a paying job. The goal is to understand the impact of pilot activities on those currently able to work thus it was important to distinguish between residents who are currently able to participate to any degree in employment and/or employment-related activities and those who are not.

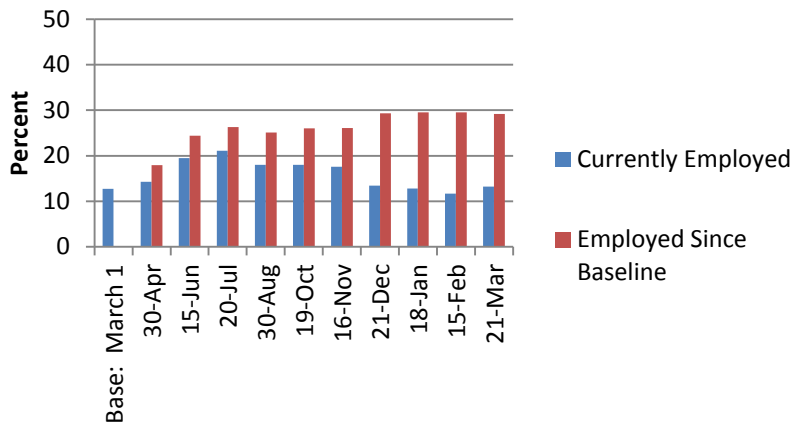
To distinguish these groups, case managers reported at baseline and then every six months on each resident's ability to engage in employment or employment related activities. A rating of 1-7 indicated a resident had some level of ability to engage in activities and becomes part of the "practical universe."

A rating of "0" indicated the resident had significant physical and/or mental health issues (either acute or chronic) making them unable to engage in any activities at this time. This included, for example, elderly residents who have been retired for years and those with significant permanent disabilities receiving Social Security benefits. Those rated as having "0" current ability relative to employment are included in reports on the "full population" but were not in the "practical universe." This distinction was used purely for measuring pilot outcomes and had no impact on residents' access to employment activities and other associated supportive services. Employment outcomes for year one (both the full population and the practical universe) are displayed below.

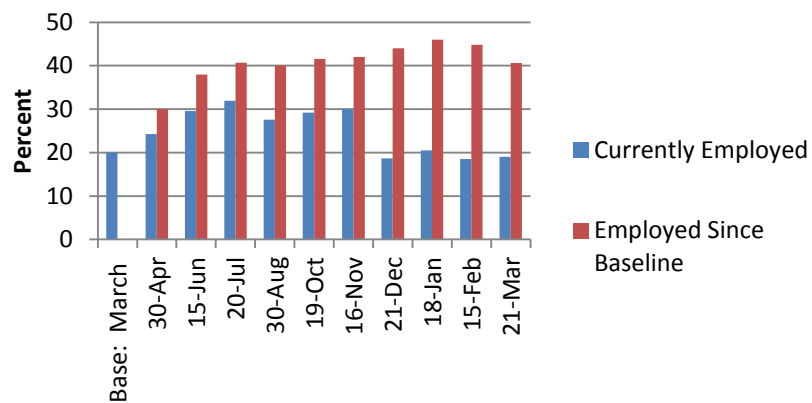
Because case managers update each resident's ability rating every six months, the "practical universe" shifted regularly and individuals could move in and out of this group based on their case manager's evaluation of their current status. In a similar way the "full population" shifted as residents moved in and out of Palmer Court. Thus it is more useful to focus on the percentages than raw numbers.

At baseline, 20.0% of the practical universe and 12.7% of the full population were identified as "currently employed." Over the course of the pilot year, the rate of employment at Palmer Court shifted dramatically. Peak employment occurred in July 2011 when 31.9% of the practical universe and 21.1% of the full population had been working. By March of 2012, employment rates had decreased to near baseline as 19.0% of the practical universe and 13.2% of the full population were currently employed.

Employment: Full Population



Employment: Practical Universe



While current employment is important to track, it is also important to take note of resident's exposure to employment at any point in time. The "Employed Since Baseline" measurement reflects all residents who have been employed at *any time* since the start of the Employment Pilot. This number is inclusive of all current and past Palmer Court residents and has steadily increased over the course of one year. In March 2012, the one-year mark, 40.6% of the practical universe and 29.2% of the full population had been employed for some period of time during the year. This reflects a 175% increase in employment participation over baseline.

Table 2: Employment Outcomes by Subgroups With Increases Over Baseline

Baseline: March 1, 2011	Section 8		Week-to-week	Total N = 220
	W/ children	W/o children		
Employed at baseline	4 (7.3%)	12 (12.1%)	12 (18.2%)	28 (12.7%)
March 21, 2012				
Currently Employed	10 (18.5%)	10 (10.6%)	10 (17.2%)	N = 207 30 (14.5%) [7.1% increase over baseline]
Employed at any time from baseline through April 21, 2012	20 (29.4%)	30 (27.0%)	27 (33.8%)	N = 260 77 (29.6%) [175% increase over baseline]

QUALITATIVE MEASURES & FEEDBACK

Resident Focus Groups

To gain additional insight into the resident population of Palmer Court, and to obtain crucial feedback about the Pilot Court Employment Pilot activities as they have affected the residents themselves, a series of focus groups were conducted both at the onset of the pilot, and at the one-year mark. The format for the resident focus groups was semi-structured and included questions focusing on employment activity at Palmer Court (previous, current, and future suggestions). A total of 52 residents participated in these voluntary focus groups. Participant received \$15 each in appreciation for their time.

Focus Groups – Round 1 – March 2011

- 21 total participants
- 3 separate groups:
 1. Residents with at least one child under 18
 2. Residents engaged in pilot-related services
 3. Residents with little/no contact with service providers
- Themes which emerged from the discussions:
 - Communication: a desire for more information, provided clearly and accurately with reliable follow-up when needed
 - Individuality: view residents as individual not cogs in a system, know each one's personal strengths and needs, ask (don't assume) what is best for me
 - Respect: "value me as a person," self-determination, personal pride and human dignity needs to be honored, wages need to reflect this
 - Safety (Physical, Financial, Psychological): life on the streets equals danger, life in Palmer Court should equal safety; physical safety is part but psychological safety (freedom from outside pressures) is important
- Practical Issues residents want folded into any Palmer Court efforts:
 - Individual Considerations
 - Age, mental/physical health, criminal record, education/previous work experience, personal interests and goals
 - Universal Nuts & Bolts
 - Transportation, childcare, telephone access, computer access and training, benefit protection, basic necessities (food, silverware, t.v., etc.)
 - Other wellbeing activities such as exercise, art classes, tutoring, and community council/having a "voice"

In the first round of focus groups, residents at Palmer Court expressed concerns and provided feedback in several broad areas that can be understood as themes. Most of the comments made during these initial sessions centered around the concept of safety. Residents expressed a fundamental need for physical, financial, and psychological safety; all of which can be secured at Palmer Court.

In light of this, it is important to consider the residents' perceived safety as the topic of employment becomes a focus at Palmer Court. Employment discussions can threaten resident safety in several ways and should be approached carefully to avoid negative consequences and continued trauma. Benefits, for instance, a major component associated with financial safety, can be jeopardized by employment and thus coordinated benefits planning should be part of any effort to secure employment for Palmer Court residents.

In addition to safety concerns, Palmer Court residents participating in this initial round of focus groups expressed frustrations with more universal components of employment such as transportation, access to childcare, and individualized job development. Respect from service providers also emerged as a crucial factor in whether or not a resident feels compelled to work with employment personnel in their search for a job.

Focus Groups – Round 2 – April 2012

- 31 total participants
- 3 separate groups:
 1. Residents engaged in employment or serious job searching
 2. Residents engaged in pre-employment activities
 3. Residents with little/no contact with service providers
- Themes which emerged from the discussion
 - General familiarity with onsite employment and employment related resources
 - Majority have very positive view of onsite service providers
 - Case manager typically viewed as the gateway to accessing services
 - Employment is a step-by-step process; each one needs to be able to walk the path at his/her own pace
 - Social stigma and fear of social engagement can inhibit residents from engaging in employment activities (and many other activities) outside Palmer Court

In the second round of focus groups, residents had clearly experienced changes in the “culture of employment” at Palmer Court. They could easily recognize and name a variety of onsite services and had many positive comments about their experiences with these providers. There seemed to be a common understanding among residents that they could talk to one another and share their knowledge about resources. Additionally, case managers were seen as an important source of information and connection to services. In this way, the “culture of employment” is truly reflected in the word of mouth that has increased so drastically at Palmer Court over the last year.

That said, the residents did have suggestions for improvement in some areas and expressed frustration with several ongoing practical problems such as transportation and the stigma associated with working and interacting outside of Palmer Court. Much was said in terms of the discrimination and societal oppression faced by residents as they attempt to re-engage with society, especially in any type of employment capacity. Several residents recounted highly traumatic experiences with external agencies in which they were the target of painful social stigma.

Changes over time: The single greatest difference between the first and second round of focus groups was the overall familiarity of the participants with the onsite service providers. Most participants could identify the providers by name and often could identify the agency with whom an individual worked and the type of services they could provide. The “culture of employment” was clearly evident as residents told stories of friends and neighbors who had spread the word about resources and services. Residents asked about increasing communication so they could know more about what was available if they were to want to contact a provider.

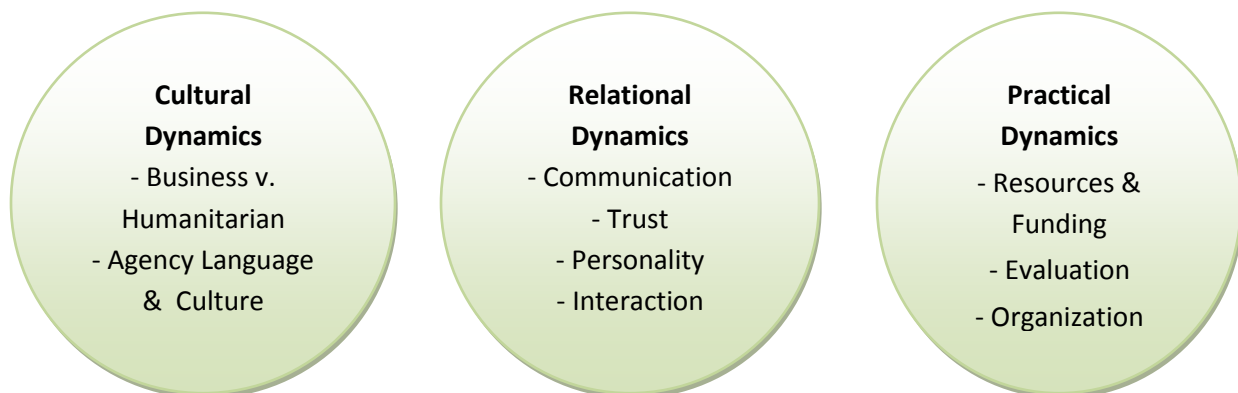
One other important change involved a shift in focus. In the first round of interviews residents focused primarily on issues within Palmer Court. This round focused more on issues concerning interactions outside the residence. Socializing in public gatherings, interacting with employers and outside agencies, and shaking the identity as a “homeless person” were topics of concern.

Stakeholder Interviews

While the outcome measures have been tracked since March 2011, the process of designing and implementing the employment pilot started nearly a year prior. To better understand the dynamics of the design portion of the Employment Pilot, 31 individual interviews were conducted with key stakeholders associated with the project. These interviews took place in August, 2011 and were focused on gathering information and perspectives about the initial development and implementation stages of the pilot.

To ensure representative feedback, interviewees were selected from two distinct groups of stakeholders: the “development group” and the “implementation group.” The development group included members of the Employment Pilot team who had direct involvement and authority in decision making, pilot creation, and the development of goals (i.e. administrators, funders, consultants, and top-level managers). The implementation group consisted of team members who were tasked with carrying out Palmer Court Employment Pilot initiatives and activities as directed by the administrative team. This second group was primarily made up of case managers, direct service providers, and mid-level managers.

Feedback and information gleaned from the stakeholder interviews can be understood in the context of three broad categories: cultural dynamics, relational dynamics, and practical dynamics.



Cultural Dynamics

The first and most prominent component of pilot development discussed in the 31 stakeholder interviews encompassed the many dynamics that naturally occur when a variety of agencies attempt to work together toward a common goal. Cultural dynamics, or the interactional patterns between agencies, have thus played a large role in shaping the development and implementation processes of the Employment Pilot as a whole.

As all of the agencies associated with the Employment Pilot began working together and designing various interventions to implement at Palmer Court, it became clear to many that not only were there significant divisions among agencies in terms of values, beliefs, and underlying philosophies, but the purpose of the pilot itself remained largely undefined for a long period of time. Indeed, several stakeholders, most of whom were part of the implementation group, recalled months of shifting goals, miscommunications, and a plethora of tense meetings. While almost all participants were able to identify “employment” as the primary goal of the pilot, there were significant variations in the definition of this term and the purpose of focusing on “employment” as the primary objective.

Additionally, some agencies were more focused on employment as a priority than others due to varying agency missions, cultures, and their perceived role in the Employment Pilot itself. While some participating agencies focus solely on obtaining employment for Palmer Court residents (as outlined in their mission and agency culture), other agencies seemed to place more value on the types of supportive services to which residents would now have increased access as a direct result of the Employment Pilot. Such resources might include assistance with ongoing medical concerns, transportation, and life skills coaching.

In hindsight, it is unsurprising that much of the frustration associated with the lack of consensus was expressed by members of the implementation group. While the development group could easily maneuver around shifting goals and theoretical framework, members of the implementation group could not escape the culture clash. These members were required to work together under significant amounts of pressure to carry out tasks that were implemented for purposes of the pilot. Thus, the ultimate culmination of culture clashes and differing goals occurred at the ground level as the operational team attempted to make the best of complex and often shifting directions.

For members of the development team, however, culture differences between agencies could more comfortably remain somewhat abstract. Stereotypes and previous disagreements between agencies were acknowledged by development stakeholders as something of a side note, however, it was assumed that any problems could be worked out along the way. While this has been true for the most part, problems associated with culture clash have been routinely addressed within the lower levels of the Employment Pilot. A thorough and honest exploration of the cultural components and possible problems associated with the Employment Pilot prior to the actual implementation may have prevented some of the most severe discontent and resistance to the pilot itself.

Throughout the first year of development and implementation, the Employment Pilot experienced many challenges due to culture clashes between agencies as a common philosophy and culture had not been identified from the onset. Each agency spoke a different language, had different underlying values, and operated with different understandings of the ultimate purpose of the Employment Pilot. As a result of the team members' hard work and dedication, however, the atmosphere within the pilot is now more amicable and there is an ever deepening understanding and respect for one another's perspective. This effort toward understanding has ultimately increased the pilot's capacity to problem solve and communicate effectively about residents' needs.

Relational Dynamics

Relational dynamics, or the interactional patterns between individuals, have occurred at all levels within the Palmer Court Employment Pilot. The 31 stakeholder interviews highlight three consistent themes associated with relational dynamics among team members throughout the development process including the enhancement of communication, the development of trust, and the interaction of individual personalities.

As team members began negotiating their roles in the Palmer Court Employment Pilot, it became clear that increased communication was necessary to develop working relationships and to accomplish the goals of the Employment Pilot, especially at the implementation level. In order to complete assigned tasks, there was a heightened need to communicate on a more regular basis; both within the individual agencies and with other partners.

Increased communication among the development partners seemed relatively straightforward and contributed greatly to the ongoing progress of the project as a whole. That said, communication between implementation partners surfaced as more of a challenge as partners were asked to share highly sensitive information (i.e. extremely confidential and potentially harmful information about residents) making trust an essential component of partner relationships.

The familiarization process took the Palmer Court implementation team many months and several personnel changes to fully realize, however, trust building and the development of working relationships have been two major pilot successes thus far. Although this work is never complete, the Palmer Court team is increasingly capable of developing relationships with new partners joining the collaboration.

As is true in any context in which human beings engage with one another, personality differences and similarities play a significant role in relationship development within the Employment Pilot. Unsurprisingly, many team members experienced both personality matches and personality clashes with their new colleagues. These interactions impacted both communication and trust between individuals and, thus, had a significant effect on the developmental process as a whole.

Interestingly, both sets of resident focus groups revealed that Palmer Court residents seem to experience very similar relational dynamics in their interactions with onsite service

providers and case managers. Communication, trust, and personality interaction were all mentioned as integral to the development of relationships between Palmer Court residents and onsite employment personnel with slight variations in what types of information were being communicated and the particular reactions to personality clashes.

Practical Dynamics

In addition to the more abstract issues associated with cultural and relational dynamics, any interagency collaboration must also consider the practical components of such a complex project such as funding, resources, and measuring outcomes. The Employment Pilot exhibits several strengths in this area, as well as several weaknesses.

In terms of resources, the development team has been able to repurpose many resources from within their respective agencies to assist in pilot activities. In addition, the financial assistance from the Butler Family Fund was of great value in providing flexible resources to not only provide technical assistance, visiting other locations, but to fund the securing of drivers licenses, glasses, and other needed personal items for Palmer Court residents pursuing employment. In addition, Butler Family Funds have employed a Research Assistant from the University of Utah Social Research Institute who tracks and reports on the results.

With so many resources so readily accessible, many practical problems, were, and can continue to be, solved on a timely basis. Only larger issues such as transportation and expunging criminal records stand out as ongoing challenges that have yet to be resolved. A significant proportion of the repurposed funds have allowed agency staff to provide onsite services during designated periods throughout the week. By reallocating these resources, the Employment Pilot receives substantial benefit and the residents gain increased access to employment services and other supportive resources.

That said, for much of the pilot development and implementation period, the project lacked some organizational components that would likely have contributed to faster progress and less confusion among team members. For instance, Kania & Kramer (2011) suggest that an outside “backbone agency” is essential to collaborative success. Without a neutral agency whose sole responsibility is organization and facilitation of project growth, the Palmer Court Employment Pilot is at risk for losing momentum and falling into what Huxham (1996) terms a “collaborative inertia.”

Stakeholder Interviews Summary

The 31 individuals who participated in the stakeholder interviews are all very busy professionals who were willing to give of their time to assist in the evaluation process for the Employment Pilot. While it is clear there were (and continue to be) many struggles in the development and early implementation stages of the pilot, interviewees also expressed a high degree of commitment to working through the issues. As lessons are learned, expectations adjusted and successes experienced the Employment Pilot teams continues to work together to hold on to what works, let go of what does not work and continue moving forward step by step.

DISCUSSION

The Palmer Court Employment Pilot represents a new way of addressing homelessness in Utah. As a product of the 10-year plan to end chronic homelessness, this program has the potential to assist many of Utah's formerly chronically homeless individuals and families in ways that have been previously inaccessible to them. A critical challenge for this, and any new program, is ensuring the program is well matched to the population it is meant to serve.

For a person to be identified as "chronic homelessness" (as defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban development) they must have a disability and have been homeless for at least one year. There are also likely to have been multiple episodes over many years. For this small portion of the overall homeless population, all these factors can work together to make transitioning into employment quite challenging. As noted above, many Palmer Court residents have significant mental and physical health issues and have not been connected to regular employment for many years. This means that it is very likely that traditional employment programs that work well with the general population or even with those who are newly homeless will likely not work the same with this population. The Employment Pilot team is still in the process of understanding the implications of this reality.

Hopes were high as the Employment Pilot team expressed the vision that "all permanent supportive housing residents will have access to increasing their income through employment." While this is still the vision, there has been a growing realization that this is not a linear process, neither for the pilot nor for individuals. People make progress in managing their disabilities and then they have setbacks. Employment numbers grow over several months and then stagnate or even decline. Of course the two issues are related. Last summer more Palmer Court residents were employed as temporary labor jobs became available. Residents could walk or take the bus in the generally good weather. In the winter there were fewer jobs available that matched the needs of many residents. Winter weather makes transportation more difficult and the effect of the cold, dark days and long nights can certainly result in more depression and a desire to stay inside and warm.

One perhaps unexpected barrier to employment (as mentioned by residents in the focus groups and identified above) is the challenge of social reintegration. Residents spoke of the damage done by living for years "outside" society. Either by their own choice or the experiences of being ostracized and marginalized, they speak of feeling unwelcome in the world. The social reintegration process can be a significant barrier to not only employment, but also basic quality of life for the residents of Palmer Court. More work needs to be done to increase awareness and respect within the community surrounding Palmer Court to promote positive, healthy interactions and supportive responses to residents' engagement with society at large. This is a slow but necessary step toward employment that increases dignity and self-worth.

Throughout this first year, the pilot team has been experimenting with new ways to provide services to the formerly chronically homeless individuals in Salt Lake City and to help them obtain increased income through employment. The data provided above serves as the foundation for several important "lessons learned," some reflect areas of progress, all provide challenges for future growth.

LESSONS LEARNED

Pilot Design

1. Interagency collaborations inevitably experience culture clashes as norms within each agency are challenged and stretched to accommodate cultural differences. Differences range from small to large and will rarely disappear on their own. Open conversations, especially during the design phase, are critical to help all to retrain by-in and on-going support. Areas of possible conflict include but are not limited to:
 - a. Differences in language (terminology, meanings of words) – language is powerful. Ask, “What do you hear when I say...”employment” or “success”?
 - b. Disparate values of what is “right” or best for a particular population
 - c. A variety of missions driving the engagement
 - d. Limitations due to funding sources and requirements
 - e. Previous “baggage” due to past interactions and experiences
 - f. Varying levels of familiarity with the population being served

Addressing these issues early in the design phase facilitates a smoother and more rapid movement into the implementation phase.

2. Large undertakings such as this need a project director who functions as a full time organizational hub or back-bone around which the project evolves. Agency representatives are already overwhelmed with work and represent a particular perspective (as noted above). This person acts to enhance the whole, facilitating communication and monitoring progress toward the larger goal.
3. Those with firsthand knowledge of and experience with the day to day lived realities of the chronically homeless individuals need to have an equal voice at the table as the program is designed. Creating a safe environment for honest discussion is difficult but critical to success. The power differentials between agency administration and front line case managers must be recognized and those most vulnerable must feel safe and protected if they are to be truly free to engage in honest dialogue. Outside agencies, even those with the best intentions, will struggle to match their mission to the realities of the population if they do not first become very familiar with the strengths and needs of the people for whom the program is designed.
4. Case management style at the PSH facility matters. The front line interaction between the client and the case manager is where the real work happens. Case managers or representatives for this group need to be involved in a discussion about how the goals of the project fit with the norms of the primary case managers. Not all programs can be implemented successfully with all case management styles. If the role of the case manager is expected to change with the implementation of a new program, this needs to be communicated clearly and consistently.
5. The case manager to client ratio may need to be adjusted to determine if workload increases due to employment activities might overwhelm the system. Personnel are often already stretched thin. The added demands of including employment resources in the multitude of activities and services needs to be acknowledged and adequate staffing provided. This is necessary so that other services do not suffer and current workers, who already engage in very challenging work, are not over-whelmed.

6. Residents and resident views need to be incorporated in the design process. Focus groups input, participation in appropriate planning sessions and consultation prior to implantation all provide critical feedback for keeping the program grounded in the residents' needs and lived realities.
7. The chronically homeless individuals are not uniform in their needs relative to employment. Program designers need to think across a continuum of services from activities to support independent employment to activities designed to encourage basic interactions even within the Palmer Court community as a first step to employment. Given the wide range of needs it may be appropriate to start with a small group of residents with similar employment related needs and expand the scope of services and residents served over time.

Pilot Implementation

1. It is not enough to simply relocate service providers onsite doing "business as usual" and assume residents will then be effectively served. Processes which made it difficult for residents to access services will likely continue to be barriers unless pathways can be adjusted to meet the needs of many within this population. Agencies which have been able to adjust their services to meet the needs of Palmer Court residents have been finding greater success in engaging residents in their programs and services.
2. Changes in the "culture of employment" at Palmer Court have happened. While very difficult to measure quantitatively, one year after implementation residents are better able to identify people, activities and resources available to support any interest in employment. As residents feel increasingly supported in their employment endeavors, they take additional steps, both with the help of service providers and on their own.
3. Job Availability -- Once marketing of the program began, we realized we needed to have a number of jobs that clients could quickly enter. Temporary jobs, daily jobs were good. As soon as we had some of these available, it gave tenants an opportunity to achieve entrance into employment, even for a short time. It is important to have something available when a tenant expresses interest, if not, they can quickly become discouraged.
4. Most Palmer Court residents need a very supportive, very gradual entrance into the workforce. We need to spend the time getting to know the client's work history and desires around employment. While many labor jobs have been made available to residents, physical health issues and interest in other types of employment have stopped some residents from taking such jobs. Employment variety and personalizing options is important to serving a diverse population.
5. Many tenants express a desire for full-time and higher paid employment. However, we need to balance and check ourselves, as the residents are not interested in being told what is best for them but want their dreams and interests considered. We need to spend the time in working with them to find the right type of job so that they will be successful.
6. Employer partnerships are being developed and need to be maintained. Employers are a key component to successful placements and they need to know that by hiring a Palmer Court resident they are also receiving the services and support of the job developer who can be a partner to manage issues that may arise once a resident is employed.

Pilot Evaluation

1. Because individual involvement in employment and employment-related activities fluctuates so rapidly, outcomes must be measured over long periods of time to reflect accurate patterns associated with pilot outcome measures. Over time, trends in the data may show an overall increase in employment, however, pilot “successes” can be identified more accurately and immediately using alternative measurements.
2. “Progress” in this type of program is hardly linear. It is a step-by-step process that often contains steps backwards as well as forward. Measures such as interest in employment, engagement with service providers, participation in employment related activities, employment “talk,” and other such factors need to be measured and valued as equally important as employment outcomes.

CONCLUSION

There has been a significant increase in residents who have increased their income through employment in this first year. In addition, the lessons learned in this first year have been many but they are far from over. The Palmer Court Employment Pilot team continues to learn lessons, make adjustments and develop a culture of employment that supports residents in taking their next step toward whatever they are seeking relative to employment. It is a slow but worthwhile endeavor.

References

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Attachment 1: Baseline and One Year Case Manager Data

Stages of Change

		Baseline N = 220	One Year N = 212
Pre-Contemplation	Resistant to discussions about work ; getting a job is not on the radar; projects unemployment as necessary for working on recovery-does not see benefits of working to improved health; may state they can work whenever they want to.	110 (50.0%)	96 (45.3%)
Contemplation	Considers employment as a possibility ; will talk with staff about working, may ask about implications of employment.	47 (21.4%)	59 (27.8%)
Preparation	Taking stock of oneself to plan for pursuing a job ; makes vocational plan; gathers info.; expresses concerns; seeks solutions to potential problems; enters training or educational programs to prepare for employment; considers risks of personal behaviors linked to working, develops response plan.	35 (15.9%)	25 (11.8%)
Action	Exits training to enter employment; working (taxed income) for an employer.	10 (4.5%)	10 (4.7%)
Maintenance	Remains attached to the workforce ; resolves on the job problems; seeks re-employment when there is a job loss; secures new work within 2 months of a job loss.	17 (7.7%)	14 (6.6%)
Relapse prevention	Uses available supportive services to stay employed; considers next job as career moves ; considers more training needed to get more satisfying work; uses earned income legitimately; learns skills to respond to trigger events or moments.	1 (0.5%)	8 (3.8%)

Interest in Employment-Related Activities

	Baseline N = 220	One Year N = 212
Not interested in participating in employment or employment related activities.	92 (41.8%)	87 (41.0%)
Some interest in participating in employment or employment related activities.	36 (16.4%)	43 (20.3%)
Interested in doing volunteer work, or self employment or similar jobs, (i.e. donate plasma collect cans, yard work, making jewelry, panhandle)	6 (2.7%)	8 (3.8%)
Interested in participating in temporary labor, project (i.e. construction job) or seasonal work	8 (3.6%)	7 (3.3%)
Interested in doing part time work in a training program/with a job coach or similar assistance (i.e. Easter Seals, DI, Valley Services, etc)	14 (6.4%)	12 (5.7%)
Interested in working a part time regular job <32 hours	31 (14.1%)	32 (15.1%)
Interested in working a full time job >32 hours a week.	33 (15.0%)	23 (10.8%)

Ability to Perform Employment-Related Activities

	Baseline N = 220	One Year N = 212
Unable to work at all. Physical or mental disabilities affecting ability to work. Not eligible to work (i.e. non citizen, no work permit)	82 (37.3%)	78 (36.8%)
Limited ability to work. May need some special accommodations due to a disability. Able to participate in very basic job readiness activities.	31 (14.1%)	32 (15.1%)
Able participate in volunteer work, or self employment or similar jobs, donating plasma (i.e. collecting cans, yard work, making jewelry, panhandling)	10 (4.5%)	21 (9.9%)
Able to participate in temporary labor, project, or seasonal work, (i.e. construction),	18 (8.2%)	12 (5.7%)
Able to participate in part time work in a training program/ with a job coach or similar assistance (i.e. Easter Seals, DI, Valley Services, etc)	23 (10.5%)	23 (10.8%)
Able to work a part time regular job <32 hours week	28 (12.7%)	27 (12.7%)
Able to work a FT job >32 hours a week.	28 (12.7%)	19 (9.0%)

Actual Current Activity in Employment Related Activities

	Baseline N = 220	One Year N = 212
Not working and not participating in any job related readiness activities. Not eligible to work (i.e. non citizen, no work permit)	124 (56.4%)	114 (53.8%)
Participating in job readiness activities	44 (20.0%)	48 (22.6%)
Participating in volunteer work, or self employment or similar jobs, donating plasma (i.e. collecting alum cans, yard work, making jewelry, panhandling)	9 (4.1%)	6 (2.8%)
Participating in temporary labor, project or seasonal work, (i.e. construction),	8 (3.6%)	9 (4.2%)
Participating in part time work in a training program/ with a job coach or similar assistance (i.e. Easter Seals, DI, Valley Services, etc)	12 (5.5%)	12 (5.7%)
Working a part time regular job <32 hours week	13 (5.9%)	16 (7.5%)
Working a full time job >32 hours a week	10 (4.5%)	7 (3.3%)

Attachment 2: Service Clusters: Palmer Court Employment Pilot

(As of 2 May 2012)

A primary component of the Palmer Court Employment Pilot is making appropriate resources and services more visible and accessible to Palmer Court residents and staff. Service Clusters provide a way to organize these resources and services according to the **support** provided to the resident when engaging in a variety of activities.

Each service cluster is identified by the skill development goals at that level and the goal for residents participating in activities at that level. Currently, service providers are being asked to identify specific programs that fit in each Service Cluster. Once complete, these listings will be used by case managers to assist interested clients in finding a good match to help them move toward and into employment.

Service Cluster 1: Pre-Employment Preparation

Skill Development: Focus on increasing daily living skills and other basic work-readiness activities to increase self-awareness, responsibility, social functioning and interest in employment.

Goal: Service providers will assist residents in developing an appropriate and productive daily routine to the extent of their ability and willingness. Expand use of resources, identify personal strengths, and address barriers to employment.

Services/Types of Activities:

- **Assistance with securing a Driver's License**
- **One-on-one meetings with disability benefits specialist**
- **Voc. Rehab. assistance with securing medical, dental and transportation resources**
- **Budgeting Workshop**
- **DWS transportation assistance**

Service Cluster 2: Onsite Employment & Expanding Work-Readiness

Skill Development: Continue to address pre-vocational needs and develop basic employment-related skills. Identify workplace expectations to increase level of independence.

Goal: Service providers will actively engage residents in onsite, supported wage-earning employment and/or work-readiness activities. They will begin planning for future employment and developing career goals.

Services/Types of Activities:

- **Onsite volunteering opportunities**
- **Onsite workshops - Life skills classes, Work and Donuts**
- **Onsite employment**
- **Work readiness workshops**

Service Cluster 3: Offsite Employment & Work-Readiness

Skill Development: Develop the necessary skills to complete job duties with moderate assistance through offsite participation. Service providers will familiarize residents with services offered by partner agencies, developing skills to independently seek, obtain and retain work.

Goal: Service providers will actively engage residents in offsite supported wage earning employment and/or work-readiness activities. They will continue planning for future employment and developing individualized career goals.

Services/Types of Activities:

- **Offsite volunteer opportunities**
- **Offsite job skill training/classes**
- **Participation in CCEP classes to obtain computer literacy skills**
- **Voc. Rehab. assistance with education and training resources**

Service Cluster 4: Supported Job Placement

Skill Development: Focus on gaining specific skills needed to independently gain and retain employment with occasional/minimal assistance.

Goal: Service providers will assist residents in seeking out services to assist them in accessing wage earning employment, gain employment and maintain his/her position with minimal support.

Resources/Services:

- **DWS Job developer: meet with residents to determine interest; locate jobs in the community, assist in completing application and interview process, serve as a resource regarding employer or resident issues around employment, informs residents of DWS employment support services and assists in accessing services**
- **Valley Services: Provides assisted employment opportunities with the possibility of full-time employment at external agencies.**
- **Voc. Rehab. Supported work activities, job coach, job matching**

Service Cluster 5: Independent Employment

Skill Development: Build on current knowledge and experience to develop additional skills for improving long-term independent employment opportunities with little or no assistance needed from service providers in seeking and/or retaining employment.

Goal: Resident independently achieves and/or maintains wage-earning employment.

Resources/Services:

- **DWS: jobs.utah.gov, Employment Centers**
- **DWS Job Developer: meet with residents to determine interest; assist in locating job postings at DWS, locate jobs in the community and make resident referral; inform residents of DWS employment support services and direct resident to DWS office for services**