

Project CRAFT

A Summary of:

PROJECT CRAFT, Community Restitution and Apprenticeship Focused Training: Executive Summary (October 1, 1994 - September 30, 1998), February 1999, by Mary Ellen Kiss, The Resource Development Group (Bowie, MD)

Overview

Community Restitution and Apprenticeship Focused Training (Project CRAFT) is a Youth Pilot Project funded under Title IV of the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) to promote employment of economically disadvantaged out-of-school youth, including youth in correctional facilities. The project is managed by the Home Builders Institute (HBI), the educational branch of the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB). Its holistic approach integrates career training with support services and participation in mandatory industry-sponsored activities. This study focuses on a pilot project for juvenile offenders that aims to reduce recidivism rates and to reintegrate the youth successfully into the community through productive work and changed attitudes.

POPULATION

This study focuses on 151 youth ages 16 to 21 in detention centers and prisons. All but one participant were males; 46 percent were white, 37 percent African American, 8 percent Hispanic and 9 percent Native American; 25 percent had dependent children. At the time of enrollment in CRAFT, nearly 90 percent had less than a high school education, 23 percent had a high school diploma or GED certificate and 14 percent had been in special education programs. Sixty-percent had been convicted of crimes against property, 51 percent of crimes against persons, 47 percent of drug related crimes, 21 percent of other related offenses and 11 percent of status offenses. Fifty-two percent had committed four or more offenses and 93 percent had sentences under 24 months. Seventeen percent had never worked and 54 percent had worked for 11 months or less. Of those working, 50 percent earned less than \$5.00 an hour.

Evidence of Effectiveness

The report indicates that, of the 151 youth served:

- ◆ 140 completed the program (93 percent completion rate)
- ◆ 130 were employed, returned to school, joined Job Corps or enrolled in military service (86 percent)
- ◆ 55 entered apprenticeship programs (36 percent)

Of the youth employed:

- ◆ 94 were employed in training-related jobs (73 percent)
- ◆ 35 were employed in other jobs such as trades, social service, health care and food service (27 percent)
- ◆ 103 entered full time jobs (80 percent)

- ◆ 58 experienced wage increases over the duration of the project (45 percent)

Participants' hourly wages:

- ◆ at entry ranged from \$4.25 to \$10.00, with a median wage of \$6.00 (in 1995, the national median wage for high school and college youth was \$4.74)
- ◆ at project completion ranged from \$4.25 to \$16.00, with the median wage of \$7.50 (in 1995, the national hourly median wage for youth aged 24 and younger was \$6.58)

Of the 149 youth who had been released or were in community corrections, 39 were convicted of new crimes, a recidivism rate of 26 percent (national data ranges between 70 and 80 percent). Of the 39 youth who recidivated, 60 percent (23 youth) recidivated within the first year of release.

Key Components

Project CRAFT provides:

- ◆ 210 hours of classroom training that includes industry-specific mathematics, communication literacy and GED preparation
- ◆ 630 hours of work-based learning in construction projects for local housing authorities, building houses for the Habitat for Humanity and others
- ◆ pre-apprenticeship certificate training (PACT) for those completing at least 420 hours of classroom training and work-based learning
- ◆ leadership and self-esteem building activities
- ◆ life skills training, including work ethic, social skills and budget management
- ◆ case management services and counseling, which are integrated with the training program
- ◆ job placement assistance
- ◆ equipment necessary to work in construction (hard hat, tool box and tools) for graduates
- ◆ follow-up services

Applicants are selected through interviews and attend a two-day orientation session. After that, they go through a two-week assessment stage before initiating the training program. During this period, the applicants are assessed on their motivation and interest in the construction industry.

The project is driven by local needs and interests but partnership building is an essential part of Project CRAFT. The partnerships are expected to:

- ◆ provide high quality community-based training and employment opportunities
- ◆ ensure coordination and access to services by Project CRAFT participants
- ◆ expand the base of support services and employment for participants upon release to promote participant and project success
- ◆ obtain resources for continuing activities, expansion and replication of the project

A site coordinator identifies and forges community-based relationships. Participants are involved in activities such as home fairs, trade shows, and Christmas in April. Members of the local Home Builders Associations (HBA) serve as mentors and sponsors and help link participants to needed services, including housing, further education, apprenticeships and others.

For youth in correctional facilities, a case manager coordinates the treatment plans to ensure that the youth has supports in place when he/she leaves the facility. Linkages to needed services are made prior to the youth's release and are coordinated with the release plans. The case manager maintains contact with the youth after release, providing support at the work site and home when necessary, until the youth's situation stabilizes.

Contributing Factors

Case Management

The case manager has a key role in coordinating supports and services and avoiding interruptions in the youth's treatment. The case manager is also actively involved in helping the youth through the initial time after release, and in providing support and assistance in moments of crisis, until the youth finds employment stability.

Program Visibility in the Community

By maintaining a high profile in the community, the project staff and the local HBA chapters expand their opportunities to develop more linkages and influence service providers in pursuing alternatives that best suit participants' needs. This visibility also provides project staff with knowledge of high quality employment and training opportunities.

Building for the Future

The program addresses the current shortage of labor in the construction field. The NAHB estimates that over 300,000 skilled construction workers are needed per year to meet the

demand of new homes and renovations. At the same time, the program offers youth offenders an avenue to rebuild their future by providing them with work skills and a work ethic.

STUDY METHODOLOGY

The study includes both a process and an outcome/impact evaluation of the pilot project. Researchers reviewed monthly and quarterly reports and participant records, in addition to site visits, surveys, interviews, and discussions with project managers, staff and participants.

EVALUATION FUNDING

Employment and Training Administration, U.S. Department of Labor, under Title IV of the Job Training Partnership Act.

GEOGRAPHIC AREAS

The pilot was implemented at: Victor Cullen Academy, Sabillasville, MD, North Dakota Youth Correctional Center, Department of Juvenile Services and Missouri River Correctional Center at Bismarck, ND; Davidson County Juvenile Court, Corrections Corporation of America and Metro Davidson Correctional Work Center, Nashville, TN. Other locations of Project CRAFT are: Giddings, TX; Daytona Beach, Orlando and West Palm Beach, FL.

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