

**Employment Services for  
Individuals who are Homeless  
in Nashville, Tennessee**

**2007  
Needs and Resource Assessment  
Full Report**

**Issued July 1, 2007**

## **CAUTION IN INTERPRETING THE RESULTS**

When reading this document it is important to remember this document is but one source for assisting the Mayor's Commission in making the best possible informed decisions when planning services.

- Many individuals who meet the definition of homeless do not always identify themselves and are therefore underrepresented in the epidemiological profile and have limited access to services
- All of the data presented only represents the information provided by various subsets of individuals and agencies, and do not represent all service users or potential users
- Several data sources rely on the perceptions of the respondents and as such only represent that individual(s) perceptions
- All of the data presented is time limited, the assessment only provides information at a single points in time, which has passed.
- All assumptions based on the data are at best still just assumptions

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## **I. Introduction**

The Metropolitan Homeless Commission's goal is to help homeless individuals to get off the streets and into programs that will allow them to lead better lives. To that end the Commission sets policy and distributes funds to service organizations in the Nashville/Davidson County area. To assist in the possible development of employment services a needs and resource assessment for Nashville/Davidson County was conducted.

To begin this process the Economic Stability Committee convened to guide the development of a coordinated needs assessment process. This initial needs assessment report is the product of the efforts of the committee members, evaluation consultants, agency representatives, and people who are currently or recently homeless who helped to conduct the research upon which it is based.

The Needs and Resource Assessment consists of a review of the existing data, a review of the literature, a review of the results of a survey of people who are homeless, a review of the results of a survey of service providers, the results of seven focus groups of targeted groups of potential service recipients, and the results of a focus group of service providers. Needs assessments are crucial to the Commission as they develop strategies to provide a consortium of quality services to assist individuals who are homeless to seek, obtain, and maintain employment.

## **II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **A. REVIEW OF EXISTING DATA ON HOMELESSNESS**

This section is based on two sources of local data 1) the results of the “Homeless Count” --an unduplicated, point-in-time count of sheltered and non-sheltered homeless individuals led by MDHA and Metro Social Services; and 2) the results of the U.S. Conference of Mayors’ survey based on data collected by MDHA. Data for the Homeless Count was collected on the night of January 30, 2007, and data for the U.S. Conference of Mayors is based on annual data for the year November 1, 2005-October 31, 2006. This is the most recent data made available at the time of this report.

This section is based on data that is the most accurate available data on the incidence of homelessness, however it must be interpreted with caution. When reviewing this section of the report it is important to be mindful of several issues that impact the ability of the data to represent the true number of individuals who are homeless and reside in Nashville. These issues include, but are not limited to:

- 1) The age of the data.
- 2) How the term “homeless” is defined is the single greatest determinant of the number of individuals that ultimately appears in any incidence rate of homelessness.
- 3) Many individuals are uncounted because they do not self identify due to stigma, or may not even define themselves as homeless.
- 4) Assumptions that are made in regards to the data are simply that, assumptions.

There were 11,522 Individuals reported to the U.S. Conference of Mayors in the city reported for the year, 2006. Based on the homeless count, there were 1,657 individuals who were homeless; 1,267 individuals residing in shelters and 390 found on the street.

In terms of gender, most (74-84%) individuals are unaccompanied males. There were slightly more men living on the street (84%), but all other rates are comparable.

In terms of race, African Americans were disproportionately represented across all categories. African Americans represent the majority (51-54%) of individuals who are homeless in the city. There are a small (3-8%), but growing important number of Latino/Hispanic individuals, with a largest proportion (8%) in the street count.

The most frequently observed subpopulation was those individuals who were abusing substance (53% of shelter data and 43% of US Conference of Mayors data). The percentage of individuals who are employed was higher in the shelters (29%) than the estimate for the US Conference of Mayors, suggesting that either the estimate is low in the second data set or a much lower percentage of non-sheltered homeless individuals are not employed.

## **B. REVIEW OF THE RESEARCH LITERATURE**

Job loss, lack of affordable housing, divorce, mental health, and education are a few of the reasons people list as reasons for why they are homeless (Goetz & Schmiede, 1996; Schenk et al. 2002). Homelessness is caused by many different circumstances but paid employment is the major link that reduces the rate of homelessness in U.S. cities. Gainful employment can improve the circumstances and quality of life for individuals and families who are living in shelters, transitional housing, and/or on the street.

Comprehensive programs that offer employment training and placement services, case management, and other support services to homeless persons are needed to combat unemployment and underemployment among the homeless population (Schenk, Cook, Grey, Bangart, Roesenheck, and Randolph 2002). Several multidimensional programs that have been successful in various cities present employment models that could be adapted to other industries that are germane to Nashville (i.e. food, hotel, retail).

Coordination and communication between agencies regarding services is another identified need to reduce homelessness. Collaboration among service providers helps to identify the gaps in services and avoid replication and duplication of services, thereby avoiding unnecessary economic and human costs. Successful programs that elicit the cooperation between national and local governments, business enterprises, and social services can result in well-trained productive workers who can return to and contribute to society.

## **C. SURVEY OF INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE HOMELESS**

As part of the needs assessment, the research team sought to elicit the perspective of individuals who were currently, or recently homeless and residing in Nashville/Davidson County. The purpose of this portion of the study was to gain an understanding of potential service users' needs and how well these needs are being met, assess barriers to employment, and to gauge interest in the use of targeted employment services.

A total of 407 individuals completed surveys; most respondents were male (80.1%), and either African American (54.1%) or Caucasian (40.0%). Only a small number of respondents (4.0%) indicated that their ethnicity was Hispanic. More than half (58.9%) of respondents identified themselves as single, while only a small percentage (16.7%) indicated that they were either married (10.3%) or partnered (6.4%). The age of respondents ranged from 16 to 73 years of age, with an average age of 41.5 years.

Almost two-thirds (64.7%) of the respondents reported being chronically homeless, as defined by the Department of Housing and Urban Development. The most frequently cited self-reported causes of homelessness were directly related to employment "I lost my job" (37.1%) or "No transportation from home to work" (22.6%).

In terms of medical care, nearly half (48.5%) of respondents indicated that they currently have no health insurance. The majority (53.3%) indicated that they do not have a regular place to

receive medical care, and among those that did indicate a regular place, nearly two-thirds (64.2%) indicated that an emergency room was their regular place to obtain medical care.

In terms of employment, almost all (93.5%) of respondents report being employed in the past. However, less than a quarter (22.5%) of the respondents report being currently employed. However, a slightly higher percentage (29.9%) of respondents report working “day jobs”, and the majority (54.1%) report “working off the books or under the table”. When these three categories are combined, the percentage of individuals being paid for work rises to nearly two-thirds (62.6%).

The most frequently reported types of current employment tended to be temporary work including: working for temporary services, working day labor, working for cleaning services, working concessions, and doing lawn care.

The most frequently endorsed current source of income was none (45.0%), followed by employment (15.3%) or hustling, i.e. doing whatever it takes to get money (13.8%). For those individuals who are currently working and reported a current hourly wages (n=115), the pay rate ranged from one dollar an hour to thirty, with a median wage of \$7.25 per hour. One quarter of the individuals who are working (n=260) reported that they are paid in cash. For those who receive a pay check (n=243), the majority (50.6%) report that they have to pay to have it cashed, the average cost of having a check cashed was \$5.69, with a range of \$1.00 to \$50.00. The most frequently endorsed place to have a check cashed was at a check cashing or payday loan center (45.5%), followed by a bank (29.8%), and employer (12.9%).

Respondents were presented with a list of forty potential barriers for employment and asked to endorse any of the barriers that applied to them. The most frequently endorsed barrier was lack of a permanent address, followed by transportation, lack of a telephone, a criminal history and physical health care need.

Respondents were asked to provide feedback regarding a total of fourteen employment services. For each service, respondents indicated whether they used the service in the past, if they would use it in the future if it were available, or if they would not use the service if it were available. Services were rank ordered according to “total need,” defined as the number of respondents who indicated a need for the service by using it currently or anticipating using it in the future if it were available. “Unmet Need” was defined as not currently receiving the service, but anticipating using it if it were available. “Met Need” was defined as currently receiving the service.

The most needed services are 1) job training with pay, 2) help finding employment services, and 3) educational opportunities. The largest gaps in services, or unmet needs are within 1) job training with pay, 2) educational opportunities, and 3) supportive employment.

Respondents also provided information regarding problems that they experienced in obtaining services, for each of the services in the section above. In general, about half of responding clients reported problems in obtaining services. Most of the service barriers reported had to do with transportation or not knowing where or how to receive services. Language and childcare were issues for relatively fewer individuals.

Approximately a third (36.9%) of respondents reported that they had received job training. Most (86.4%) respondents received the training “on the job” and only a small percentage (3.6%) were involved exclusively in any sort of specialized training program. Almost all (91.0%) of respondents found job training to be “very helpful” (66.7%) or “helpful” (24.3%) on a three point scale. When asked what would have made the training more helpful, the most frequent response was nothing. Other frequent themes included suggestions that the training had been more “hands-on” or led to a better paying job and/or been connected to a real job.

## **D. AUDIT OF EMPLOYMENT RESOURCES**

Contact information was obtained and telephone calls were placed to each of eighty-four identified agencies in the Nashville area that provide employment services, and thirty-nine of the service agencies completed phone interviews, returned phone calls and/or completed the form and faxed or mailed it to the evaluation team.

Despite the higher than expected response rate there is inherent sampling bias in this type of convenience sampling requires the acknowledgement that the results may not be representative of the population. That is, the data from the responding agencies may not accurately reflect the complete picture of employment services and resources available for homeless individuals being provided in the city.

These agencies represent a fairly stable group of programs. The majority of service providers reported providing both services in general (78.8%), and employment services (51.5%) in particular, for ten or more years. Only four agencies have been providing services for less than five years, and only one for less than a year.

Employment support services are provided more frequently than employment specific services.

Agencies reported their own rating of fourteen factors that impact the accessibility of services. There were two factors that were rated substantially lower than the others, with scores falling in what would be an unacceptable range, i.e. mean is greater than 2.0: Child Care, Language Interpretation, Sign Language Interpretation, Assistance for the Visually Impaired, and Video Materials Representing the Population.

An estimated total of 10,980 individuals received services from fifteen of the agencies that reported serving homeless individuals. Importantly, the majority (54.5%) of the agencies reported that they did not knowingly provide employment services to homeless individuals. There was a tremendous range in the number of individuals served from 1-7,143. Obviously this is tremendously skewed as two-thirds of the reported clients were served by one agency. This data appears to reflect the diversity in the types and intensity of services, (or the definitions of the respondents) more than it provides any meaningful information at the aggregate level.

Thirty of the agencies reported data on their staffing patterns. Three hundred twenty-nine full-time employees and seventeen part-time employees were reported at these agencies.

Agencies were asked to identify three primary barriers in providing employment services to individuals who are homeless. Transportation was the barrier most often identified, followed in decreasing order by limited funding, and mental health stabilization.

Respondents were asked to rank the three most requested services at their agency, the top three needs they were able to meet, and the top three unmet needs. Each of these request were collapsed into a single category. The needs do not represent all needs, but the most frequently endorsed at the agency. The most requested services were housing, transportation, and employment. The most frequently met services were resume/application assistance, transportation, shelter, and assistance accessing benefits. Transportation, housing and individual counseling were the most frequently unmet

Respondents were also asked to identify the five most important employment needs not currently being met in the community. Service needs were tabulated and then collapsed into categories that were similar. Transportation, job skills training services, and entry-level positions with benefits and living wages were the most frequently cited unmet service needs.

Half (51.7%) of the agencies report expanding to meet the unmet needs.

When asked what the single most important change to improve services is, most respondents reported something related to housing. The most frequent response was to simply increase access to affordable housing. This was closely followed by response related to stabilizing individuals with housing and support services, and three responses related to the establishment of a one stop shop for employment and other services.

## **E. SERVICE USER FOCUS GROUPS**

A total of seven focus groups were held throughout Nashville between March and May 2007. The purpose of the focus groups was to understand the barriers to employment and the need of those who were unemployed and to understand the strategies and resources that were beneficial to those who were formerly homeless and formerly unemployed.

Below is a detailed list of themes that were pulled from the groups. A more detailed description of each group is also provided in the appendix of this report.

### **Barriers to Employment**

- Formerly homeless, currently homeless, employed and unemployed men and women stated that structural barriers, lack of identification, not having a permanent of address, no access to telephone, and no place for receiving mail, and transportation issues, lack of knowledge about services were the major barriers to employment.
- Additional barriers such health, lifestyle, personal hygiene, criminal record and addictions were also personal barriers to employment. Treatment services for addictions and uncooperative employers were two other barriers named.
- Specific issues for subgroups: Hispanic group cited undocumented status (immigration) and language barriers as additional barriers.
- Mothers in shelters named the need for day care assistance as the major barrier to employment.

- In addition to many of the barriers mentioned above, the youth group also found that lack of higher education - the need for more than high school diploma and a lack of computer skills were barriers they faced when looking for employment.

### **What makes the process easier?**

- The majority of participants stated that vocational rehabilitation, skills training, drop ins; mail service, phone service, bus passes, drug treatment, medical treatment, facilities to take care of personal hygiene and shower.
- Also named were various agencies around Nashville that have been helpful to some individuals: Campus for Human Development; the Power Project; Project Return, Nashville Career Centers; Resource center (a place that lists of employers who will hire offenders); Job Fairs with employment support services; temp services
- For some participants word of mouth, social networking and having child care were ways that made finding and keeping a job possible.

### **Concerns about being employed?**

- When asked what concerns they had once they were employed participants expressed some fears and anxieties about maintaining the job, afraid of competency (whether I can do it-coming off street unemployed and jump into a new job); worried about being productive, liking the job enough to keep it.
- They were also anxious about “fitting in”, being stereotyped, and fear of losing job.
- Concerns about being on time (transportation), working “third or night” shift and not having transportation were stated .
- Staying clean and sober; fear of first payday and making the right choices with lump sum of money was a concern.
- Worries about employers learning of criminal background were other anxieties expressed by some individuals.

### **The Best way to provide employment training;**

Participants felt that

- On the job training, apprenticeships, extensive orientation
- Incentives to participate in job training
- Vocational school
- 90 day probation on the job training
- Provide outreach from people who were formerly homeless
- Before job training provide a place to sleep, eat, and clean up
- Place all resources in the same place

### **What is the worst way to go about providing employment training?**

The problems with employment training cited were:

- Not properly communicating the requirements and expectations of employment
- Putting people to be trained for jobs they are not interested in nor qualified for;
- No standardization across programs and agencies
- Lack of incentives – monetary, social, or emotional incentives

- No guarantee of employment after completion of employment training-very discouraging.

**If you have had a job, what made process of getting and keeping it easier for you?**

Participants named:

- The desire not to be homeless
- Being truthful and honest about being in rehabilitation for drug use and having understanding employers,
- Bus passes
- Stable place to go to sleep, and clean up;
- Ability to willing to change my thinking and living,
- Support network,
- Correct medication, drug and alcohol treatment,

**What do you want the Mayor’s Commission to know? Recommendations to Commission from formerly homeless, currently homeless, (employed and unemployed) and foster youth.**

- Offer free vocational training that provides certification that will be recognized by prospective employers.
- Provide a Co-op shared cost incentive to employers to hire potential employees.
- Provide a place to shower, place to sleep, food, toiletries, laundry facilities with flexible closing time to make it easier to do evening or night work.
- Help us to manage our monies – half of paycheck into savings account toward independence.
- The state of Tennessee should prevent construction companies from hiring out of town workers on construction sites. Currently they import workers from Atlanta, house and feed them in hotels. Give that work homeless in Nashville.
- Need for an office that specializes in employment issues for Hispanics – with bilingual staff.

**F. SERVICE PROVIDER FOCUS GROUPS**

A focus group was held with front line workers who provide employment services to people who are homeless. A total of 7 people participated in the group representing seven agencies and organizations.

All participants were asked the same set of questions regarding barriers and challenges to providing employment services for homeless individuals.

**What are the major barriers that your agency faces when providing employment services to people who are homeless?**

Personal characteristics of homeless individuals named were: untreated mental illness, addiction, low self esteem, negative attitude and low expectations due to repeated “let downs” from society. It is difficult to have a positive attitude about employment when you are homeless, need a bath and clean clothes.

Higher paying laborer jobs require skills and training (e.g. backhoe, forklift, etc). Most lack skills training and/or education. They need little successes to help them persevere to future successes. Drug and alcohol treatment is also helpful.

Structural barriers named by the front line workers focused mainly around transportation and the location of jobs. Homeless need full services-address, clothing, transportation, and social support. The missions and shelters around Nashville have strict hours for entering and leaving the facility thereby creating difficulty maintaining employment other than 9-5 hours. Jobs are not close to transportation and service industry jobs are at night and homeless people housed in missions and can not make it to work on time. MTA busses do not run after a certain hour causing difficulty getting to and from work. Also available transitional housing or shelters are often in high crime neighborhoods which increases risk for relapse. This sets homeless individuals up for failure with continued exposure.

**What are the barriers that prevent you from providing employment services to people who are homeless? What prevents you from doing the best job possible to serve people who are homeless? What do you need that you do not have that would make your job easier and more effective?**

- Primarily there is a lack of funding, support, and resources to service homeless individuals. Agencies need fewer administrators and more hands-on personnel who are familiar with the everyday problems of servicing clients. Case managers have too many clients and cannot offer individualized services.
- We need to connect with enough employers who will employ ex-offenders and others who are homeless and educate employers of tax credits for hiring ex-offenders. The government should provide tax breaks for hiring homeless.
- Also establishing a reward/incentive program and mentorship with enhanced services to help empower people for long term success would be a great tool for improving the employment success rates of homeless individuals.
- Organizations should require homeless individuals to enroll in a mandatory self improvement plan in order to get benefits
- Other barriers mentioned were the need for agencies to provide or secure safety equipment and tools required for the type of jobs that readily employ homeless people. Some jobs would easily hire workers who already possess the right equipment for getting a job completed. VA will pay for equipment needs. Some employers will also pay for tools for qualified workers.
- One agency worker commented that we are not able to send qualified people to school. A worker from the TN Career Center stated that they do have money to help them finish a degree if it is started.
- The primary need agreed upon by participants was the promotion of collaboration between agencies to meet the continuum of needs of employment for the homeless.

**What is the best way to provide services to homeless individuals?**

- The best way would be to have a one stop shop geared directly to the homeless.

- We need better skill level assessment process, an in-house education component with pre employment test tutoring.
- Supportive services and a job with crisis intervention should be available for individuals with complex needs.
- State sponsored jobs for people who private sector just does not trust are needed. Industries moving to Tennessee should be required to hire a small percentage (5-10%) of this population.
- More bus routes, mass transportation or subcontracted vans are sorely needed for individuals to obtain employment in outlying communities where additional jobs are available.

#### **What is the worst way to provide services?**

- Agencies have different and sometimes conflicting missions and goals. People servicing this population should agree on process of how to get people stable and what constitutes success. These differences often make it difficult to collaborate because oftentimes there is no structure to services across agencies.
- We need a comprehensive database to help people get services they need and not duplicate services.

#### **What should mayor's commission know about homeless services?**

- Affordable housing is crucial to Tennesseans, not just homeless people. Housing that is affordable to low wage earners is often placed in dangerous high crime areas. Decent housing costs are not realistic for many, homelessness is just a part of it.
- The homeless population will increase if the housing situation does not improve. Living on the street is one part of homeless but there are many who do not have a place to call their own, living with family or friends due to lack of affordable housing.
- Structure budget for people to provide intensive case management and support to homeless population. Make sure money is being used by programs that work.
- Make sure workers have a high level of respect for population. Clients are often prideful and want to be treated with some dignity.

#### **Single most important change needed?**

Each agency staff member named the most important change needed to improve employment among homeless individuals.

- One staff member stated that more intensive training and better services to prepare individuals was needed along with better transportation strategies.
- Another front-line staff worker stated that raising minimum wage would be a better incentive for unemployed homeless individuals and that higher wages would prevent working class individuals from becoming homeless.
- Participants also discussed sending out recruiters to the homeless population to market employment training programs.

#### **Implications and Recommendations to increase employment among homeless individuals to Mayor's Commission from agency front-line staff**

Participants in all groups recognize that both personal and structural barriers impede the process of successfully obtaining employment for individuals who are homeless.

- To address the personal barriers to employment for individuals who are homeless a comprehensive center is needed that provides: showers, clothing, lockers, mailboxes, and a message center 24 hours a day.
- Transportation is the top structural barrier to employment for individuals who are homeless. More creative ways of getting people to and from work are needed. Soliciting the help of the community, including churches, academic institutions, employers, agencies and the government is vital to meet the transportation needs of this population.
  - Partnerships for sharing rides
  - Accessibility Vans
  - Access Ride
  - Buss Passes
  - Share transportation shuttles for elderly with employed homeless individuals
- Collaboration and cooperation among agencies is one of the primary concerns of agency staff. At this meeting, the lack of knowledge that agencies had about each other was apparent.
- A comprehensive database listing the services and resources that each agency provides would be helpful and beneficial to workers and to clients. This would help reduce duplication of services but also reveal the gaps in services.

## **G. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on all of the data collected throughout the study, we make several recommendations to the Commission.

### **Employment among people that are homeless**

First it is important as a base to start from to recognize that, the majority of homeless individuals work in some capacity, are willing to work, and are desirous of better employment opportunities.

### **Collaboration Needed**

The provider survey and focus groups of homeless, formerly homeless, both employed and unemployed, and agency staff expressed the need for organized collaborative processes across agencies to deliver employment services to homeless individuals.

All groups discussed the lack of knowledge about the full compliment of resources available in Nashville to address employment needs of those who are homeless. At the focus groups meetings, the group of front-line agency staff participants was able to share and exchange information about services or resources provided at their perspective agencies and update each other on other services within the Nashville area.

There appear to be employment services in the city, but few are specifically targeted to homeless individuals or tailored to their needs.

Specific Recommendations:

- Continue networking efforts specific to the employment of homeless individuals.. Organize meetings at least twice a year among front-line agency workers for updates on problems encountered, effective solutions and strategies, and resources available-include relevant government agencies representatives.
- Create a comprehensive database that can be accessed by all participating agencies. All agencies should be able to send updates and additional information to one central location which will update the database and possibly a website.

### **Incentives for Employers**

It was also clear from the surveys that there is a gap in employment opportunities that pay living wages and provide benefits. Focus Group participants also discussed providing incentives for employers who hire homeless individuals. Some staff knew about existing tax incentives; others knew of employers who were sensitive to homeless individuals, and still others cited employers who took advantage of homeless individuals. However, no one group or person was knowledgeable about the continuum of employer benefits for hiring homeless individuals.

Specific Recommendations:

- State and local governments should provide or improve financial incentives for employers to hire individuals who are homeless.
- Create and distribute a comprehensive list of employers willing to hire homeless individuals to ALL agencies in the region.
- It may be necessary to provide a work environment that is tailored to the needs of homeless individuals as a stepping stone to competitive employment, and allow individuals to build their work history and employment skills.

### **Comprehensive Homeless Center**

Focus group participants and survey respondents suggested that homeless individuals needed a facility that specifically targeted employment and housing needs, and was sensitive to the challenges of being homeless and employed.

Specific Recommendations:

- Develop a comprehensive center where employed homeless individuals can attend to personal hygiene, receive messages, leave personal belongs, and find resources pertaining to employment.
- Given that the lack of an address is a major factor in securing employment, individuals should be able to give the center as a mailing address.
- To register for admission to the center, individuals should be required to show that they are either employed, in an employment training program, and/or actively seeking employment.
- Provide wrap around services to assist individuals in stabilization and ultimately move into permanent housing.

## **Transportation**

Transportation was named as a major barrier to stable employment in both surveys and focus groups. . When employment is secured, getting to and from work on time is a problem for day, evening and night workers who are homeless. Strategies for possible solutions were discussed and listed above and below.

Specific Recommendations:

- Partnerships for sharing rides  
Accessibility Vans  
Access Ride  
Buss Passes  
Share transportation shuttles for elderly with employed homeless individuals
- The combined cooperation and creative efforts of community, government, and Metropolitan Transit Authority is needed to implement effective solutions.

## **Mental Health and Substance Abuse Issues**

Mental health, including substance abuse and psychological fears and anxieties are issues faced by homeless individuals that need the attention and help from mental health and substance abuse agencies. While several agencies address mental health and substance abuse issues, according to the homeless individuals in the focus groups and surveys, individuals feel that they are rarely addressed and services are difficult to access. Likewise these fears and anxieties about the stigma of being homeless, maintaining employment, competency, self-esteem, and needing help managing money and life are concerns that are not usually addressed in majority of employment organizations that are not tailored to the needs of homeless individuals.

Specific Recommendations:

- Address mental health and substance abuse issues
- Raise awareness of mental health and substance abuse issues among clinicians
- Conduct self-improvement classes or workshop before sending individuals out to jobs. These types of prevention strategies are much more cost-effective and less time consuming than intervention strategies.
- Make self-improvement classes a collaborative effort across-agencies whereby funding and logistics of conducting the classes are a joint effort. This approach could virtually save money, time, personnel and energy of all agencies involved.

## **Day Jobs**

The majority of homeless individuals are desirous and willing to work. In fact, this current research confirms what the literature suggests that many of the homeless are employed in low-wage, temporary, no-benefit jobs that are classified as “day jobs” or “under-the-table”. These types of non-secure temporary week-to-week or hour-to-hour employment make it difficult for vulnerable homeless individuals to maintain affordable housing. In addition many of the homeless in our study paid additional fees for cashing their checks. Studies indicate that other “fees” are also charged against wages-rides to

and from work and basic work equipment. Maintaining these types of paid jobs sometimes makes it difficult for homeless individuals to participate in unpaid training.

**Specific Recommendations:**

- Provide training opportunities that are closely linked to permanent employment
- Provide more paid job training and apprenticeships to qualified individuals. Many of homeless individuals may have acquired skills that are valuable in certain industries-construction, landscaping- but may need more “official” training to include on a resume and make them desirous to legitimate employers.

**Summary**

There are personal barriers that are difficult to overcome without encouragement and support.

There are no easy solutions. Programs that simply place homeless individuals in a job to meet a quota, without the benefit of employment supportive services have little long-term success for its clients or for employers. Programs that steer clients to jobs that foster vocational growth and economic independence have continued success with clients and build trust with employers. Successful programs that demonstrate cooperation between national and local governments, business enterprises, and social services can result in well-trained productive workers who can return to and contribute to society.

Implementing supportive employment programs is a complex process that deserves the immediate attention and combined resources and efforts of social services, industry, and government. Joblessness among the homeless is not simply consequential to individuals and families but also has social and economic costs to all of society.

### **III. Review of Existing Data on Homelessness**

This section is based on two sources of local data 1) the results of the “Homeless Count” --an unduplicated, point-in-time count of sheltered and non-sheltered homeless individuals led by MDHA and Metro Social Services; and 2) the results of the U.S. Conference of Mayors’ survey based on data collected by MDHA. Data for the Homeless Count was collected on the night of January 30, 2007, and data for the U.S. Conference of Mayors is based on annual data for the year November 1, 2005-October 31, 2006. This is the most recent data made available at the time of this report.

This section is based on data that is the most accurate available data on the incidence of homelessness, however it must be interpreted with caution. When reviewing this section of the report it is important to be mindful of several issues that impact the ability of the data to represent the true number of individuals who are homeless and reside in Nashville. These issues include, but are not limited to:

- 1) The age of the data. The U.S. Conference of Mayors data is nearly a year old. Many new individuals have certainly become homeless in this time frame. The demographic profile of who is homeless has also changed.
- 2) How the term “homeless” is defined is the single greatest determinant of the number of individuals that ultimately appears in any incidence rate of homelessness. Strict definitions similar to the one utilized in the Homeless Count, i.e. the number of individuals who are sleeping in a shelter or physically seen and counted on a specific day will yield the lowest possible number. Definitions that include annualized service utilization similar to the U.S. Conference of Mayors process will yield higher rates. Even broader definitions inclusive of individuals in unstable housing situations will yield an even higher incidence rate.
- 3) Regardless of definition, any method used to count the number of individuals who are homeless is inherently flawed because many individuals do not self identify due to stigma, or may not even define themselves as homeless. Those individuals who are unknown cannot be counted in any incidence rate. Populations who do not view themselves as homeless, and/or do not have access to services, are almost certainly underrepresented.
- 4) Assumptions that are made in regards to the data are simply that, assumptions. They are based on the best available data, but are simply the best estimates of the authors or the readers of this report as to who is currently homeless in Nashville/Davidson County.

This report therefore, in no way is a representation of all of the individuals who are homeless in Nashville nor is it an exact prediction of the service needs of individuals who are homeless in the city. It is simply the estimate of the authors of this report to extrapolate the trends and make suggestions based on known inherently flawed data.

## Homelessness Incidence Data

### Number of Persons who are Homeless Within Nashville

There were 11,522 Individuals reported to the U.S. Conference of Mayors in the city reported for the year, 2006. Based on the homeless count, there were 1,657 individuals who were homeless; 1,267 individuals residing in shelters and 390 found on the street.

### Characteristics of Homeless Individuals

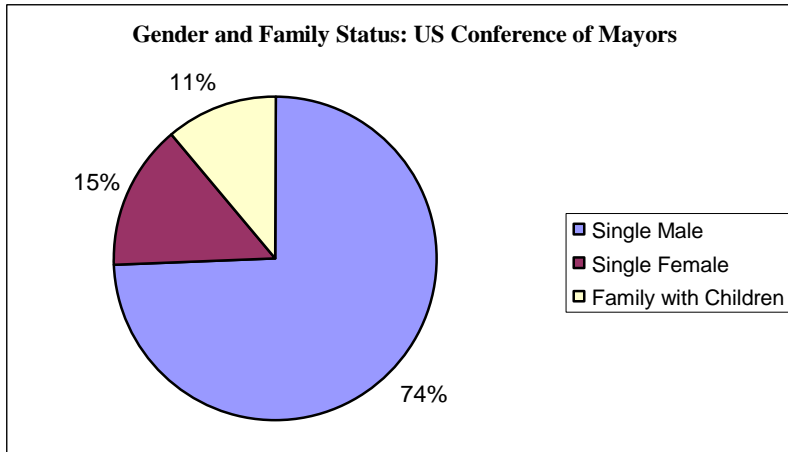
Table III, contains descriptive information on the demographic characteristics and identified risk category for individuals who are currently living with HIV/AIDS. Data is provided for the total number and percentage of each category for Davidson County, the area in the Region outside of Davidson County, and the Region as a whole. These are cumulative totals of persons living with the virus.

**Table I: Existing Homeless Data**

	Population	US Conference Mavors		Shelter Data 1-30-07		Street Count 1-30-07		Homeless Count Total	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>Total</b>		11,522		1,267		390		1,657	
	Families with Children	1,267	11%	95	8%	8	2%	103	6%
	Single Men	8,547	74%	912	74%	291	84%	1,203	73%
	Single Women	1,678	15%	226	18%	46	13%	272	16%
	Unaccompanied Youth	30	0%	6	0%	0	0%	6	0%
	Unknown					45		45	3%
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	African-American	6,175	54%	702	55%	167	51%	869	52%
	White	4,994	43%	612	48%	128	39%	740	47%
	Hispanic	288	3%	52	4%	25	8%	77	2%
	Other-Unknown	65	0%	36	3%	62		90	5%
<b>Subgroups</b>	Mental Illness	2,079	18%	114	9%				
	Substance Abuse	4,906	43%	669	53%				
	Dual Diagnosis			245	19%				
	HIV/AIDS	313	3%	22	2%				
	Domestic Violence			147	12%				
	Employed	478	4%	372	29%				
	Veterans	1,742	15%	208	17%				

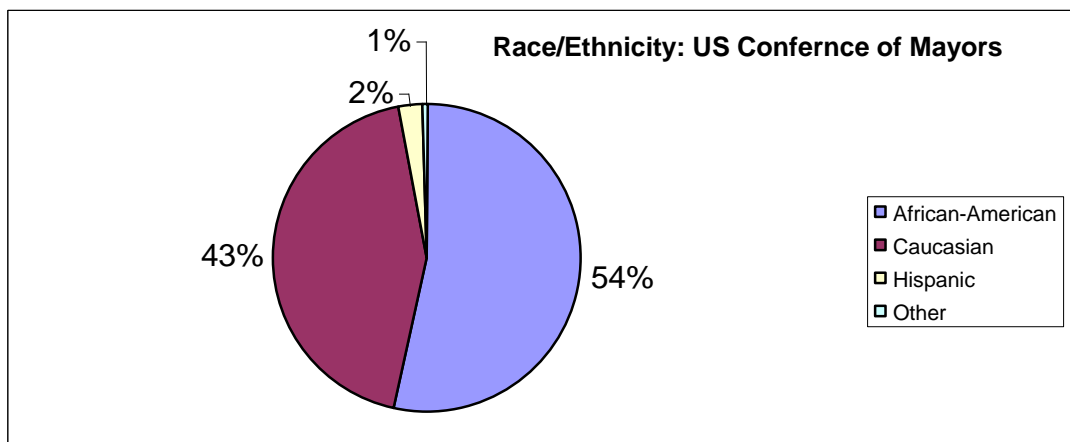
### Gender and Family Status

In terms of gender, most (74-84%) individuals are unaccompanied males. There were slightly more men living on the street (84%), but all other rates are comparable.



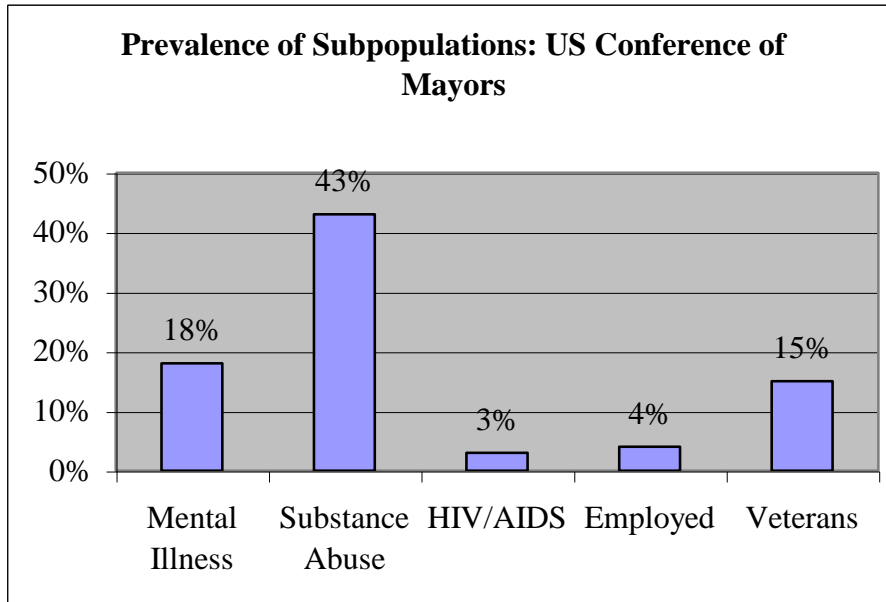
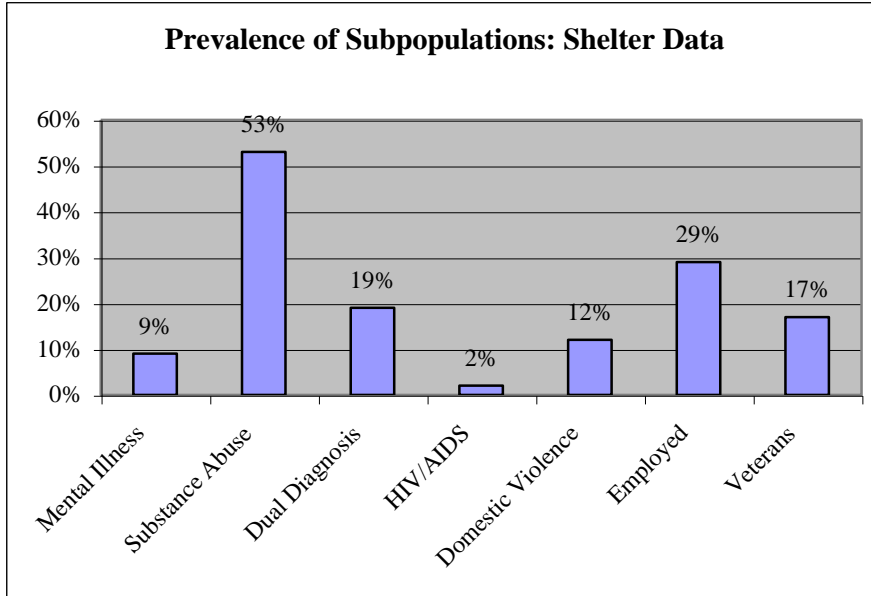
**Race/Ethnicity**

In terms of race, African Americans were disproportionately represented across all categories. African Americans represent the majority (51-54%) of individuals who are homeless in the city. There are a small (3-8%), but growing important number of Latino/Hispanic individuals, with a largest proportion (8%) in the street count.



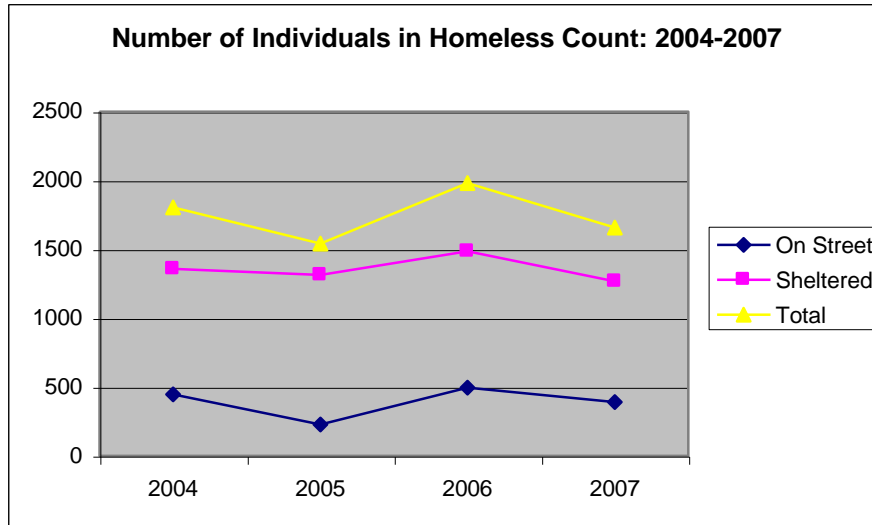
**Subpopulations of Interest**

The prevalence of subpopulations among the counts of homeless individuals is seen in the graphs below. The most frequently observed subpopulation was those individuals who were abusing substance (53% of shelter data and 43% of US Conference of Mayors data). The percentage of individuals who are employed was higher in the shelters (29%) than the estimate for the US Conference of Mayors, suggesting that either the estimate is low in the second data set or a much lower percentage of non-sheltered homeless individuals are not employed.



**Trend Data for Homeless Count Data 2004-2007**

Year to year data was available for the past four years for the number of individuals found each year in the Homeless Count. The number of individuals living on the street has been between a low of 227 in 2005 to a high of 496 in 2006. The number of sheltered individuals ranged from 1,486 in 2006 to a low of 1,267 this year. The overall range has been between 1,542 in 2005 to 1,982 in 2006.



#### IV. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Job loss, lack of affordable housing, divorce, mental health, and education are a few of the reasons people list as reasons for why they are homeless (Goetz & Schmiede, 1996; Schenk et al. 2002). Homelessness is caused by many different circumstances but paid employment is the major link that reduces the rate of homelessness in U.S. cities. Gainful employment can improve the circumstances and quality of life for individuals and families who are living in shelters, transitional housing, and/or on the street. The majority of individuals who are homeless desire to work but there are many social, economic, and structural barriers that prevent would-be workers from obtaining gainful employment (Goetz & Schmiede, 1996). A lack of education, work skills, job training, and transportation are a few barriers that are difficult for homeless individuals to overcome without the cooperation and assistance from industry, social services, and local and federal governments. Implementing supportive employment programs is a complex process that deserves the immediate attention and combined resources and efforts of social services, industry, and government. Joblessness among the homeless is not simply consequential to individuals and families but also has excessive social and economic costs to all of society.

##### *Current Work*

Research suggests that many of the homeless are employed in low-skilled, low-wage, low-level jobs that limit vocational potential. About 40% are employed but with low-paying jobs, day labor jobs, seasonal employment, or only half-time work that limit vocational potential (Roberts & Bartley, 2004; Schenk et al. 2002, 2004). These types of non-secure temporary employment make it difficult for vulnerable homeless individuals to maintain affordable housing. The number of homeless individuals engaged in the day labor industry has increased dramatically across the United States. Day laborer jobs

consist of workers who are employed on a day to day, sometimes hour to hour basis in low-wage manual labor jobs. While the hourly wage may be comparable to most low-paying jobs, the hidden costs of “transportation fees” for rides to and from job site, check cashing fees from employers and check cashing business, and fee for basic work equipment absorbs most of the earned income and thus the “take-home pay” is substantially lower than most minimum wage jobs would net its workers (Roberts & Bartley, 2004). Workers remain in this type of employment due to lack of viable job skills, low education, lack of transportation to other jobs, and difficulty accessing the services needed to sustain employment.

### ***Type of Programs Needed***

Most homeless individuals desire to have meaningful work but are in need job training. Studies that evaluate training programs for homeless individuals and family find that job training is one of the most crucial components to positive outcomes for homeless individuals and for society. Securing entry-level jobs that pay a living wage gives clients a better chance of maintaining employment, and securing and maintaining housing.

Comprehensive programs that offer employment training and placement services, case management, and other support services to homeless persons are needed to combat unemployment and underemployment among the homeless population (Schenk, Cook, Grey, Bangart, Roesenheck, and Randolph 2002). Programs that include an extensive network of care and training have the highest level of success in employing homeless individuals in good paying jobs. Programs that simply place homeless individuals in a job to meet a quota, without the benefit of employment supportive services have little long-term success for its clients or for employers. Programs that steer clients to jobs that foster vocational growth and economic independence have continued success with clients and build trust with employers (Schenk et al., 2004).

### ***Programs that Works***

Successful programs include those that offer skills training, medical care, and other support services. Homeless clients who receive job training, assistance finding jobs, and participate in supported socialization programs are very likely to be employed and maintain satisfactory employment (Fisk & Frey, 2002; Schenk et al. 2002). Goetz and Schmiede, 1996 described an employment and training program that had much success in helping the homeless gain employment in an industry experiencing a shortage of workers. Jobs in this industry paid modest wages and offered men and women skills training and a chance for advancement. The model included the collaborative and cooperative efforts of the local homebuilding industry, the U.S. Department of Labor, the Home Builders Institute of America, and local social services. Successful participants were able to learn valuable practical skills (i.e., carpentry) and eventually move from shelters into permanent housing.

Another successful employment model included a multi-dimensional academic and social program of job training and long-term career development for selected homeless individuals with potential for academic nursing education. The idea emerged in response to the shortage of nurses and the increase in homeless individuals in a major U.S. city. The goal was to recruit, educate and graduate to train selected men and women individuals for a nursing career proved to be extremely successful. The belief was that regardless of where students might exit from the program prior to completing, all enrollees would leave with a greater capacity for employment than when they came (Powell, Lee, Nichols, Kamara, & Sawyer, 1998). The program in collaboration with a local college, trained individuals with an aptitude and interest in nursing involving colleges. The success of the program was due to the collaborative efforts of The Nursing Careers for Homeless People Project, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

Other programs that link community resources, health care, and a central location for extensive employment services found great success in securing employment and subsequent housing for homeless individuals (Marrone, 2005). These successful programs demonstrate that cooperation between national and local governments, business enterprises, and social services can result in well-trained productive workers who can return to and contribute to society.

The multidimensional programs demonstrate have been successful in various cities and is a model that could be adapted to other industries that are germane to Nashville (i.e. food, hotel, retail). Employers are particularly concerned about job retention issues with any employee but especially with individuals who are homeless (Quimby, Drake & Becker, 2001). Assurances to employers that individuals are well trained in a special field, mentally and physically healthy and willing to work are necessary for employers to consider hiring individuals who are homeless.

Another factor that contributed to successful outcomes for employing homeless individuals was cooperation and trust between agencies and within agencies. Dedicated and committed personnel working at both management and staff levels were critical to positive outcomes for clients. Expectations, attitudes, and goals of management, staff and clients sometimes conflict with each other (Quimby, Drake, & Becker, 2001). Oftentimes these and other conflicting expectations are associated with frustration and burnout for staff and personnel working with homeless individuals and discouragement for the homeless (Miller, Birkholt, Schott, Stage, 1995). In order to avoid conflicts managers must be careful to balance out the needs of both employees and homeless clientele.

Coordination and communication between agencies regarding services is another identified need to reduce homelessness. Collaboration among service providers helps to identify the gaps in services and avoid replication and duplication of services, thereby avoiding unnecessary economic and human costs. Communication between service agencies and government agencies about goals and expectations for employing homeless

individuals are needed to ensure a continuum of effective employment services for reducing homelessness.

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## V. SURVEY OF PEOPLE WHO ARE HOMELESS

As part of the needs assessment, the research team sought to elicit the perspective of individuals who were currently, or recently homeless and residing in Nashville/Davidson County. The purpose of this portion of the study was to gain an understanding of potential service users' needs and how well these needs are being met, assess barriers to employment, and to gauge interest in the use of targeted employment services.

### METHODOLOGY

#### Survey Instrument

An instrument was developed based on the structure of a similar survey, which had been used to annually assess the needs of persons living with HIV/AIDS in 2003-2007. The survey was initially modified to be specific to issues related to employment and homelessness, and later based upon feedback and recommendations provided by members of the Mayor's Commission and the Homeless Coalition, as well as input from consumers, service providers, and interested community members. The survey was designed to include items that capture information about respondents' demographic characteristics, their need for services, and their opinions on which services were most important to them. The survey also allowed respondents to identify barriers to receiving services as well as rate their interest in possible future services.

#### Methods

Data was collected between February 15 and April 15, 2007 from a convenience sample of individuals who are currently or recently homeless in Nashville/Davidson County. Four hundred and seven (407) completed surveys were returned. Interviewers hired by the research team were stationed at different shelters, missions, agencies, and other sites where homeless individuals were known to gather. Interviewers distributed surveys to clients, assisted individuals with questions about the survey, and/or interviewed

individuals, collected them after clients completed the survey, and either returned completed surveys to the research team or arranged for them to be picked-up. Respondents received a five-dollar gift card to McDonald's for their participation. Completed surveys were received from a total of nine interviewers. A total of 407 surveys were completed, resulting in a response rate somewhere between 22.5% (based on the HUD count of homeless individuals), or 3.5% (based on the US Conference of Mayors criteria).

### **Analysis**

Data from returned surveys were entered into a database and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences, Version 14 (SPSS 14.0). Descriptive statistics were computed for all variables included on the survey and are reported below. In addition, inferential statistics were utilized where appropriate to discover any differences in responses due to various demographic factors. Many respondents did not answer every question on the survey. As such, percentages presented in various tables are calculated based upon the total number of respondents who answered that particular question, rather than being based upon a percentage of the total number of surveys. In addition, information is provided regarding the number and percentage of the total returned surveys for which information was not reported for the particular variable.

## Results

### Demographic Information

As can be seen in Table 1, most respondents were male (80.1%), and either African American (54.1%) or Caucasian (40.0%). Only a small number of respondents (4.0%) indicated that their ethnicity was Hispanic. Seven individual reported that English was not their primary language, all seven reported Spanish as their primary language; however ten individuals reported that they were uncomfortable receiving services only in English. More than half (58.9%) of respondents identified themselves as single, while only a small percentage (16.7%) indicated that they were either married (10.3%) or partnered (6.4%). The age of respondents ranged from 16 to 73 years of age, with an average age of 41.5 years. Nearly two-thirds (60.6%) of respondents were between the ages of 30 and 49, and nearly two-thirds (62.4%) were over the age of 40, and nearly a fourth (23.6%) were over the age of 50.

**TABLE 1**

Demographic Information	N	%
<b>Age</b>		
0 – 29	55	15.8
30 – 39	76	21.8
40 – 49	135	38.8
50 – 59	65	18.7
60 +	17	4.9
Not Reported	59	
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	323	80.1
Female	77	19.1
Transgender	3	0.7
Not Reported	4	
<b>Race</b>		
African-American	212	54.1
Caucasian	156	40.0
Multi-racial	25	3.8
Other (Asian and Native American)	8	2.0
Not Reported	1	
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
Non-Hispanic	237	96.0
Hispanic	10	4.0
Not Reported	160	
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Single	229	58.9
Divorced	66	17.0
Married	40	10.3
Separated	29	7.5
Living with partner	25	6.4
Not Reported	18	

### Housing Information

As can be seen in Table 5, more than 77.8% of respondents either live in a shelter (46.1%) or on the street (31.7%). In addition, the sixty write-in responses of “other” were

primarily respondents who either reported living in both a shelter and on the street, or indicated a residence that would not constitute permanent housing, i.e. under a tree, in a tent, the mission, etc. Almost two-thirds (64.7%) of the respondents reported being chronically homeless, as defined by the Department of Housing and Urban Development as being continuously homeless for a year or more, or has having at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years. Two hundred and seventeen individuals (61.6%) reported being homeless for more than a year and eleven additional individuals (3.1%) reported being homeless four or more times, but for being homeless for less than a year.

**TABLE 2**

<b>Housing Information</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Living Situation</b>		
Shelter/Transitional Housing	160	46.1
Homeless on Street	110	31.7
Rent	25	7.2
Hotel/Motel	18	5.2
Live w/Friend/Family	18	5.2
Own Home	8	2.3
Domestic Violence Shelter	8	2.3
Other	60*	
<b>How long Homeless</b>		
90 days or less	55	15.6
Three to Six months	45	12.8
Six months to one year	35	10.0
One to three years	87	24.7
Three to five years	58	16.4
Five to ten years	46	13.1
Ten or more years	26	7.4
Not Reported	55	
<b>How long Homeless-Cumulative</b>		
90 days or less	55	15.6
Six months or less	100	28.4
Less than a one year	135	38.4
Less than three years	222	63.1
Less than five years	280	79.5
Less than ten years	326	92.6
Ten or more years	26	7.4
Not Reported	55	
<b>Number of Times Homeless in Last Three Years</b>		
Less than four	242	91.3
Four or more	23	8.7
Not Reported	142	

\*Primarily includes other forms of homelessness

### **Causes of Homelessness**

Self-reported causes of homelessness are reported in Table 3. The categories are not mutually exclusive, as a respondent could endorse as many of the sixteen reasons that applied. The majority, (52.1%) however endorsed only one, and the almost all (81.9%) endorsed three or fewer. The most frequently endorsed causes were directly related to

employment “I lost my job” (37.1%) or “No transportation from home to work” (22.6%). Forty individuals also wrote in explanations, the most frequent of which related to a drug and/or alcohol problem.

**TABLE 3**

<b>Cause of Homelessness</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
I lost my job	150	37.1
No transportation from home to work	91	22.6
Medical Problems/Mental Health	77	19.1
I went to jail/ just got out of jail	76	18.8
Rent money was spent on drugs and/or alcohol	70	17.3
I was divorced/ my partner left/I left my partner	62	15.3
Affordable housing not available	49	12.1
I was evicted/unable to pay rent	45	11.1
I’m too depressed to work	40	9.9
I don’t know why I’m homeless; it just happened	40	9.9
Rent went up but my pay didn’t	38	9.4
A major expense came up (medical or other)	26	6.4
I was in an abusive relationship and left	25	6.3
I don’t know where to look for housing	23	5.7
Displaced by a natural disaster	14	3.5
I choose to be homeless	12	3.0
<b>Other</b>	<b>40</b>	
Alcohol or Drug Problem	15	
Death in Family	7	
Family Problem	5	
Robbery Crime Victim	4	
Criminal History	4	
Just Moved Here	3	
Hospitalization	2	
Just Discharged from Army	1	
HIV Positive	1	
Moved in with Pimp	1	
Anti-Social Personality Disorder	1	
Oppression	1	

### **Medical and Social Service Access**

As seen in Table 4, nearly half (48.5%) of respondents indicated that they currently have no health insurance (this may be a larger percentage as most of the individuals who wrote in answers appeared to indicate that they too had no insurance, i.e. responses of “none”, “indigent”, or “homeless insurance”. The majority (53.3%) indicated that they do not have a regular place to receive medical care, and among those that did indicate a regular place, nearly two-thirds (64.2%) indicated that an emergency room was their regular place to obtain medical care. Approximately a third (34.0%) indicated that they have a regular physician or nurse. Slightly more than a quarter (28.9%) reported that they have a case manager. Individuals were also asked how many case managers they had and what agencies they came from. More than a quarter (28.9%) reported having a case manager; and the majority (71.6%) reported one case manager; although individuals reported that they had as many as ten different case managers. Respondents named forty-nine separate agencies and organizations from many different service sectors where

the case managers were employed; the most frequently endorsed agencies were Mental Health Co-op and Nashville Cares.

**TABLE 4**

<b>Health Insurance</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
None	192	48.5
TennCare	88	22.6
VA	39	10.1
Medicare	29	7.5
Private	10	2.6
Bridges to Care	3	0.7
Medicaid	2	0.5
Other	42*	
<b>Regular Place for Medical Care</b>		
Yes	134	46.7
No	153	53.3
Not Reported	120	
<b>Emergency Room is Regular Place for Medical Care</b>		
Yes	86	38.9
No	135	61.1
Not Reported	221	
<b>Regular Medical Provider</b>		
Yes	114	34.0
No	221	66.0
Not Reported	72	
<b>Case Manager</b>		
Yes	103	28.9
No	253	71.1
Not Reported	72	

\*Majority appeared to indicate uninsured status

### **Employment Information**

As seen in Table 5, almost all (93.5%) of respondents report being employed in the past. However, less than a quarter (22.5%) of the respondents report being currently employed. However, a slightly higher percentage (29.9%) of respondents report working “day jobs”, and the majority (54.1%) report “working off the books or under the table”. When these three categories are combined, the percentage of individuals being paid for work rises to nearly two-thirds (62.6%). The most frequently reported types of current employment tended to be temporary work including: working for temporary services, working day labor, working for cleaning services, working concessions, and doing lawn care. Respondents also reported current jobs that were more permanent in nature, i.e. construction related trades, truck driver, tow motor operator, working in food service, etc. When asked about what jobs individuals had worked “under the table” a wide variety of responses were made. The most frequent responses were “any” and “all”. However many types of jobs were listed which primarily related to landscaping, cleaning, construction related jobs, and other labor-intensive work, i.e. mover, general labor, warehouse work, etc.

**TABLE 5**

<b>Employment Information</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Ever Employed</b>		
Yes	358	93.5
No	25	6.5
Not Reported	24	
<b>Currently Employed</b>		
Yes	69	22.5
No	238	77.5
Not Reported	100	
<b>Currently Working “Day Jobs”</b>		
Yes	107	29.9
No	251	70.1
Not Reported	49	
<b>Currently Working “Under the Table”</b>		
Yes	173	54.1
No	147	45.9
Not Reported	87	
<b>Employed, including “Day Jobs” or “Under the Table”</b>		
Yes	255	62.6
No	132	32.4
Not Reported	20	

### **Income and Earnings Information**

Current sources of income are seen in Table 6, respondents were asked to endorse all that applied, however almost all indicated one (77.8%) or two (91.1%) or fewer sources of income. The most frequently endorsed source was none (45.0%), followed by employment (15.3%) or hustling, i.e. doing whatever it takes to get money (13.8%). For those individuals who are currently working and reported a current hourly wages (n=115), the pay rate ranged from one dollar an hour to thirty, with a median wage of \$7.25 per hour. One quarter of the individuals who are working (n=260) reported that they are paid in cash. For those who receive a pay check (n=243), the majority (50.6%) report that they have to pay to have it cashed, the average cost of having a check cashed was \$5.69, with a range of \$1.00 to \$50.00. The most frequently endorsed place to have a check cashed was at a check cashing or payday loan center (45.5%), followed by a bank (29.8%), and employer (12.9%).

**TABLE 6**

<b>Earnings Information</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Current Source of Income</b>		
None	180	45.0
Employment	61	15.3
Hustle	49	13.8
Family or friends give me money	33	8.3
I ask strangers for money	31	7.8
SSI	27	6.8
Selling Blood	22	5.5
Selling Cans	19	4.8
SSDI	15	3.8
Unemployment Check	14	3.5
Other Government Check	14	3.5
Private Disability	12	3.0
AFDC	10	2.5
Retirement Check	9	2.3
Trade Sex for Money	4	1.1
VA Pension	3	0.8
Sell Newspapers	1	0.3
Not Reported	7	
<b>Current Hourly Wage</b>		
\$1.00 – 5.00	12	10.4
\$5.15 – 6.00	30	26.1
\$6.01 – 10.00	53	46.1
\$10.01-15.00	13	11.3
\$15.01 or higher	7	6.1

### **Barriers to Employment**

Respondents were presented with a list of forty potential barriers for employment and asked to endorse any of the barriers that applied to them. The list of barriers was initially drawn from the combination of lists used in two studies of employment barriers for homeless individuals and was further modified to be specific to the issues of the target population with assistance from service providers and former service recipients in Nashville. A total of 1,950 barriers were indicated an average of nearly five (4.87) per respondent. The most frequently endorsed barrier was lack of a permanent address, followed by transportation, lack of a telephone, a criminal history and physical health care need. The full list of barriers can be seen in Table 7 on the next page.

**TABLE 7**

<b>Barriers to Employment</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
I need a permanent address	159	39.8
I need transportation to and from a job	141	35.3
I need a telephone	132	33.0
I have a criminal record	124	31.0
Physical Health/Medical Health care	111	27.8
I need identification	92	23.0
Nobody wants to hire me	89	22.3
I need help managing my life	75	18.8
I need help managing my money	75	18.8
I'm disabled	67	16.8
I need more work experience/history	67	16.8
I need to go back to school	51	12.8
I need more meaningful work	48	12.0
I need some support from friends and family	46	11.5
I stopped trying to get a job	42	10.5
People at work treat me differently when they learn I'm homeless	42	10.5
I'm afraid I'll fail and not have another chance	38	9.5
I need help with my reading and writing skills	36	9.0
I'm afraid I'll let folks down	35	8.8
Work interferes with my alcohol/drug treatment	34	8.5
My work experience and skills are worth more than jobs are willing to pay	33	8.3
I don't want to work	32	8.0
I'm too busy doing day labor	30	8.4
Working interferes with mental health treatment	28	7.9
I work off the books	28	7.9
I don't want to lose benefits-health benefits	25	6.3
I don't like the types of jobs offered to me	25	6.3
I owe money so my pay would be garnished	25	6.3
I can't do the work I'm trained to do	24	6.0
It costs too much to get to and from work	23	5.8
I'm not quite ready to work	23	5.8
My physical appearance is not good	23	5.8
I'm not valued at most jobs I get	22	5.5
I need child care	18	4.5
People at work don't like me or make fun of me	17	4.3
I have an outstanding arrest warrant	16	4.0
It costs too much to cash my checks	15	3.8
I'm too old to work	15	3.8
My family doesn't want me to work	13	3.3
I'm not a legal resident	11	3.1
Not Reported	7	

### **Overall Service Needs**

Respondents were asked to provide feedback regarding a total of fourteen employment services. For each service, respondents indicated whether they used the service in the past, if they would use it in the future if it were available, or if they would not use the service if it were available.

Services were rank ordered according to “total need,” defined as the number of respondents who indicated a need for the service by using it currently or anticipating using it in the future if it were available. “Unmet Need” was defined as not currently receiving the service, but anticipating using it if it were available. “Met Need” was defined as currently receiving the service.

As seen in the three tables below, the most needed services are 1) job training with pay, 2) help finding employment services, and 3) educational opportunities. The largest gaps in services, or unmet needs are within 1) job training with pay, 2) educational opportunities, and 3) supportive employment.

**Table 8: Total Need – Using Now or Likely to Use in the Future**

RANK	Service	WOULD USE OR USING	N
1	Job Training with pay	77.9	344
2	Help finding employment services	74.0	285
3	Education opportunities	73.9	264
4	Supported employment (member owns job, has job coach, flexibility in hours, etc. for job adjustment)	70.3	232
5	Resume Preparation	69.6	257
6	Short-term, trial employment	68.9	254
7	Employment Counseling	68.7	268
8	Job coach at job site	67.8	245
9	Help filling out job applications	66.7	264
10	Transitional employment (agency owns job, member works when they can, staff fills in at other times)	66.1	242
11	Vocational Rehabilitation	66.0	265
12	Job Training without pay	57.9	259

**Table 9: Unmet Need – Not Using Now, Likely to Use in the Future**

RANK	Service	WOULD USE IN THE FUTURE	N
1	Job Training with pay	64.0	344
2	Education opportunities	59.1	264
3	Supported employment (member owns job, has job coach, flexibility in hours, etc. for job adjustment)	55.6	232
4	Help finding employment services	55.4	285
5	Short-term, trial employment	53.9	254
6	Employment Counseling	53.7	268
7	Transitional employment (agency owns job, member works when they can, staff fills in at other times)	52.9	242
8	Job coach at job site	52.7	245
9	Vocational Rehabilitation	51.3	265
10	Resume Preparation	50.6	257
11	Help filling out job applications	47.7	264
12	Job Training without pay	43.6	259

**Table 10: Met Need –Used in the Past**

RANK	Service	USED IN THE PAST	N
1	Resume Preparation	19.1	257
2	Help filling out job applications	18.9	264
3	Help finding employment services	18.6	285
4	Job coach at job site	15.1	245
5	Short-term, trial employment	15.0	254
6	Employment Counseling	14.9	268
7	Education opportunities	14.8	264
8	Vocational Rehabilitation	14.7	265
9	Supported employment (member owns job, has job coach, flexibility in hours, etc. for job adjustment)	14.7	232
10	Job Training without pay	14.3	259
11	Job Training with pay	14.0	344
12	Transitional employment (agency owns job, member works when they can, staff fills in at other times)	13.2	242

### Problems Obtaining Services

Respondents also provided information regarding problems that they experienced in obtaining services, for each of the services in the section above. Results can be seen on Table 11 on the next page, services are listed in order of the number of individuals who experienced barriers in attempting to receive the service. In general, about half of responding individuals reported problems in obtaining services. Most of the service barriers reported had to do with transportation or not knowing where or how to receive services. Language and childcare were issues for relatively fewer individuals.

**Table 11**

TYPE OF SERVICE	PERSONS EXPERIENCED BARRIER	TRANSPORTATION	DIDN'T KNOW WHERE TO GO	DIDN'T QUALIFY	CHILD CARE	LANGUAGE BARRIER
Job Training with pay	126	49.2	31.7	10.3	4.0	4.8
Vocational Rehabilitation	95	42.1	30.5	16.8	2.1	8.4
Help finding employment services	91	51.6	33.0	9.9	1.1	4.4
Employment counseling	89	42.7	38.2	11.2	2.2	5.6
Resume Preparation	89	40.4	36.0	15.7	2.2	5.6
Job Training without pay	87	40.2	36.8	13.8	3.4	5.7
Education opportunities	85	43.5	35.3	12.9	1.2	7.1
Short-term, trial employment	78	43.6	29.5	17.9	1.3	7.7
Transitional employment	78	39.7	33.3	17.9	2.6	6.4
Help filling out job applications	76	46.1	30.3	17.1	1.3	5.3
Job coach at job site	76	40.8	32.9	18.4	2.6	5.3
Supported employment	61	49.2	29.5	11.5	1.6	8.2

### Experiences with Job Training

Job training experiences are seen in Table 12 below. Approximately a third (36.9%) of respondents reported that they had received job training for their current job. Most (86.4%) respondents received the training “on the job” and only a small percentage (3.6%) were involved exclusively in any sort of specialized training program. A few individuals who have been in job training programs for up to twelve years skews the average number of months that individuals

received job training, however the median amount of training is six months. Almost all (91.0%) of respondents found job training to be “very helpful” (66.7%) or “helpful” (24.3%) on a three point scale. When asked what would have made the training more helpful, the most frequent response was nothing. Other frequent themes included suggestions that the training had been more “hands-on” or led to a better paying job and/or been connected to a real job.

**TABLE 12**

<b>Job Training Experience</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Received Training for Current Job</b>		
Yes	108	36.9
No	185	63.1
Not Reported	114	
<b>Type of Training for Current Job</b>		
On the Job	95	86.4
Specialized Training Program	4	3.6
Both on the Job & Specialized	11	10.0
Not Reported	297	

## V. AUDIT OF EMPLOYMENT RESOURCES

### Methodology

The *Homeless Employment Services Survey* is based on a similar survey, the Resource Audit Instrument that has been used extensively by the Tennessee Department of Health. The instrument was originally based on a similar federal instrument developed by the Health Resources Services Administration (HRSA). Members of the research team extensively modified the instrument to be specific to homeless employment services.

The survey instrument is designed to gather information regarding the individual agency's characteristics, perceived accessibility, capacity and location; the services offered; characteristics of targeted populations and individuals served; and barriers to service provision. Surveys were assigned a unique identifier and all responses were confidential, but not anonymous as each agency provided the agency's name and the contact information for the person completing the survey.

A list of four hundred and fifty-six various types of social agencies and service organizations in Tennessee was generated from Park Center and Goodwill contact lists that were provided to the research team. Only agencies and service organizations that provided employment services in the Nashville area were included in the project, thereby reducing the number of eligible agencies to eighty-four. Contact information was obtained and telephone calls were placed to each of the eighty-four agencies in the Nashville area.

Thirty-nine of the service agencies completed phone interviews, returned phone calls and/or completed the form and faxed or mailed it to the evaluation team. This provided an overall response rate of 46.4%. Despite the higher than expected response rate there is inherent sampling bias in this type of convenience sampling requires the acknowledgement that the results may not be representative of the population. That is, the data from the responding agencies may not accurately reflect the complete picture of employment services and resources available for homeless individuals being provided in the city. At best, results from this survey can provide a guide or framework for developing an understanding of the employment services available in the Nashville for our homeless population.

### Participating Organizations

The following organizations participated in the survey: Campus for Human Development, Center for Independent Living of Middle Tennessee, Christian Women's Job Corp, Cohn Adult Learning Center, Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, Home Builders Institute, Huggs Inc, LifeAction of TN, Matthew 25, Mending Hearts, Goodwill Industries of Middle Tennessee, Metropolitan Action Commission, Mid-Cumberland Community Services Agency, Nashville Career Advancement Center-TN Career Center-Metro Center, Nashville CARES, Nashville Cares Advancement Center- TN Career Center-Nolensville Rd., Nashville Rescue Mission, New Horizons, Operation Stand Down Nashville, Park Center/Voc Rehab, Preferred Alternatives Inc., Rochelle Center , Second Chances, The Center for Living and Learning, The Martha O'Bryan Center, TN Department of Labor and Workforce Development-TN Career Centers, TN Family Solutions Inc., Traumatic Brain Injury Council, Urban League, US Small Business

Administration, UT Center on Disability and Employment, Welcome Home Ministries, WOMEN, YMCA Build

**Individuals Providing Agency Information**

Information was provided by employees representing a variety of job titles with differing roles, responsibilities and perspectives on service delivery. Most (14) interviews were completed by middle managers with a wide variety of titles: Community Programs Director, Corporate Connections Account Representative, Director of Filed Operations, Director of Case Management, District Supervisor, Employment Svc Representative, two Office Managers, Principal, two Program Directors, Regional Director, Rehab Counselor II, and a Senior Vice President. At ten agencies, the head of the agency completed the phone interview; these roles included eight Executive Directors, a CEO, and a Company President. , Seven front line staff members completed phone interviews, including: a Benefits Specialist, a Case Manager, a Counselor, two Employment Specialists, a Job Coach, and a Workshop Facilitator.

**Results**

**Agency Characteristics**

**Types of Agencies.**

The agencies represent a wide variety of service providers and surveys were completed by an equally wide variety of individuals within these agencies. Multi-service agency was the most frequently endorsed category. Not all categories are exclusive, but agency representatives were asked to report the category that best described their work.

**Table I: Types of Agencies**

Multi-service agency	14
Community based organization	3
Vocational Rehabilitation Services	3
Educational Service agency	2
Mental health center/Mental Health Agency	2
Transitional Housing Facility	2
Youth Service Provider	2
Employment Agency	1
Community coalition	1
Women's organization	1
Transitional Housing Facility	1
AIDS service organization	1
Community Action Agency	1
Employment Referral	1
Federal Agency that provides support for small business	1
Spiritual Counseling	1
State Program	1

**Length of Time of Operation**

These agencies represent a fairly stable group of programs. The majority of service providers reported providing both services in general (78.8%), and employment services (51.5%) in particular, for ten or more years. Only four agencies have been providing services for less than five years, and only one for less than a year.

## **Services Offered**

Responding agencies reported the specific prevention services they provided from a checklist of potential services. Individual agencies reported as few as three and as many as twenty-nine different services. A frequency distribution of services is provided in the Table below. Because the service providers responding to the survey represent such a diverse group of agencies, there are a significant number of services that are provided only by one or two agencies. Services are divided by employment/job training services, services that support employment, and other support services. Within these categories services are listed from the most frequently cited to the least frequently cited services. While the definition of each service may differ from respondent to respondent, or even the definition of what constitutes an employment service, this does provide a general idea of what types of services are being provided in the city. However, similar to other areas of this report, the understanding and interpretation of the definition of each service category greatly affected the response to this area of the survey.

**Table II: Percentage of Agencies Offering Service**

<b>Service</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Employment –Job Training Services</b>	
Computerized Job Training	53.1
Job Training With Pay	43.8
Supported Employment	43.8
Vocational Rehabilitation	40.6
Short-Term, Trial Employment	37.5
Job Training Without Pay	34.4
Transitional Employment (member owns job, has job coach, flexibility in hours, etc. for job adjustment)	34.4
<b>Employment Support Services</b>	
Help Filling Out Job Applications	87.5
Help Finding Employment Services	84.4
Job Goals And Skills Development (agency owns job, member works when they can, staff fills in at other times)	84.4
Education	78.1
Resume Preparation	78.1
Access To Media Print Job Listings	59.4
Employment Counseling	56.3
Access To Online Job Listings	56.3
Job Coach At Job Site	50.0
Interview Coaching-Role Play	50.0
<b>Housing Services</b>	
Housing Related Services	56.3
Housing Assistance	43.8
Low-Income Housing	34.4
Emergency/Transitional Housing	25.0
<b>Services to Increase Access</b>	
Telephone Access	84.4
General Case Management	62.5
Transportation	46.9
Interpreters For Non-English Speaking Clients	40.6

Child Day Care/Locating Day Care	15.6
<b>General Support Services</b>	
Insurance Assistance Program	6.3
Budgeting Assistance	62.5
Client Advocacy	75.0
Food Bank/Food Pantry	31.3
Mental Health Counseling	34.4
Drug Counseling And Testing	37.5
Health Referrals	56.3
Legal Services	6.3
Medical Health Education	28.1
<b>Other Services Identified by Agencies</b>	
Mentoring, Bible Study, GED Classes, Spiritual Counseling for Ex-Offenders, Spiritual Support, Transitional Programming for Developmentally Disabled, Habilitation for Developmentally Disabled, Transportation Resources, Health Education, Assistance With Utility Deposits, In-Home Volunteer Support, HIV Testing, Home Delivered Meals, Nutritional Supplements, Work Adjustment.	

### **Accessibility of Services**

Agencies reported their own rating of fourteen factors that impact the accessibility of services. Ratings were made on a four-point, Likert-type scale (1 = High, 2 = Moderate, 3 = Low, 4 = Not Accessible). Table III provides the mean, or average rating, and the distribution of scores within the four categories. Factors are organized highest to lowest, with the factors receiving the highest, or most inaccessible ratings listed first.

There were two factors that were rated substantially lower than the others, with scores falling in what would be an unacceptable range, i.e. mean is greater than 2.0: Child Care, Language Interpretation, Sign Language Interpretation, Assistance for the Visually Impaired, and Video Materials Representing the Population.

**Table III: Ratings of Factors Effecting Level of Accessibility**

<b>Accessibility Factor</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Percentage Rating High Level of Accessibility</b>
Child care	2.93	12.5
Spoken language interpreter	2.52	8.7
Sign language interpreter	2.47	23.8
Visually impaired	2.43	21.7
Video material for client/ population	2.07	39.3
Transportation resources provided	2.00	47.8
Audio material for client population	1.92	46.2
Proximity to other referring agencies	1.55	55.2
Staff representing client population	1.48	60.0
Parking	1.38	67.7
Printed material for client population	1.37	65.5
Staff diversity representative of client population	1.37	65.5
Proximity to public transportation	1.32	77.4
Location is handicapped accessible	1.23	86.7

**Individuals Served**

**Target Populations**

Agencies were asked if they targeted specific groups, and if so how were these groups defined. Table IV provides the number of agencies targeting each population and the definitions of those populations.

**Table IV: Target Populations**

<b>Targeted by:</b>	<b>Agencies</b>	<b>Specific Populations Defined as:</b>
Age	11	Adults-9: 14-64, 16-65, 18-50, 18+, 21+, 22+ Young Adults-2: 18-24
Developmental Disability	7	100% Intellectually and Developmentally Disabled; MR; Developmentally Disabled; Mentally Retarded; Dually Diagnosed with Mental Retardation and Psychiatric Diagnosis; and Mental Retardation as a primary diagnosis
Gender	5	Men-2, Women, Older Men, Low Income Women
Mental Health	2	Mental Illness, Severe and Persistently Mentally Ill
HIV/AIDS	2	People with HIV/AIDS, HIV positive
Ex-Offenders	2	Ex-offenders, Ex-offenders in transitional homes
Disability	2	Disability, Disabled
Race/Ethnicity	1	Minorities
Substance Use	1	Alcoholics and Addicts
Homeless	1	Homeless Men
Other	3	Brain Injury, At-risk people in the neighborhood, Honorably Discharged Veterans

**Numbers of Individuals Reached**

An estimated total of 10,980 individuals received services from fifteen of the agencies that reported serving homeless individuals. Importantly, the majority (54.5%) of the agencies reported that they did not knowingly provide employment services to homeless individuals. There was a tremendous range in the number of individuals served from 1-7,143. Obviously this is tremendously skewed as two-thirds of the reported clients were served by one agency. This data appears to reflect the diversity in the types and intensity of services, (or the definitions of the respondents) more than it provides any meaningful information at the aggregate level.

**Demographics of Individuals Receiving Services**

The demographics of the individuals receiving services can be seen in the table below, but is somewhat difficult to interpret, as these represent duplicated case counts across reporting agencies.

**Table V: Demographics of All Reported Clients**

<b>Demographic</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Ethnicity/Race</b>	
African American	3761
Caucasian	1332
Hispanic/Latino	182
Unknown/unreported	4713

Asian	4
More than one race	145
American Indian/Alaskan	103
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	3
<b>Gender</b>	
Male	3273
Female	3266
Transgendered	154
<b>Age</b>	
2-12 yrs old	750
13-24 yrs old	1804
25-44 yrs old	3732
45-64 yrs old	1364
65 yrs or older	638
Unknown/unreported	4558

## Agency Capacity

### Funding

Agencies responded to all or parts of this section with a great deal of variability in the responses. No two agencies appeared to have the same funding pattern. About half the responding agencies had diversified funding streams, while the other half had funding that was primarily (75% or more) from one source.

**Table VI: Funding Sources**

Source	Agencies Utilizing this Funding Source
Federal Grants	40.0
Private Grants	39.1
Fundraising	30.4
Foundations	21.7
United Way	21.7
City/State Grants	20.0
Client Payment	8.7
HUD	8.7
Medicare	4.3
Private Insurance-HMO	4.3
Private Insurance-PPO	4.3
Corporate Giving	4.3
HOPWA	0.0
Other: State Department of Rehabilitation Services, Families First, Medicaid, State Department of Mental Retardation Services, Membership fees, No funding, Vocational Rehabilitation (2)	

### Staffing Patterns

Thirty of the agencies reported data on their staffing patterns. Three hundred twenty-nine full-time employees and seventeen part-time employees were reported at these agencies. As with the other data, the numbers of employees varied from one agency to another. Four agencies reported not having any full-time employees, while the most was sixty. The average number of full-time

employees was eleven. An additional seventeen individuals were reported as partial full-time employees. These individuals were primarily employed full-time, but only a portion of their time was dedicated to employment services. Part-time employee staffing patterns were similar. A total of one hundred and forty nine part time employees were reported. Many agencies reported not having any part-time employees, while another reported having as many as eighty-three. Nine agencies reported supplementing their paid staff with volunteer staff. There were four hundred and nine reported volunteers.

**Agencies’ Barriers to Providing Services**

Agencies were asked to identify three primary barriers in providing employment services to individuals who are homeless. Transportation was the barrier most often identified, followed in decreasing order by limited funding, and mental health stabilization.

**Table VIII: Barriers to providing services**

<b>Primary Barriers</b>	<b>Agencies</b>
Transportation	10
Funding	7
Mental Health Stabilization	5
Training needs/lack of skills for specific jobs	4
Lack of an address	4
Housing	4
Child care	3
Lack of identification of homeless status	3
Criminal backgrounds	2
Employers willing to hire homeless	2
Secondary education opportunities	1
Reasonable pay	1
Poor work history	1
Lack of phone contact information	1
Lack of identification	1
Lack of employment seeking skills	1
Coalition approach to supporting holistic needs	1
Apathy of clients	1

**Unmet Needs**

**Client Requested Services and Unmet Requests**

Respondents were asked to rank the three most requested services at their agency, the top three needs they were able to meet, and the top three unmet needs. Each of these request were collapsed into a single category. The needs do not represent all needs, but the most frequently endorsed at the agency. The most requested services were housing, transportation, and employment.

**Table IX: Most Frequently Requested Services**

<b>Employment Services</b>	
Employment	5
Job or vocational training	4
Employment assistance	3
Job placement	3

Application/resume prep	2
Job search assistance	2
General employment advice	1
<b>Other Services</b>	
Housing	9
Transportation	8
Financial assistance for rent or utilities	7
Food	4
Assistance with identification: driver's license, social security card	3
Counseling, advice, mentoring	3
Group home/supportive living	3
Health related including medications and insurance assistance	3
Case management	2
Clothing	2
Other: Substance Abuse Services, DHS help, GED, Supportive services	

**Table X: Most Frequently Met Service Requests**

<b>Employment Services</b>	
Resume/Application Assistance	5
Job training	3
Job placement	3
Job leads	3
Employment	3
Employment Assistance	2
Information and referral	2
Temporary Employment	1
<b>Other Services</b>	
Transportation	5
Shelter	5
Assistance accessing benefits	5
Housing	4
Food or nutrition	4
Case management services	4
Access to health care	4
Mental Health Care	3
Education	3
Financial assistance for rent or utilities	2
Child care	2
Other: Supportive services, Life and job skills training, Clothing, Basic life needs, Advocacy, Advice, A meaningful day	

**Table X: Most Frequently Unmet Service Requests**

<b>Employment Services</b>	
Employment	3
Direct job placement	1
Job coaching	1
Supported employment in the community	1
<b>Other Services</b>	

Transportation	9
Housing	8
Individual counseling	5
Child care	3
Substance abuse	2
Medical	2
Financial assistance	2
Socialization, Psychiatric services, Medical insurance, Maximizing income, Assistance obtaining personal documents, Emergency housing assistance, and Accessibility	

**Agencies’ Identified Unmet Community Needs**

Respondents were asked to identify the five most important employment needs not currently being met in the community. Service needs were tabulated and then collapsed into categories that were similar. Transportation and job skills training services were the most frequently cited unmet service needs.

**Table XI: Identified Unmet Community Needs**

Need	
Transportation, including transportation to work sites outside of Davidson County	13
Job skills training, including: work and life skills training, classes in computers and skill labor, training to assist individuals to identify their skills	10
Entry level positions with benefits and living wages	10
Difficulty finding placements due to needs of population: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working with new employment locations that don't understand the needs of our individuals;</li> <li>• Locating companies willing to work with us;</li> <li>• Flexibility due to clients not being able to work more than 1-2 hours per day 2-3 days per week</li> <li>• Employers will not hire mentally retarded because they do not want to be liable</li> </ul>	9
Employment opportunities for ex-offenders	5
Job readiness training, work adjustment training,	4
Supported employment	4
Mental health counseling	4
Increased funding	3
Services for people with special needs including, people with epilepsy and those requiring handicapped accessibility	3
Healthcare, including dental	3
Educational opportunities	3
Job coaching	2
Housing	2
Child care	2
Vocational Rehabilitation only serves priority category people	1
Job carving	1
Address with a place to shower	1

**Agency Response to Needs**

Half (51.7%) of the agencies report expanding to meet the unmet needs.

**Identified Single Greatest Need:**

When asked what the single most important change to improve services is, most respondents reported something related to housing. The most frequent response was to simply increase access to affordable housing. This was closely followed by response related to stabilizing individuals with housing and support services, and three responses related to the establishment of a one stop shop for employment and other services. Two responses were provided related to combining housing and employment services and assistance to homeless individuals to not appear stereotypically homeless. No other response garnered more than one endorsement.

**Table XII: Single Greatest Community Need**

<b>Greatest Need</b>	
Increase access to affordable housing	6
Stabilize individuals with housing and mental health/substance abuse services.	5
Development of a one-stop-shop for the homeless individuals inclusive of employment and other support services that could be used as an address	3
Combine housing and employment services-- the two are not mutually exclusive and must be individualized based for each homeless person	2
Helping clients appear other than homeless (clothing, haircut, total hygiene)	2
Better reporting of positive findings by the Homeless Coalition	1
Child care	1
More job coaches	1
Increase funding and capacity of agencies	1
Increase living wage	1
Improve services at NCAC	1
Population needs to self identify and maintain contact with agencies	1

## VII. Service User Focus Groups

### Methodology

A total of seven focus groups were held throughout Nashville between March and May 2007. The purpose of the focus groups was to understand the barriers to employment and the need of those who were unemployed and to understand the strategies and resources that were beneficial to those who were formerly homeless and formerly unemployed.

- Formerly homeless men and women who were successful in securing housing and employment
- Women with Children living in shelters
- Hispanic/Latinos homeless men (Group was held in Spanish)
- Substance users in recovery housing
- Individuals living in shelters who are now employed
- Youth who have aged out of the foster care system,
- Front-line staff who work who provide employment services to individuals who are homeless

Participants were asked to sign the “Consent to Participate” before each focus group. Facilitators also explained to the participants that their answers were voluntary and that they could leave the group at any time. Participants received a \$15 gift cards to MacDonald’s for their participation.

All adult participants who were homeless or formerly homeless were asked the same set of questions regarding barriers to employment for individuals who are homelessness. Some members of the youth group had experienced homelessness; others were at risk for homeless. Therefore, the youth group was asked additional questions about prevention and specific needs for their age group. The final focus group consisted of representatives from various Nashville agencies who provided employment resources and services to various individuals, including homeless men and women. Twelve broad questions were asked in each of these groups about specific experiences with services:

1. What have been some barriers to employment for individuals who are homeless?
2. What has made the process easier for homeless individuals to find employment?
3. Has anyone “officially” discussed employment with you, (case manager, outreach worker, nurse, etc.), if so, who? What was that experience like?
4. What are your concerns about being employed or finding employment?
5. If you wanted to get a job or job training, where would you go?
6. What is the best way to go about providing employment training?
7. What is the worst way to go about providing employment training?
8. Who should provide employment training (what type of agency? Which government-city, state, federal)?
9. What may have kept you from getting or keeping a job?
10. If you have had a job, what made process of getting and keeping it easier for you?
11. What are the things you need now to assist you in finding a job? Education? Information? Training? A job coach? Medical care/medical care information? Services?
12. Is there anything else we should know about homelessness and employment??

### Participants

In the tables below are demographic (age, gender, race/ethnicity) and other key characteristics of focus group participants by group.

#### Hispanic Unemployed & Homeless

Age	Gender	Race/Ethnicity
36-45	Male	Hispanic
46-55	Male	Hispanic
26-35	Male	Hispanic
46-55	Male	Hispanic
36-45	Male	Hispanic
36-45	Male	Hispanic
19-25	Male	Hispanic
26-35	Male	Hispanic
19-25	Male	Hispanic
19-25	Male	Hispanic

#### Employed & Homeless

Age	Gender	Race/Ethnicity
56-55	Male	White
46-55	Male	White
46-55	Male	Black
46-55	Male	Black
36-45	Male	Black

#### Women Living in Shelters with Children

Age	Race/Ethnicity	Marital Status	Number of Children
26-35	Black	Single	1
26-35	White	Married	4
26-35	White	Married	3
46-55	White	Separated	5 including 1 minor
12-18	White	Married	1

#### Formerly Homeless Now Employed & Housed

Age	Gender	Race/Ethnicity
46-55	Female	Black
36-45	Female	White
56-65	Male	Black
46-55	Male	Black
36-45	Male	Black

**Formerly Homeless Individuals Living in Substance Abuse Transitional Housing & Currently Employed**

<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>
19-25	Female	White
56-65	Male	Black
36-45	Male	Mixed
36-45	Male	Black
Not Reported	Not Reported	Black
46-55	Male	Black
26-35	Male	White
19-25	Female	White

**Youth Aging Out of Foster Care**

<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	<b>Job-training</b>	<b>Currently Homeless</b>
12-18	Male	White	Yes	Yes
19-25	Female	Black	Yes	No
12-18	Male	Black	No	No
18-18	Not Reported	White	No	No
12-18	Male	Black	No	No
12-18	Male	Black	No	No
12-18	Male	Black	No	No
12-18	Male	White	No	No
12-18	Male	Bi-Racial	No	No
12-18	Male	Black	No	No

**Brief Summary and Implications**

Below is a detailed list of themes that were pulled from the groups. A more detailed description of each group is also provided in the appendix of this report.

**Barriers to Employment**

- Formerly homeless, currently homeless, employed and unemployed men and women stated that structural barriers, lack of identification, not having a permanent of address, no access to telephone, and no place for receiving mail, and transportation issues, lack of knowledge about services were the major barriers to employment.
- Additional barriers such health, lifestyle, personal hygiene, criminal record and addictions were also personal barriers to employment. Treatment services for addictions and uncooperative employers were two other barriers named.
- Specific issues for subgroups: Hispanic group cited undocumented status (immigration) and language barriers as additional barriers.
- Mothers in shelters named the need for day care assistance as the major barrier to employment.
- In addition to many of the barriers mentioned above, the youth group also found that lack of higher education - the need for more than high school diploma and a lack of computer skills were barriers they faced when looking for employment.

### **What makes the process easier?**

- The majority of participants stated that vocational rehabilitation, skills training, drop ins; mail service, phone service, bus passes, drug treatment, medical treatment, facilities to take care of personal hygiene and shower.
- Also named were various agencies around Nashville that have been helpful to some individuals: Campus for Human Development; the Power Project; Project Return, Nashville Career Centers; Resource center (a place that lists of employers who will hire offenders); Job Fairs with employment support services; temp services
- For some participants word of mouth, social networking and having child care were ways that made finding and keeping a job possible.

### **Concerns about being employed?**

- When asked what concerns they had once they were employed participants expressed some fears and anxieties about maintaining the job, afraid of competency (whether I can do it-coming off street unemployed and jump into a new job); worried about being productive, liking the job enough to keep it.
- They were also anxious about “fitting in”, being stereotyped, and fear of losing job.
- Concerned about being on time (transportation), working “third or night” shift and not having transportation emerged.
- Staying clean and sober; fear of first payday and making the right choices with lump sum of money was a concern.
- Worries about employers learning of criminal background were other anxieties expressed by some individuals.

### **The Best way to provide employment training;**

Participants felt that

- On the job training, apprenticeships, extensive orientation
- Incentives to participate in job training
- Vocational school
- 90 day probation on the job training
- Provide outreach from people who were formerly homeless
- Before job training provide a place to sleep, eat, and clean up
- Place all resources in the same place

### **What is the worst way to go about providing employment training?**

The problems with employment training cited were:

- Not properly communicating the requirements and expectations of employment
- Putting people to be trained for jobs they are not interested in nor qualified for;
- No standardization across programs and agencies
- Lack of incentives – monetary, social, or emotional incentives
- No guarantee of employment after completion of employment training-very discouraging.

### **If you have had a job, what made process of getting and keeping it easier for you?**

Participants named:

- The desire not to be homeless
- Being truthful and honest about being in rehabilitation for drug use and having understanding employers,
- Bus passes
- Stable place to go to sleep, and clean up;
- Ability to willing to change my thinking and living,
- Support network,
- Correct medication, drug and alcohol treatment,

**What do you want the Mayor’s Commission to know? Recommendations to Commission from formerly homeless, currently homeless, (employed and unemployed) and foster youth.**

- Offer free vocational training that provides certification that will be recognized by prospective employers.
- Provide a Co-op shared cost incentive to employers to hire no address potential employees.
- Provide Place to shower, place to sleep, food, toiletries, laundry facilities with flexible closing time to make it easier to do evening or night work.
- Help us to manage our monies – half of paycheck into savings account toward independence.
- The state of Tennessee should prevent construction companies from hiring out of town workers on construction sites. Currently they go import workers from Atlanta, house and feed them in hotels. Give that work homeless in Nashville.
- Need for an office that specializes in employment issues for Hispanics – with bilingual staff.

**Foster Youth**

Foster youth aging out of the foster care system are a special population that would benefit greatly from prevention services. Alternatively, many of them will be the homeless of tomorrow. During the focus group, it was revealed that many of them had lived in their cars, slept on friends or family’s sofas or floors, stayed in hotels, lived in group homes but did not consider any of these housing options as being homeless. Many of these youth had completed high school and were working in fast food places or other low-paying jobs but not able to sustain adequate housing. These youth but had never received an

They were however quite astute about needing additional education and career training to be attractive on the job market for good paying careers. They spoke in terms of careers rather than jobs and were probably the only group who spoke about computer training.

- Provide educational and career counseling tailored to this particular population. Invest in distributing information to schools, group homes, juvenile centers, and other places where homeless youth are apt to gather.
- Provide money management and life skills workshops for youth aging out of foster care. Many of the youth lack supportive family or the knowledge to find resources needed to be successful productive adults.
- Many youth express frustration with bureaucratic processes from the Department of Children’s Services.

- Youth were certain that obtaining technical training, vocation training, and internships were the best ways to succeed. However, they also were uncertain how to obtain funding and supportive services to obtain and access training.

## **Mothers**

One of the difficulties of a single or married mother who is homeless is her ability to find, access and sustain employment and day care, if needed, in an attempt to relieve herself from the ranks of the homeless. One of the themes identified in the Nashville report, was the “on-going need for increased job training, readiness and placement for chronic homeless people who are willing and able to work.” There was a unanimous response that “Job Training Program Involvement” had not been experienced by any of the participants but all had been previously employed. During the focus group, statements were also made by participants regarding their feelings regarding people on the job knowing their homeless status. All of the women, including the married women stated that child care was problematic for them.

## VIII. Service Provider Focus Group

### Participants

#### Homeless Employment Service: Focus Group on Regional Resources

On May 14, 2007 a focus group was held at The University of Tennessee with front line workers who provide employment services to people who are homeless. A total of 7 people participated in the group representing seven agencies and organizations. These agencies and organizations included:

- Urban League
- Campus for Human Development
- Matthew 25
- Homebuilder's Institute
- Center for Independent Living
- Second Chances
- TN Career Center
- Goodwill Industries

### Questions

All participants were asked the same set of questions regarding barriers and challenges to providing employment services for homeless individuals.

#### **What are the major barriers that your agency faces when providing employment services to people who are homeless?**

Personal characteristics of homeless individuals named were: untreated mental illness, addiction, low self esteem, negative attitude and low expectations due to repeated "let downs" from society. It is difficult to have a positive attitude about employment when you are homeless, need a bath and clean clothes.

Higher paying laborer jobs require skills and training (e.g. backhoe, forklift, etc). Most lack skills training and/or education. They need little successes to help them persevere to future successes. Drug and alcohol treatment is also helpful.

Structural barriers named by the front line workers focused mainly around transportation and the location of jobs. Homeless need full services-address, clothing, transportation, and social support. The missions and shelters around Nashville have strict hours for entering and leaving the facility thereby creating difficulty maintaining employment other than 9-5 hours. Jobs are not close to transportation and service industry jobs are at night and homeless people housed in missions and can not make it to work on time. MTA busses do not run after a certain hour causing difficulty getting to and from work.

Also available transitional housing or shelters are often in high crime neighborhoods which increases risk for relapse. This sets homeless individuals up for failure with continued exposure.

#### **What are the barriers that prevent you from providing employment services to people who are homeless? What prevents you from doing the best job possible to serve people who**

**are homeless? What do you need that you do not have that would make your job easier and more effective?**

- Primarily there is a lack of funding, support, and resources to service homeless individuals. Agencies need fewer administrators and more hands-on personnel who are familiar with the everyday problems of servicing clients. Case manager have too many clients and cannot offer individualized services.
- We need to connect with enough employers who will employ ex-offenders and others who are homeless and educate employers of tax credits for hiring ex-offenders. The government should provide tax breaks for hiring homeless.
- Also establishing a reward/incentive programs and mentorship with enhanced services to help empower people for long term success would be a great tool for improving the employment success rates of homeless individuals.
- Organizations should require homeless individuals to enroll in a mandatory self improvement plan in order to get benefits
- Other barriers mentioned were the need for agencies to provide or secure safety equipment and tools required for the type of jobs that readily employ homeless people. Some job would easily hire workers who already possess the right equipment for getting a job completed. VA will pay for equipment needs. Some employers will also pay for tools for qualified workers.
- One agency worker commented that we are not able to send qualified people to school. A worker from the TN Career Center stated that they do have money to help them finish a degree if it is started.
- The primary need agreed upon by participants was the promotion of collaboration between agencies to meet the continuum of needs of employment for the homeless.

**What is the best way to provide services to homeless individuals?**

- The best way would be to have a one stop shop geared directly to the homeless.
- We need better skill level assessment process, an in-house education component with pre employment test tutoring.
- Supportive services and a job with crisis intervention should be available for individuals with complex needs.
- State sponsored jobs for people who private sector just does not trust are needed. Industries moving to Tennessee should be required to hire a small percentage (5-10%) of this population.
- More bus routes, mass transportation or subcontracted vans are sorely needed for individuals to obtain employment in outlying communities where additional jobs are available.

**What is the worst way to provide services?**

- Agencies have different and sometimes conflicting missions and goals. People servicing this population should agree on process of how to get people stable and what constitutes success. These differences often make it difficult to collaborate because oftentimes there is no structure to services across agencies.
- We need a comprehensive database to help people get services they need and not duplicate services.

### **What should mayor's commission know about homeless services?**

- Affordable housing is crucial to Tennesseans, not just homeless people. Housing that is affordable to low wage earners is often placed in dangerous high crime areas. Decent housing costs are not realistic for many, homelessness is just a part of it.
- The homeless population will increase if the housing situation does not improve. Living on the street is one part of homeless but there are many who do not have a place to call their own, living with family or friends due to lack of affordable housing.
- Structure budget for people to provide intensive case management and support to homeless population. Make sure money is being used by programs that work.
- Make sure workers have a high level of respect for population. Clients are often prideful and want to be treated with some dignity.

### **Single most important change needed?**

Each agency staff member named the most important change needed to improve employment among homeless individuals.

- One staff member stated that more intensive training and better services to prepare individuals was needed along with better transportation strategies.
- Another front-line staff worker stated that raising minimum wage would be a better incentive for unemployed homeless individuals and that higher wages would prevent working class individuals from becoming homeless.
- Participants also discussed sending out recruiters to the homeless population to market employment training programs.

### **Implications and Recommendations to increase employment among homeless individuals to Mayor's Commission from agency front-line staff**

Participants in all groups recognize that both personal and structural barriers impede the process of successfully obtaining employment for individuals who are homeless.

- To address the personal barriers to employment for individuals who are homeless a comprehensive center is needed that provides: showers, clothing, lockers, mailboxes, and a message center 24 hours a day.
- Transportation is the top structural barrier to employment for individuals who are homeless. More creative ways of getting people to and from work are needed. Soliciting the help of the community, including churches, academic institutions, employers, agencies and the government is vital to meet the transportation needs of this population.
  - Partnerships for sharing rides
  - Accessibility Vans
  - Access Ride
  - Buss Passes
  - Share transportation shuttles for elderly with employed homeless individuals

- Collaboration and cooperation among agencies is one of the primary concerns of agency staff. At this meeting, the lack of knowledge that agencies had about each other was apparent.
- A comprehensive database listing the services and resources that each agency provides would be helpful and beneficial to workers and to clients. This would help reduce duplication of services but also reveal the gaps in services.

## **IX. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on all of the data collected throughout the study, we make several recommendations to the Commission.

### **Employment among people that are homeless**

First it is important as a base to start from to recognize that, the majority of homeless individuals work in some capacity, are willing to work, and are desirous of better employment opportunities.

### **Collaboration Needed**

The provider survey and focus groups of homeless, formerly homeless, both employed and unemployed, and agency staff expressed the need for organized collaborative processes across agencies to deliver employment services to homeless individuals.

All groups discussed the lack of knowledge about the full compliment of resources available in Nashville to address employment needs of those who are homeless. At the focus groups meetings, the group of front-line agency staff participants was able to share and exchange information about services or resources provided at their perspective agencies and update each other on other services within the Nashville area.

There appear to be employment services in the city, but few are specifically targeted to homeless individuals or tailored to their needs.

Specific Recommendations:

- Continue networking efforts specific to the employment of homeless individuals.. Organize meetings at least twice a year among front-line agency workers for updates on problems encountered, effective solutions and strategies, and resources available-include relevant government agencies representatives.
- Create a comprehensive database that can be accessed by all participating agencies. All agencies should be able to send updates and additional information to one central location which will update the database and possibly a website.

### **Incentives for Employers**

It was also clear from the surveys that there is a gap in employment opportunities that pay living wages and provide benefits. Focus Group participants also discussed providing incentives for employers who hire homeless individuals. Some staff knew about existing tax incentives; others knew of employers who were sensitive to homeless individuals, and still others cited employers who took advantage of homeless individuals. However, no one group or person was knowledgeable about the continuum of employer benefits for hiring homeless individuals.

Specific Recommendations:

- State and local governments should provide or improve financial incentives for employers to hire individuals who are homeless.
- Create and distribute a comprehensive list of employers willing to hire homeless individuals to ALL agencies in the region.

- It may be necessary to provide a work environment that is tailored to the needs of homeless individuals as a stepping stone to competitive employment, and allow individuals to build their work history and employment skills.

## **Comprehensive Homeless Center**

Focus group participants and survey respondents suggested that homeless individuals needed a facility that specifically targeted employment and housing needs, and was sensitive to the challenges of being homeless and employed.

Specific Recommendations:

- Develop a comprehensive center where employed homeless individuals can attend to personal hygiene, receive messages, leave personal belongs, and find resources pertaining to employment.
- Given that the lack of an address is a major factor in securing employment, individuals should be able to give the center as a mailing address.
- To register for admission to the center, individuals should be required to show that they are either employed, in an employment training program, and/or actively seeking employment.
- Provide wrap around services to assist individuals in stabilization and ultimately move into permanent housing.

## **Transportation**

Transportation was named as a major barrier to stable employment in both surveys and focus groups. . When employment is secured, getting to and from work on time is a problem for day, evening and night workers who are homeless. Strategies for possible solutions were discussed and listed above and below.

Specific Recommendations:

- Partnerships for sharing rides  
Accessibility Vans  
Access Ride  
Buss Passes  
Share transportation shuttles for elderly with employed homeless individuals
- The combined cooperation and creative efforts of community, government, and Metropolitan Transit Authority is needed to implement effective solutions.

## **Mental Health and Substance Abuse Issues**

Mental health, including substance abuse and psychological fears and anxieties are issues faced by homeless individuals that need the attention and help from mental health and substance abuse agencies. While several agencies address mental health and substance abuse issues, according to the homeless individuals in the focus groups and surveys, individuals feel that they are rarely addressed and services are difficult to access. Likewise these fears and anxieties about the stigma of being homeless, maintaining employment, competency, self-esteem, and needing help managing money and life are concerns that are not usually addressed in majority of employment organizations that are not tailored to the needs of homeless individuals.

#### Specific Recommendations:

- Address mental health and substance abuse issues
- Raise awareness of mental health and substance abuse issues among clinicians
- Conduct self-improvement classes or workshop before sending individuals out to jobs. These types of prevention strategies are much more cost-effective and less time consuming than intervention strategies.
- Make self-improvement classes a collaborative effort across-agencies whereby funding and logistics of conducting the classes are a joint effort. This approach could virtually save money, time, personnel and energy of all agencies involved.

### **Day Jobs**

The majority of homeless individuals are desirous and willing to work. In fact, this current research confirms what the literature suggests that many of the homeless are employed in low-wage, temporary, no-benefit jobs that are classified as “day jobs” or “under-the-table”. These types of non-secure temporary week-to-week or hour-to-hour employment make it difficult for vulnerable homeless individuals to maintain affordable housing. In addition many of the homeless in our study paid additional fees for cashing their checks. Studies indicate that other “fees” are also charged against wages-rides to and from work and basic work equipment. Maintaining these types of paid jobs sometimes makes it difficult for homeless individuals to participate in unpaid training.

#### Specific Recommendations:

- Provide training opportunities that are closely linked to permanent employment
- Provide more paid job training and apprenticeships to qualified individuals. Many of homeless individuals may have acquired skills that are valuable in certain industries- construction, landscaping- but may need more “official” training to include on a resume and make them desirous to legitimate employers.

### **Summary**

There are personal barriers that are difficult to overcome without encouragement and support. There are no easy solutions. Programs that simply place homeless individuals in a job to meet a quota, without the benefit of employment supportive services have little long-term success for its clients or for employers. Programs that steer clients to jobs that foster vocational growth and economic independence have continued success with clients and build trust with employers. Successful programs that demonstrate cooperation between national and local governments, business enterprises, and social services can result in well-trained productive workers who can return to and contribute to society. Implementing supportive employment programs is a complex process that deserves the immediate attention and combined resources and efforts of social services, industry, and government. Joblessness among the homeless is not simply consequential to individuals and families but also has social and economic costs to all of society.