Connecting with Opportunities Initiative

Maine's National Health Emergency Dislocated Worker Grant focused on the Opioid epidemic



What is the Connecting with Opportunities Initiative?

Let's break it down:

- a) A US Department of Labor: Employment and Training Administration
- b) Disaster Recovery
- c) Dislocated worker grant
- d) To address the opioid crisis

BACKGROUND:

In 2017, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services declared the opioid crisis a national public health emergency.

This made funds available to states to support workforce needs that have arisen from this crisis.

With a focus on the opioid crisis

<u>CORE GOAL</u>: Help individuals gain stability through access to:

- employment
- education/training that will lead to employment
- or a combination of both

Connecting with Opportunities

Statewide Overview

- Grant development was a collaboration between Maine DOL, the three Workforce Boards (Northeastern, Central Western Maine and Coastal Counties Workforce, Inc.) and Eastern Maine Development Corporation
- o 2 years: up to \$6,281,891 statewide (December 2019 December 2021)
- Original aim to serve 683 people statewide

Who is eligible to participate?

Dislocated Workers
&
Long-Term Unemployed
Individuals

Track #1:
Individuals impacted by
the opioid crisis
(directly or indirectly)

Track #2:
Non-impacted
individuals willing to train
& work in treatment and
recovery fields

What is a "dislocated worker?"

In short, someone who has lost their job:

- Laid off; eligible for Unemployment Insurance
- Temporarily or permanently out of work due to the opioid crisis
- Fired from their job due to the opioid crisis

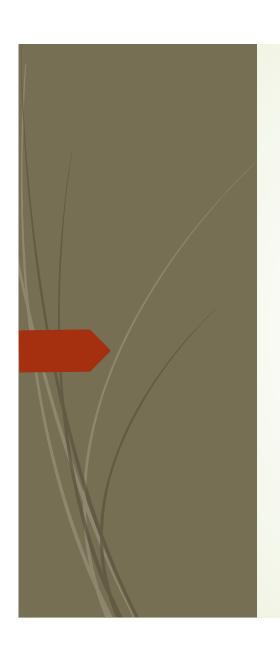
OR, Long-term unemployed:

Out of work for 27 consecutive weeks or longer

Two Main Tracks:

Dislocated Workers or Long-term unemployed individuals who:

- TRACK 1: Have been impacted by the opioid epidemic either directly or indirectly (family/friends) can pursue any career field
- TRACK 2: Would like to go into occupational fields related to substance use disorder/recovery, such as counseling, addiction treatment and mental health care



Impacted by the opioid crisis?

"Your answer to this question is voluntary. Do you, a friend, or any member of your family have a history of opioid use?"

Please answer "Yes" or "No."

What services can this grant provide?

- o One-on-one career guidance
- Assistance with education, training, skills development and the job search process
- Case management services
- Financial assistance with training, education and supportive services - supportive services might include transportation, child care, tuition, clothing for work, etc.
- Support from Peer Connectors

Peer Connectors

- Individuals with "lived experience" of substance use disorder and recovery that are hired for up to twelve months of employment.
- Peer Connectors will be liaisons, providing outreach about available services AND providing <u>support</u> and <u>encouragement</u> to participants enrolled in the grant.
- These individuals will be enrolled and receiving services themselves.

How many served by this grant so far:

Currently, <u>157</u> individuals are being or have been served by this grant.

Of that number:

Experience with criminal justice system: 106 (68%)

• Low Income: 138 (88%)

• Female: 94 (60%)

• Male: 63 (40%)

Service-providers – STATEWIDE:

- Workforce Solutions: https://www.workforcesolutionsme.org/
 CONTACT: Gerry Corcoran, 207-274-3305, Gerry.corcoran@goodwillnne.org
 Cumberland, Knox, Lincoln, Sagadahoc, Waldo and York County residents
- Eastern Maine Development Corporation (EMDC): https://www.emdc.org/
 CONTACT: Doug Dunbar, 207-299-5626, OpportunityGrant@emdc.org/
 Hancock, Penobscot, Piscataquis and Washington County residents
 Androscoggin, Franklin, Kennebec, Oxford and Somerset County residents
- Aroostook County Action Program (ACAP): https://www.acap-me.org/
 CONTACT: Meghan O'Berry, 207-554-4154, moberry@acap-me.org
 Aroostook County Residents

Service Providers

The grant service providers:

- Aroostook County Action Program
- Eastern Maine Development Corporation
- Workforce Solutions Goodwill Northern New England

Provide comprehensive employment and training services for individuals with the greatest barriers to employment – ongoingly – through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). WIOA is: a United States public law that is the primary federal workforce development legislation.

While this grant is time-limited, the services of the providers are not.

What are the overarching goals of this grant:



Why is employment vital to recovery?

The Office of the Surgeon General has defined recovery as: "a process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential."

In light of that, what might employment provide:

- Sense of purpose
- Structure to one's life
- Income
- Sense of belonging
- Community

For many, employment is a key component of recovery.



In the words of Robert Fickett, Executive Director of the Bangor Area Recovery Network: "When we think about those basic life domains that are vital to an individual sustaining recovery from SUD, like housing, transportation, healthcare, access to food, etc., it is obvious that <u>gainful employment</u> is a <u>key factor</u> to obtaining almost any of those things.....

In addition, employment empowers an individual in recovery, provides purpose, increases self-esteem and develops relationships and social skills. It is **fundamental** to sustained, long term recovery."

In closing, this grant aims to **connect** individuals with **opportunities** that can offer them a chance at that meaningful employment.



Laurie McDonnell

Labor Program Specialist for

Connecting with Opportunities Initiative

Department of Labor/Bureau of Employment Services

CONTACT:

Laurie.E.McDonnell@maine.gov

Phone: 207-248-2934

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