

**Ending the Epidemic Task Force  
Committee Recommendation  
CR30**

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**Recommendation Title: Increase Access to Opportunities for Employment and  
Employment and Vocational Services for People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA)**

- 1. For which goal outlined in the Governor's plan to end the epidemic in New York State does this recommendation apply? 1, 2 and 3**
  
  - 2. Proposed Recommendation:** Research findings reflect a positive relationship for people living with HIV/AIDS between employment and employment services, and access to care, treatment adherence, decreases in viral load (VL), improved physical and behavioral health, and reduction of health risk behavior. To expand access to employment and employment services for people living with HIV/AIDS to improve HIV health and prevention outcomes:
    - 1) Develop current HIV/AIDS services to address economic stability, vocational development and full community inclusion of PLWHA, including identification of employment-related information, resource or service needs, encouraging employment interests and supporting well-informed employment decisions of PLWHA. Build current HIV/AIDS services capacity to address identified employment needs/interests of consumers through linkage to existing resources or direct service provision, developing an HIV/AIDS services system implementing trauma-informed care grounded in priorities of informed vocational self-determination, continued/improved economic, housing and health care stability, living wage employment, increased adult literacy and completion of other adult and higher education to strengthen individuals' position in the labor market.
    - 2) Ensure engagement/retention in care, treatment adherence and financial and housing stability through expanded access to certified benefits advisors equipped to address needs from initial economic security, housing, and health care program eligibility, application and benefits enrollment through accurate, individualized benefits and work incentives counseling and advisement for those considering and/or participating in employment.
    - 3) Develop existing and new community-based employment initiatives for PLWHA targeted to facilitate access to skill-building and living wage employment. Provide training and technical assistance on transition-to-work topics for HIV clinical and non-clinical service providers.
    - 4) Develop and implement community-based education, credentialing, internship and supported employment programs for peers to provide health navigation services in hospital or community-based health settings to support early access to, and retention in, HIV care, with extended, on-going access to vocational/career development services for peers.
    - 5) Implement an earned income disregard policy for HIV enhanced rental assistance program participants who enter employment which disregards work earnings above previous income: 100% of work earnings disregarded for the first year; 75% of work earnings disregarded for the second year; 50% of work earnings disregarded for the third year; and 25% of work
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- earnings disregarded for the fourth year. Advocate at the federal level for the updating and improvement of work incentive policies of the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Income (SSDI) programs.
- 6) Develop targeted employment initiatives for transgender communities across HIV status to expand access to effective job training, employment preparation and access to work, as prevention interventions for HIV-negative individuals, and to increase engagement/retention in care and treatment adherence of HIV-positive individuals. These initiatives should include peer-led community-based transgender employment services with life skills, literacy and job training (including peer navigator and self-employment/small business development options), certified benefits advisement, job search assistance, extended access to post-employment supports, and mentorship programs. Strengthen the capacity of existing workforce participation and vocational rehabilitation programs to effectively and competently provide services for transgender individuals through training and technical assistance.
  - 7) Provide funding for the previous six recommendations through the Delivery System Reform Incentive Payment (DSRIP) program through federal savings generated by Medicaid Redesign Team (MRT) reforms.

**List of key individuals, stakeholders, or populations who would benefit from this recommendation**

- PLWHA considering or actively pursuing employment, education, or volunteering
- PLWHA who are under-employed
- HIV/AIDS Service Providers (ASOs)
- NYS Department of Health, AIDS Institute
- Vocational Rehabilitation providers
- Community college system, including SUNY and CUNY
- Key statewide and local employment-related service systems, such as NYESS, OTDA, ACCES-VR, Ticket to Work, Work Incentive Planning and Assistance (WIPA), American Job Centers (One Stops) and Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs)

**List of measures that would assist in monitoring impact**

- Annual cost savings from PLWHA reducing reliance on public benefits due to employment
- Improved CD4 and HIV Viral Load measurements of PLWHA engaged in employment/vocational services
- Decrease in risk for acquiring and transmitting HIV, STI, Hepatitis C
- Number of state-wide or regional cross-sector conferences/workshops/meetings connecting leaders/representatives from HIV, training/education, vocational rehabilitation, workforce development, benefits advisement and legal services.
- Number of HIV-positive persons who participate in vocational training and education programs



- Number of HIV-positive persons who move from unemployment to peer positions, part-time employment and full-time employment annually
- Numbers of community and agency level trainings presented on transition-to-work topics in HIV service provision

### Footnotes or References

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3. **Would implementation of this recommendation be permitted under current laws or would a statutory change be required?** Permitted under current law.
4. **Is this recommendation something that could feasibly be implemented in the short-term (within the next year) or long-term (within the next three to six years)?** Within the next year.
5. **Please list the TF numbers of the original recommendations that contributed to this current version:** TF38, TF68, TF69, TF76, TF78, TF275.

