

AB1111

Breaking Barriers to Employment Initiative

eNewsletter: Issue 1

September 2, 2020

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Welcome!

Welcome to the first Breaking Barriers to Employment Newsletter. Each quarter, on behalf of the California Workforce Development Board (CWDB), the California Workforce Association's (CWA) AB1111 Technical Assistance Team will work with the State Board, grantees, and other stakeholders to identify content that highlights project accomplishments, provides updates, shares best practices, showcases customer successes, and provides information in support of the initiative's key objectives.

Save The Date

The CWDB, CWA and Pathways Consultants, will host a project-wide **virtual Community of Practice** for AB 1111 grantees and their project partners on **October 27 and October 28, 2020**. Participants will be engaged in a wide variety of peer-to-peer learning, information sharing and support. In addition, specialized training focused on key issues and opportunities facing grantees will be a central part of the program. Further details about the event will be emailed in the near future. *Grantee participation is required.*

Strategies for Addressing Key Challenges

The convergence of AB 1111 Breaking Barriers to Employment grant program implementation and the rapid expansion of coronavirus cases in early April and beyond created myriad challenges for grantees, the vulnerable populations their programs aim to serve, and local economies, where businesses create jobs. While some projects had experience and resources enabling them to quickly adapt strategies to meet obstacles posed by the pandemic, many initially struggled to address service delivery issues, such as the following:

Need for Virtual and Remote Service Delivery: California's stay at home order, the need for social distancing, and the overall effects of the pandemic led many organizations to close their facilities to the public, resulting in their need to develop remote services delivery strategies to provide training and a range of other services.

Lack of Digital Literacy and Resources among Targeted Individuals: At the same time that projects were grappling with decisions about how to best move services to virtual platforms, several grantees expressed concerns about customers' lack of knowledge or resources. Among the barriers to employment faced by individuals that AB 1111 projects target is a lack of digital literacy and the technology tools to take advantage of distance or remote learning.

Technical assistance on moving Breaking Barriers projects to virtual and remote service delivery has dominated discussions with several grantees. CWA has been working with organizations throughout California on this issue and has compiled the following resources to support these efforts.

Virtual Platform Options: This is a resource that was initially developed in connection with CWA's Regional Plan Implementation 2.0 Technical Assistance initiative. It provides a variety of virtual platform options for working remotely and serving individuals through distant learning formats. This resource was created for local workforce systems based on urgent needs brought about by COVID-19.

[**Virtual Platform Options PDF.**](#)

Delivering Quality Remote Services Resource Packet: This resource development packet was created under the ELL Co-Enrollment Pilot Project, which outlines the transition to virtual service delivery and provides a rationale for selection of virtual platforms. This content was developed for case managers working with English language learners, but it is relative to anyone working with populations that have barriers to employment.

[**Delivering Quality Remote Services Resource Packet**](#)

Spotlight on Projects: Promising Approaches

Each month, the newsletter will feature strategies, accomplishments, best practices, and other information about one or more of the 26 AB1111 Breaking Barriers projects funded by CWDB. As we get underway, three grantees are highlighted along with their projects, all of which provide unique approaches to addressing the workforce needs of individuals with significant barriers to employment.

Jewish Vocational and Career Counseling Service (JVS)

JVS is collaborating with the Workforce Development Board of Contra Costa County under its East Bay Water and Transit Pre-Apprenticeships project. As the partners have worked to launch the program, which serves a broad range of individuals with employment barriers, the COVID-19 pandemic and social distancing requirements have impacted students, employers, colleges, and other program partners. As a result, JVS and project stakeholders have adapted key program elements to reach job seekers from the project's target populations through social media, deliver engaging online instruction, and supporting students through virtual platforms. Strategies to implement distance learning have included: identifying potential technology access issues during initial applicant assessment; ensuring instructors are comfortable with and equipped to teach online; and early orientation for students in using online learning strategies. Learn more about this approach at [Jewish Vocational Service](#).

Nile Sisters Development Initiative (NSDI)

The mission of NSDI is to educate, support, and offer training to refugee and immigrant women and their families to help them overcome barriers to social and economic self-reliance. In the face of COVID-19 and its impacts on people and the labor market, NSDI moved quickly to make adjustments to LearnMore, its nurse assistant training program. LearnMore implemented a series of procedures to enable instruction to continue, including daily sanitization measures, temperature checks, mandatory face masks, vigorous hand hygiene protocols, and COVID-19 testing. In addition, working in partnership with a skilled nursing facility where mandatory externships occur, safety procedures were augmented to ensure students, staff and patients can all securely benefit from the program. For more information, check out [LearnMore](#).

Transitions Mental Health Association (TMHA)

Serving clients in both Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo counties, TMHA operates Growing Grounds Enterprises, a vocational program for adults living with a mental illness. In response to the pandemic, TMHA carefully considered the needs of its customers and the importance of social interaction in preparing them for work. As a result, the Growing Grounds program has foregone adoption of virtual strategies for instruction and has fully embraced a "low-tech" approach to learning. TMHA decided to move its instruction outdoors, using traditional approaches to teaching and learning, where students are equipped with clipboards, notepads, and pens.

Information about TMHA and its programs and services is available at [Transitions-Mental Health Association](#).

Technical Assistance for the Provider Network

AB1111, The Breaking Barriers to Employment Initiative, was signed into legislation in 2016 and sponsored by CWA. As such, CWA is honored to have been selected to serve as the Technical Assistance provider for Breaking Barriers grantee network, which includes not only local WDBs and lead CBOs, but a wide range of public, non-profit and other local service agencies that contribute knowledge and resources to individual projects and the overall initiative. Publication of the Breaking Barriers to Employment Newsletter is one of many approaches that CWA and our technical assistance partners will utilize to bring relevant, useful, and timely information to the AB 1111 provider community. Principal partners in the delivery of training, consulting, and coaching, and in leading community of practice events include:

- Pathways Consultants
- Bay Area Community Resources PolicyLink
- LinkedIn Learning
- California Community Action Partnership Association Foundation for California Community Colleges

If you need technical assistance, contact your CWDB program analyst!

Breaking Barriers Technical Assistance Services for Grantees

In partnership with a wide range of consultants, subject matter experts, policy-focused organizations and trainers, CWA is ready to provide AB1111 grantees and their partners with a variety of services and supports, including:

- Customized Technical Assistance
 - Individualized Consulting and Coaching
 - Project-wide Training Monthly System Building Events
 - Community of Practice Convenings
 - Monthly Check-Ins by the TA Team
 - Referrals to Special Services for Project Participants
 - Links to Information and Resources
 - A Breaking Barriers App
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