

Fresh Start Vocational Rehabilitation and Transitional Living Program

“Put your hand in my hand, together we can make it.”

Substance Abuse Disorder- A disorder that is characterized by an individual’s need for more of a drug or alcohol product than intended, an inability to stop using by choice, and an ongoing difficulty in recovering from the effects of the substance.

Vocational Rehabilitation- A process which enables persons with functional, psychological, developmental, cognitive, and emotional impairments or health conditions to overcome barriers to accessing maintaining, or returning to employment or other useful occupation.

The **Fresh Start** Vocational Rehabilitation Program is committed to serving individuals with a substance use disorder in recovery. It is our belief that employment is essential to recovery and sustaining a life of sobriety. Obtaining and maintaining employment requires developing strong, positive working relationships with individuals in recovery. ARVAC, as a Community Action Agency, along with community partners and employers transform this commitment into practice.

For the individual undergoing treatment, the recovery process may involve:

- Transformational or incremental change, and occur at a different pace across a number of zones: physical, intellectual, emotional, relational, personal (daily living), and spiritual. Recovery from substance use disorder is non-linear and reflects the natural process of growth and self-awareness, as well as setbacks. Through the recovery process, an individual transcends the stigma of addiction and expresses a commitment to personal change.

The challenge for the Fresh Start Counselor is to understand how vocational rehabilitation services can be most effective in contributing to an individual’s recovery. The objective is to empower and enable the recovering person to pursue quality employment consistent with the individual’s employment factors to avoid “triggers”.

Effective vocational rehabilitation approaches are holistic, individualized, comprehensive, and do not minimize the complexity of substance use disorder as a disability. Vocational rehabilitation recognizes recovery as a lifetime challenge for the recovering person. This approach empowers the person to make decisions regarding short-term and long-term employment goals. The individual develops a plan to achieve employment. This approach guides the recovering person through difficult periods of adjustment and supports the individual while taking steps toward independence.

Techniques used can include:

- Goal setting and intervention planning
- Case management, referral, and service coordination
- Career counseling to include: job analysis, job development, and placement services
- Psychosocial intervention (referrals)
- Job training, employment accommodations, job seeking skills/coaching, resume development, volunteer opportunities. Other services may be provided to assist in starting businesses or independent living services.

Participants who successfully complete the program can expect to attain:

- Paid Internship—(Participants receive a stipend that is equivalent to a week’s worth of free rent at Freedom House. Requirements for the stipend include 30 hours of internship that consists of:
 - 20 hours of hands-on work experience
 - 10 hours of independent work that includes but is not limited to: job searching, resume preparation, interviewing techniques, etc.
- Job Coaching
- Work Experience
- Professional Resume and Cover Letter
- Career Assessment
- Community Resources
- Employment Referrals and References

Employers can expect to receive:

- Quality employee, driven to succeed
- Employee with demonstrated employability skills
- Employee that seeks an opportunity to prove themselves
- Required skill to complete the requirement of the job
- Mentor available to coach employee to retain employment

At the completion of 90 hours of internship and employment coaching, the individual will be assessed by a performance evaluation. The evaluation is designed to give the individual insight on what skills, techniques, or work behaviors that the individual may need to improve on in order to achieve success in the work industry. At such time, the employee will be given recommendations of improvement or a certificate of achievement. If recommendations include additional work experience or internship, the individual may be advised to return to the internship before attaining the certificate of achievement.