

Proposed Topics for Support Groups

Based on brainstorming by Donna Shannon and Nicole Raphael, 4-4-12

Following are some considerations for the Support Groups to help the clients find value in their time given, as well as expanding on their job search skills. While many of the topics are covered in the Core Competencies, it is our hope that these lessons will expand their knowledge while reiterating the core material.

Overall Themes

Each Support Group should carry forward some essential, overall themes:

1. How to stand out as a candidate
2. Think like an employer
3. Self-awareness: finding your own value in difficult times, realizing your talent and building on strengths
4. Making their Workfare site work for them.

In particular, many participants do not realize that they have choices for Workfare sites, especially ones in their chosen field. Starting each Support Group with introductions, their current site and their target jobs helps the facilitator see who is properly placed and who isn't.

Critical Support Group Areas

We identified five essential topics, which could be rotated to keep the material fresh for participants.

1. Job Interviews

- Instead of content-heavy, this class is participation-heavy.
- Basics can be discussed as a reminder, but we want client's interaction more.
- We can start with the favorite dessert exercise
- Using the Elevator Speech to answer that first question – "Tell me about yourself!"
- Using STAR (Situation-Task-Action-Result) stories as ways to overcome difficult questions. We have the clients complete the blanks and then share their own stories with each other.
- We close with mock interviews as time allows.

Additional support groups could be a demonstration of a bad interview, with the clients identifying the mistakes; dealing specifically with difficult questions as its own class.

2. Resumes, Applications and Screening

- At this point, we hope the clients are using their Master Application to fill out other applications and do have a copy of their Master Application with them.
- We discuss whether you need a resume or not – some will, some won't. Possibly have a blackboard or easel to write down arguments for when you do and when you don't.
- References discussion

Note: less emphasis on how to write it – refer to Workforce Center for that service.

3. Job Search Strategy

- Creative job search strategies (group brainstorm with direction provided)

- Targeting employers and how to do that
- Weekly/ daily job search plan (“what are you doing all day?”)
- Social media strategies, including clean up tactics

4. Where to Find Jobs

- What are you using right now?
- What is the “hidden job market”?
- Networking strategies – including importance of the right Workfare site
- Additional resources

5. Reframe Your Mindset

- Thinking like an employer to identify their objection – what are benefits or different points of view to overcome this? (Such as older worker has experience and is reliable, younger worker is teachable, etc).
- Using STAR stories to reframe the mindset – what has adversity taught you?