Identifying Successful Strategies for Job Placement
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Management & Training Corporation (MTC) is a leader in training, education, and corrections. MTC manages and operates 24 Job Corps centers in 19 states for the U.S. Department of Labor, preparing disadvantaged youth for meaningful careers. MTC also operates privatized correctional facilities around the world with approximately 8,000 beds under contract. The MTC Institute, a research unit within MTC, addresses topics relevant to job training and corrections programs. The Institute is dedicated to objectively examining data, projecting trends, researching program models, tracking public policy developments, and shedding light on promising practices.
INTRODUCTION

Career Transition Services (CTS) are key to students establishing a connection within the community to support their progression towards long-term employment, higher earnings, further education, and career advancement. One objective of CTS is to find employment for each student in the trade for which they received training. It is expected that each student maintain employment for 12 months following initial placement and begin to establish a solid career foundation. In addition, CTS must find employment for students that do not complete training. A common issue for CTS is locating students for follow-up particularly at critical measure points of 6 and 12 months. Implementing successful placement practices and procedures will positively affect both CTS placement and Job Corps overall performance by improving short- and long-term measures.

There are many organizations both not for profit offering job assistance service and job training. Yet for many of these organizations, placement services are segmented, limiting services to referrals and job listings. Job Corps is a unique provider of job placement services and continued student contact is key to success.

This research was conducted as part of an effort to identify practices and strategies to improve job placement services for Job Corps students.

The Institute examined longitudinal studies as well as investigative methods used by private detective agencies to identify strategies for locating individuals for follow-up. Consideration of alternative material for thinking through strategies for locating students at 6 & 12 month follow-up can generate innovative ideas that will allow for improvement.

The negative effects of subject attrition can compromise the results of the study and exact large costs to investors, researchers, and the community at large. While different strategies have been employed to decrease the rate of attrition in major research studies, it is often addressed as an aside to the research itself. In some cases, the attrition effect can be accounted for empirically using statistical procedures. This is not always an option leaving researchers to look for alternative methods of improving participant retention. Many have been successful often increasing the rate of retention.

Although researchers deal with a similar need to locate a pool of identified people, and have been doing so for quite some time, there is little focus on their methods, strategies, or practices to address this need. Even though many studies suffer from study attrition resulting in tremendous costs, many fail to address the issue or at best address it as an aside giving little focus and less resolution the matter.

While researchers have had some success in enhancing and promoting participant retention particularly in the arena of longitudinal studies, these are practices that are imbedded in the CTS model of service delivery. Key to improving participation is to instill trust and establish credibility with the participants. In addition, typical barriers to participation such as access to transportation, childcare, and telephone must be addressed and are handled in various ways. Strategies that positively influence study attrition include:

- Frequent contact with study participants is necessary to maintaining relationships and keeping up-to-date contact information on study participants.
- The contact staff person must be culturally sensitive when addressing participants particularly in a research setting. Cultural sensitivity/appropriateness has been widely discussed in the research and is of particular importance in the research arena. When possible, this person must be invested in the community and committed to the purpose.
- The participant must perceive an added value or benefit gained as a result of their participation. Once the benefit of participation no longer outweighs the cost, the participant is likely to dropout.
Strategies Employed by Investigators to Locate Missing Persons

Professional investigators employ various tactics and methods including document research, locksmithing, surveillance and counter-surveillance measures, bugging devices, audio and video equipment and more to locate persons. To locate missing people the most commonly used approach is to turn to the myriad of public records available. Understandably, investigative strategies for locating a missing person are determined by each unique case and its surrounding circumstances, yet the sources used by investigators to locate persons are within the public domain. Strategies to locate an individual missing 20 years would differ than those used to locate a person missing for 2 months, yet investigators agree the first recourse should involve accessing public records.

The following steps are recommended by investigators to locate people.

Accessing Public Records.

1) Create a form letter to be kept on file addressed to the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles requesting a copy of a student’s driving record. (see Appendix) Each state has different cost requirements for accessing records. Costs can range from $10 - $25 per request.
   i. If a record indicates a traffic violation, request a copy of the citation and accident report.
   ii. Information on other parties involved in the accident will be helpful in searching records for a suit filed and subpoenas served. The documents will have contact information and clues for locating the student.
   iii. Note the vehicle identifications from the accident report; this will be help if the address on the accident report is invalid. Request information for vehicles involved in the accident or owned by the student. This can also be a form letter kept on file. (see Appendix)

2) Many occupations require that an individual have a state license or credential. Create a form letter to be kept on file addressed to the Secretary of State requesting a search be conducted for the student’s name across all state licensing boards. The information that can be gained includes student contact information, employer information, complaints against the student, and other clues helpful in locating students.

3) Workers Compensation Bureau keeps records on file for individuals who have suffered from injuries occurring on the job. States have differing policies on releasing compensation information and these policies are subject to change.

Professional Services.

Several options are available for those interested in seeking outside help. Professional services conduct a search for listed telephone numbers and addresses. Some of these companies do not advertise because this service is largely provided to government agencies and investigative firms. These fees for service enterprise is accessible to the public. (www.lesisnexis.com, www.PrivateEye.com, www.SubjectCheck.com, www.acruit.com) Fees can range from a monthly subscription to a fee for each report pulled. Costs vary from $39 for a monthly subscription to $15 - $39 for each report. Free directory service and reverse directories are available via internet. (www.find-someone.com, www phonedirectorysearch.com, www.whitepages.com, etc.)

STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING PLACEMENT

The PRH identifies methods CTS providers are to employ to place students in jobs. These include the use of a personal student plan, job or educational leads, and employment referrals (P. 4-7). Additionally, CTS providers are to identify resources within the student community for health, transportation, life skills, counseling, childcare, and other social services.

Strategies identified in this report are from the Job Corps Program Development Work Group survey and the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices. Many of these strategies are in practice at MTC Job Corps Centers.
In addition, the Institute contacted community colleges, technical schools, private non-profit community agencies like Goodwill, Catholic Social Services, and United Way to identify placement strategies used by like service organizations that may be useful in a Job Corps setting. However, placement services for these organizations were too limited in scope of service or extent of service to supply additional information. Services in the non-profit organizations focused on the mentally or physically disabled clients providing intensive one-to-one service. Community colleges, technical schools, and private training institutes provide a bulletin board that lists open jobs and, on occasion, a direct link to the state-run job bank. Job Corps CTS service and accountability requirements are unmatched. The information gained was not strategically valuable to system improvement.

The purpose of the recommendations put forth is to improve the overall placement process and identify innovative strategies to improve 6 & 12 month follow-up performance. The strategies included in this report are those that have been identified in both the Best Practice by the National Governors Association and the Job Corps Workgroup. The strategies focus on three core objectives:

1. Improve the accuracy of contact information for former students,
2. Increase 6 & 12 month follow-up performance, and
3. Improve important linkages necessary for independent living.

Suggestions for improving the process are provided in the following key areas: organizational systems, student activities, support, and structured functions. This provides a framework for assessing placement as part of a system of interconnected services that must work together to ensure that students are successful 12 months after initial placement.

**Improve the Accuracy of Student Contact Information**

- **Organizational & System Approaches**
  - Institute Standard Contact Procedures (i.e. “former student” contact log) - Capitalize on contact opportunities by implementing standard procedures for in-bound calls. This provides an added check to the contact information in the data system. Recording former student information can be done in a variety of ways with minimal effort. Standard procedures could require logging student information and forwarding it to the CTS department for follow-up.
  - Identify “hard to locate” Students - CTS should provide Administration with a list of “hard to locate” students. When one of the students calls for any reason (i.e. to inquire about having personal belongings shipped), the Support Services staff can solicit up to date address and telephone information, and connect with someone in CTS before ending the telephone conversation.

  - **Student Activities**
    - **Center Ambassadors / Student Government Association (SGA) Address Book** - Provide center ambassadors and SGA leaders with address books to collect contact information from students to compile a student body registry. The books lists phone numbers, email, and addresses of students on center. The student leader should keep the registry because students are more inclined to give correct information to other students. The address book can serve as an invaluable resource for locating students.

  - **Support**
    - **Telephone Card** - Provide telephone cards as a support incentive for students who contact the center between the first and fifth of each month. This encourages students to stay in contact with their CTS specialists.

**Increase 6 and 12 Month Follow-Up**

- **Organizational & System Approaches**
  - Assignment of CTS Staff - Dividing case managers into teams. For example, two or three staff can focus on graduate
placement, one on former enrollee placement. This helps maintain consistency and focus on the specific job on a weekly basis in each area of CTS, and provides time for each person to develop real expertise in the area he/she is focusing on. This strategy also enables community contacts, employers, agencies, etc. to communicate more effectively with one or two case managers instead of trying to work with everyone on staff.

- Post Placement Contact - CTS specialists contact all students as part of their post-placement services. CTS specialists enters his/her case notes in the CTS data system, and then the CTS supervisor/manager audits the case notes. This ensures contact up to the 6 & 12 month follow-up, development of employment opportunities, and social service referrals for graduates are occurring.

- Use of Flexible Scheduling for CTS Office Hours - Develop a staff schedule around flexible office hours to maximize the opportunity to reach students. Consider having each CTS specialist work one late night per week to maximize a window of opportunity to contact each student.

**Organizational & System Approaches**

- Departing Student Notification - Administration should notify CTS/Former Enrollee case manager prior to every student leaving the center.

- Case Manager Visit Students During Career Prep Phase - CTS Graduate/Former Enrollee case manager should visit students during the Career Prep Phase to begin to build a rapport with the students before they leave the center. The center-based Former Enrollee case manager’s office should be located in the same area with CPP staff.

- Personalize Automated Phone Systems - Improve contact with former students by adding an option to an existing center phone menu specific to former students. This conveys to the students their priority status as former students. For example, after the initial greeting the voicemail system can be programmed to say “if you are a former Job Corps student, please press extension xxx.” The student is connected with Career Development, CTS, etc. This makes the former student feel like he/she is important to the center and reduces the chance of former student callers hanging up to avoid a long menu process.

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**Create Opportunities to Develop Important Linkages Necessary for Successful Placement**

**Student Activities**

- Transition Classes - In an effort to ensure that every student is fully prepared for the “real world,” centers should offer a comprehensive transition program that provides students with information on the following topics:
  - Budgeting
  - Writing Checks / Paying Bills
  - Credit Counseling
  - Opening a Bank Account
  - Payroll and Deductions
  - Health Benefits
  - Medical Insurance
  - Household Responsibilities
  - Transportation: Public/Private
  - Accessing Community Resources

- Incentive Bonus 6 & 12 Month - Every six months, have CTS specialist send a post card to the student at their place of employment. If the student can verify their employment, a bonus is sent. The bonus can include items such as bus tokens, weekly pass, phone card, or internet access, etc.
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- Start a Student Job Club - Create a job club for graduates and former enrollees who are having difficulty getting a job to come in once a week to meet and talk about job strategies, marketability, etc.

- Support
  - Transportation Passport - Provide public transportation tokens and/or passes to students for job fairs, interviews, work, etc. Transportation can significantly affect a student’s ability to obtain or maintain a job.

- Functions
  - Employer Tour - Conduct an Employer Tour on center once a month. The CTS supervisor and BCL should target trade specific industries/companies and invite their staff to visit campus. The overall purpose is to inform employers about Job Corps and the placement process.
  - Work/Employer Fairs - Coordinate visits by Employers from the community, Armed Forces recruiters, and business owners.

CONCLUSION

Job Corps is a unique service provider particularly in the areas of job placement and support services. Both in service delivery and accountability, Job Corps provides all students with tangible outcomes. The placement process begins the first day a student enters an MTC center regardless of whether a student completes the training program. As such, placement is part of a larger service delivery system. While placement is important, the students’ ability to maintain and remain stable in the workforce or educational setting for 12 months is critical to the success of the student, the program, and the center.

Centers will likely continue to be responsible for placing students that both complete and do not complete training and be held accountable for ensuring they maintain employment for up to 12 months. Engaging students early and having standard administrative procedures for contact are critical to improving placement performance.

Providing quality programs and services involves the commitment of everyone on and off center. Quality must be managed by utilizing effective assessment and tracking procedures and making improvements. Quality management involves the continual identification of strategies, review of processes, and targeting of key areas for improvement.

The differences in CTS facilities provides an opportunity to look at alternative operations and identify new strategies or procedures to successfully place students. Even though research regarding various organizations did not produce strategies that would be of benefit to our placement efforts in Job Corps, it was important that we continue to identify strategies for continuous improvement. Improving the accuracy of student contact information and creating important linkages for students and staff will help to increase initial placement and both 6 & 12 months follow-up. The research into strategies for locating persons may open doors to improving success with hard to locate or missing students.
SAMPLE LETTER REQUESTING DRIVING RECORD

Commissioner Name
Address
City State Zip

Date

Dear Commissioner of Motor Vehicles:

Kindly send me the driving record of Student Name. The date of birth is DOB. Find attached a check for the appropriate fee. If your search reveals that there are numerous Student Name, please advise me and I will decide on what course of action I wish to pursue.

Sincerely,

CTS Staff Name
SAMPLE LETTER REQUESTING VEHICLE REGISTRATION

Commissioner Name  
Address  
City State Zip

Date

Dear Commissioner of Motor Vehicles:

Kindly send me motor vehicle information for vehicles owned by: Student Name, date of birth: DOB. Please find the attached check to cover costs associated with my request. If there are more than five vehicles registered to Student Name, please advise me and I will decide on what course of action I wish to pursue.

Sincerely,

CTS Staff Name


