

Working for Recovery

A profile of HireAbility Vermont's Opioid Employment Pilots
October 2024



The Insidious Challenge of Opioid Use Disorder

- It's multifaceted, ultra-complex, and variable
- Stigma creates isolation and misunderstanding
- Conflicting systems and demands have to be navigated
- Recovery requires lifelong maintenance

ODD disproportionately affects adults aged 20-40

60% of those receiving treatment for ODD are unemployed.

Those with jobs and income are more likely to have:

- Lower rate of recurrence ^[1]
- Higher rate of abstinence
- Less criminal activity
- A better quality of life
- Higher treatment completion ^[2]
- Reduced risk of overdose ^[3]

Employment is a top priority for people in recovery.

Employment is sustaining.

HireAbility, InvestEAP & VABIR are specialists in helping people overcome barriers to employment.



Why We Needed A New Service Delivery Model

People with OUD are unlikely to seek HireAbility services without outreach.

- They might not think they have a qualifying disability
- Meeting basic survival needs and system demands can crowd out energy and hope for a job and career.

Maintaining connection and ongoing progress is a challenge.

- Lack of stability (a home, a working phone, control over their schedule) results in lost contact and stalled cases.

Their complex needs strain our scope of practice and model of service delivery.

- Progress is frequently derailed by recurrence and crisis situations that arise and get in the way of employment.
- Much of what interrupts progress has nothing to do with employment.



Wraparound teaming model to meet people where they are:

- Team is outposted in Recovery Centers and other sites.
- Dedicated full-time staff with professional & lived OUD experience.
- VR / EC draw on the entire HireAbility team to support employment goals.
- EAP offers wraparound services for issues that might derail employment.



HireAbility Vocational Counselor (VC):

Lead case manager for team
Primary outposted presence
Elicits person's skills / interests
Crafts employment goal / plan
Enlists HireAbility resources (network, specialists, funds) to support progress and remove barriers



VABIR Employment Consultant (EC):

Direct link with employers
Coach for job readiness skills
Arranges work experiences
Helps in job search/placement
Troubleshoots job retention risk
Fosters recovery-friendly workplace practices



InvestEAP Employee Assistance Program (EAP) Counselor:

Coordinates with MH / SU providers, links to other resources
Assesses risks, triggers, and barriers to employment
Intervenes with solution-focused counseling at need
Coaches participant through stress of entering and maintaining employment

**A story from our
Burlington Pilot**



What They Say...

“They made me feel welcomed and comfortable... They helped with the purchase of work clothes, boots, and even a phone. The real help came with their compassion and understanding though, never making me feel judged or somehow ‘less than’ for my situation. With Morgan's help I was able to tweak my resume and put it online, resulting in several job opportunities in a short period of time.”

“Hey, thank you for the support and believing in me when not too many other people did. I have got a job and a life again.”

“HA has the expertise, experience and employer connections to make successful placements!
TPCCC Employees enjoy working with VABIR ECs and counselors from HA.... [they] go above and beyond to meet the employment needs of people in recovery”

– Cam Lauf, Turning Point Center

People who engage with HireAbility feel empowered. They didn't think about their long-term vocational success or a career because no one asked them to consider it before. Once engaged, people tell us they are honestly thinking about building for a future in addition to surviving the present.

– paraphrased from a Treatment Court Judge



Early Results

First referral came within 5 months of funding award.

At capacity for referrals in Burlington, after slow start.

Employers are very open to the pilot and hiring participants.

23 enrolled in training

3 earned credentials

5 work experiences

46 placed in jobs

30 now in jobs

Active Partners and Outreach Sites:

VDH, Div of Substance Use
Chittenden Clinic (HowardCenter)
Recovery Centers ■ Hub & Spoke sites
(UVM, CHCs, SaVida, BAART, Better Life Partners)
Treatment Court ■ Community Justice Centers
Steps to End Domestic Violence ■ Pride Center of Burlington
Safe Recovery ■ Jenna's Promise ■ Champlain Housing Trust
Sober Houses ■ VAPA ■ Valley Vista ■ Serenity House ■ VCCI ■ DOC ■ ESD

Referrals and Uptake Rate:

Despite the challenges in engaging this population **our uptake rate is over 50%.**

The following data is as of September 2024:

- **307 individuals have been referred** to the pilots from community partners
- **165 have opened HA cases and engaged in services.**

Targeted marketing & social media campaign:

- Our 30 second video was viewed over 17,000 times in Orleans County and nearly 34,000 times in Chittenden County.
- **9,000 clicked through to HireAbility's website** for more info after watching the video.

The videos appear to be hitting the key demographic of younger men.

Sustainability Options and Budget Needs

The legislative appropriation finding the pilots runs out in SFY 25.

Each site costs about \$170,000. We would like the Committee to consider four potential options:

Option 1.
Sustain the
existing sites in
Burlington and
Newport:
\$340,000

Option 2.
Add a second Team
to Burlington:
\$510,000
The demand for
services in Burlington
is already exceeding
our capacity.

Option 3.
Sustain the existing
sites, add a second
Burlington site and
add sites in Rutland
and Bennington:
\$850,000
Rutland County has the
second largest pool of
potential participants.

Option 4.
Fund sites in every AHS
District including two in
Burlington:
\$2,210,000
This option would provide
statewide coverage and
provide the needed
capacity in Burlington.

HireAbility's Commitment:

Sites will have:

- **Approximately \$40,000 per year, per site, in case service funds** to pay for training and education programs, transportation, work clothes, and other needed supports.
- **Access to a statewide network of 12 Business Account Managers** with ongoing relationships with over 2,000 employers.
- **Access to paid work experiences and HA's Career Training Offset** which pays participants minimum wage for attending training leading to a workforce credential.

In-kind funding for participant costs & infrastructure costs

Site teams will be supported by HA's infrastructure:

Experienced HA managers & supervisors
Modern electronic case management system

HA's robust data management and analysis systems will allow the State to closely monitor both site-specific and overall participant services and project outcomes.

Thank you!



[OUD Video Link](#)

Sources

- 1) Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: Substance Use Disorders Recovery with a Focus on Employment and Education. HHS Publication No. PEP21-PL-Guide-6 Rockville, MD: National Mental Health and Substance Use Policy Laboratory. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2021.
- 2) State of Vermont, VDH. Vermont Social Autopsy Report. 2021 Data Analysis. August 2023. (Updated September 2023) 2021 Vermont Social Autopsy Report (healthvermont.gov)
- 3) Melvin, A. M., Koch, D., & Davis, S. (2012). Employment as a predictor of substance abuse treatment completion. *Journal of Rehabilitation*, 78, 31-37.