

# **Homeless Employment Access**

## **Niagara Region**

**2006**

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## Executive Summary

### *Methodology Summary*

- This report on a study of homeless access to employment in Niagara, is comprised of four parts: a literature review, a population survey, a social service agency interview, and a business interview.
- There were three data collection tools used, a population survey of 130 homeless individuals, a survey of social service agencies, and a survey of businesses. The primary data collection instrument was a population survey of 130.

### *Summary of Literature Review*

- 80% - 97% of homeless persons have been employed in the formal labour market.
- People who are homeless often find employment in marginal occupations characterized by low wages, no benefits, and with no opportunities for advancement.
- Homeless persons face a number of employment barriers, of which seven are predominant: Lack of a permanent, secure residence, lack of skills/education, physical or mental health issues, drug/substance abuse, criminal and legal involvement, lack of transportation, and irregular employment histories.
- Understanding the role of multiple barriers provides greater insight into employability than a focus on any single barrier.
- Employment programs require “flexibility” in order to prevent a progression trap.
- Increased access to health benefits, including drug coverage is key to preventing absenteeism once a person is working.
- Government must cease the practice of contracting with or subsidizing employers who pay poverty-level wages and/or offer no benefits.
- Understanding relationships must be formed between social service employment agencies and employers.
- Allowing people who are homeless access to a range of services and supports is critical to their securing employment.
- There is a direct positive link between acquiring additional skills and education and the employment retention rate.
- Since access to safe and affordable housing is crucial to securing employment, the provision of housing should precede the pursuit of employment.

- Peer support and mentoring programs should be utilized to provide ongoing emotional supports while people are employed.
- Ongoing access to health benefits and specific services aid in employment retention. (mental health counselling, substance abuse programs, child care, transportation etc.)
- The provision of housing and transportation assistance increases the employment retention rate.
- Traditionally employment advancement has not been a goal for clients who are homeless.

### **Population Survey**

- Respondents report an average of two homeless episodes over the last two years.
- 47% of respondents first experienced homelessness as a teen.
- Respondents, who identified experiencing homelessness as a teen, were less likely to have completed high school and were more likely to be among the chronically homeless.
- 37% identified as chronically homeless. (p.33)
- 57% of respondents reported at least one chronic health problem.(p.36)
- Mental health struggles were identified as the most significant barrier to both finding employment and retaining employment.
- At the time of survey, 15.6% of respondents were employed. (p.41)
- 93% reported having worked in formal employment at some point. (p.41)
- Majority of respondents earn less than \$10 per hour and will not realize any significant wage increase over the term of their employment.
- Homeless persons face multiple employment barriers including lack of a secure residence, lack of skills/education, physical or mental health issues, drug/substance abuse, criminal and legal involvement, lack of transportation, and irregular employment histories. In this survey, 76% of respondents have between four and six barriers.
- The reported ability to work decreased when the number of barriers increased. (p.45)
- Transportation reported as the single greatest logistical barrier to employment. (p.40)
- Substance abuse was identified by 80% of respondents. (p.38)
- 78.5% of respondents reported a period of incarceration at some point. (p.39)
- Reported employment reflects a job pool that is low skilled, low paying, temporary, and without benefits.

### **Social Service Agency Interviews**

- Social service agencies identify few, if any, employment programs targeted specifically at the homeless population.
- Cooperation and coordination is needed among social service agencies, employers, and government, including different levels of government as well as across governmental departments.
- Given the prevalence of multiple barriers, a movement away from narrowly focussed short-term employment outcomes to a broader, longer-term focus on benchmarks is needed. These benchmarks should include both the steps to meeting basic needs and the steps to employment. In some cases, quality of life needs to be improved in order to find employment.
- A focus on benchmarks uniquely suited to individual situations will require an intensive strong case management model based on a multi-disciplinary model.
- The ability to address multiple barriers will require flexible service delivery models where eligibility for services is not tied to income support or the attainment of specific employment outcomes. Currently, clients who face barriers such as homelessness or addictions are screened out of employment assistance programs.

### **Business Interviews**

- The businesses interviewed provided a very consistent view on hiring, retention, and employee advancement. They indicated that employee reliability, willingness to learn and access to transportation were key factors in employment retention.



# **Study Development and Methodology**

## Study Development

In early January 2005, a group of approximately 40 homeless and recently homeless persons gathered for a focus group examining Homeless Volunteerism. The focus group developed some interesting findings, specifically that a significant percentage of homeless persons have been employed, desire employment, and ultimately utilize volunteering as a method to secure employment. The findings of the focus group were used to develop and implement a volunteer program tailored to volunteers who are homeless currently operated by Start Me Up Niagara in St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada. The findings of the focus group also led to the proposal to study homeless employment access and are the genesis of this current report.

Homelessness is a growing phenomenon across Canada and western society generally. The fact that research into homelessness is on-going in all the major developed nations shows that it is an international concern. While it is important to note the growing international attention focused on homelessness it is similarly important to note that homelessness is ultimately a concern within communities. As such the solution to homelessness (or at least the progress toward a solution) will require the efforts of all of society's stakeholders, including those who are homeless, social service agencies, business and all levels of government. This report is a small step toward that goal.

This report provides:

- An up-to-date literature review;
- The current employment status of the homeless population in Niagara;
- A detailed examination of the barriers to access homeless individuals face when seeking and retaining employment;
- A specific understanding of the homelessness situation as encountered by persons who struggle with their mental health;
- An understanding of the challenges and concerns of multiple stakeholders in Niagara; and
- Observations and recommendations.

## Literature Search/Review

The literature review was conducted in the standard fashion (Journals, articles, agency resources, internet, etc). The review encompasses the following considerations: (1) The majority of material considered was published post January 1, 2000, in order to provide current information (2) focused on Best Practices with regard to access (3) accessed specifically as relating to the homeless and homeless with mental health concerns (4) focused in the areas of sustainable employment, job preparation, skills and literacy development, and special employment arrangements. Additionally, a concise summary of the financial and training incentives as present in Holzer's (2005) and Michalopoulos' (2005) articles is included in the appendix.

## Data Collection Methodology and Tools

There were three data collection tools used, a population survey of 130 homeless individuals, a survey of social service agencies, and a survey of businesses. The primary data collection instrument was a population survey of 130 homeless individuals. This survey was developed in consultation with the project consultant, the coordinator, researchers, and the Research Advisory Committee. This survey examined issues of access to (a) sustainable employment (b) job preparation (c) skills and literacy development (d) special employment arrangements. Special consideration was given to Best Practices, structural and systemic barriers, training, long term support requirements, and current employment outlook utilizing comparative findings from the literature review.

The population survey instrument was submitted for review by the Human Participant Review Sub-Committee (HRPC) at York University, Toronto, Ontario; where Dr. Baker-Collins is an assistant professor. The survey instrument also underwent a literacy review conducted by the participant interviewers. The survey gathered data of 130 homeless/at risk persons. Several methods for identifying this group were used: (1) Multiple linked respondent technique - in this technique contact is made with a member of the survey population and s/he is asked to identify others in similar circumstances, the process is continued with each additional contact (2) Identified potential candidates form Start Me Up Niagara's (SMUN) client population - SMUN has been operating in the region for six years and has developed an excellent rapport with the target group based on mutual respect and trust (3) Accessed SMUN partnership network - Social service agencies were asked to contact their client base for the purpose of identifying persons interested in participating in this research. (4) The Research Advisory Committee aided in identification of potential interviewees. In addition to the principal population survey, ten (10) social service agencies in the region were identified for review, in order to provide a broad overview of services offered to the homeless. The criteria for selection were a client base identified as homeless/at risk and the provision of employment /vocational/life skills programs. The ten agencies participated in a structured interview designed to generate an aggregate of social service views on access to programs by the homeless population. Specifically, the agencies' views of their clients, type of programming offered to the homeless, impact of funding on programming, and definitions of success.

Lastly, business was identified as a key stakeholder in solving the employment problems amongst homeless/at risk individuals and as such was consulted. Five (5) businesses in the region were identified. The criterion for selection was that each regularly offers entry-level employment opportunities in the region. The selected businesses participated in a structured interview designed to examine their hiring policies, barriers to employment and retention and methods of advancement.

## Recruitment and Training of Interviewers

One objective of the process was to include homeless persons in the delivery of the survey<sup>1</sup>. This served a three-fold purpose. First, since homeless persons often experience community stigma and stereotyping, being interviewed by someone who was also homeless could serve to create greater trust and ease in the interview situation. Second, having interviewers who were homeless involved in testing the survey could draw on their knowledge about both the accessibility and the completeness of the survey. Third, conducting the survey will contribute to the training and employment experience of those individuals who acted as interviewers. In order to ensure a regional perspective the interviewers were recruited with the oversight of the Research Advisory Committee. The participant interviewers were: (i) Homeless or had suffered an episode of homelessness, (ii) At least 18 years of age, (iii) Literate (minimum average reading/writing skills), (iv) Motivated and committed to completing the research project, and (v) Willing to be interviewed and participate in training.

These individuals attended an information session where the research staff described the project to them. After a brief interview of each of those attending, eight interviewers were selected by SMUN to participate in the project. After selection, the interviewers attended a one-day training session at SMUN.. The project rationale was described and the survey reviewed. Basic interviewing techniques were presented and the interviewers practiced their skills using the pilot survey. They received a training allowance for the day.

Interviews were conducted throughout the Niagara Region, in the communities of St. Catharines, Niagara Falls, Welland, Port Colborne, and Fort Erie. Homeless individuals participating in the interviews received a \$20 honorarium. The participant interviewers received a \$20 honorarium per interview completed. A member of the research staff was present at every interview to ensure ethical and methodological integrity and to aid the interviewers, as required.

## Data Analysis

The results of the Population survey were entered into a database using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. Qualitative responses to open ended questions were recorded and each set of responses analyzed and categories developed from those responses. Similarly, the results of both the Social Service Agency survey and Businesses survey were recorded and each set of responses analyzed and categories developed from the responses. Finally, the data from all sources was reviewed by the Research Advisory Committee, at which time they collectively commented and helped develop the findings.

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<sup>1</sup> There is always a concern for quality when conducting this type of interview research. In order to alleviate and limit this concern SMUN uses the following controls: (i) Training – An important component of training is stressing accuracy and diligence in performance of an interviewer's responsibilities. The training also provides interviewers with practice, interviewing each other. This ensures that the interviewers understand what is expected and that they are comfortable with both procedure and questionnaire, (ii) Monitoring – The lead researcher was responsible for continuously monitoring quality as surveys were completed, (iii) Debriefing form – After each interview was completed, interviewers fill out a debriefing form that provides them an opportunity to express what they felt went well or poorly. The debriefing form also allows the lead researcher constant feedback on the interview process, (iv) Limiting piecework – Each interviewer was limited in the number of interviews they could perform in a week, and (v) Final review – When all surveys have been completed the interviewers were invited to attend a final meeting for the purpose of reviewing their experiences.

# Literature Review

## Section I

There are a number of divergent views in the literature regarding homelessness. While there is common agreement amongst the authors regarding homelessness' most salient characteristic: an individual who is lacking permanent stable housing, this is generally the point at which consensus ends. Differences arise when the authors seek to define "who" qualifies as homeless. The number of individuals and/or circumstances of those individuals that the authors wish to include in the "who" is a significant consideration. To illustrate this point consider that homelessness according to the Canadian *National Homeless Initiative* (NHI) is "any person, family, or household that has no fixed address or security of housing tenure" ([www.homelessness.gc.ca/homelessness/index\\_e.asp](http://www.homelessness.gc.ca/homelessness/index_e.asp)) which for the literature in question is a very inclusive operational definition. In contrast, the U.S. legislation *McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act* Section 103 states:

### (a) In general

For purposes of this chapter, the term "**homeless**" or "**homeless individual or homeless person**" includes:

- (1) an individual who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate night time residence; and
- (2) an individual who has a primary night time residence that is:
  - (A) a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations (including welfare hotels, congregate shelters, and transitional housing for the mentally ill);
  - (B) an institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized; or
  - (C) a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.

This is clearly a less inclusive definition than the one provided by the NHI. When we consider the "who" the reason becomes quite clear. Part of the NHI's mandate is to support research into homelessness, which requires that the NHI adhere to a very expansive definition of homelessness in order to provide the greatest area of potential research. Whereas the American *McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act* has an interest in restricting the entrance eligibility for the benefits provided by the legislation and therefore uses a restrictive definition.

Given the paucity of articles relating to general homelessness and employment, the review's parameters were expanded to include homeless and individuals at risk of homelessness. The inclusion of individuals at risk of homelessness opened this review to a far larger pool of articles. Again, however, the definition for "at risk" varies from article to article. The two main methods for determining an individual's "at risk" status is either income related or personal vulnerability. A typical income related measurement of risk is when a person's core housing need and spending equals or exceeds half of total income. A personal vulnerability measurement of at risk is when a person identifies certain high-risk triggers such as mental illness, substance

abuse, social exclusion, or physical disability. Generally, the more triggers a person presents, the greater the risk of homelessness. It is also worth mentioning that a person can be constantly at risk of homelessness and never actually experience homelessness. (Greater Vancouver Regional District 2002, Morrell-Bellai 2000)

The underlining difficulty with an operational definition for “homeless” is simply that homelessness is an extremely pervasive phenomenon that crosses most demographic boundaries. To highlight this point consider the following situations: the person who lost their house as an effect of Hurricane Katrina in 2005, an evicted college student, a woman fleeing domestic violence, or a man whose employment skills have largely become moribund due to industry flight. Each individual in these examples is homeless to some greater or lesser degree.

The significance of research methods is readily apparent in determining the population studied as the majority of articles focusing on “actual” homelessness are conducted using face-to-face interviews in collecting their data (Gaetz 2004, Bridgman 2001, Caton 2005). Consequently, this means that the research is largely gathered in homeless shelters or at agencies that supply services to the homeless, which in turn means that the homeless population being researched is by and large male, urban, and accessing service(s). In contrast, articles focusing on people “at risk” of homelessness conduct the majority of their interviews by phone or mail which in turn means a large segment of this “at risk” population are single females with dependent children, collecting government assistance (City of Toronto 2002, 2004, Danziger & Seefeldt 2002, Fleischer 2001).

Lastly, the homeless population is a heterogeneous group that requires a large urban concentration to obtain a statistically sufficient sample size. In order to insure the applicability of the research a majority of the literature reviewed focused on a specific demographic aspect of the homeless individual as opposed to homelessness generally. The Canadian literature for example, where homeless and employment are cross-referenced, focuses exclusively on homeless youth in a large urban setting (Bridgman 2001, Gaetz 2002, 2004). More broadly in the literature, the homeless subgroups that garnered the greater share of enquiry are homeless with mental illness (Becker 2004, Lepage 2005, Brown 2001) homeless with substance use/abuse (Klee et al. 2002, Tam & Zlotnick 2003, Zlotnick et al. 2002) homeless with criminal involvement (Baron 2001, Lepage 2005, Gaetz 2002), and homeless who are welfare recipients (Danziger 2000, Freeman & Taylor 2002, Hamersma 2005). Overall, there was little research that approached employment and general homelessness.

With regard to current employment outlook the literature presents common conclusions across a variety of demographic populations. Three main points are prominent in the literature regarding current employment outlook:

- Homeless or “at risk” populations are a vulnerable segment of the labour market;
- While vulnerable the homeless population strongly identifies with and desires mainstream employment;
- The population’s current outlook shares a number of common elements.

It is not surprising that the homeless are vulnerable employees within the labour market. However, it is worth noting that while the homeless population is a vulnerable segment of the labour market, this is in part a consequence of their strong identification with the traditional labour market and the formal economy (Gaetz 2002). This is an important point given the

common misconception that the homeless have economic views that are divergent from the mainstream<sup>2</sup>. According to the literature 80% to 97% of homeless have been employed at some point in the formal labour market (Zlotnick 2002, DoL 1998) and one study reported 83% of homeless wanted formal paid employment (Gaetz 2002). In the Niagara region a survey of homeless volunteers reported that 75% believed in their ability to find traditional employment (Lethby 2005). These numbers show that homeless individuals are well aware and indeed desire traditional employment as a means of living a life of quality.

Homeless individuals and those at risk of homelessness are largely clustered in marginal occupations. These occupations have low wages, lack any benefits other than those mandated by the government (if any), and have little growth or opportunities for advancement. Typically, this work is sporadic, short-term, dead end, and unregulated, with regular lay-offs or work stoppages. As a consequence, the homeless population must adopt “flexible” employment strategies, where flexible means choosing “cash” employment over a paycheque, with its ubiquitous two week waiting period (Gaetz 2002, 2004, Kerr 2005). In addition to “choosing” a flexible employment strategy, a number of articles pointed out that the homeless suffer a higher rate of labour exploitation, both intentional or circumstantially (Kerr 2005, Morrell-Bellai 2000, Chaykowski 2005). When employed, the main professions for homeless individuals are consistently in either the service industry or the physical labour industries (Saunders 2005, Martinson & Strawn 2003). A recent development, for homeless and other employment marginalized populations, is employment within the “para” professional fields, mostly in healthcare (Kauff et al. 2005).

Having examined the current employment outlook for the homeless and those at risk of homelessness, it is time to review the “reasons” for this population’s marginalized employment. The majority of the literature supported the understanding that homeless people desire traditional employment and its associated independence (Danziger 2002, Zlotnick 2002, Lethby 2005, Lownsborough 2005). Yet there is clearly a serious disconnect between desire and reality, which is apparent given the large number of unemployed homeless people. All the authors agreed that this disconnect occurs because of barriers. Unfortunately, it seems that there are as many barriers as there are homeless individuals.

A succinct definition of a barrier is: anything that inhibits, blocks, or decreases the likelihood of labour force involvement. The following are the salient characteristics of barriers developed from the literature:

- Barriers can be as ubiquitous as a flight of stairs or as obvious as lacking a place to live;
- Barriers can be created by a personal decision, by a social service agency, by government policy, by social structures, or by disastrous event(s);
- The effect of any barrier tends to be altered with changing personal circumstance;
- Barriers can and are used to control the number and types of choices available to the homeless;
- A person’s employability is more directly related to the number of barriers a person has and to a lesser extent dependant on the effects of specific barriers.

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<sup>2</sup> This viewpoint is prevalent in the “underclass” or “deserving poor” literature. An excellent treatment of this topic can be found in Herbert J. Gans’ *The War Against the Poor* BasicBooks 1995. The concept of an “underclass” with different social norms is not new, it features prominently in *The Other America* by Michael Harrington first published in 1963.

While a significant number of barriers are documented in the literature, seven barriers predominated when homelessness and employment were factored for. It is worthwhile to provide brief examination of these barriers as a way to develop the concept of barriers and the nuances that make these seven predominant barriers so difficult to overcome.

### ***Lack of a permanent, secure residence***

A lack of a permanent, secure residence is one of the more obvious barriers to employment found in the literature (Bridgman 2001, Gaetz 2002, 2004, Lownsborough 2005, Lepage 2005). The U.S. Department of Labor document indicates that housing is a requirement for employment (U.S. Department of Labor, 1998). In Gaetz's examination of the difficulties faced by homeless youth in the labour market he notes that being homeless means suffering a greater chance of victimization (consider not having a door to place between you and the outside world). Additionally, the homeless have no address for resumes, no phones, difficulty maintaining a tidy appearance, a lack of rest, and ultimately deteriorating health (Gaetz 2002). Moreover, the high cost of housing combined with low wages could potentially encourage illegal income generation that increases a person's vulnerability to exploitation or increases a person's chance of legal involvement (Caton 2005)

### ***A lack of skills/education***

There is unanimous consensus that a lack of skills/education severely limits a person's earning potential (Holzer 2005, Smith et al. 2002, Fleisher 2001, Elliot 2001). Not only was income constrained by this barrier but the likelihood of receiving benefits also decreased. It is important to note that this barrier was not sufficient to bar a person from employment but is significant in predicting retention and advancement in employment. Simply put, the types of employment available to people without skills or education are extremely low paying, without benefits and with virtually no chance for advancement (Holzer 2004, 2005, Conway 2004, Tam 2003). The lack of opportunity to advance is supported by the findings that level of education was the single most significant factor used by employers to determine which employees they chose for training (Holzer 2005). These factors tend to ensure that people with low skills/education will be living in perpetual risk of homelessness.

### ***Physical or mental health issues***

Numerous studies have shown that poor physical and/or poor mental health is a barrier to employment and this is especially relevant in homeless unemployment (Rangarajan 1998, Danziger et al. 2000, Zlotnick 2002). One of the most troublesome aspects of this barrier is the episodic nature of illness. Episodic is a salient factor in mental illness. A continuous illness can be accounted for and allowances made but an illness that is episodic is difficult to accommodate and leads to increased absenteeism and irregular employment histories (Lepage 2005, Morrell-Bellai 2000, Danziger 2000). It should be noted that absenteeism is the number one reason for employment termination, which obviously limits retention and advancement. Further, it was noted in the literature that job-training programs are not designed to accommodate people with mental or physical illnesses, which lends insight into the observation that people with health problems are less likely to participate in programs (Zlotnick 2002, U.S. Department of Labor 1998, Lakey 2001).

### ***Drug/substance abuse or misuse***

The literature documents that people who are chronically homeless are twice as likely to identify drug use as the precipitating factor of their homelessness (Morrell-Bellai 2000). Similar to poor health, drug abuse often leads to absenteeism and its corresponding employment terminations (Gaetz 2002, Ranjanajan 1998, Lepage 2005). Significantly, many employment-training programs (indeed many homeless services generally) require a person to remain completely drug free for the duration of the program and often for a number of months prior to participating (Zlotnick 2002, Lepage 2005, Klee 2002). Clearly this policy not only ensures that drug abusers are denied service but so is anyone who is using a drug in any manner. A significant concern also presented in the literature is the drug abuser's penchant for cash employment over traditional employment, a penchant that is shared by the homeless generally (Gaetz 2002, Klee 2002).

### ***Criminal and/or general legal involvement***

A criminal record or being involved in the legal system is a barrier with a number of consequences specific to seeking employment. Firstly, arrest history is a predictive characteristic of homelessness (Caton 2005). Secondly, legal involvement is often detailed in criminal reference checks and these checks are coming into greater use by employers (Lepage 2005, Holzer 2005, Brown 2001). Finally, time spent incarcerated is time spent outside of the labour market and this greatly decreases employment skills and creates gaps in resumes (Lepage 2005, Brown 2001).

### ***Lack of transportation***

A number of different consequences are attributed to the barrier of transportation (Holzer 2001, 2004, Kauff 2005, Lakey 2001). At its simplest, a transportation barrier is a barrier of time and distance, location and cost. Looking for employment or keeping a job requires people to travel and be places at specific times. Traveling requires people to develop and maintain strict schedules often with little flexibility (i.e. bus schedules) (Holzer 2004, Danziger 2000, Kauff 2005). In many cases where transportation is a barrier it is the location of employment that is the cause. Location raises the following concerns: rural areas lacking a public transportation system, employment opportunities on the outskirts of urban areas (ex. Box store developments) that are underserved by public transport, and public transportation that takes people through areas which they consider unsafe (Kerr 2005, Holzer 2004, Kauff 2005). Finally, transportation costs and these costs may make minimum wage employment prohibitive, especially in the short term (Kerr 2005).

### ***Irregular employment histories***

Irregular employment histories can develop in a number of ways: as large gaps in time between jobs, multiple short-term jobs in a single year, or an odd assortment of jobs (Lownsborough 2005, Gaetz 2002, LePage 2005, Becker 2004). Any of these irregular employment histories can make the employer view the candidate as an unreliable employee. In addition to being viewed as an unreliable employee, this barrier is also predictive of long-term unemployment, poor performance in training, and homelessness. Finally, irregular employment histories are

predictive of other underlying barriers (criminal involvement, drug abuse, illness, etc) (Lownsborough 2005, LePage 2005, Brown 2001).

Although these seven barriers were predominant in the literature focused on the homeless and employment, a large number of substantial barriers have not been included. An excellent example of one such barrier is child rearing (Holzer 2001, Michalopoulos 2002). However, a well-developed method for barriers into classifications was largely absent in the literature examined. Only one system of classification was found in the literature reviewed. This system, designed by Susan Hauan (2004), provides a succinct, comprehensive, and articulate classification system of employment related barriers.

The Hauan employment related barrier classification:

- **Human capital assets** – measures of education and skills;
- **Personal and Family-related liabilities** – poor health, mental health struggles, criminal record, caring for children, etc.;
- **Logistical or Situational challenges** – transportation, unstable housing, issues of personal safety or security, service usage & access, unemployment, low wages, etc.

Perhaps the greatest advantage of this classification system is the way it illustrates the shared and interconnected nature of many barriers. This is a fundamental vantage point from which future research into the role of barriers will proceed in this report. Indeed, with the Hauan classification system we can now profitably review the latest development in understanding barriers, the role of multiple barriers or what are sometimes referred to as either multiple disadvantages in employment or simply risk factors.

Although the existence of barriers and those barriers specific impacts are well documented in the literature, the literature's weakness is how barriers are understood when not isolated and when found in the natural environment. However, some attempts have been made to fill the gap in the literature, with a few articles that describe the simple correlation between the number of barriers and the decrease in employability and/or retention<sup>3</sup>. It was from the observations based on these simple correlations that Berthoud proposed to examine the relationships between and amongst barriers.

Berthoud's (2003) *Multiple Disadvantage in Employment* fundamentally expands the analysis of multiple barriers (disadvantages). By providing more than just a catalogue of the various barriers to employment, he seeks to develop a theoretical model of barrier interaction. Beginning with six theoretical models, Berthoud is able to produce strong evidence to support the hypothesis that barriers are "additive"<sup>4</sup> and to a lesser extent that specific "combinations"<sup>5</sup> also effect employability.

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<sup>3</sup> Brown documents a 78% employment rate for people with 1 barrier down to 17% employment for people with 3 or more barriers; while Danziger noted in her study that of people with 4-6 barriers employment was 40% whereas of people with 7 or more barriers 0% were employed.

<sup>4</sup> The Additive hypothesis states, "the effect of each disadvantage can be added together" (regardless of type) thus reducing employability.

<sup>5</sup> The Combination hypothesis states, "specific combinations of disadvantages have effects which increase or decrease risk."

## Section II

### *Acquiring Employment*

This examination of acquiring employment is premised on the idea that homeless people have difficulty in achieving, retaining, or advancing in employment because of barriers. This premise guides the way in which this review sought information and so informs the Best Practices presented. In an effort to maintain symmetry the Best Practices will be presented using the Hauan classification system as outlined in the previous section<sup>6</sup> addressing the three key areas: human capital assets, personal and family related liabilities and logistical and situational challenges.

Within the human capital assets category can be found the provision of skills development, continuing education and job training. Many studies have shown that extensive employment assistance, including employment development planning, skills upgrading, job training, job placement and post-placement follow-up services are extremely beneficial to those seeking to enter the labour market (U.S. Department of Labor 1997, Danziger 2000, City of Toronto 2004, Martinson 2003, Zlotnick 2002, Holzer 2004, Conway 2004, Saunders 2005, Smith 2002). The homeless also lack educational skills and have low literacy levels (Saunders 2005, Martinson, 2003, U.S. Department of Labor 1997) and in order to pursue gainful employment, educational upgrading and literacy training is necessary. Lazar (2000) suggests that: "Individuals need to follow a path of continuous learning. Such a commitment would not only improve their prospects of gainful employment in an economy where skills needs are in ongoing evolution but would also improve civic literacy" (in Saunders 2005, p. 24). Clearly, a lack of education and basic skills must be addressed in addition to, and many authors suggest, in conjunction with job training and development services (City of Toronto 2002, 2004, Martinson, 2003, U.S. Department of Labor 1997, Holzer 2005).

At this point a concern should be noted with regard to moving people through any program. It must be recognized that a program, no matter how well conceived, cannot provide successful outcomes if the program lacks the ability to adjust to the individual client (U.S. Department of Labor 1997, Lownsborough 2005, Brown 2001, Fleisher 2001). Once this is acknowledged and the program designers, policy developers or ultimately, the service provider recognizes that individuals experience barriers to employment in different ways they will be able to provide a program that avoids the "progression trap". This is a prescribed treatment pattern with set personal outcomes that ignores the individual's reality but rather conforms to the realities of the program designer and so at best hinders the client's progress or at worst forces people out of the program (Lownsborough 2005).

With that said it is possible to demonstrate that education and job skills training help people gain marketable skills and increased access to employment, but these alone are not enough to guarantee employment readiness. Personal and family related liabilities, which encompass barriers ranging from poor health and mental health struggles to childcare issues, must also be addressed (U.S. Department of Labor 1997, Holzer 2001, Talpade 2003, Danziger 2000, Saunders 2005, Waller 2002, Gaetz 2002). Increased access to health care and health services are necessary for those pursuing employment, and those with already existing health problems should be referred for treatment before beginning training or an employment search. Good health is essential job readiness, and access to health care services and the provision of

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<sup>6</sup> See Page 21

government or employer-sponsored benefits, including drug coverage, is key to preventing absenteeism once a person is on the job (Talpade 2001, Danziger 2000, Waller 2002, Saunders 2005). Specific recommendations for those with mental health issues include access to referral and access to therapy (Morrell-Bellai 2000), and the creation of an atmosphere in which individuals struggling with their mental health can succeed (Brown 2001). Importantly, this includes sensitizing social service agencies, training and employment staff, and employers to the nature of mental health problems and how they can impact individuals' lives (Brown 2001). Indeed, sensitivity training should be incorporated into the regular training regimen of service providers regardless of target population. The provision of and funding for childcare services is also vital to an individual's access to employment (especially single parents), and both employers and the government must be involved in making such services a priority (Saunders 2005, U.S. Department of Labor 1997, City of Toronto 2002, 2004).

The last classification relates to logistical or situational challenges, specifically unstable housing arrangements, low wages and unemployment. A lack of safe and affordable housing impedes a person's ability to focus on acquiring skills and searching for work. A major demonstration project on job training for the homeless undertaken by the U.S. Department of Labour provided all participants with individualized housing assistance prior to beginning training, believing that there is "a direct correlation between stable housing and stable employment" (U.S. Department of Labor 1998, p. 3-25). The Best Practices from this study suggest (and many other authors concur) that access to housing and housing services are crucial for homeless seeking employment and these needs must therefore be carefully assessed before a person can successfully pursue employment (U.S. Department of Labor 1997, Josephson, Morrell-Bellai 2000, Saunders 2005, Gaetz 2002). "When people are well housed, their family and community life is more stable, enabling greater opportunities for good health, educational performance, job security and community safety" (Saunders 2005, p. 22). Morrell-Bellai (2000) also advocates for the restoration of government funding for non-profit housing as a key step in helping individuals overcome this barrier. Low wages and unemployment have also been cited as barriers to employment and a number of authors have recommended an increase in the minimum wage and better access to Employment Insurance as a solution to this barrier (Josephson, Saunders 2005). Saunders suggests that an increase in the minimum wage be accompanied by modest income supplements, in order to help lift people out of poverty. These measures help target those most in need and improve participation of single parents in the labour force (Saunders 2005). Saunders also strongly asserts that the government must cease the practice of contracting with or subsidizing employers who pay poverty-level wages, as this only serves to enable employers to continue using cheap labour, perpetuating the cycle of poverty and maintaining the existence of high numbers of low-paying jobs.

Thus far, this examination of the literature has focused a majority of its attention on the individual. At this point, it is important to expand the Best Practices beyond the individual to include social service agencies, employers, government, and their ongoing relationships with homeless employment-seekers and each other. Overwhelmingly, the literature presents the development and increased co-operation and co-ordination between social service agencies, educational institutions, workforce developers, community organizations, funding bodies and employers in order to best serve homeless seeking employment (U.S. Department of Labor 1997, Brown 2001, Morrell-Bellai 2000, Klee 2002, Freeman 2002, Conway 2004). This increases the likelihood of success as social service agencies experienced in working with the homeless can recruit motivated individuals who desire employment and therefore have a high probability of completing training and securing a job (U.S. Department of Labor 1997). Further, with more employer participation, better matches will be made between employer and employee, increasing job satisfaction and dramatically reducing absenteeism (Holzer 2001).

Also stressed was the importance of utilizing already available services whenever possible (U.S. Department of Labor 1997), and increasing co-ordination and referrals between agencies providing these services (Klee 2002, Freeman 2002, U.S. Department of Labor 1997).

Building relationships with employers is a significant step in providing the homeless with access to employment. Agencies must strive to build long-term relationships with employers by working with them to meet and perhaps even more importantly understand the employer's needs. Once a social service agency understands the employer's needs they will be able to refer good candidates to them, involve them in homeless training and skills development design and implementation, and should maintain periodical contact with them to see how things are working out (Brown 2001, Freeman 2002, U.S. Department of Labor 1997). Drawing on existing expertise in the business community from companies and training providers that effectively offer employment to homeless and ex-homeless is also recommended (Smith 2002, Lownsborough 2005). Additionally, employers should be offered concrete benefits, including wage subsidies and tax credits for employing program participants (Freeman 2002, Brown 2001, Lownsborough 2005). However, as noted above, incentives must only be given to those employers paying a decent wage, so as not to encourage the continuing provision of cheap labour to employees by the government or social service agencies (Saunders 2005). This practice only reinforces stereotypical attitudes and prejudices concerning the homeless (Lownsborough 2005), which could be further dispelled by focusing on participants' strengths when presenting them to employers, and by referring only high quality candidates to them in the first place (U.S. Department of Labor 1997).

It was noted previously that much of the homelessness literature focuses on associative factors. This trend continued in the Best Practices primarily with regard to substance abusers and those on social assistance. Klee (2002) states that rehab must be seen as a gradual process involving many stages and it is important that participants truly be ready for involvement in an employment program before commencing. However, this is not to suggest that a person still involved in substance abuse treatment cannot also pursue job training. Multiple authors suggest that this is possible (Brown 2001, Klee 2002, Zlotnick 2002), and training agencies and employment advisors must therefore have an increased knowledge of drugs, the multiplicity of risk factors regarding drug use, and should collaborate with treatment providers to promote recovery and help prevent relapse (Brown 2001, Klee 2002, Zlotnick 2002). Related to this is the emphasis on always knowing whom you are serving. A clear distinction should be made between a drug user and a drug abuser, and Brown (2001) states that drugs and alcohol should be focused on only when they are a barrier to work, not when simply a method of relaxation.

Best practices for working with those on social assistance include the provision of adequate supports (housing stabilization, food security, child care, transportation, health & mental health care) as a means to help a client better focus on pursuing skills and educational upgrading, job training, and job search activities (City of Toronto 2002, 2004, Danziger 2000). Overwhelmingly, educational opportunities, job training and job search skills were listed as essential aids to moving a person from social assistance into employment (Martinson 2003, Fleischer 2001, City of Toronto 2002, 2004). The most successful Welfare-to-Work programs have been those providing a range of services, including a combination of education and training opportunities (Fleischer 2001). Finally, attempts must be made to respect the client in whatever program they might be involved with (Lethby, 2005).

## **Retaining Employment**

While the literature is quite developed around acquiring employment there is a notable lack of literature examining an employee's prospects beyond "getting the job". The best research on this topic can be found in the articles authored by Harry J. Holzer. Given the thoroughness and depth of understanding Holzer brings to this subject it is sufficient here to merely direct the reader to his articles. It should be noted that retention is fast becoming the new framework for employment support supplied by the Ontario Government. A sample of this new governmental emphasis on retention can be found in the *Improving Employment Outcomes* document released February 13, 2006 by the Ministry of Community and Social Service (MCSS). This document's purpose is to direct the transformation for the provision of employment supports between the government and its service providers. This transformation is "placing and retaining clients in employment and helping clients increase their level of earnings through career advancement". (MCSS, 2006). This transformation reflects the understanding that simply accessing employment does not benefit a person if they cannot maintain the employment over time. Critically, as Holzer points out, repeated cycling into and out of employment limits yearly earnings and inhibits advancement. It is logical that the first priorities in retention are ongoing assessment, support and case-management (U.S. Department of Labor 1997). The supports needed are wide-ranging and vary, once again, depending on the individual. What follows in this section is a summary of the Best Practices with regard to employment retention and will be broken down into our now familiar Hauan classification system of: human capital, personal and familial related supports, and supports addressing logistical and situational challenges.

There is a direct correlation in human capital classification between acquiring additional skills training and a higher employment retention rate (U.S. Department of Labor 1997). The importance of ongoing education and skills upgrading provides an increase in earnings, benefits and steady work (Smith 2002, Saunders 2005) and is integral to keeping a job that pays a living wage (City of Toronto 2004, Holzer 2005, Relave 2004). Employers should be directly involved in the upgrading process through employee retention programs. Freeman (2002), and Holzer (2001) state that when provided with opportunities for advancement, employees are more motivated and absenteeism decreases. Ongoing life skills training is also essential (U.S. Department of Labor 1997, Holzer 2005, Lownsborough 2005), and the provision of services such as financial counselling are highly beneficial at this stage (Bergeron et al. 2000, Freeman 2002, Fleischer 2001, Rangarajan 1998). Lastly, re-placement services and additional job search assistance also fall under this category, in the case that initial employment did not work out (U.S. Department of Labor 1997, Freeman 2002).

Ongoing support to meet personal and familial needs should not be underestimated as an area of high importance. The literature recommends pursuing a number of different measures related to this category with a primary emphasis focused on the need for ongoing emotional supports (U.S. Department of Labor 1997, Fleischer 2001, Rangarajan 1998, Freeman 2002, Relave 2004). Several authors state the effectiveness of peer support groups for persons entering employment that would allow them to discuss their problems and work together to develop solutions (U.S. Department of Labor 1997, Fleischer 2001, Rangarajan 1998). Mentoring programs (U.S. Department of Labor 1997, Freeman 2002, Relave 2004) and ongoing individual counselling is also recommended (Rangarajan 1998, Relave 2004). In addition to addressing emotional needs, physical and mental health care needs must be addressed on an ongoing basis, and individuals must continue to have access to health care, health insurance (Holzer 2001, Holzer 2005, Gaetz 2002), as well as services for mental health and substance abuse (Rangarajan 1998) in order to effectively maintain their jobs. Additionally,

childcare supports must continue to be in place (Freeman 2002, Fleischer 2001, Rangarajan 1998, Holzer 2005).

Situational and logistical challenges must continually be met in order for an individual to retain employment. The literature suggests that housing assistance is critical to retaining employment (U.S. Department of Labor 1997, U.S. Department of Labor 1998, Rangarajan 1998). The U.S. Department of Labour's Best Practices found that employment retention rates were highest for those with permanent housing placements, and that retention rates were generally higher than average for those receiving housing assistance, than for those not receiving housing assistance. Ongoing housing assistance and supports are therefore critical (U.S. Department of Labor 1997, Freeman 2002, Rangarajan 1998). In addition to housing needs, it was noted in the literature that transportation barriers must also continually be addressed, in order for a person to maintain a daily routine of traveling to and from work safely and efficiently (Freeman 2002, Fleischer 2001, Rangarajan 1998).

### ***Advancing Employment***

By this point we have examined various practices for helping individuals gain employment and the methods needed to maintain and retain employment once they have found it. However, the reader must be cautioned that a real danger exists if employment programs focus simply on retention and forgo an advancement strategy. The very real danger is a retention strategy in which the goal of retention is so strictly enforced that service providers (conscience of funding priorities) do not allow a client the opportunity to quit a low wage job to accept a higher paying job. While this danger may seem unlikely, its prospect is only reinforced when the sheer dearth of information in the literature regarding employment advancement is considered.

What little information and Best Practices on employment advancement that does exist can now be summarized. Some authors do recognize the importance of employment advancement, and overwhelmingly, additional training and education were recommended in order to achieve this advancement (U.S. Department of Labor 1997, Martinson 2003, Relave 2004, Brown 2001, Freeman 2002, Michalopoulos 2002). Ongoing case management was also recommended to aid participants in this process, and to help them plan their next steps in pursuing advancement or in finding alternative employment that will give them opportunities to grow and develop (Brown 2001, Freeman 2002, Michalopoulos 2002, Lownsborough 2005, Holzer 2004). Also Relave (2004) recommends that agencies continue to work with employers to establish job ladders in particular firms or occupations and work with training providers to create opportunities for additional skills training.

**Report on the Survey of  
Homeless and/or  
At Risk of Homelessness  
  
Niagara Region**

## Key Findings of Homeless Survey

### Population

- Even sample distribution between urban and rural populations.
- 78% of respondents were male.
- The majority of respondents were between the ages of 40 – 49.
- Respondents reported an average of two homeless episodes over last two years.
- 47% of sample first experienced homelessness as a teen.
- Respondents, who identified experiencing homelessness as a teen, were less likely to have completed high school and were more likely to be among the chronically homeless.
- 37% identified as chronically homeless.
- 52% of respondents reported their education level as less than high school.

### Health

- Approximately 1/3 of respondents reported their health as poor/fair.
- 57% of respondents reported at least one chronic health problem.
- 61% of sample reported struggling with their mental health over the last year.
- Mental health struggles identified as the most significant barrier to both acquiring and retaining employment.

### Barriers to Employment

- Substance abuse was identified in 80% of sample.
- 78.5% of respondents reported a period of incarceration at some point.
- Approximately 50% reported a period of incarceration within the last two years.
- 32.7% claimed to have been denied employment because of their criminal record
- Transportation was reported as the single greatest logistical barrier to employment.
- 40.3% reported that a transportation issue caused them to miss work.
- 60% of respondents reported lacking money for transportation is often or always a barrier to employment.

## Employment Status

- At the time of survey, 15.6% of respondents were employed.
- 93% reported having worked in formal employment at some point.
- Majority of sample earned less than \$10 per hour and did not realize any significant wage increase over the term of their employment.
- Reported employment reflects a job pool that is low skilled, low paying, temporary, and without benefits.

## Multiple Barriers

- Findings suggest that the greatest barriers to employment and retention are better understood as expressions of underlying difficulties as opposed to the effect of any single barrier.
- The homeless face multiple employment barriers including chronic homelessness, lack of skills/education, physical or mental health issues, drug/substance abuse, criminal and legal involvement, and lack of transportation. 76% of respondents had between four and six of these barriers.
- The reported ability to work decreased when the number of barriers increased.
- 100% of respondents with one barrier reported being able to work; with seven barriers only 12.5% of respondents reported being able to work.

## Seeking Employment

- 71.1% of respondents have a resume.
- "Friends" reported as the most successful method of obtaining employment.
- The homeless population's views on employment mirror the employment views of mainstream society.

## Section I

### Sample Characteristics

Table 1 shows the percentage of respondents by area of residence within the Niagara Region. The City of St. Catharines accounts for roughly 50% of respondents, Welland and area 29%, and Niagara Falls and area 21%, in total 130 people were surveyed. These percentages were predetermined in order to supply a balance between urban and rural respondents<sup>7</sup>. In addition to present residence, the vast majority of respondents were born in Canada (86%) and an even larger percentage identified English as their first language (90%).

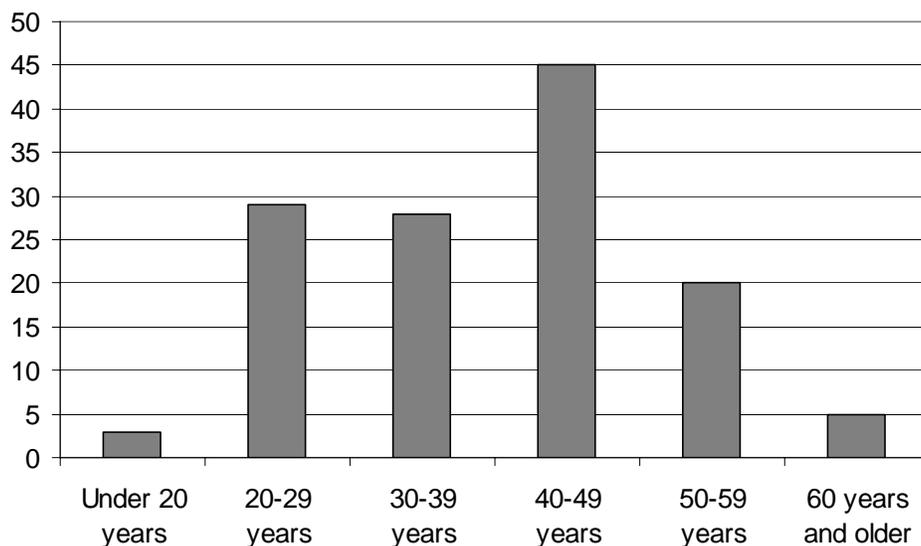
The sample is strongly male, with approximately 78% of respondents identified as male.

**Table1: Geographical Area**

Area	Percent of Respondents
St. Catharines	50%
Welland and area	29%
Niagara Falls and area	21%

The average age of respondents was 42. The greatest number of respondents were between 40 and 49 years of age.

**Graph 1: Age (number of respondents)**



<sup>7</sup> The Government of Ontario's Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) standard for urban and rural areas was applied. According to OMAFRA an area can be considered rural if the resident population is below 130,000. The City of St. Catharines is the only area within the Niagara region that has a resident population of 130,000 and consequentially was the only area available from which to draw the urban sample.

Respondents were asked to identify their household type; 81% of respondents identified themselves as single.

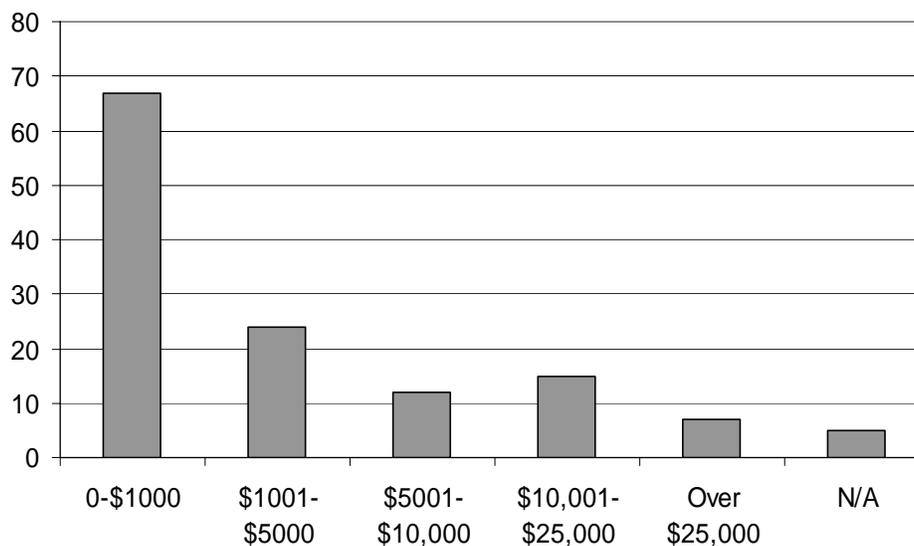
The average income of respondents was \$683.93, with a median income of \$536.00 per month. It should be noted that 30% of the sample were living on less than \$500.00 per month and of those persons, 10 people had no source of income.

**Table 2: Primary Income Source**

Primary Source of Income	Number of Respondents	Percent of Sample (Rounded)
Ontario Works	61	48%
Ontario Disability Supports Program <sup>8</sup>	38	29%
Part-time or Full-time Employment	7	5%
Odd Jobs/Temp Agency	5	4%
CPP/EI	5	4%
Friends	4	3%
Not Reported	10	8%

Respondents were also asked about their current debt level. The median debt level is \$1000.00. A significant number of respondents had extensive debt levels. The graph below indicates that over a quarter of respondents, 27%, had debt levels of over \$5000.

**Graph 2: Debt Levels (number of respondents)**



<sup>8</sup> Recent news coverage has identified the difficulty that homeless people with serious physical and mental health disabilities face in obtaining disability benefits. The data from this study indicate that 49 percent of the sample had been clinically diagnosed with a mental health problem. Of these 64 persons, only 25 are currently in receipt of ODSP as a source of income. (For 22 of the 25, ODSP is a primary source of income, for another three persons ODSP is a secondary source of income.) This may indicate that those with serious mental health difficulties are not applying for ODSP or are being denied ODSP.

## Housing

It was mentioned in the literature review that research methods impact on the type of data collected. The data collected over this research project sought “actual” homeless with specific attempts to engage the “hidden”<sup>9</sup> homeless through personal interviews. It was expected that this type of research method would engage a largely male demographic who were experiencing homelessness as opposed to a female demographic with dependents who can be classified as “at risk” of homelessness. Since the population in this study is largely single and male, we can conclude that the research was successful in engaging the homeless and the “hidden” homeless as illustrated in Table 3. It did not tap into those at risk of homelessness.

**Table 3: Where did you sleep most often last month?**

<b>Accommodations</b>	<b>Percent of Respondents (Rounded)</b>
Living in housing or staying at long term boarding	40%
Stayed at a shelter	44%
Stayed with friends or family	12%
Stayed outside <i>(this number is low because research was conducted in the winter February -April)</i>	2%

**Table 4: Housing**

<b>Housing Type</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>	<b>Percent of Respondents</b>
Permanent Housing/ Long Term Boarding	52	40%
Shelter/Out of the Cold	57	44%
Friends/Family	15	12%
Hotel	2	1.5%
Outside	2	1.5%
Other	2	1.5%

It is important to note that 58% of respondents reported staying in shelters, with family or friends, in a hotel or outside, meeting the definition for homeless or hidden homeless.

A number of questions were asked in order to gauge the relative severity of the sample population’s homeless experience. Severity is important because although homelessness always creates interruption, the interruption can be mitigated by a rapid return to domiciled living or if it is a very infrequent occurrence in a person’s life. It was found that on average the population was homeless for nine consecutive weeks. 22% of the sample report an average homeless duration of less than one month. 20% report durations of one month. It should be noted that 59% are homeless for longer than two months and of these 18% report an average episode that is longer than six months.

<sup>9</sup> Hidden homeless is that portion of the homeless population that does not regularly use shelters. This includes those that camp, sleep in parking garages, couch surf with friends or family, etc.

**Table 5: Length of Homelessness Episode**

<b>Length in Weeks</b>	<b>Percentage of Respondents (Rounded)</b>
Less than Four Weeks	22%
Four Weeks	20%
Five to Nine Weeks	18%
Ten to Twenty-Four Weeks	23%
Over Twenty-Four Weeks	18%

Twenty-two percent of the sample reported their longest homeless episode lasted more than a year. Further the population reported suffering an average of two homeless episodes in the last two years: with 24% reporting one, 25% reporting two, and 34% three or more homeless episodes in last two years.

A final gauge of relative homelessness was to ask about the length of tenure for the portion of the sample that indicated being housed. 40% reported being currently housed, and their median length of stay in their current housing was just over six months. 32% of those currently housed had been in their housing for more than one year. The average amount spent on rent for those currently in housing was 51% of income. If 30% of income on rent is used as a suggested guideline, only 24% of those currently in housing spend 30% or less of their income on rent.

Clearly, a significant portion of the sample suffers regular and prolonged homeless episodes. For the purposes of this report a segment of the population is defined as *chronically homeless*, if a respondent is either homeless for a period of six consecutive months or greater and/or any respondent that has been homeless three or more times over the last two years. Any respondent conforming to the above definition is considered to have a housing barrier to employment. 37% of the sample are chronically homeless.

Respondents were asked if certain identified factors were important in causing homelessness. The percentage of respondents who answered “yes” that the following factors were significant in causing homelessness is listed below. (Respondents could respond yes to more than one factor.)

**Table 6: Selected Factors Indicated as Important in Causing Homelessness**

<b>Selected Factors</b>	<b>Percent of Respondents</b>
End of spousal relationship	55%
Losing a job	44%
Significant debt	39%
Losing children	20%

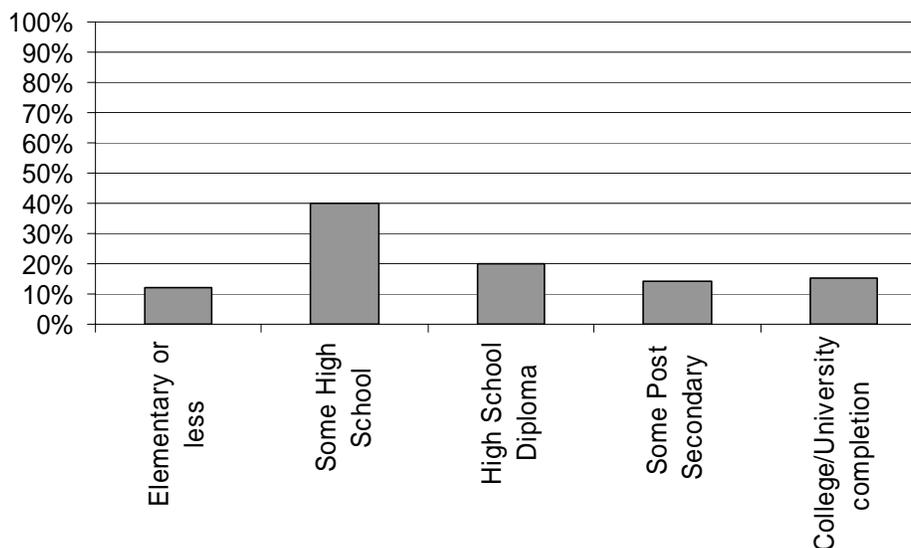
One finding that was not anticipated was the percentage of respondents that suffered their first episode of homelessness as a teenager. Fully, 47% of respondents first experienced homelessness at less than nineteen years of age; with 32% being sixteen years or less! The average age of first homeless episode was nineteen years of age. However, approximately a quarter of respondents (24%) first experienced homelessness after 40 years of age. The longitudinal effects of teenage homelessness were not well documented in the literature. There are signs in the data that first time homelessness under 20 may be a significant factor in a

person's life course development. There were two statistically significant relationships found in the results of the study: Those who were first time homeless at less than 20 years of age are significantly less likely to have finished high school. They are also significantly more likely to be among the chronically homeless. In addition, although chronic substance abuse is high among the entire population, it is higher among those homeless before 20, at 86%, compared to 75% for those not homeless before 20.

### **Education and Skills**

Based on the findings in the literature review it was expected that the population would exhibit a significant lack of education and skills. The graph below (Graph 3) presents the education level of respondents

**Graph 3: Education Level**



With 52% reporting less than a high school diploma this sample displays a significant lack of education. This indicates a barrier to employment but more specifically a barrier to retaining employment, especially, when we consider that employers will typically train/promote the employee with the highest level of education. It is interesting that while an educational barrier is strongly indicated for this sample, when asked if a lack of education was a barrier to work, 67% respondents replied “not” or “occasionally.” A statistically significant relationship was found between those who have less than a high school education and those who indicated that lack of education is a barrier to their employment. This suggests that the sample is aware that a lack of education is a barrier.

There are also indications that the sample does not perceive their education levels as a barrier in basic literacy and numeracy skills as indicated by the following numbers:

**Table 7: Literacy/Numeracy Skills**

Skills	Percent of Respondents
Do not have any trouble reading or writing	82%
Do not have a problem with math or numbers	61%
Do not have a difficulty with English	94%
Read English well	83%
Write English well	79%

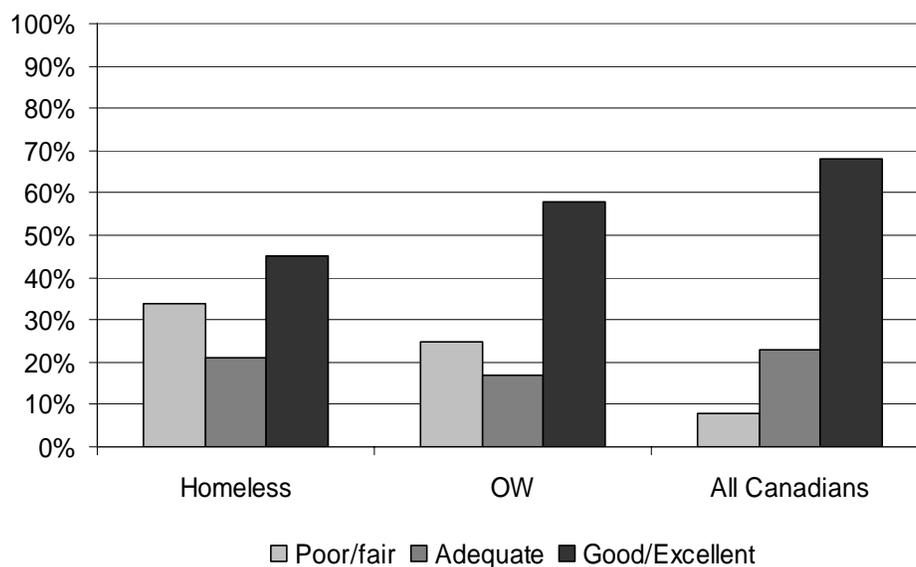
However, respondents are aware that education and learning are critical to achieving good employment and conversely that a lack of education and skills (specifically computer related skills) makes a poor employee. So it is not a case that the sample does not understand the role of education and skills in employment only that they lack self-awareness of the full extent of their own deficits.

## Health

### General Health

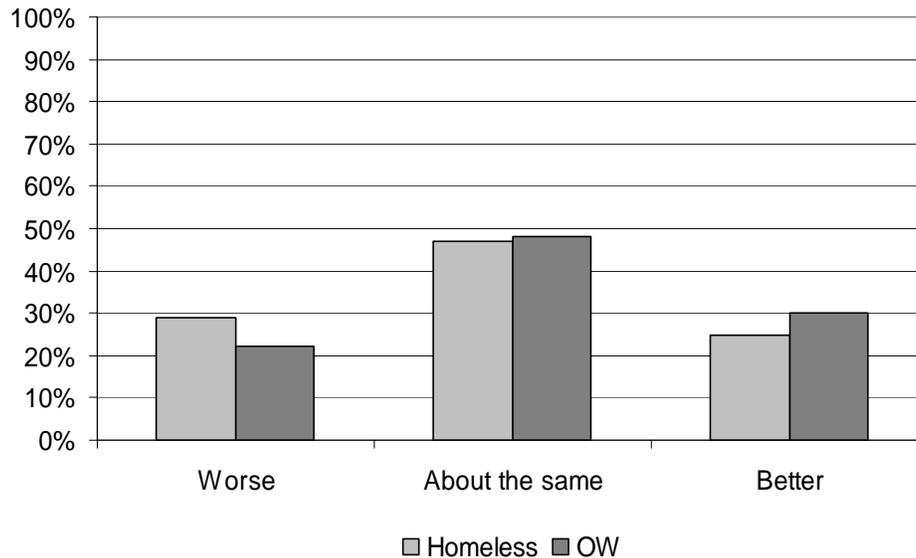
Respondents asked to describe their current health condition and the results are reported below (Graph 4). Graph 4 also contains the current health condition of an Ontario Works survey conducted in 2004 (Baker Collins, Region of Niagara, 2005) and the Personal Security Index 2003, which reports on Canadians' rating of their health status (Tsoukalas & Mackenzie, 2003). The comparison between studies shows that the homeless are more likely to rate their health as poor/fair than either a sample of the local Ontario Works' population or Canadians generally.

**Graph 4: Health Status**



Respondents were asked to rate their health compared to one year ago and their responses were compared against the Ontario Works survey mentioned above. Graph 5 shows that the homeless were more likely to describe their health as worse than was a respondent in the Ontario Works survey.

**Graph 5: Health Status Compared to One Year Ago**



Chronic/long term health problems were identified in the literature as a significant barrier. Respondents were asked if they had any chronic/long term health problems; 57% identified having at least one chronic/long term health problem, although some reported more than one. Those with chronic health problems were more likely to report their health as fair or poor than those without chronic health problems. There was not a tendency for the chronically homeless to report chronic health problems more than the general sample. When asked to report what their specific health problems were, of those who answered, the following health problems were reported: Mental health (18), Hepatitis C (16), Arthritis (9), and Asthma (7).

Attending medical appointments requires time and scheduling and so can represent a significant barrier to traditional employment. Respondents were asked how many times per year did they meet with a medical professional (doctor, dentist, nurse). 91% of respondents had seen a medical professional in the last year. The average response was four times a year. However, a significant number of individuals (22%) went monthly and a further 13% of respondents saw a medical professional more than that. This data indicates that at least a quarter of the sample must incorporate a number of medical appointments into their routine.

Finally, sickness, either chronic or episodic, creates challenges in daily living and lifestyles. To a large extent, people who are sick must rely on family, friends, and ultimately the medical system during convalescence. In this way, isolation of the sick can greatly hinder recovery perhaps even forestall it completely. All respondents were asked: "When I'm sick I have someone to help me" to which 49% agreed and 51% disagreed, which indicates an isolation of the sick within this sample group and raises a troublesome barrier to recovery.

## Mental Health

The effects and severity of mental illness were given special attention in this report and are provided separate from the general health section. It was found that 49% of respondents answered, “yes” when asked if they were ever diagnosed with a mental health issue. However, 61% of the total sample responded positively to the question “When was the last time you struggled with mental health?”, indicating a larger segment with mental illness than officially diagnosed. Of the 61% of the sample that answered “yes”, 81% indicated that they had struggled with their mental health within the last year and 49% indicating their struggle is either current or ongoing. Further, when asked the number of days a respondent was depressed in an average week 42% of respondents are depressed more than half of the week at four days or more and 19% of respondents are depressed every day.

Given the data, it is not surprising that mental illness and poor mental health in general have a notable effect on employment. When asked if mental health made it hard to start a job 75% of those indicating a mental health struggle<sup>10</sup> said “yes”. When asked if struggling with mental health made you lose a job 69% of those indicating a mental health struggle replied “yes”. These two statistics only serve to emphasize the real impact that poor mental health has on this population is employment prospects and financial security. Interestingly, 40% of respondents indicated that they had told their employer about their mental health struggle and when asked the follow up question of: What was the consequence of telling; respondents replied that:

**Table 8: Disclosure of Mental Health**

Consequence	Percent of Respondents
Employer was supportive	51.6%
Respondent was either laid off/fired	35.4%
Employer did not understand	12.9%

It is difficult to determine what conclusions should be drawn regarding consequences of reporting mental health struggles. However, the numbers suggest stronger positive outcomes as opposed to strictly negative ones. The numbers do suggest a portion of employers would benefit from greater education on the issues surrounding mental health.

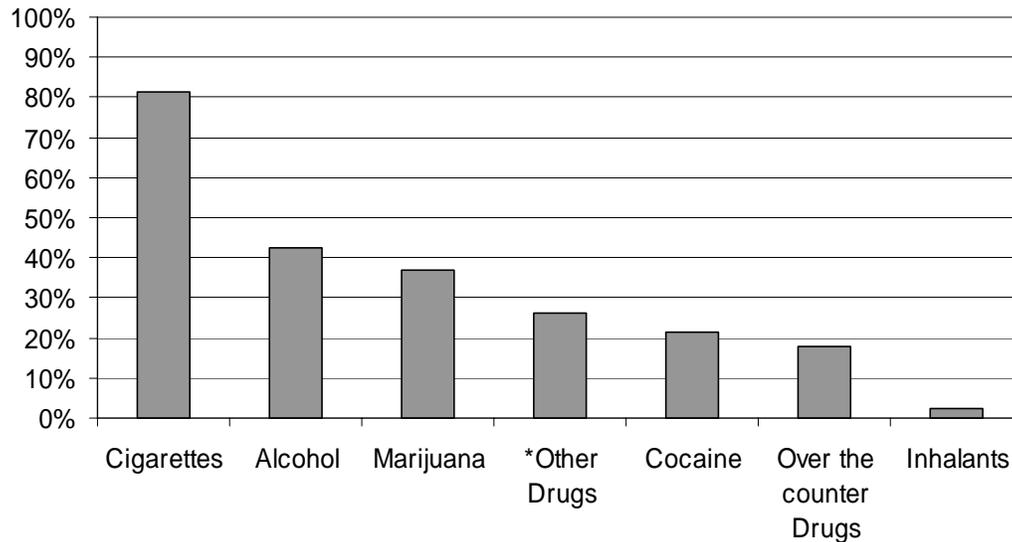
Mental illness and its accompanying struggle is an important barrier to overcome. This is clearly reported by the respondents when they were asked to identify their most significant barrier to both finding employment and keeping employment. In the case of finding employment 9.4% of respondents indicated that “Struggling with mental health” was their greatest barrier, this representing the largest percentage for that question. In comparison the next three greatest barriers were: “no car” (6.8%), “I have a criminal record” (6%) and “no place to live” (5.1%). When respondents were asked about their greatest barrier to keeping employment 13.6% of respondents indicated “struggling with mental health” was their greatest barrier, which tied with “living paycheque to paycheque” as the single greatest barrier. Again by comparison “struggling with drugs” (12.6%) and “seasonal jobs” (8.7%) came in second and third. One final point of interest is that “struggling with mental health” was the only barrier to rank as significant for both finding and keeping employment questions. This last point will be remarked upon later, when multiple barriers are discussed.

<sup>10</sup> Indicated by reporting mental health struggles within the last year

## Substance Use

Respondents were asked to identify their usage of a number of substances. The following graph (Graph 6) illustrates current substance use by respondents:

**Graph 6: Substance Use**



\*Other drugs were identified by respondents as prescription or methadone.

In order to differentiate substance *use* from substance *abuse* it was determined that any respondent who answered “yes” to any one of three questions was identified as a substance abuser. The three questions are: (1) Have you ever been to Detox/A.A./N.A.? (2) Have you lost a job because of drug/alcohol use? (3) Would you say that drugs or alcohol has had a negative effect on your life? In this research answering “yes” to any of these questions indicated an inability, by the respondent, to control their personal substance use. When the data was examined using the above criteria it was determined that 80% of respondents are substance abusers.

Table 9 illustrates the percent of respondents that answered “yes” to each separate question:

**Table 9: Substance Abuse**

Question	Percent of Respondents Who Answered Yes
Have you ever been to Detox/A.A./N.A.?	66.2%
Have you ever lost a job because of drug/alcohol use?	32.3%
Would you say that drugs or alcohol has had a negative effect on your life?	68.8%

While it is useful to note the strong substance abuse prevalent within the population, future research should seek a greater longitudinal understanding of substance use/abuse. Critically, further research should determine if substance use becoming substance abuse has a significant relationship with this population's lack of housing and employment.

However, while greater study would help determine the role of substance abuse in homelessness and unemployment for Niagara's residents, the literature did remark on the role of drug testing. Drug testing is routinely practiced in the US and is becoming more commonplace in Canada. This practice is potentially a barrier to accessing employment and/or retaining employment. In order to determine the potential barrier represented by drug testing, respondents were asked if they had ever had to take a drug test: to which 45.4% replied that they had. When respondents were asked the reasons why the drug test was required, respondents who had answered "yes" to the above question answered: Treatment (22), Physician (9), Child Custody (7), and Employment (4). According to these numbers drug testing is currently not a major barrier to employment. However, while nearly half of respondents had been asked to take a drug test only 11.4% of them had been denied service or entrance to a program because of drugs/alcohol. When asked which services or programs they had been denied entrance to, respondents identified Recovery programs and Shelter/hostel services.

Finally, the entire sample was asked to rate their struggle with drugs, 27.8% replied often/always and additionally 12.6% of respondents identified this as their greatest barrier to retaining employment. Respondents showed a level of awareness regarding the adverse relationship between substance abuse, employment, and the abuse's negative impact generally. When asked what, if anything, would provide the greatest help for you to keep a job; "staying sober" ranked fourth highest. Similarly, when asked what lack of skills or reasons do you think would not make you a good employee: Drug/Alcohol abuse ranked third.

### ***Criminal Involvement***

According to the literature, criminal involvement, specifically incarceration, has a significant negative impact on access to employment. In addition, arrest history can be used as a predictive measure for homelessness. These findings were largely supported by the data: 78.5% of respondents reporting that they had been to jail at some point in their lives and significantly just over half (51.5%) had been in jail within the last two years and over a quarter (27.7%) within the last year. An effect of incarceration is the limit it places on job experience and education and the more times it occurs the greater the overall effect. When respondents were asked how many separate times had they been to jail: 21.4% answered once but the average response was four to five times. This data suggests that incarceration is affecting the respondents' ability to access employment. Additionally, the data supports the finding that criminal involvement is a predictive tool for homelessness, as it was reported by respondents that 74.5% had committed a crime before becoming homeless.

In addition to the lack of education and job experience, having a criminal record is stigmatizing. A means of reducing the criminal stigma is to receive a pardon. However, 91.2% of respondents who had been to jail had not received a pardon. Further, only 4.9% of respondents who were incarcerated were in jail as minors. 32.7% claim to having been denied work because of their criminal record. Respondents seem aware of the stigma associated with having been in jail, as only 25.8% of them told a potential employer about a past criminal record. It was reported in the literature that employers are very reluctant to hire people that have committed either robberies or drug offences. The data indicated that 64.7% of the sample admitted

committing a crime to make money and 37.3% were convicted of a drug offence. However, an employer must be aware of the criminal record in order for it to effect employment. To that end, it was determined that 86.5% of respondents with criminal records, when asked if an “employer found out I had a criminal record” answered either Not or Occasional as a barrier to employment. The data suggests that the employers of this sample are not using criminal reference checks or other screening tools in their hiring practices. The data does support the evidence that should criminal screening tools become more commonplace amongst these employers a criminal record will have a greater impact on the sample’s employability.

### ***Transportation***

Transportation is the single greatest logistical barrier to employment. So much so, that for the purposes of this study the lack of a personal vehicle qualifies as a lack of transportation: especially considering the lack of a regional transportation network. It comes as no surprise then that roughly 94% of respondents can be considered transportation impaired. When asked what their main way of getting around was, the two primary means of transportation were walking (45.7%) and riding the bus (35.7%). This has an obvious and overt implication on employability. When asked how much time respondents spent getting around the majority indicated two to three hours/day. These findings raise a number of serious concerns that extend well beyond the scope of employment. Questions of safety, health, isolation, and quality of life are far more important as matters of enquiry. It is worth highlighting that the data, for this report, was collected in the winter!

In considering access to employment, respondents were asked if transportation caused them to miss work in the last year to which 40.3% replied it had. However, when asked if they had ever been suspended from work due to transportation only 13.2% said yes.

In order to better determine the significance of the transportation barrier on the sample a number of questions were asked. Firstly, given that not having a car is a significant predictor of a transportation barrier, respondents were asked to rate the effect of not having a car, to which 56.7% replied was not or occasionally a barrier to finding employment and 43.3% replied this was often or always a barrier. Secondly, since the vast majority of respondents do not have access to a car, we asked if not having access to a bus was a barrier. 89.8% replied that access to a bus was not or occasionally a barrier to finding employment. Finally, when asked if not having money for transportation is a barrier, 60% replied that lacking money for transportation is often or always a barrier to employment. These findings suggest that respondents believe that their transportation barrier is more properly understood as an economic barrier as opposed to a logistical barrier.

An interesting consideration is that respondents identified not having a car as their second greatest barrier to employment; which suggests that for those who view transportation as a barrier rate this barrier is very significant. Equally as intriguing is the finding that transportation did not rank in the top five greatest barriers to keeping employment. This suggests that once a respondent finds employment they have also made adequate transportation plans.

## Section II

### Current Employment

Currently, 15.6% of respondents are employed<sup>11</sup> with approximately 93% having worked in formal employment at some point. Both of these percentages are in line with comparable populations in the literature. When asked the length of their most recent employment 59% of the population that reported, indicated being employed for 1 year or less with a full 32% being employed no longer than 4 months. This pattern is repeated for second most recent and third most recent job.

This pattern of employment stoppage is documented in the literature. Presumably, job loss within the first 4 months represents employees being fired or working seasonal jobs. A job lost after a 1-year represents contract employment perhaps even government sponsored employment programs. This analysis is supported by the data collected. Table 10 lists the top 4 reasons for job stoppage as reported by respondents for their last 3 jobs.

**Table 10: Reasons Jobs Ended**

Most recent	# of Respondents	2 <sup>nd</sup> Most recent	# of Respondents	3 <sup>rd</sup> Most recent	# of Respondents
Contract/laid off	18	Contract/laid off	18	Contract/laid off	11
Seasonal	16	Quit	14	Fired	7
Fired	13	Fired	9	Health problems	6
Moved	9	Moved	8	Moved	5

Table 11 lists the top 4 types of employment in order of last 3 jobs.

**Table 11: Type of Employment Last Three Jobs**

Most recent	#	2 <sup>nd</sup> Most recent	#	3 <sup>rd</sup> Most recent	#
Factory	18	Factory	15	Restaurant	9
Construction	18	Construction	15	Factory	8
Telemarketing	9	Restaurant	11	Construction	7
Farming	9	Retail	10	Retail	5

The findings in Table 11 were largely what were expected given the gender and relative age of the sample: this being manual, repetitive, and labour intensive work. The para-professional industry (i.e. health aide, personal assistance, etc) is largely absent in this sample. Again, this is probably due to the gender and average age of the sample. An interesting development is the appearance of "Telemarketing" in most recent job. Telemarketing employment is often repetitive and labour (time) intensive if not physically challenging and in many ways mimics the para-professional industries given its emphasis on communication and service.

<sup>11</sup> This percentage should be viewed with a certain level of caution, given that the data was collected in the winter when seasonal employment opportunities are minimal.

The literature draws a clear link between low wages, homelessness, and frequent employment turnover. Table 12 presents the average starting and finishing wages for respondents in their last three jobs.

**Table 12: Average Starting & Finishing Wages Last Three Jobs**

<b>Most recent</b>	<b>Wage</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Most recent</b>	<b>Wage</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Most recent</b>	<b>Wage</b>
Starting	\$8.75-9.00	Starting	\$9.75-10.00	Starting	\$9.00
Finishing	\$9.25	Finishing	\$9.75-10.00	Finishing	\$9.75

Two factors are immediately clear in the data, (a) The majority of the homeless population are making less than \$10.00 per hour and (b) the homeless do not realize any significant increases in wages over their time of employment. These two findings are important when the motivation of the population to work is considered later in this report. However, it is sufficient to note that the data suggests the sample is largely denied access to a living wage both initially and over the longer term.

In addition to temporary employment at low wages, the lack of benefits attached to employment is also significant for the sample. 86% of respondents had not received benefits in their first job reported, 80% in the second job reported and 78% had not received benefits in their third job reported.

The reported jobs were overwhelmingly full time jobs with the median number of hours work per week at 40 hours for jobs one, two and three. Apart from the tendency for full time work in the jobs reported by respondents, most other characteristics of reported employment reflect a job pool that is low skilled, low paying, temporary and without benefits.

### ***Barriers of Greatest Significance and Hauan Classification System<sup>12</sup>***

Respondents were asked to identify from a list their greatest barrier to employment. Table 13 lists the percentage of respondents that identified the greatest number of similar replies, what that barrier is, and what category in the Hauan classification system it corresponds with.

**Table 13: Barriers to Employment (Greatest Significance)**

<b>Greatest Barrier</b>	<b>Percent of Respondents</b>	<b>Hauan Classification</b>
Mental health	9.4%	Personal/Family
No car	6.8%	Logistical/Situational
Criminal record	6.0%	Personal/Family
Homeless	5.1%	Logistical/Situational

<sup>12</sup> The Hauan Classification system is examined in the Literature Review on Page 21 of this report.

Respondents were asked to identify from a list their greatest barrier to keeping employment. Table 14 lists the percentage of respondents that identified the greatest number of similar replies, what that barrier is, and what category in the Hauan Classification System it corresponds with.

**Table 14: Barriers to Keeping a Job (Greatest Significance)**

<b>Greatest Barrier</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Hauan Classification</b>
Mental health	13.6%	Personal/Family
Low wages	13.6%	Logistical/Situational
Drugs	12.6%	Personal/Family
Seasonal	8.7%	Logistical/Situational

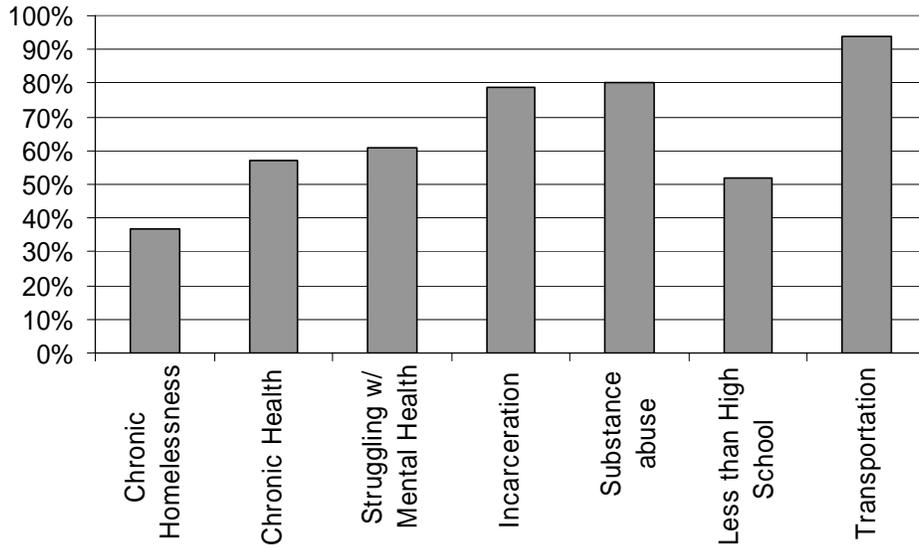
It is interesting to note that mental health was identified as both the greatest barrier to finding employment and keeping it; in effect crossing the situational employment divide. To better illustrate this point consider the person with a criminal record who is looking for a job. In this situation his criminal record has the potential to be a great barrier. However, should he overcome this barrier, once employed his criminal record loses significance as a barrier. Whereas, in the case of a person who is struggling with his mental health, the mental health struggle is a barrier in both situations, that is while both seeking employment and while employed. This is the reason that the mental health demographic, in this data, is reported as an exception.

Tables 13 and 14 are also useful in illustrating the benefits of the Hauan Classification System because the system helps focus the attention away from a single barrier and instead focuses attention on the interconnectedness of barriers. In both the seeking employment and keeping employment, the findings suggest that the greatest barriers are expressions of an underlying personal/familial problem or a logistical/situational problem as opposed to any single factor. These findings, which are supported in the data and in the literature, provide the logical segue way from a single employment barrier focus to a multiple barriers focus.

### ***Multiple Barriers***

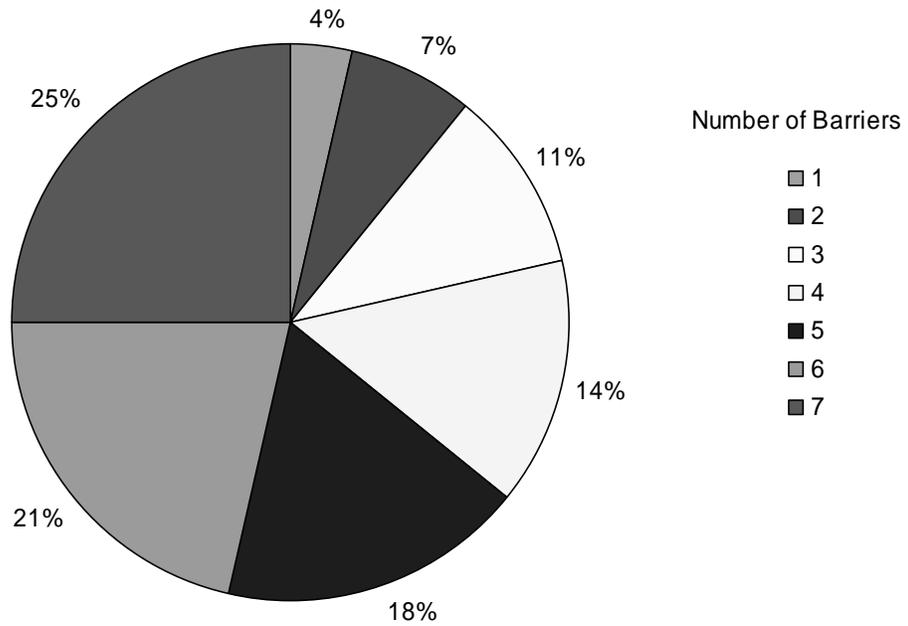
The individual cases were examined to determine the total number of employment barriers per respondent. The employment barriers have been discussed in detail both in the literature review and in the analysis section above. The employment barriers are, in no particular order: chronically homeless, chronic health problems, mental health struggle, recent and repeated criminal activities, substance abuse, lack of education, and transportation. Graph 7 records the type of barriers as a percentage of the sample.

**Graph 7: Employment Barriers**



It is clear that a large segment of the sample must have a number of multiple barriers. Graph 8 illustrates the number of barriers as a percentage of the sample.

**Graph 8: Multiple Barriers**



It is immediately clear that vast majority of respondents have at least four barriers, with the average respondent having five employment barriers. In fact, 76% of the sample has between four and six barriers. Due to this, it is very difficult to draw any significant comparisons or patterns amongst the barriers or group of barriers. One exception was that respondents who reported only one barrier all report transportation as their single barrier.

Table 15 compares the respondents' desire for employment with their number of employment barriers.

**Table 15: Comparison Between Wanting to Work and Number of Barriers**

# Of Barriers	Yes	No	Percent of Respondents who Answered Yes
1	2	0	100
2	10	1	90.9
3	9	0	100
4	23	4	85.1
5	35	6	85.3
6	22	6	78.5
7	5	3	62.5

Table 15 shows a modest inverse relationship between the desire for employment and the number of barriers, in that as the number of barriers increases the desire for employment decreases. However, it is significant that even the portion of the sample with seven barriers still shows a strong desire for employment.

Table 16 helps to highlight the relationship between number of barriers and a person's reported ability to work.

**Table 16: Comparison Between Able to Work and Number of Barriers**

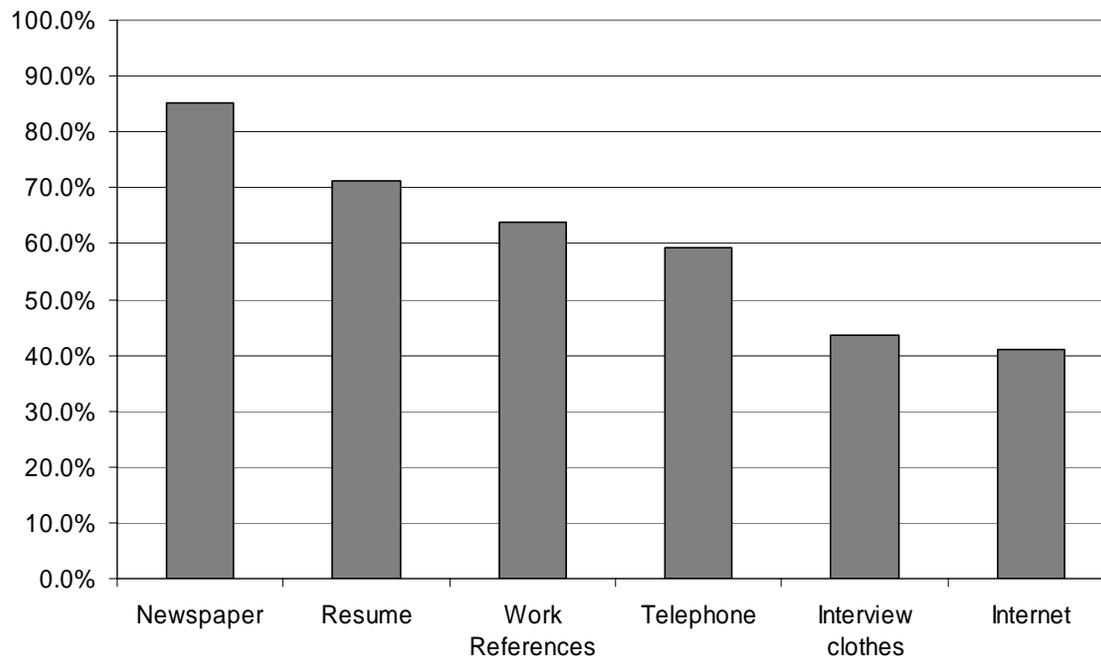
# of Barriers	Yes	No	Percent of Respondents who Answered Yes
1	2	0	100
2	12	0	100
3	7	2	77.7
4	17	11	60.7
5	28	13	68.2
6	16	11	59.2
7	1	7	12.5

Again an inverse relationship is observed between the number of barriers and the ability to work. The extreme drop in ability reported by people with seven barriers supports the findings in the literature.

## Acquiring Employment

The data presented so far helps explain the significant unemployment in this sample. Another potential problem could be the methods used to acquire employment. At a basic level, a person seeking employment must have access to certain job search tools. Respondents were asked to identify what job search tools they had access to. Graph 9 shows the percentages of the sample that had access to the following job search tools.

**Graph 9: Job Search Tools**



A strong majority (71.1%) of respondents reported having the most important job search tool: a resume. The data further indicates good access to the majority of job search tools. There were only two tools to which respondents reported only fair access: interview clothes and the Internet. That the homeless report a lack of interview clothing should not be surprising given the difficulty the homeless face arranging clothing storage, laundry, money to purchase new clothing. The lack of Internet access comes as a greater surprise given the number of potential log-in points. However, there is evidence that the homeless are largely excluded from the services that supply and direct employment searches through the Internet. It was found that services in Niagara that target the homeless population focus on basic needs like food and shelter as opposed to employment.

Respondents were asked to identify how they obtained their last three jobs. Table 17 lists respondents' top three answers over their last three jobs.

**Table 17: How did you get jobs?**

Most recent	# of Respondents	2 <sup>nd</sup> Most recent	# of Respondents	3 <sup>rd</sup> Most recent	# of Respondents
Friends	37	Friends	33	Friends	25
Newspapers	20	Cold calling	20	Newspapers	10
Cold calling	18	Newspapers	17	Word of mouth	6

Overwhelming the data shows that friends are opening the door to employment for this sample. This is an interesting finding given that the number one hiring method for businesses contacted was Knowing people/staff recommendations. The ways that lead to employment often corresponds with the method(s) used while looking. Table 18 ranks the respondents' employment search method(s).

**Table 18: Methods Used When Unemployed**

Method Used	Percent of Respondents who Use
Newspaper	84.1%
Word of Mouth	80.2%
Friends	73.8%
Employment help	68.3%
HRSDC	46.8%
Internet search	45.2%
Cold calling	43.7%
Other	15.6%

The responses suggest that the methods do affect the means in which the homeless population obtain employment. One point of interest in this data is that close to 70% of respondents use an employment help service yet this method does not seem to correspond with getting employment. A possible explanation for this finding is that the homeless population does not access employment help services as a means of finding jobs but rather as a resume and interviewing service or as a point to access employment search tools. Indeed, this explanation was supported by the respondents when they were asked to identify what services they sought through employment help. Respondents used private temporary employment agencies like *Labour Ready* or *The Burke Group* to find employment. This finding is supported in the literature review, which identified the strong desire in the homeless population for cash employment.

### **Employment Views**

It is suggested in the literature, although largely disregarded, that the homeless represent an underclass with views on employment substantially divergent of mainstream society's views. This finding, if true, would help explain the severe unemployment rate of the homeless. A

number of questions were specifically targeted to test the views of the homeless regarding employment. Respondents were asked to consider what they believed was a good job and then to list their reasons for making that selection. Also, respondents were asked to consider what they believe was a bad job and then to list their reasons for making that selection. Table 19 lists the top three reasons for both what characterizes a good job and a bad job.

**Table 19: Characteristics of Good/Bad Jobs**

<b>Characteristics Good Job</b>	<b># of responses</b>	<b>Characteristics Bad Job</b>	<b># of responses</b>
Good pay	40	Low Pay	33
Like working with people	36	Dirty/Smelly	33
Enjoyment/Satisfaction	36	Boring/Repetitive	30

The data does not support the conclusion that the homeless exhibit a divergent view of what makes a good job and what makes a bad job. It seems likely that mainstream society would largely agree with the list as presented above. In addition, when asked what skills would make them a valuable employee, the most frequent response was being a good worker. It is interesting to note that the characteristics of a bad job are the characteristics of the type of employment accessible to the homeless population.

# **Report on the Social Service Agency Views Niagara Region**

Ten social service agencies participated in an agency interview designed to develop a richer understanding of the issues surrounding access to employment service by homeless persons in the Niagara region. These ten agencies represent a wide range of services to the homeless including mental health, employment, shelter, and community development. The interviews followed an interview guide but allowed considerable latitude. The following are the themes that were consistently discussed:

- Social service agencies' view of clients;
- Type of programs targeting homeless;
- Impact of funding on services;
- What is "success";
- Gaps in service and recommendations.

### ***Social Service Agencies' View of Clients***

The agencies, although varied, offered a surprisingly consistent view of "who" the homeless are. Significantly, all services identified that the homeless were vulnerable people lacking basic needs and exhibiting extreme emotional stress. These agencies believed that this was the result of the homeless living unstable volatile lifestyles and due to the multiple barriers they encounter notably addictions, mental illness, and criminal involvement.

### ***Type of Programs Targeting Homeless***

When asked what programs existed for the homeless the service providers identified shelter, food, and referrals. A few services believed that employment programs were out of the reach perhaps even counterproductive for homeless individuals. This belief was predicated on the view that the homeless lifestyle was not conducive to traditional employment because of the uncertainty and volatility associated with this lifestyle as well as the significant barriers faced daily.

### ***Impact of Funding on Social Service Agencies***

All agencies said that how their services were developed and offered is primarily dependant on funding and consequentially the preferences of the funders. This system of funding means that the funder directs the type of client and/or target populations served. This lead to a number of important observations by the service agencies:

- The majority of the agencies surmised that this is the reason why specific or targeted homeless programs rarely moved beyond supplying basic needs like emergency shelter, food, and general referrals;
- The amount and duration of funding does not provide for intensive, long term support beyond meeting basic needs;
- The funder and the funder's priorities determine program success. In most instances, success is narrowly focused only on quantifiable outcome measures. (number of visits, meals served, number of referrals, etc);

- Competitive funding can create a “turf” mentality amongst agencies that limits communication, cooperation, and client access/choice. Conversely, it was also mentioned that funding can be used to create partnerships;
- A few agencies commented that a significant or disproportionate number of staff hours and agency resources were expended pursuing various funding options in order to maintain services.

### ***What are Best Practices?***

The social services agencies answered this question in a number of different ways but in all cases the following represents a consistent summary. The following are the agencies’ consensus of best practices.

- Provides effective service to clients;
- Service(s) consistently meets program outcomes and community needs;
- Has secure and stable/core funding;
- Recognized as a credible service within the community;
- Builds community capacity.

### ***Gaps and Recommendations in Service***

All the social service agencies interviewed were asked to identify gaps in service and offer any recommendations to improve services. The majority of respondents identified the following gaps and made the recommendations:

**Gap** - The lack of a safe haven for the hardest-to-serve. Most agencies commented on the vulnerability of this client group and believed real dangers existed because of predators and unregulated situations.

**Recommendation** - Provide hard-to-serve with a safe haven that is inclusive, respectful, and empowering. This haven would protect people from predators (i.e. drug pushers, sexual exploiters, etc) while supplying basic needs (i.e. food, clothing, hygiene), opportunities to reduce isolation and activities that increase exposure to gainful use of time.

**Gap** - High levels of misinformation passed between homeless individuals regarding the services available to them in the community.

**Recommendation** - Agency staff requires continuous education about the resources that exist in the community in order to ensure that clients obtain up-to-date and factually correct information.

**Gap** - A truly client centred approach to service delivery.

**Recommendation** - (1) Funders and funding bodies should mandate a participatory client representation model (no decisions about me, without me) when determining allocations. (2) Success should be determined in partnership with service users. (3) Emphasis should be placed on client success and less on program success. (4) A seamless service delivery model would increase the number of appropriate referrals and successful outcomes for these individuals.



# **Report on the Business Views**

## **Niagara Region**

Five businesses participated in interviews designed to engage this largely excluded stakeholder in the debate. It is overwhelmingly apparent in the literature that the issues surrounding homeless employment, retention, and advancement require businesses to be involved in a capacity other than as generators of income. Clearly, the views of these five businesses cannot be considered anything more than as a signpost. It should be noted that by and large their views conformed to expectations developed in the accompanying literature review. With that said, it is an important step to open this dialogue with Niagara's businesses and work to include this important stakeholder.

### ***Business Demographics***

The five businesses are located within Regional Niagara and all regularly offer competitive entry-level employment opportunities. The businesses span the range from small operations of 10 or less employees to very large operations of 600 plus employees. The employers operate in the Service, Hospitality, and Manufacturing industries for both domestic and international markets. These businesses offer starting salaries that range from \$9 to \$15 per hour and three of the five offer limited benefits after 6 months and full benefits after one-year employment. Two employers out of the five required a criminal reference check upon employment and none practiced drug screening. Finally, all of the employers offered training incentives for their employees.

### ***Hiring***

A number of hiring practices were used by the businesses to attract employees. The top three methods are:

1. **Knowing people/Staff recommendations** – This was the preferred method of hiring. Staff has an in-depth knowledge of the skills required on the job thereby removing a significant portion of new hire risk. Additionally, staff recommendations contribute to employee empowerment;
2. **Advertising in newspapers** – A fairly standard hiring tool. One employer believed that rural areas were underserved by local newspapers which limited the utility for advertising positions for rural employers because of potential transportation issues between urban employees and the rural workplace;
3. **Service agencies** – The majority believed that the social service agencies dealing with employment could potentially become a major avenue for new hires. However, they did express concerns that the employment service agencies did not “understand” what was required in a good employee and/or that they tried to place inappropriate employees.

### **Barriers to Retention**

When the employers were asked what limits employee retention three primary factors were consistently identified:

1. Absenteeism/Reliability – All employers agreed that employee absenteeism reduces employment retention. Significantly, both explained and unexplained absenteeism reduced retention. Employers felt that missing work multiple times, even if with a reason, still decreased the employee's relative reliability, which decreased retention.
2. Intensive Supervision – All employers expect that employees require a certain level of supervision. They also expect that the level of supervision will decrease as the employee learns what is expected of them. At some point in this process, the employers will decide that an employee requires supervision beyond an acceptable level. Once this point is reached, the likelihood of an employee being terminated increases with the resultant decrease in employment retention.
3. Transportation – While having a car was not a requirement for any of the employers, a general concern with transportation was noted. In two cases, buses could not access the employer's worksites. This has led to a number of complications with reliability and retention.

### **Employee Advancement**

The literature review clearly identified the necessity of developing advancement strategies in tandem with retention planning. In order to develop these discussion employers were asked to list their top three factors for advancing an employee. The majority of employers identified the following three factors:

1. Seniority;
2. Willingness – Simply that the employee shows a willingness to advance within the business. This can be accomplished by expressing the desire to advance, taking training opportunities, and/or taking on extra tasks;
3. Attitude – All employers agreed that every employee who advances has the "right" attitude. Although this attitude was subjectively applied in all cases even referred to as a "gut" feeling or the right fit. At its most basic, an employee must commit to the employer.

It should be noted that education is conspicuously absent from this list given the prominent place afforded education in the literature review. Given the limited size of the business sample used, its absence should not be interpreted as contradictory with the literature review.



# **Observations and Recommendations**

This report set out to determine Best Practices with regard to employment access for homeless individuals. However, the literature review showed a lack of research in this area, as very little exists beyond acquiring employment. By and large, a concern with homeless employment ceases when employment is found. Given the lack of breadth and depth necessary for the formulation of recommendations a set of significant observations has been developed from which future research and recommendations can be drawn.

However, there were clear findings around the multiplicity of barriers faced by homeless individuals as they acquire employment. Three important recommendations are offered at the conclusion of the observations about these.

### ***Observations from Literature Review***

- Individuals need the stability of permanent, affordable housing to take steps to employment.
- Employment assistance needs to be comprehensive, including employment development planning, skills upgrading, job training, job placement and post placement follow up.
- Those lacking in education and literacy skills need educational upgrading and literacy training.
- Individualized employment plans are needed because individuals experience barriers differently.
- A positive encouraging atmosphere supported by appropriate referral and access to therapy is critical for the success of individuals struggling with a mental health barrier.
- Cooperation and coordination are needed among service providers, employers and governmental programs.
- Employment services need to develop relationships with employers to understand employer needs in order to match these with appropriate referrals and to provide appropriate post employment supports.
- Treatment of substance abuse issues is a gradual process and individuals with substance abuse issues must be ready for involvement in employment programs.
- The provision of adequate supports (housing, food security, childcare, transportation, and healthcare) to individuals is necessary to maintain the focus on employment and make a successful transition from social assistance.
- Employment retention requires on going assessment, personal support and case management.
- Employment agencies must include post employment support programs/services.
- Both employment retention and advancement require on going skills development and educational upgrading.
- Employer incentives such as wage subsidies should be targeted to employers who pay a living wage.
- Entry requirements into employment assistance programs must be less restrictive so that homeless individuals can benefit. An example of a restriction is recent past attachment to labour force.
- Adequate resources for transportation and comprehensive transportation systems are critical to employment acquisition, retention, and advancement.
- Ability to meet family or personal financial needs is key to employment retention.
- Assessment for employment services must consider the multiplicity of barriers.

- Employment barriers have an additive effect. Services should be designed to eliminate or reduce the number of barriers as opposed to targeting specific barriers.
- A mental health barrier has a greater impact on retention and advancement than other barriers.
- Further research is needed to explore the link between early first episode of homelessness and chronic homelessness.
- The consequences of youth homelessness must be examined in greater depth.

### ***Observations from Research Advisory Committee***

- Current funding guidelines, services, and even knowledge about the population of individuals who are homeless exist in separate silos. In order to improve services and access to employment the silos must be eliminated and a comprehensive integrated model of service delivery implemented.
- Knowledge about the homeless population needs to be integrated through a common assessment tool and centralized intake process that will assist service providers to work together effectively to address multiple barriers and improve employment outcomes.
- A focus on benchmarks will require individualized case management using a multi-disciplinary model.
- Eligibility requirements for income support for homeless individuals with multiple employment barriers must be de-linked from employment outcome expectations.
- Criteria for entry into and participation in employment assistance programs for homeless individuals with multiple barriers to employment must be inclusive and flexible.

### ***Observations from Agency Survey***

- Program funding must extend beyond emergency services.
- The timelines for program funding should be lengthened to maintain the continuity needed to address an individual's long term barriers to employment.
- Homeless individuals require a safe point of entry or safe haven that is inclusive, respectful, and empowering.
- Outcome measures should be determined in partnership with service users and be based on the achievement of individual benchmarks rather than preset program goals.
- Tools that improve tracking benchmarks as a reporting method for program outcomes are needed in order to strengthen the continuum of supports necessary for the achievement of employment outcomes for homeless individuals. Comprehensive outcome measures should be developed more fully.
- Cooperation and collaboration between service providers is critical for sustainable employment to become a reality for homeless individuals.

### **Recommendations**

- The most important barrier to employment is the compounding and additive nature of the multiple barriers faced by the homeless individuals in this study. Programs to assist them in accessing and maintaining employment must respond to and address multiple barriers concurrently.
- In order to address multiple barriers concurrently services to homeless individuals should be reconfigured from the separate servicing of individual barriers to a comprehensive and integrated model of service delivery.
- Addressing the multiple barriers of homeless individuals requires a move away from a focus on short-term employment outcomes to a longer-term focus with follow-up on benchmarks that track the acquisition and retention of employment as well as advancement in employment for these individuals.

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# **APPENDIX A**

## **Homeless Access to Employment**

### **Survey 2006**

**Interviewer** \_\_\_\_\_

**City** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_/2006

**Demographics:**

1. What city do you live in? \_\_\_\_\_

2. Female  Male  (Do not ask, just check box)

3. What year were you born in? \_\_\_\_\_

4. Were you born in Canada? Yes  No

If "No",

i. What country were you born in?

\_\_\_\_\_

ii. How long have you lived in Canada?

\_\_\_\_\_

iii. What is your current immigration status?

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Other than Canadian, how would you describe your ethnic ancestry?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Is English your first language? Yes  No

If "No",

i. What was your first language?

\_\_\_\_\_

7. Do you read English: Well  Somewhat  Not Well

8. Do you write English: Well  Somewhat  Not Well

9. Highest level of education completed? \_\_\_\_\_

10. Why did you finish school when you did?

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11. What best describes your household?

Single  Sole Support Parent  Two Parent  Couple

12. Do you have children? Yes  No

If "Yes",

i. How many? \_\_\_\_\_

ii. What are the ages of your children? \_\_\_\_\_

iii. Do they live with you? Yes  No

If "Yes",

a. Are your children in Daycare? Yes  No

b. What is your main source of child care? (ex. daycare, relative, neighbour, etc.)

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c. On a scale of 1- 5, with 5 being the best, how would you rank your main source of child care with regard to:

<b>Convenience</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Reliability</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Cost</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Safety</b>	1	2	3	4	5

### Health

13. Generally, how would you describe your health?

Excellent  Good  Adequate  Fair  Poor

14. Do you have any chronic (long term) health problems? Yes  No   
If "Yes", what are they?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

15. Compared to one year ago, how is your health now?  
Better  About the same  Worse

16. How often do you meet with a medical professional? (Ex. Doctor, Nurse, Specialist)  
Times/Week \_\_\_\_ Times/Month \_\_\_\_ Times/Year \_\_\_\_

17. Have you ever struggled with your mental health? Yes  No

If "Yes",

i. Are you currently struggling? Yes  No

ii. When was the last time you struggled with your mental health?

\_\_\_\_\_

iii. Have you ever been clinically diagnosed with a mental health issue?  
Yes  No

iv. Do you feel that your struggle has made it difficult for you to start a job?  
Yes  No

v. Do you feel that your struggle has made it difficult for you at a job?  
Yes  No

vi. Do you believe that your struggle has caused you to lose a job?  
Yes  No

vii. Have you ever told you Employer about your struggle?  
Yes  No

If "Yes", what was the result of telling the Employer?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

18. In an average week, how many days would you say you felt depressed? \_\_\_\_\_ days

**Substance Usage**

19. Which of the following substances are you **currently** using?

Cigarettes How often? \_\_\_\_\_

Alcohol How often? \_\_\_\_\_

Marijuana How often? \_\_\_\_\_

Cocaine How often? \_\_\_\_\_

Inhalants (hairspray, gas, etc) How often? \_\_\_\_\_

Over the counter drugs How often? \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_ How often? \_\_\_\_\_

20. Have you ever been to Detox/A.A/N.A.? Yes  No

If "Yes", how many times in the last year? \_\_\_\_\_

21. Have you ever gotten into trouble at work because of drugs/alcohol? Yes  No

If "Yes", what happened?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

22. Have you lost a job because of drug/alcohol use? Yes  No

23. Have you been denied service or entrance into a program because of drugs/alcohol?

Yes  No

If "Yes", what services or programs have you been denied service or entrance into?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

24. Would you say that drugs or alcohol has had a negative effect on your life?

Yes  No

25. Have you ever been asked to take a drug test/screening? Yes  No   
If "Yes", by whom and for what reason?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Criminal Involvement**

26. Have you ever been to jail? Yes  No   
If "Yes",

i. When were you last in jail? \_\_\_\_\_

ii. Were you a minor? Yes  No

iii. Did you get a pardon? Yes  No

iv. How many separate times have you been to jail? \_\_\_\_\_

v. Did your conviction involve a drug offence? Yes  No

vi. Was your crime committed before or after becoming homeless? \_\_\_\_\_

vii. Did you commit a criminal act in order to make money? Yes  No

viii. Have you ever been denied work because of your record? Yes  No

ix. Do you tell your potential employer about your record? Yes  No   
If "Yes", what was the result of telling the Employer?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Income**

27. What was your income from all sources last month? \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
(work, benefits, child support, etc.)

28. What is your **primary** source of income in the last month? (Please check one)

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Part Time Work     | <input type="checkbox"/> Full Time Work              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ODSP               | <input type="checkbox"/> Support Payments            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> OW                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Temp Agency (Cash day work) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 'Farm Labour Pool' | <input type="checkbox"/> EI                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CPP                | <input type="checkbox"/> Begging/Panhandling         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Odd Jobs           | <input type="checkbox"/> Family                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Friends            |  |

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

29. What other sources of income did you have last month? (Check all that apply)

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Part Time Work     | <input type="checkbox"/> Full Time Work              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ODSP               | <input type="checkbox"/> Support Payments            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> OW                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Temp Agency (Cash day work) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 'Farm Labour Pool' | <input type="checkbox"/> EI                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CPP                | <input type="checkbox"/> Begging/Panhandling         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Odd Jobs           | <input type="checkbox"/> Family                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Friends            |  |

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

30. What is your current debt level? \$ \_\_\_\_\_

31. Do you have a bank account? Yes  No

32. Did you file your Income Tax last year? Yes  No

33. Do you plan on filing your Income Tax this year? Yes  No

### **Housing**

34. Where did you sleep most often in the last month?

- My place (permanent residence)
- Long term boarding (motel, boarding, transitional, rooming)
- "Out of the Cold" Program
- Friends house (couch surfing)
- Family
- Shelter
- Hotel
- Outside \_\_\_\_\_

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

35. If in permanent housing what is your monthly rent? \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- i. Does this include utilities? Yes  No
- If "No", how much are your utilities? \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- ii. Is this housing subsidized? Yes  No
- iii. How many people do you share your housing with? \_\_\_\_\_
- iv. How long have you lived there? \_\_\_\_\_
36. How significant is having a job in you keeping/staying in a place?  
Not important  Somewhat important  Important  Very important
37. Was losing a job ever a significant factor in having your utilities turned off?  
Yes  No
38. How safe would you rate your current sleeping situation?  
Safe  Somewhat safe  Somewhat unsafe  Unsafe
39. How safe do you feel walking alone in your community?  
Safe  Somewhat safe  Somewhat unsafe  Unsafe

### **Homeless Experience**

40. How old were you when you first experienced homelessness? \_\_\_\_\_
41. How many separate times have you been homeless in the last 2 years? \_\_\_\_\_
42. How long are you normally homeless for? \_\_\_\_\_
43. What was your longest spell of homelessness? \_\_\_\_\_
44. Was losing a job ever a significant event in your homelessness?  
Yes  No
45. Was losing a job ever a significant factor in you getting an eviction notice?  
Yes  No
46. Was the ending of a "spousal" relationship ever a significant factor in your becoming homeless?  
Yes  No
47. Was losing a child(ren) to care ever a significant factor in your becoming homeless?  
Yes  No
48. Was debt ever a significant factor in your becoming homeless?  
Yes  No

**Discrimination**

49. Have you ever been the target of discrimination? Yes  No   
If "Yes", please describe the type of discrimination and how often it occurs.

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50. Have you ever suffered discrimination on the job? Yes  No   
If "Yes", who discriminated against you (employer, co-worker, etc) and what form did this discrimination take?

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51. Have you ever Quit , Not taken , or been Fired  from a job because of discrimination? (Check any that apply)  
If any checked, please describe the discrimination.

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## **Barriers to Employment**

52. I'm going to read you a list of possible barriers to employment, let me know if they apply to you and if so, how serious a barrier it is to you by ranking it as Not, Occasionally, Often, or Always a barrier to employment.

**Circle one answer for each question**

	<u>Not</u>	<u>Occasional</u>	<u>Often</u>	<u>Always</u>
Knowing how to look for work	1	2	3	4
Lack of work experience	1	2	3	4
Not having the right kind of clothes	1	2	3	4
Not having money for transportation	1	2	3	4
Not having money for child care	1	2	3	4
Customers didn't like the way I look	1	2	3	4
Can't get hired because my teeth are in bad shape	1	2	3	4
Lack of education	1	2	3	4
Poor physical health	1	2	3	4
Lack of good jobs with good pay	1	2	3	4
Have to give up drug card	1	2	3	4
The work is part time	1	2	3	4
Shift work is a problem	1	2	3	4
My children need me at home	1	2	3	4
My wages would be garnished	1	2	3	4
I'm in a training program	1	2	3	4
Difficulty with the English language	1	2	3	4
Trouble with reading and writing	1	2	3	4
Feeling low, no energy, sadness	1	2	3	4
No buses in our area	1	2	3	4

	<u>Not</u>	<u>Occasional</u>	<u>Often</u>	<u>Always</u>
Can't afford a hearing aid	1	2	3	4
Can't afford glasses	1	2	3	4
No car, or car keeps breaking down	1	2	3	4
I'd have to give up my OW	1	2	3	4
I'd have to give up my ODSP	1	2	3	4
Not enough money for food	1	2	3	4
Struggling with my mental health	1	2	3	4
My family doesn't want me to work	1	2	3	4
Employers think I'm too old/young to hire	1	2	3	4
Too much debt right now	1	2	3	4
In the end, would make less money	1	2	3	4
No place to live	1	2	3	4
I'm not comfortable using a computer	1	2	3	4
Its hard to balance working and the appointments I have to keep	1	2	3	4
I have too many problems to be looking for a job right now	1	2	3	4
I don't like dealing with customers	1	2	3	4
I got a criminal record	1	2	3	4
Employers don't like the way I look	1	2	3	4
The training I've taken hasn't gotten me any work	1	2	3	4
I need training but I can't get any assistance to help pay for it	1	2	3	4
I get really nervous at interviews	1	2	3	4
I don't like using math or counting	1	2	3	4
All the jobs are for men/women	1	2	3	4

	<u>Not</u>	<u>Occasional</u>	<u>Often</u>	<u>Always</u>
It's difficult to keep appointments	1	2	3	4
I have no place to keep my stuff safe	1	2	3	4
I haven't worked in awhile	1	2	3	4
I have too many different people telling me what I should be doing	1	2	3	4
No one is willing to give me a break	1	2	3	4
I have trouble reading instruments	1	2	3	4
I don't like dealing with Co-workers	1	2	3	4
I don't have any contacts that can help me find a job	1	2	3	4

*Ask which barrier has the greatest significance and indicate this with a star (\*)*

53. Are there any other barriers to getting a job that you can think of?

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### **Employment**

54. Are you able to work at this time? Yes  No   
If "No", what reasons or responsibilities are keeping you from working?

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55. Are you currently employed? Yes  No

56. I'm now going to ask you some questions about your last 5 jobs.

### **Current Job or Most Recent**

*(If employment is with Temp agency, just consider that as one job, for this section)*

Job Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of work (Factory, Retail, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_

Start date \_\_\_\_\_

Finish Date \_\_\_\_\_

How many hours per week? \_\_\_\_\_

What shift? \_\_\_\_\_

Starting Wage \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Finishing Wage \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Did this job start with Benefits? (Dental, Health, etc.)? Yes  No

Did you receive Benefits at any time during your employment at this job? Yes  No

If "Yes", how long after starting did you first get Benefits and what type were the Benefits?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How did you get this job? (Friend, service, newspaper, etc)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Did this job require any specific qualifications or training? (ex. D licence, welding ticket, etc.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Did you get a promotion at this job? Yes  No

Did the employer ever send you to training paid for by the company? Yes  No

If "Yes", what type of training?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Why did this job end?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Job # 2**

Job Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of work (Factory, Retail, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_

Start date \_\_\_\_\_ Finish Date \_\_\_\_\_

How many hours per week? \_\_\_\_\_ What shift? \_\_\_\_\_

Starting Wage \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Finishing Wage \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Did this job start with Benefits? (Dental, Health, etc.)? Yes  No

Did you receive Benefits at any time during your employment at this job? Yes  No

**If "Yes"**, how long after starting did you first get Benefits and what type were the Benefits?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How did you get this job? (Friend, service, newspaper, etc)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Did this job require any specific qualifications or training? (ex. D licence, welding ticket, etc.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Did you get a promotion at this job? Yes  No

Did the employer ever send you to training paid for by the company? Yes  No

If "Yes", what type of training?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Why did this job end?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Job # 3**

Job Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of work (Factory, Retail, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_

Start date \_\_\_\_\_ Finish Date \_\_\_\_\_

How many hours per week? \_\_\_\_\_ What shift? \_\_\_\_\_

Starting Wage \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Finishing Wage \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Did this job start with Benefits? (Dental, Health, etc.)? Yes  No

Did you receive Benefits at any time during your employment at this job? Yes  No

If "Yes", how long after starting did you first get Benefits and what type were the Benefits?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How did you get this job? (Friend, service, newspaper, etc)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Did this job require any specific qualifications or training? (ex. D licence, welding ticket, etc.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Did you get a promotion at this job? Yes  No

Did the employer ever send you to training paid for by the company? Yes  No

If "Yes", what type of training?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Why did this job end?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Job # 4**

Job Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of work (Factory, Retail, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_

Start date \_\_\_\_\_

Finish Date \_\_\_\_\_

How many hours per week? \_\_\_\_\_

What shift? \_\_\_\_\_

Starting Wage \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Finishing Wage \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Did this job start with Benefits? (Dental, Health, etc.)? Yes  No

Did you receive Benefits at any time during your employment at this job? Yes  No

If “Yes”, how long after starting did you first get Benefits and what type were the Benefits?

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How did you get this job? (Friend, service, newspaper, etc)

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Did this job require any specific qualifications or training? (ex. D licence, welding ticket, etc.)

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Did you get a promotion at this job? Yes  No

Did the employer ever send you to training paid for by the company? Yes  No

If “Yes”, what type of training?

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Why did this job end?

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**Job # 5**

Job Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of work (Factory, Retail, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_

Start date \_\_\_\_\_ Finish Date \_\_\_\_\_

How many hours per week? \_\_\_\_\_ What shift? \_\_\_\_\_

Starting Wage \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Finishing Wage \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Did this job start with Benefits? (Dental, Health, etc.)? Yes  No

Did you receive Benefits at any time during your employment at this job? Yes  No

**If "Yes"**, how long after starting did you first get Benefits and what type were the Benefits?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How did you get this job? (Friend, service, newspaper, etc)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Did this job require any specific qualifications or training? (ex. D licence, welding ticket, etc.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Did you get a promotion at this job? Yes  No

Did the employer ever send you to training paid for by the company? Yes  No

**If "Yes"**, what type of training?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Why did this job end?

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57. In general, do you believe that your jobs have been getting:

Better  About the Same  Worse

58. For the above question, why would you say that?

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59. What was the longest time you spent in one job? \_\_\_\_\_

60. Approximately how many years have you worked since you turned 18? \_\_\_\_\_

61. Do you currently have or have access to:

i. A resume Yes  No

ii. Work references Yes  No

iii. A telephone Yes  No

iv. Internet Yes  No

v. Newspaper Yes  No

vi. Interview clothes Yes  No

62. In what job or type of job would you like to be working?

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63. Name the top 4 reasons why you would like to be working in this job.

- i. \_\_\_\_\_
- ii. \_\_\_\_\_
- iii. \_\_\_\_\_
- iv. \_\_\_\_\_

64. What is the job or type of job you dislike the most?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

65. Name the top 4 reasons why you dislike this job.

- i. \_\_\_\_\_
- ii. \_\_\_\_\_
- iii. \_\_\_\_\_
- iv. \_\_\_\_\_

66. What, if anything, would help you keep a job? (*List as many as possible.*)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

67. Of those you have listed, what would be the greatest help?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

68. Do you want work? Yes  No

**If "Yes", why?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

If "No", why? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

69. What skills or reasons do you think makes you a valuable employee?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

70. What lack of skills or reasons do you think you wouldn't make a good employee?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Job Search Strategies**

71. When unemployed what methods do you use to look for work? (Check all that apply)

Newspapers  Cold calling

Word of mouth  Internet search

HRSDC office  Employment help centre

A friend

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

72. What method has gotten you a job most often? \_\_\_\_\_

73. Have you ever looked for a new job, while still employed? Yes  No

74. What do you look for in a potential job? (ex. good wage, benefits, enjoyable, etc.)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

75. What, if anything, would help you to find a job? (*List as many as possible.*)

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### **Transportation**

76. What is your main way of getting around? \_\_\_\_\_

77. On a scale of 1-5, with 5 being the best, how would you rank your main way of getting around with regard to:

<b>Convenience</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Reliability</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Cost</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Safety</b>	1	2	3	4	5

78. If your main way of getting around weren't available, what would your next way be?

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79. In a typical day, how much of your time is spent getting around? (ex. on bus for ½ hour, then walk for 10 minutes, then...)

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80. In the last year, has transportation ever caused you to miss work?

Yes  No

81. In the last year, has transportation ever caused you to be suspended from work?

Yes  No

## **Barriers to Keeping a Job**

82. I'm going to read you a list of possible barriers to keeping a job, let me know if they apply to you and if so, how serious a barrier it is to you by ranking it as Not, Occasionally, Often, or Always a barrier to keeping employment.

**Circle one answer for each question**

	<u>Not</u>	<u>Occasional</u>	<u>Often</u>	<u>Always</u>
Difficult getting to work on time	1	2	3	4
I didn't really want this job but I had to take it	1	2	3	4
Trouble with Co-workers	1	2	3	4
Working shifts was too hard	1	2	3	4
I missed my children	1	2	3	4
The job pays too little to make it worthwhile	1	2	3	4
Between work and everything else I just couldn't keep it together	1	2	3	4
Trouble with Boss/supervisor	1	2	3	4
It was too hard to know how much money I was getting and when	1	2	3	4
No benefits with the job	1	2	3	4
I was/got ill had to leave	1	2	3	4
Had to struggle with drugs	1	2	3	4
It cost me more to work	1	2	3	4
I didn't feel safe working there	1	2	3	4
Got laid off	1	2	3	4
Employers just hire me for a couple of months then fire me	1	2	3	4
Services helped me get this job but I need help to keep it	1	2	3	4

	<u>Not</u>	<u>Occasional</u>	<u>Often</u>	<u>Always</u>
Once I got working, the job wasn't what I was expecting	1	2	3	4
Conflict between work and keeping appointments	1	2	3	4
Had to struggle with my mental health	1	2	3	4
I need the health benefits provided by OW	1	2	3	4
There wasn't any chance that I'd get a raise or a promotion	1	2	3	4
A problem developed with my family and I had to choose between them or the job	1	2	3	4
All the jobs are seasonal	1	2	3	4
Work was just too hard to get to	1	2	3	4
Employer found out I had a criminal record	1	2	3	4
Employers don't recognize how valuable an employee I am	1	2	3	4
Difficult getting to work all week	1	2	3	4
I'm living pay cheque to pay cheque	1	2	3	4
I need the health benefits provided by ODSP	1	2	3	4
I didn't have reliable child care	1	2	3	4

*Ask which barrier has the greatest significance and indicate this with a star (\*)*

### **General questions**

83. How often did you get a "night out" in the last month? \_\_\_\_\_

84. Where do you spend the majority of the daytime?  
\_\_\_\_\_

85. Where do you spend the majority of your nighttime?  
\_\_\_\_\_

86. Do you have family living in the area? Yes  No   
 If "Yes", in the last month how often did you spend time with family?

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87. Do you ever feel isolated or alone? Often  Sometimes  Never
88. I'm going to read you a number of statements and I'd like you tell me whether you Agree, Somewhat Agree, Somewhat Disagree, or Disagree.

**Circle one answer for each question**

	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Somewhat Agree</u>	<u>Somewhat Disagree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>
When I'm sick I have someone to help me	1	2	3	4
When I have an important choice to make I have someone to ask advice of	1	2	3	4
If I'm feeling down I know someone who will cheer me up or listen to my problem	1	2	3	4
If I really needed some cash to tide me over, I know someone who would lend it to me	1	2	3	4
I know someone that I would trust with something very valuable to me	1	2	3	4

**Service Involvement**

89. Have you ever used an Employment Resource Centre? Yes  No

If "Yes", with \_\_\_\_\_

What was the outcome? (Skills learned, Training received, Assistance with...)

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90. Have you ever worked with an Agency to find a job? Yes  No

If "Yes", with \_\_\_\_\_

How specifically did this agency help you?

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91. Have you ever worked with an Agency to keep a job? Yes  No

If "Yes", with \_\_\_\_\_

How specifically did this agency help you?

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92. Have you ever worked with an Agency to get a better job? Yes  No

If "Yes", with \_\_\_\_\_

How specifically did this agency help you?

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93. Have you ever taken a Workshop (ex. job search, resume writing)? Yes  No

If "Yes", with \_\_\_\_\_

What type of workshop and did it help you?

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94. Have you ever taken Training (ex. Computers, Food service)? Yes  No

If "Yes", with \_\_\_\_\_

What type of training and did it help you?

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95. Have you ever taken a Life Skills course (Anger Management, Parenting, Budgeting)?  
Yes  No

If "Yes", with \_\_\_\_\_

How specifically did this agency help you?

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96. Have you ever taken a continuing education program with a service agency?  
Yes  No

If "Yes", with \_\_\_\_\_

Did this help you and in what ways?

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97. Have you ever taken English as a Second Language? Yes  No

If "Yes", with \_\_\_\_\_

Did this help you and in what ways?

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98. Have you ever started a business with help from a service agency? Yes  No

If "Yes", with \_\_\_\_\_

How specifically did this help you?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

99. Have you ever done volunteer work because of your involvement with a service agency?  
Yes  No

If "Yes", with \_\_\_\_\_

Do you think volunteering helped you and if so in what ways?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

100. Have you ever had a service agency contact you after you got a job? Yes  No

If "Yes", what agency? \_\_\_\_\_

For what reason?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# **APPENDIX B**

## **Review of**

# **Financial and Training Incentives**

This review will discuss the financial and training incentives outlined in Holzer and Martinson (2005) and Michalopoulos (2005) aimed at helping low-income people obtain self-sufficiency. First, Holzer and Martinson (2005) reveal a range of job market strategies that affect retention and advancement outcomes. These strategies stated by the authors include: (1) supplement low wages and benefits through financial incentives and supports; (2) address various personal and family needs through case management; (3) improve skill development; and (4) improve access to and interactions with employers through employer-based strategies.

With respect to financial incentives and supports, Holzer and Martinson (2005) states that evaluations show financial incentives can raise employment levels and earnings among low-wage workers. These authors list a financial incentive program, namely, the American government's Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC); and the following earnings supplement programs: Canadian Self-Sufficiency Program (SSP) and the Texas Employment Retention and Advancement Program (ERA). Evaluations of these programs show that SSP had large effects on employment, earnings, job stability, lessening poverty, while the Texas ERA resulted in relatively small effects on employment levels. Other earnings supplement programs listed by the authors include: Milwaukee New Hope Project, Minnesota Family Independence Program (MFIP), Iowa Family Independence Program (FIP), and Connecticut Jobs First Program.

Holzer and Martinson (2005) states that the New Hope program in addition to the supplement, provided guaranteed health benefits, childcare and community service jobs. This program had initial gains in employment and earnings, but these gains faded over time. The authors also reveal that the Jobs-Plus demonstration offered a drop in the rate at which their rents increased with higher earnings, supplemented with employment-related services and built informal community supports for employment. Financial incentives provided through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) as an earned income disregard are included in MFIP, FIP and Jobs First programs. Holzer and Martinson (2005) conclude that MFIP was the most successful of these as indicated by gains in employment and earnings and reductions in poverty. Furthermore, they argue that SSP and MFIP are most successful when subsidies are tied to full-time work even though effects on work fade over time unless the subsidies are permanent.

In sum, Holzer and Martinson (2005) shows that a mix of services that includes job search, education, training, and case management, while maintaining pressure on most individuals to gain employment produced the best results. Examples include Portland, Oregon site in the National Evaluation of Welfare-to-Work Strategies (NEWWS), which had large increases in employment, earnings and job stability. The authors also state that an analysis of three sites in the NEWWS evaluation found that high school non-graduates in basic education had large increases in longer-term earnings if they also participated in job training. There are other initiatives that rely on skill development to help maintain self-sufficiency.

Accordingly, Holzer and Martinson (2005) reveal that at Tacoma Community College there is an initiative that integrated basic skills and training programs in early childhood education and health areas to create pathways from low-literacy into degree programs. Also, other approaches that relate to training and case management include transitional jobs and the Cleveland Achieve program. Here the authors state that transitional jobs approach combines training and support services along with paid work experience for usually less than a year for the hard-to-serve. As for the Cleveland Achieve program, this initiative provides on-site case management and assistance on job-related issues to low-wage workers in the long-term nursing care industry

where retention gains appear to get smaller over time, particularly after six months. Holzer and Martinson (2005) also list a number of employer-based strategies that help lead to self-sufficiency.

Some of these strategies include higher wages, unionized jobs, placement in large firms, third party intermediaries, and sectoral initiatives. The authors reveal that higher wages generate greater incentives for workers to perform better and retain jobs. Furthermore, unionized establishments likely reduce turnover as well as provide better health benefits which leads to better worker retention. Also, Holzer and Martinson (2005) states that employment in large firms results in low turnover rates and more on-the-job training and more opportunities for promotion. Third party intermediaries also have access to employers through the use of temporary help agencies that match low-wage workers with jobs they might otherwise not know about.

With respect to sectoral initiatives, this strategy improves access of low-income people in labour markets to existing jobs, and also increases the quantity and quality jobs available within those industries. Overall, these sectoral initiatives found that workers experienced improvements in employment rates and wages. Also, the author indicates there is a subset of sectoral initiatives that seeks to build career ladders in low-wage occupational categories. Here, Holzer and Martinson (2005) show that these initiatives seek to lay out a sequence of connected skills upgrading and job opportunities, with each education step on the ladder leading to a job and/or further education or training. As well, the authors conclude that career ladder efforts are geared toward a specific employer, but cover a certain sector or range of industries with health care and manufacturing as the most common. For example, there are attempts that involve the use of third-party intermediaries in building career ladders in nursing homes located in Massachusetts, the Bronx, and Chicago.

This review will now discuss the financial and training incentives outlined in Michalopoulos (2005) aimed at helping low-income people obtain self-sufficiency. This report describes recent results from four studies of programs that supplemented the earnings of low-income adults. The four studies, which took place beginning in the early 1990's, are the Canadian Self-Sufficiency Project (SSP), the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP), Milwaukee's New Hope Project, and Connecticut's Jobs First Program. Michalopoulos (2005) lists the main findings of the four studies which are: (1) the program increased employment, earnings, and income; (2) effects on welfare receipt varied with the structure of the earnings supplement offer; (3) the effects of the program diminished over time where after five to seven years, the economic gains had largely dissipated; and (4) effects of the policies on employment and earnings were larger and more persistent for a group of very disadvantaged families.

When looking at the MFIP, Michalopoulos (2005) states that the pilot version was begun in 1994 to test whether financial incentive would encourage welfare recipients to work. Here, he explains that MFIP provides its financial incentive through an enhanced earnings disregard, which means that a welfare recipient in MFIP could earn more than under the old system before becoming ineligible to receive cash assistance. Before under the old system; namely, Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), there was 100 per cent tax on additional earnings and it provided a strong incentive not to work.

As for SSP, the author explains this supplement offered temporary earnings to selected single-parent welfare recipients in the provinces of British Columbia and New Brunswick. In this instance, Michalopoulos (2005) states the earning supplement was a monthly cash payment that was available to single parents who had been on welfare for at least one year and who left welfare and worked at least 30 hours per week. The supplement was paid on top of earnings from employment for up to three years, as long as the person continued to work full time and remained off welfare. There was also a monthly earnings supplement offered through Milwaukee's New Hope project. This supplement was paid to low-income families if one parent worked at least 30 hours per week. Furthermore, Michalopoulos (2005) adds that New Hope also offered public health insurance and childcare subsidies for parents who worked full time where all benefits were available for up to three years. Also, adults who wanted to work full time could be placed into community service jobs up to six months.

With respect to Connecticut's Jobs First, this program supplemented the earnings of welfare recipients by enhancing its earnings disregard. Here, Michalopoulos (2005) reveals that Jobs First requires welfare recipients to prepare for work either through job search classes or through adult basic education. Also, even though the Jobs First contains a generous earnings supplement, it also includes a 21-month time limit on welfare benefits. Michalopoulos (2005) also states that a review of the programs shows that while SSP and New Hope rewarded only full-time work, MFIP and Jobs First also rewarded part-time work. Thus, he concludes most families would be expected to benefit from MFIP and Jobs First even though a low-wage parent in MFIP received less incentive to work full time than to work part time. Like MFIP, the author states that the Jobs First enhanced earnings disregard rewarded both part-time and full-time work.

Still, Michalopoulos (2005) concludes that unlike MFIP, Jobs First rewarded full-time work more than part-time work because welfare benefits were not reduced at all, whereas MFIP reduced benefits by 62 cents with each additional dollar of earnings. Unfortunately, Jobs First cut a family's welfare check and food stamp benefit to zero if the parent earned one dollar more than the poverty threshold. As well, Michalopoulos (2005) believes the Jobs First program is the only one in which the employment gains did not diminish after the first or second year. He concludes that the time limit may also have provided an impetus for Job First families to stay at work or find jobs. Also, Michalopoulos (2005) indicates that the results from MFIP and Jobs First show effects on employment and earnings were concentrated among long-term welfare recipients and were small among recent welfare applicants.

A further analysis of MFIP shows that the welfare-to-work services in this program focused on helping participants find jobs but allowed the more unskilled participants to receive some education or training before looking for work (Michalopoulos, 2005). He states, in fact, employment gains in MFIP came primarily by adding mandatory employment services to the programs' earning supplement. The author also makes further conclusions that concern the employment of MFIP participants. Michalopoulos (2005) reveals that MFIP's earnings supplement encouraged some parents to work less. In general, he believes financial incentives can encourage work cut backs if they allow families to achieve sufficient income with less work by replacing earnings with earnings supplements. Nevertheless, he argues that this situation can have other benefits for families. For example, allowing parents to spend more time with their children and reducing work-related stress.

Further conclusions that concern SSP show that earnings supplements alone are enough to encourage work, even full-time work, when they are generous and well marketed (Michalopoulos, 2005). He also compares SSP and MFIP and argues that by contrast, MFIP showed that financial incentives by themselves, if they are not very generous for the first few months of work, might not be enough for most people. In addition, he states that both SSP and MFIP show that combining earnings supplements with work requirements or voluntary employment services increase the supplements' overall effects, particularly on employment and earnings. The author also believes that full-time work is more beneficial than part-time work.

In this respect, Michalopoulos (2005) indicates people who worked because of the programs might learn valuable skills and earn more over time through raises and job promotions or by finding better jobs. Because of this factor, he concludes that this is more likely to happen for those working full time than for those working part time, so this effect is expected to be larger for SSP and New Hope, the two programs that required full-time work. Michalopoulos (2005) also makes several conclusions that concern the effectiveness of earnings supplements.

Here, he explains that combining earnings supplements with job search services can therefore boost both employment and income. Still, Michalopoulos (2005) cautions despite going to work earlier, people who were offered earnings supplements generally earned no more than their control group counterparts after five to seven years. He also reveals that results from SSP Plus suggest, however, that the short-term employment effects of earnings supplements could be prolonged by providing post-employment and job advancement assistance. As for the effectiveness of the earnings supplement, its effects on income disappeared when the supplements were withdrawn.

Nevertheless, Michalopoulos (2005) argues that the earnings supplement can benefit two different groups. The first group includes people who would not work without supplements. For this group the earnings supplement can stimulate work and increase income while reducing welfare receipt. The other group includes people who would have worked regardless. Here the earnings supplement increases income and might actually encourage them to work fewer hours. Specifically, Michalopoulos (2005) believes that earnings supplements should be targeted at those who are least likely to work, such as long-term welfare recipients or the long-term unemployed, and to reduce cost, tie earnings supplements to full-time work. In addition, he reveals that this policy of linking earnings supplements to full-time work would limit the work-hour reductions among workers evident in programs like MFIP and New Hope. Furthermore, this strategy would contain the costs of additional incentives, and would make it more likely that families are self-sufficient. Simply put, Michalopoulos (2005) states that full-time work is more likely than part-time work to provide fringe benefits such as health insurance, and to produce skills that would also increase a person's chances of being self-sufficient.

With respect to the costs of the MFIP, New Hope, SSP and Jobs First initiatives, Michalopoulos (2005) provides such budgetary information. First, he explains MFIP spent about \$1,900 per year over a five-year period for each family in the program group. The costs came primarily from the program's more generous earnings disregard and the ability of families to continue receiving Medicaid while receiving welfare. New Hope spent about \$4,000 per program group member on its services and work supports. About a quarter of the costs were allocated for childcare subsidies and another quarter of the cost covered case management, administrative costs, and developing and managing community service jobs. As for the costs of SSP, Michalopoulos (2005) states overall amount was less than \$110 per year per program group member over the

six-year follow-up period. Finally, he indicates Jobs First did not incur additional transfer payment costs, although the net cost of employment services and related support services in Jobs First, that is, the cost over and above what was spent in the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program, was about \$450 per person per year over the five years. This supplement was especially allocated for childcare subsidies in Jobs First.

