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Moving people from food assistance to self-sufficiency
New pilot program to measure if enhanced services lead to better employment outcomes

DES MOINES, Wash. — King County residents receiving food assistance will have new opportunities to learn and improve job skills through a pilot program at Highline College.

The pilot program, called Resources to Initiate Successful Employment (RISE), will help people in Washington’s Basic Food program and will work with Highline’s existing Basic Food Employment and Training (BFET) program. Participants don’t need to enroll at Highline College to take part.

The program is designed for people facing multiple barriers to employment, including homeless adults, individuals with limited English skills, veterans and those who owe child support.

“Our first goal is helping people achieve stability in their lives. Some will need help finding an affordable place to live while others may need help sorting out financial issues,” said Marty Sanders, who is a case manager for RISE at Highline College. “We help them locate resources for stability, then we move to training and/or work-based learning opportunities.”

Highline will receive \$150,252 during the first year of the three-year grant. Funding is provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and administered through Washington’s Department of Social and Health Services, which also funds BFET. Statewide, \$22 million is allocated for the three-year pilot project. After Highline’s grant has ended, the college may be eligible for additional funding if it can identify an annual 50 percent, non-federal match.

RISE includes a number of services to move people from food assistance to self-reliance:

- Personalized coaching and case management before, during and after training and employment.
- A free six-week Strategies for Success course to develop job and school readiness.
- The potential for paid internships, on-the-job training and other work-based learning opportunities.

Highline expects to provide RISE services to 180 participants over the three-year period.

Washington is one of 10 states to receive the USDA grant and King County is one of four counties participating in the pilot. The pilot will measure if enhanced services like wrap-around case management, the Strategies for Success course and work-based learning opportunities enhance employment outcomes for the people who participate, compared to existing BFET services.

As a pilot program, participants have to agree to be a part of a research study. Half of those interested (50 percent) will be placed into the treatment group (RISE program) and the other half (50 percent) will be placed into the control group, where they will receive existing services through the BFET program.

“We believe that helping people achieve stability—and then gain skills—will give them more opportunities and confidence to be competitive for living-wage jobs,” said Sanders, who came to Highline in December, bringing more than five years’ experience in student advising and case management.

In addition to Highline College, North Seattle College and eight community-based organizations in King County are participating in the RISE pilot program: Career Path Services, FareStart, Multi-Service Center, Neighborhood House, Puget Sound Training Center, Seattle Goodwill, TRAC Associates and YWCA (Renton and Seattle).

For information or eligibility, visit the Workforce Education Services office in Building 1 on Highline’s main campus or contact Marty Sanders: (206) 592-4387 or masanders@highline.edu.

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Highline College was founded in 1961 as the first community college in King County. With nearly 17,000 annual students and 350,000 alumni, it is one of the state’s largest institutions of higher education. The college offers a wide range of academic transfer, professional-technical education and bachelor’s degree programs. Alumni include former Seattle Mayor Norm Rice, entrepreneur Junki Yoshida and former Washington state poet laureate Sam Green.

Attachment: Photo of Marty Sanders