COMMONWEALTH CORPORATION

**Case Study:** **Healthcare Employment Access Recruitment and Training (HEART) at the Center for Community Health Educator Research and Service, Inc. (CCHERS)**

**RE:** **Trauma-informed job readiness training**

**Sector:** **Healthcare**

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To address the psychological demands of healthcare work, the Healthcare Employment Access Recruitment and Training (HEART) program offers trauma-informed job readiness training for its participants. While this approach prepares them for the workplace, it also supports them within the program as they navigate support service needs for food insecurity, transportation, and childcare, which creates anxiety. HEART seeks to construct a respectful learning environment by providing strong support services and a trauma informed training approach.

At HEART's Home Health Aid program, trauma-informed care (TIC) is baked into both the training and the organizational culture. The combined tactical and systemic approaches improve engagement and retention in the program. Run by the Center for Community Health Educator Research and Service, Inc. (CCHERS) at Northeastern University, HEART connects participants to entry-level healthcare roles with room for career growth.

While the term trauma-formed care is not explicitly named during the You Matter job readiness training, participants actively practice self-care and in-person skill building which is the foundation of the trauma-informed care training. HEART's partner, Mothers for Equality and Justice (MEJ), developed and delivered the training one day per week for four weeks. The You Matter training builds confidence in participants' abilities to succeed both in the training and on the job. For example, HEART finds that participants speak more freely in the class question-and-answer sessions as the program progresses. Many either have not been in a training program previously or had negative experiences in one. As they encountered the support provided by the HEART Program Coordinator, the pressure to succeed on their own is lessened. They know someone is there to support them. As a result, the training program completion rates increased, and participants felt more comfortable moving on to employment. Participant feedback on the training indicates they feel safe and respected and not judged in the program, which are key hallmarks of effective trauma-informed care. Students trust the instructors and want to come back to pursue a certified nursing assistant program when HEART launches one.

In the overall program, HEART advises that staff see trauma-informed care as a shift in how the program operates its day-to-day activities, not just as a one-off activity. When hiring new staff, HEART looks for this capacity. They recommend staff be trained in trauma-informed care to understand how it can show up and to learn how they can respond in consistent ways respectful of participants' culture, background, and needs, thus building their confidence. As HEART Program Managers note often staff instinctively practice trauma-informed care without naming it or knowing that is what they are doing. By infusing trauma-informed care program wide, they can strengthen program and job retention simultaneously.

For programs looking to partner with a provider of trauma-informed care, HEART suggests the following:

- Ask what their trauma-informed programs look like and how they address trauma.
- Look for a provider with a shared commitment to serving the target population who has a deep understanding of the community. This means they bring established trust and credibility to their work.
- Look for a provider who already offers trauma-informed care workshops that align with your program's curriculum.
- Have a solid program with good feedback from participants.
- Are complimentary to what you offer. For example, MJE already had established a name for themselves and were engaged in community access.
- Ensure the partner's trauma-informed care program is geographically located to your program.
- Look for programs who are open to feedback and communication for continuous quality improvement.

Their data speaks to the impact of their TIC approach with all 60 participants earning an industry recognized credential and 54 job placements. HEART notes that though programs may think providing trauma-informed care is a heavy lift, at its core, it is about meeting human needs. It is about offering space for students to grow and trust someone, helping them to feel equipped to grow into their professional role.

For more information about the Healthcare Employment Access Recruitment and Training (HEART) program, visit https://cchers.org/heart-home-health-aide-training.