

City of Portland
Health and Human Services Department
Social Services Division

Support Services Program
Year End Report
FY 2010

Disability Services
Representative Payee Program
Employment Services
FY 10

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Support Services
FY 2010 Year End Report

The Support Services Program consists of three components: Employment, Representative Payee and Disability Services. These programs assist our consumers in the transition from public assistance and homelessness to self sufficiency.

Employment Services

The Division's Employment Services Program provides assistance with the location of part time and full time employment. Services provided include pre-employment workshops, employment counseling, resume writing, job placement, and job retention/follow-up services.

- **Homeless Employment Project**

The purpose of this project is to provide employment training and support to homeless persons experiencing multiple barriers to employment such as limited skills and education, poor work history, and health, mental health, and/or substance abuse issues. This project is a collaboration between Preble Street and the Social Services Division. Employment Counselors from the Social Services Division and Preble Street work as a team to provide services for homeless individuals. This program is funded by Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Homeless Assistance Grant funds and is currently in its eleventh year of operation.

At the time of intake, project participants are considered homeless per the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development federal definition and likely living on the streets or in emergency shelters. Services provided include a range of activities including support groups; skills training related to locating, applying for, and maintaining employment; assistance in accessing training programs; job development and retention services. The goal is to help homeless people gain and maintain stable employment, which will allow them to rent or purchase safe, decent, and affordable housing and reduce the risk of future homelessness.

Employment Services provided assessments to a total of 107 individuals this year. Employment placements for the year resulted in 28 full-time placements and 15 part-time placements (for a total of 43 placements), with 32 individuals being offered benefit packages as part of attaining employment (Attachment #1). In FY 2009 a total of 170 individuals were provided employment assessments and 50 individuals located full time or part time employment. In the current down economy and with competition increasing for each open position the employment project focused a great deal on marketability and thus had 83 clients attend our workshop series.

Employment Counselors provide outreach services on-site at the City's Family Shelter and Preble Street's Women's Shelter during afternoons and evenings on a regular basis in an effort to increase recruitment. In addition, the employment workshop curriculum was revised to contain hands-on computer instruction for creating resumes and navigating through the online job market.

- **Employment Assistance**

Employment services were also provided to homeless General Assistance recipients. Their services include resume development, job matching exercises, mock interviews, guided employment searches and assistance re-stabilizing in permanent housing. Staff assists with making connections to other resources such as Federal Food Stamp Program, MaineCare, Temporary Aid for Needy Families (TANF), Social Security Income/ Social Security benefits, and the Career Center. This model has been very effective in helping transition unemployed individuals back into the workplace.

This past year proved to be a challenging one for our clients due to the downward economy. Our consumers faced an increasingly competitive job market, which significantly impacted the availability of entry-level employment opportunities. During the year, forty-five (45) clients were verified to have secured employment.

Pre-Employment Workshops are provided for both homeless and General Assistance consumers. Workshops topics include appearance and dress, communication skills, interviewing skills, attitude and other pertinent topics. Workshop trainers present a custom training curriculum designed to help increase self-esteem and overcome barriers to attaining and retaining gainful employment. These workshops serve as a gateway to other job readiness activities including individual assessments, one-on-one employment counseling, identifying and eliminating barriers, skills identification, and job searching strategies. This Fiscal Year, forty-six (63) workshops were scheduled with a total of 275 consumers participating.

A weekly General Assistance Workshop was implemented by the Division to provide an overview of the General Assistance Program to their consumers. In Fiscal Year 2010, there were fifty-one (46) workshops scheduled with a total of 421 individual consumers participating in this workshop. (Attachment #1)

- **Job Training**

The Job Training Program (JTP) is another HUD funded program and is in its tenth year of operation. The JTP mission is to provide homeless individuals with a challenging training experience, which will lead to employment. We look at strengths, past work history, and employment goals and interests to help in our selection of an appropriate work site. This project provides job training stipends to homeless adults experiencing multiple barriers to employment such as limited skills and education, poor work history, and health, mental health and/or substance abuse issues. At the time of Intake, project participants are living in the streets or in homeless shelters. Stipends are used as an incentive for homeless who are transitioning back into the workforce to participate in work experience placements which can lead to permanent, unsubsidized employment.

The Job Training funds are used to create stipends to help homeless people transition into employment. Stipends are paid directly to participants, and amount to about \$2 per hour for 24 hours per week, for up to eight (8) weeks. The placements may lead to permanent employment with that particular employer; they are intended to provide an opportunity for people who have worked sporadically or not at all to gain experience and skills that will support permanent employment. Clients are given a weekly evaluation by the site-supervisor including skills learned. Clients may use these as tools to assist in securing future employment once the JTP is completed.

This year, 21 individuals participated in this program and 8 participants secured employment (attachment #1), with 7 of the participants being offered a benefits package.

The Job Training Fund offers consumers a training experience in the following fields: Food Service Worker, Institutional Cook, Laundry Worker, General Maintenance Worker, Housekeeping Services, Custodial Worker, and Clerical. These sites are located within the City of Portland's Health & Human Services Department.

Disability Services

The Disability Services Program assists General Assistance recipients in the Social Security benefits application process. When employment is not a reasonable goal due to disability, consumers are referred to the Disability Services Program to receive assistance filing for Social Security Disability benefits (SSI/SSDI). Staff assists consumers throughout the complex application process from the initial assessment through an appeal, if required.

The Disability Services staff provides the following services to consumers:

- *Assessment for SSI, SSDI, and MaineCare*
- *Completion of all disability reports for Social Security applications*
- *Completion of MaineCare applications*
- *Receiving necessary forms regarding claims at Social Services offices*
- *Completion of forms required by Disability Determination Services*
- *Maintaining contact with Disability Determination Services to update claim status*
- *Referral to services such as rehabilitation, medical and housing programs*
- *Assistance filing appeals when Social Security claims are denied as necessary*
- *Arranging appointments with attorneys for appeals assistance and for representation at Administrative Law Judge hearings*

This fiscal year, Disability Services completed 115 disability assessments. A total of 73 new claims were filed and 91 new appeals were filed on behalf of individuals who were initially denied benefits. This year, 83 individuals were granted benefits; 42 of these individuals were awarded benefits on their initial application, 26 others were awarded benefits during the Hearing, while 15 were awarded benefits at Reconsideration. (Attachment #2)

Due to the economic downturn, the number of people applying for Social Security disability benefits has increased. At the same time, there has been a hiring freeze at the Social Security Administration Disability Determination Services in Augusta. This has led to an increase in the average processing time for initial claims from three (3) months to as long as six (6) months. Claims being reconsidered are a lower priority and are now being processed by the Disability Determination Services. It may take months from when a Reconsideration is filed before the claim is even assigned to a Disability Adjudicator.

Representative Payee Program

While most individuals receive their Social Security and Supplemental Security benefits directly, some are mandated by the Social Security Administration to have a Representative Payee to provide assistance in managing their funds. When an individual applies for Social Security Supplemental Income (SSI) a determination may be made that the individual needs a representative payee to manage the money that is received. Also, the need for a representative payee can occur post-entitlement, after an individual has been receiving SSI. For example, a parent serves as a payee for an adult child, and the elderly parent is deceased, or is no longer able for health reasons to continue to serve as payee. Representative payees can be family members or friends of the recipient or agencies that serve as representative payees. The agency can collect a fee to help cover the cost. The fee is \$37 per person (\$72 for certain individuals deemed to have a drug addiction/alcohol problem.) The fees increase annually.

The Representative Payee Program provides the following services:

- *Monthly money managing/ payments to landlords, vendors, utilities*
- *Budgeting skills education*
- *Information and referral services*
- *Long term fiscal planning*

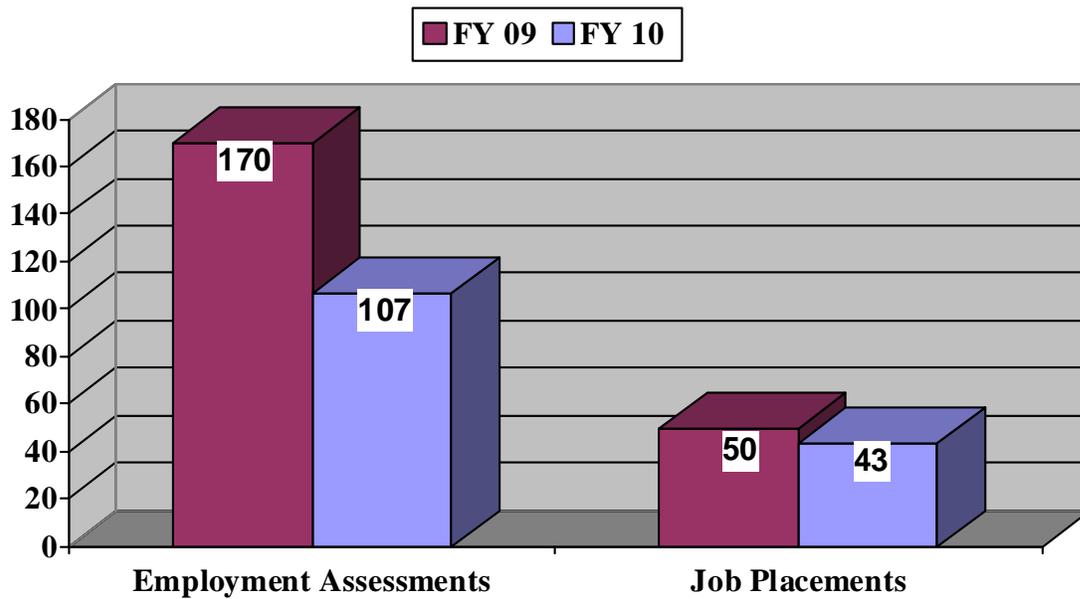
Accessing the Representative Payee Program

The Consumer is typically referred to the Representative Payee Program directly from the Social Security Administrative offices, area social service provider agencies, hospitals, family members and attorneys. Staff works very closely with local provider agencies to coordinate support services on behalf of the consumers who often have difficulty making these important community connections.

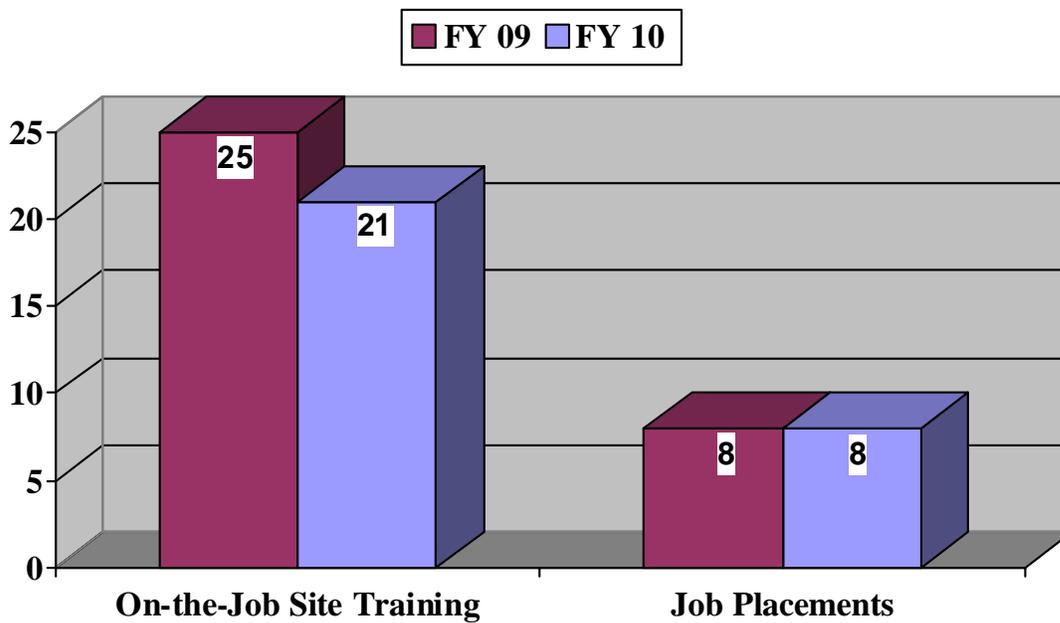
We continue to have a strong working relationship with the local Social Security Administrative Offices and remain a significant resource for individuals who they determine will need the services of a Representative Payee to manage their finances.

This year the Representative Payee Program has served 279 individuals with financial management and casework services (Attachment #3). We recorded approximately 400 office visits per month by consumers utilizing our program. The vast majority of our consumers gain and maintain stable housing as a result of being connected to our program and also become well connected with other community resources. This remains a highly respected community program meeting the important goals of stable housing, advocacy and financial management.

Homeless Employment Program* Number of Individuals

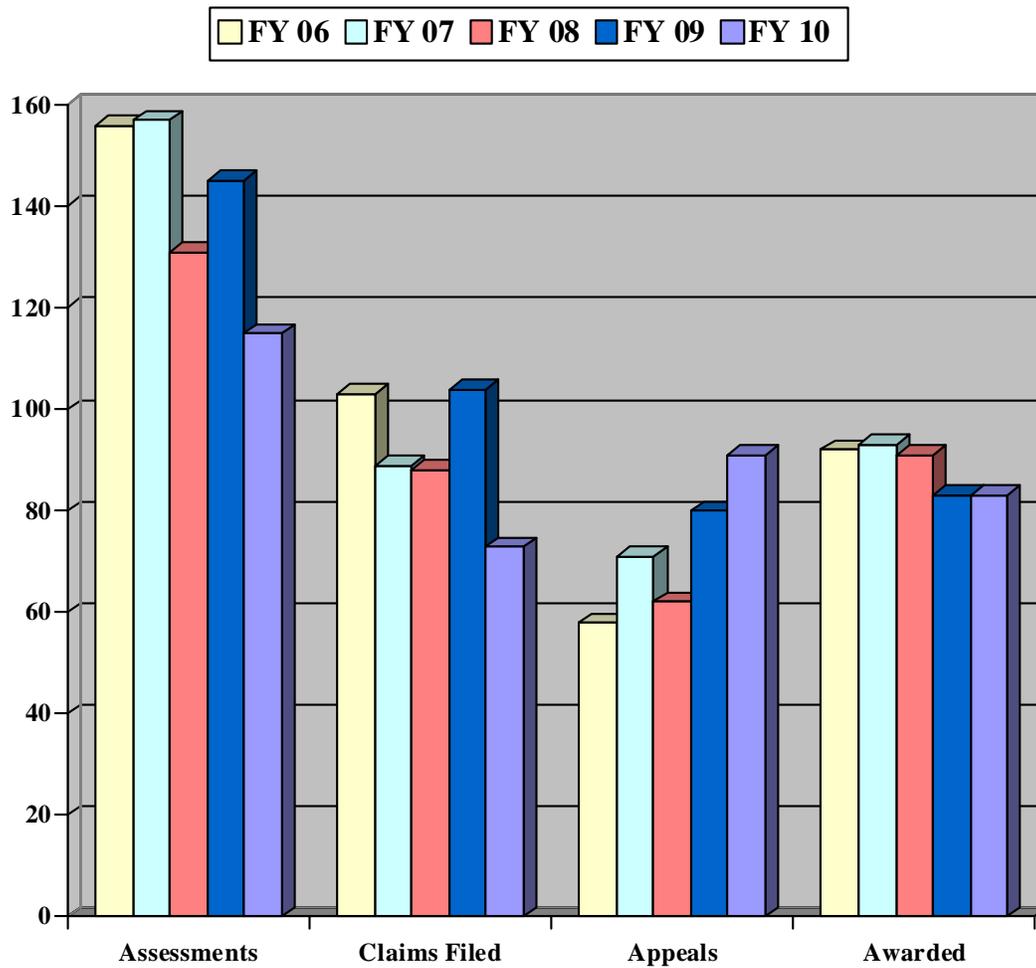


Job Training Program*

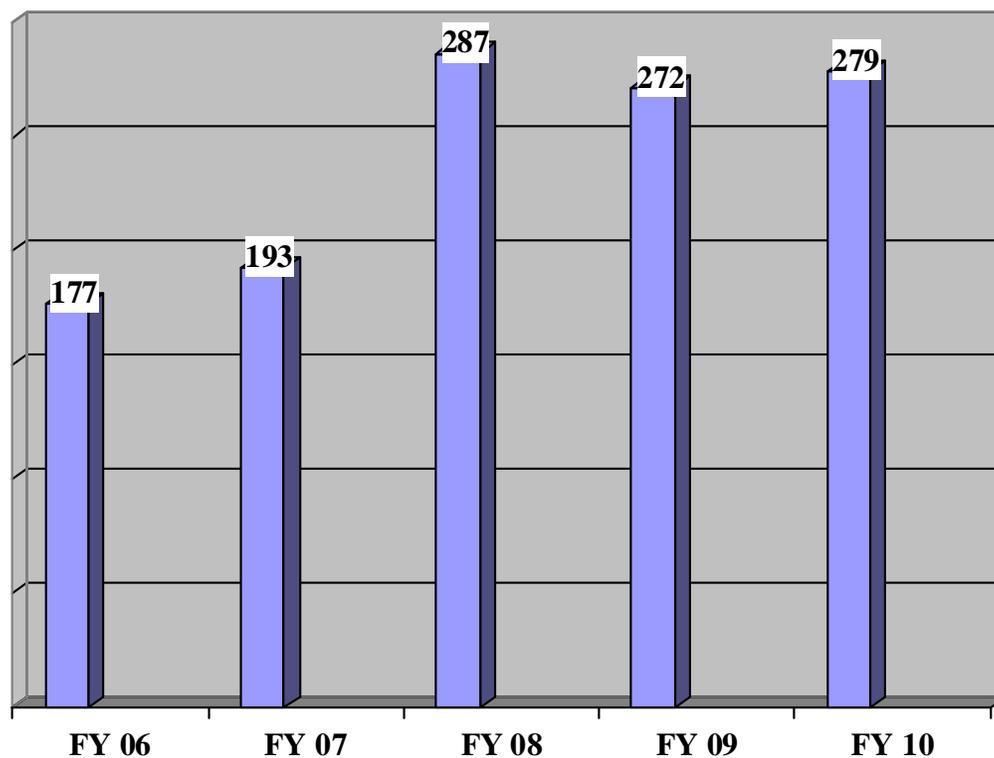


* Programs are funded by Federal Housing and Urban Development Homeless Assistance Program.

DISABILITY SERVICES PROGRAM SOCIAL SECURITY DISABILITY BENEFITS



	FY 06	FY 07	FY 08	FY 09	FY10
Total Number of SSI/DI Assessments	156	157	131	145	115
Total Number of Claims Filed	103	89	88	104	73
Total Number Assisted with Appeals	58	71	62	80	91
Total Number Awarded Disability	92	93	91	83	83

REPRESENTATIVE PAYEE PROGRAM**Clients Served**

The Representative Payee Program began in 1993 with the SSI Outreach Demonstration Project. This was a federally funded grant ending in June of 1995. The Program continued through the Social Services Division and is funded through a combination of municipal tax dollars and client fee for services. A fee of \$37 (\$72 for certain individuals deemed to have a drug addiction/alcohol problem) as mandated by the Social Security Administration, is charged to each client on a monthly basis.