

2009 AGENCY COLLABORATION AWARD

Workforce Development Council of Snohomish County “Help for Hard Times”

The Workforce Development Council is a governing group, representing a broad cross section of the local community, interested in workforce development issues. Under its tutelage, Help for Hard Times evolved to address the needs of those laid-off or whose businesses failed due to the current economic downturn.

Help for Hard Times is the result of true agency collaboration. This group of agencies voluntarily met weekly through the fall of 2008 and every three weeks for the winter, spring and fall of 2009. Existing services were already overtaxed, and the group worked to develop strategies on how to work together to better serve the influx of the newly needy. The group strategized to find efficiencies that would help the participating agencies serve more clients, and to develop tools that would help those affected find the resources that they needed.

The group raised funds and developed a self-help website, www.helpforhardtimes.org. Brochures and marketing cards were developed, and a kick-off event was held to promote the website. It was decided that calls should be directed to 2-1-1, and their staff was given detailed information about available services and best tactics so that they could best serve the callers.

Workforce Development Council of Snohomish County developed a packet of information that included the Help for Hard Times brochure, which they distributed to laid-off employees throughout the county. Hundreds of first-time callers called 2-1-1 and were directed to appropriate services and resources. Thousands of brochures and promotional business cards were distributed to agencies and businesses throughout the County, who then distributed them to those newly in need. This project quickly became recognized across the country, and other Counties (i.e., Whatcom County, www.unitedwaywhatcom.org) mimicked the efforts of this group.

Unemployment, even when temporary, is one of the most difficult experiences to endure, especially if it affects your entire family's income. Knowing where to turn and taking control can reduce the impact. By providing “front door” access to existing resources here in Snohomish County, Help for Hard Times provides that critical need-it-now information for people facing the loss of a job.

Partners in This Collaboration:

Cascadia Community College
Center for Career Alternatives
Edmonds Community College
Employment Security Dept of Washington State
Everett Community College
Evertrust Foundation
Lutheran Community Services
Providence Health & Services
Snohomish County Human Services Dept

The Salvation Army
Volunteers of America North Sound 2-1-1
Volunteers of America Western Washington
United Way of Snohomish County
Washington State Dept of
Social and Health Services
Workforce Development Council of Snohomish
County
WorkSource Snohomish County