

Daisy Marquis Jones Foundation

Purpose: Operating budget for women in recovery program and business

Women in recovery from addiction and re-entry from incarceration face daunting obstacles on their journey from early recovery to full sustainability, from surviving to thriving in their personal and professional lives. They are able to find help overcoming some of those obstacles through available services, including shelter from abuse, supportive living, early treatment, and basic medical and financial support. These services are temporary and limited, so they soon search for help with more difficult obstacles, such as:

- managing trauma triggers
- learning relationship and communication skills
- finding a job in a supportive workplace
- balancing work with personal and family challenges
- maintaining long-term sobriety
- gaining work experience and education to achieve economic independence

The Coffee Connection's integrated program and business provides help to women facing all of these obstacles. Our collaborative work with other agencies (Person Centered Housing Options/PCHO, Rochester Works, Judicial Process Commission, Huther Doyle) will strengthen our program capacity to help more women bridge the gap from the basic services offered widely by community agencies to coordinated transitional services tied to employment in the context of a trauma-informed program. In our program, they learn life practices to help them thrive in their jobs, families, and personal lives.

SAMSHA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration) published a study on "Substance Use Disorders Recovery with a Focus on Employment and Education" which listed these challenges to obtaining employment:

- Lack of job skills/lower education attainment
- Poor work history
- Poor interpersonal skills/motivation to work
- Lack of transportation
- Lack of childcare
- Continued substance misuse/recurrence
- Criminal history
- Employer lack of understanding about substance use disorder
- Scheduling conflicts with probation and treatment requirements
- Creating a corporate culture that acknowledges the reality of employee use and misuse of alcohol and drugs and offers a vision of recovery support and wellness.
- Providing policies and resources that support prevention.
- Providing supportive intervention policies such as allowing employees to take a leave of absence to seek treatment, use sick leave to attend recovery groups, receive support through a strong Employee Assistance Program, and access to health insurance with SUD treatment benefits.

(Source: "Substance Use Disorders Recovery with a Focus on Employment and Education" ¹)

Our program addresses every one of these challenges. In our 22nd year, Coffee Connection has grown since 2011 from no employees to sixteen and increased gross income by 500%, yet we remain a small organization operating a not-for-profit coffee business integrated with our program. Our collaborative work with other agencies brings to this capacity-building project other diverse transitional programs.

For instance, Huther Doyle's executive director, Kelly Reed, and ours, Joy Bergfalk, share a commitment to combine workforce development and our trauma-informed program with all that they do to provide much-needed services for women in later stages of the journey toward a thriving personal life and economic independence. (A team of volunteers and staff appointed by each agency board is developing a plan for direct partnership and sharing of resources.) We have worked for years with Rochester Works to identify women in this population who are ready for job training and employment. We already work with PCHO to provide job training for women who also have been homeless. And we regularly receive referrals from Judicial Process Commission and recovery programs as potential job trainees and employees. This project seeks to expand on these informal partnerships in the community. We also believe that our community could be strengthened by businesses and organizations being proactive in providing a work environment where men and women from this population could be supported and empowered through using training resources based on our program. All of this is part of the project.