

San Francisco Business Times - June 9, 2006 by Chris Rauber

New team

The Council for Adult and Experimental Learning, a Chicago-based national nonprofit, has teamed up with San Francisco's Jewish Vocational Service, the University of California at San Francisco, Planned Parenthood's Golden Gate chapter and On Lok SeniorHealth, also in San Francisco, on an innovative program to help low-wage workers get additional funding to pay for nurse and other health-care training programs.

Jewish Family and Children's Services, unrelated to JVS, is also one of the participating employers, along with UCSF, On Lok and Planned Parenthood.

The council's program matches worker and employer contributions dollar for dollar, up to \$1,000 per individual per year, to help low-income workers afford more education and the counseling to make it work.

Pamela Tate, the council's president and CEO, said education and training can make a big difference to working but low-income adults, upgrading skills and adding to their earning potential.

So far, the San Francisco program has enrolled 77 low-income participants, who use LifeLong Learning accounts, an employer-matched individual savings account, to pay for training at programs such as City College of San Francisco, San Francisco's California Nursing Institute and the College of San Mateo, according to JVS Executive Director Abby Snay. UCSF and On Lok have waiting lists for the program, totaling more than 260 workers waiting for a chance to participate. Participants are selected using a lottery that gives greater weight to qualified applicants at lower income levels.

San Francisco employers have contributed \$50,000 to support the program, which contributes an average of \$995 per worker annually toward educational and training expenses. Other funding came from the Ford Foundation, Walter & Elise Haas Fund, Levi Strauss Foundation, Richard & Rhoda Goldman Fund, San Francisco Foundation and other major local foundations.

Participating organizations hope to expand the program as this approach becomes better known and more popular. "Why wouldn't I invest my money in a person who wants to learn a new skill?" asked Jennifer Hermann, UCSF Medical Center's director of employment compensation benefits. "In the long run, the program saves money."

Chris Rauber can be reached at (415) 288-4946 or crauber@bizjournals.com.

