
As part of its Foundational Community Supports (FCS) program, Washington has implemented supportive housing and supported employment services that have been effective in improving housing stability, health, and employment outcomes for high need Medicaid beneficiaries.

As part of Washington’s Medicaid Transformation Project, the FCS program launched at the beginning of 2018 to address the employment and housing needs of the population with “complex physical or behavioral health care needs.”¹ These services are covered by the state’s Medicaid program under an 1115 Demonstration Waiver resulting in federal matching funds (or FFP). Washington applied for a one-year extension for The MTP waiver that will allow for long-term sustainability.

Many of the individuals served have complex health profiles, and face housing-related barriers to effectively engaging with health care systems and managing their own plan of care to achieve improved health and wellness. FCS consists of an array of pre-tenancy, tenancy-sustaining and employment supports designed to improve health and other outcomes for these individuals and will now help to facilitate timely, successful transitions from institutional settings to integration in communities.

A preliminary evaluation of the success of the program found that supported employment services were associated with improvements in employment rates, earnings, and hours worked. Similarly, supportive housing services were associated with promising increases in transitions out of homelessness, and reductions in outpatient emergency department and inpatient utilization for Medicaid beneficiaries with behavioral and physical health care needs.²

Tiffany is a shining example of the value of FCS. Tiffany had a long history of mental health issues, including crippling anxiety, and domestic violence, which eventually led to the loss of custody of her two children, serious substance abuse, and homelessness. It was at the point where she was waking up under a bridge, that she reached out for help in order to return home and get connected to services.

During Tiffany’s intake into FCS, she was asked about her dream job, to which she replied, “to help others.” Tiffany was a client of the FCS supported employment program for just a month when an employment opening within the same program came open. She applied for the job and got the position. She credits her own experience with mental health issues with helping her relate to her clients who are experiencing their own challenges and being able to advocate on their behalf in a variety of situations that she’s familiar with.

By maintaining her job, she was able to move into a three-bedroom home, earn custody of her daughter back, and shortly after that, secure a shared custody agreement with her son’s father. She purchased a vehicle, and eventually secured a new position as a job coach for individuals with developmental disabilities at her agency. With her job and hard work, she was able to pay off her debt and collections – bringing her credit score up from 400 to 700. This enabled her and

¹ <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/ffa/rda/research-reports/foundational-community-supports-program-preliminary-evaluation-findings>)

² <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/sites/default/files/rda/reports/research-11-251.pdf>

her future husband to buy a house. Tiffany is now married and has been able to repair her relationships with her mother and sister.

FCS is changing lives, and at the same time enabling WA to be more efficient and effective with its resources. FCS allows WA to maximize federal revenue, and to control and reduce spending on acute/crisis services and untreated illness by supporting successful transitions to the community, stable housing situations and access to community-based, preventative medical and behavioral health care.

