

# Employment Pathway Initiative Operations Manual



DESTINATION: **HOME**



County of Santa Clara  
**Office of Supportive Housing**

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# 1 Purpose and Background

## 1.1 Vision

The Employment Pathway Initiative is an employment engagement enterprise developed by Destination: Home and the County of Santa Clara Office of Supportive Housing (OSH). This Initiative, which is operated in a collaboration between Destination: Home and JobTrain, seeks to serve participants by developing new pathways to living wage careers that are critical to helping more people achieve long-term housing stability, and ultimately, reducing homelessness in our community.

The Employment Pathway Initiative's objective is to connect individuals and families receiving housing assistance in Santa Clara County with living-wage employment leading to careers in high-growth industries. The Employment Pathway Initiative prioritizes assisting participants enrolled in rapid rehousing and homelessness prevention programs and empowers them to increase their incomes to achieve and sustain long-term housing stability.

## 1.2 Key Strategies

### Providing Targeted Employment Assistance

- *Helping Individuals Earn Immediate Income:* While not all recently housed individuals may be prepared for a living-wage employment, the Employment Pathway Initiative helps participants secure part- or full-time jobs that can serve as a critical first step towards self-sufficiency and future employment success.
- *Providing Individuals with Career & Vocational Training:* As individuals start earning income, the Employment Pathway Initiative also helps them build the job skills and training that are necessary to transition into living-wage employment.
- *Connecting Individuals with Living Wage Jobs:* Once individuals fill out their resume with both recent job experience and a robust set of job skills, the Employment Pathway Initiative helps connect them with the type of full-time, living-wage jobs needed to remain stably housed.

### Expanding Living Wage Job Opportunities

- *Forging Employment Pathways in Local Government:* Following the model established by the ACE program in San Francisco, the Employment Pathway Initiative is partnering with the City of San Jose and the County of Santa Clara to create a direct pathway for formerly homeless individuals to start a career in public service.
- *Building Bridges to Careers within the Tech Industry:* The Employment Pathway Initiative is working with tech companies to break down barriers to accessing the tremendous job opportunities in the private market.
- *Creating Social Enterprises:* Recognizing the growing need for peer mentors, case managers, and property management as Santa Clara County builds more supportive and deeply affordable housing developments, the Employment Pathway Initiative will pilot the launch of a Property Management social enterprise staffed by formerly homeless individuals.

## 1.3 Background: Rapid Rehousing

The rapid rehousing framework is built on the idea that the solution to homelessness is housing. Rapid rehousing has three main components:

1. Housing Identification
  - Identifying privately owned housing.
2. Rent and Move-In Assistance (financial assistance)
  - Short-term<sup>1</sup> rental subsidies.
3. Case Management<sup>2</sup>
  - Income/benefits, education, childcare, health care and [employment assistance](#).<sup>3</sup>

Rapid rehousing programs help individuals and families to quickly exit homelessness by assisting them in finding and securing housing. The outcome objective of the rapid rehousing intervention is that participants will stabilize in housing with temporary case management and financial assistance, after which they will be able to remain in their unit without assistance.

The Employment Pathway Initiative provides assistance that can be offered through the case management component of the rapid rehousing framework. This initiative is designed to meet the needs of rapid rehousing participants who are seeking to enter the workforce and to increase their income. Employment services are essential to the success of rapid rehousing participants because these services enable participants to increase their income so they can afford market rate rent after temporary financial assistance ends.

## 1.4 Importance of Employment Initiatives for Rapid Rehousing Participants

### 1.4.1 Background

According to a report published by the Heartland Alliance on integrating rapid rehousing and employment, “rapid rehousing has shown great promise in helping people experiencing homelessness move out of shelter and into housing. However, large-scale evaluations show that rapid rehousing as currently implemented generally falls short on helping participants meet their stated employment needs and achieve longer-term housing security—both of which are key to truly ending family homelessness.”<sup>4</sup> This is especially true in areas with high market rent and low-vacancy rates.

### 1.4.2 Why Employment Assistance is Important in Santa Clara County

Like many counties, Santa Clara uses rapid rehousing as a tool to quickly remove individuals and families from the experience of homelessness. However, in order for individuals and families to remain

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<sup>1</sup> The definition of short-term may depend on the climate of the rental market.

<sup>2</sup> [What is Rapid Rehousing?](#) at pg. 2. Retrieved December 2020: <https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/Rapid-Re-Housing-Brief.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://destinationhomesv.org/destinationwork/>

<sup>4</sup> [Integrating Rapid Rehousing & Employment](#) at pg. 6. Retrieved December 2020: [https://melvilletrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Integrating-Rapid-Re-Housing-and-Employment\\_Heartland-Alliance.pdf](https://melvilletrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Integrating-Rapid-Re-Housing-and-Employment_Heartland-Alliance.pdf)

housed in the high-market-rent environment of Santa Clara County, additional support is needed to achieve employment and increase income levels.

#### 1.4.2.1 Income Levels and Unemployment Rates Individuals Experiencing Homelessness in Santa Clara

In today’s economic climate, it has become increasingly difficult for low-income residents to secure and maintain stable housing. There is no metropolitan area in the country where a minimum wage worker can afford a modest two-bedroom apartment. At the same time, living wage job opportunities remain limited for our poorest and most vulnerable residents, particularly those who are experiencing or have recently exited homelessness.

The 2019 Santa Clara County Homeless Census & Survey showed that the unemployment rate of individuals experiencing homelessness that responded to the survey was 82%. Further, the income level for a majority of unemployed survey respondents was less than \$750 per month while the income level for the majority of employed respondents was less than \$1,099 a month.<sup>5</sup> Only 17% of employed participants in our Supportive Housing System make \$17.50 per hour or more.

**FIGURE 28. MONTHLY INCOME BY EMPLOYMENT STATUS**

	EMPLOYED		UNEMPLOYED	
	2017	2019	2017	2019
Less Than \$750	61%	40%	85%	75%
\$750-\$1,099	14%	25%	10%	16%
\$1,100-\$1,499	14%	14%	4%	7%
\$1,500 or More	12%	21%	2%	2%

2017 N=553; 2019 N=1,297

Note: Respondents were challenged by this income question and the low response for employed income is subject to a high margin of error.

#### 1.4.2.2 High Market Rents and Low Vacancy Rates

In the Santa Clara area, during the fourth quarter of 2019, the average rent was \$2,751—\$2,067 for a studio, \$2,475 for a one-bedroom unit, \$3,021 for a two-bedroom unit, and \$3,888 for a three-bedroom unit. The overall rental vacancy rate was estimated at 4.0 percent, but vacancy rates were lower in the more affordable market areas. The South San Jose and East San Jose market areas—where average rents were \$2,305 and \$2,385, respectively, during the fourth quarter of 2019—had apartment vacancy rates of 3.5 percent and 2.6 percent, respectively, which were among the lowest in the region.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> [2019 Santa Clara County Homeless Census & Survey](https://www.sccgov.org/sites/osh/ContinuumofCare/ReportsandPublications/Documents/2015%20Santa%20Clara%20County%20Homeless%20Census%20and%20Survey/2019%20SCC%20Homeless%20Census%20and%20Survey%20Report.pdf) at pg. 27-28. Retrieved December 2020: <https://www.sccgov.org/sites/osh/ContinuumofCare/ReportsandPublications/Documents/2015%20Santa%20Clara%20County%20Homeless%20Census%20and%20Survey/2019%20SCC%20Homeless%20Census%20and%20Survey%20Report.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> [San Jose-Sunnyvale-Santa Clara Comprehensive Housing Market Analysis Jan. 2020 – HUD Study](https://www.huduser.gov/portal/publications/pdf/SanJose-Sunnyvale-SantaClaraCA-CHMA-20.pdf) at pg. 18-19. Retrieved December 2020: <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/publications/pdf/SanJose-Sunnyvale-SantaClaraCA-CHMA-20.pdf>

### 1.4.2.3 Closing the Gap Between Low Incomes and High Market Rents

The numbers above show the large disparity between what individuals experiencing homelessness are earning, and the high cost of rent and low vacancy rate in Santa Clara County. The Employment Pathway Initiative strives to pair interested individuals with opportunities to increase their income so they can afford market-rate rent following the expiration of the time-limited financial assistance they receive through rapid rehousing or homelessness prevention programs.

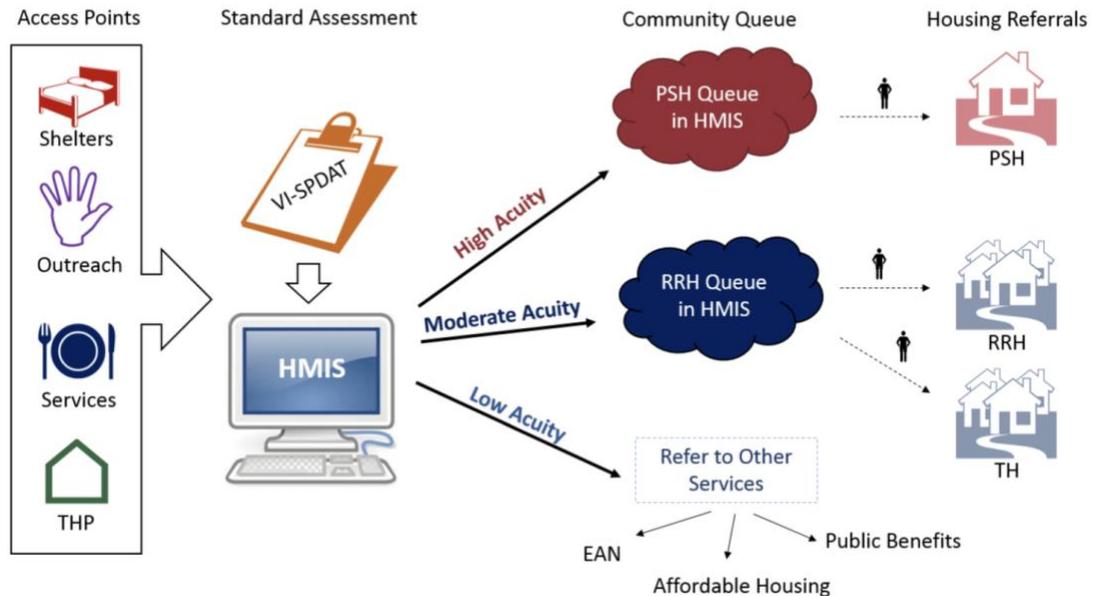
The 2019 Santa Clara County Homeless Census & Survey encouragingly shows that the majority of unemployed individuals experiencing homelessness surveyed want to and are able to work. Of the survey respondents, 74% were able to work and a majority were interested in and actively seeking work opportunities.<sup>7</sup> The Employment Pathway Initiative is designed to give these willing individuals an opportunity to succeed in finding and retaining employment.

## 2 Eligibility and Prioritization

### 2.1 The Role of the Coordinated Assessment System

Since December of 2015 all referrals to permanent housing programs within the Continuum of Care (including permanent supportive housing and rapid rehousing) have been made through the coordinated assessment system. See [SCC Coordinated Assessment](#).<sup>8</sup>

Coordinated Assessment Process



<sup>7</sup> [2019 Santa Clara County Homeless Census & Survey](https://www.sccgov.org/sites/osh/ContinuumofCare/ReportsandPublications/Documents/2015%20Santa%20Clara%20County%20Homeless%20Census%20and%20Survey/2019%20SCC%20Homeless%20Census%20and%20Survey%20Report.pdf) at pg. 27. Retrieved December 2020:  
<https://www.sccgov.org/sites/osh/ContinuumofCare/ReportsandPublications/Documents/2015%20Santa%20Clara%20County%20Homeless%20Census%20and%20Survey/2019%20SCC%20Homeless%20Census%20and%20Survey%20Report.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.sccgov.org/sites/osh/ContinuumofCare/coordinated-assessment/Pages/home.aspx>

Whether an individual or family qualifies for housing services is determined through the following process:

1. Households experiencing homelessness enter the coordinated assessment system through the [Santa Clara Access Points](#).<sup>9</sup>
2. A standard assessment called the Vulnerability Index - Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT) is administered to all households experiencing homelessness and seeking services.
3. Based on the range in which they score on the VI-SPDAT, households are then matched to appropriate interventions (i.e., permanent supportive housing, rapid rehousing, transitional housing, or no housing intervention at this time).
4. All households with current VI-SPDATs in the housing intervention score range are placed into the community queue.
5. Within each score range, households with the highest scores are prioritized for housing referrals.
6. Housing programs notify OSH when a vacancy becomes available and households in the queue are matched with the available opening.
7. The housing program receiving the referral confirms the eligibility of a household and enrolls them.

## 2.2 Eligibility and Prioritization Overview

There are several categories of individuals receiving housing assistance that are eligible for the services offered through the Employment Pathway Initiative. Applicants must be willing to commit to employment as a path toward housing stability. Applicants are prioritized for services as follows:

- i. Rapid rehousing participants, including those who are currently housed and receiving case management services and those who are in the housing search process;
- ii. Homelessness prevention program participants and persons who are on the Coordinated Assessment System rapid rehousing community queue that are willing to secure temporary sleeping arrangements at an emergency shelter or elsewhere while they participate in an employment or employment training program;
- iii. Households in emergency shelters, transitional housing, those who are literally homeless, and those who are currently enrolled in or awaiting permanent supportive housing but are a low priority for placement will also be considered if funds are available. However, these individuals must be willing to secure temporary sleeping arrangements at an emergency shelter or elsewhere while they participate in an employment or employment training program.

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<sup>9</sup> <http://scc.hmis.cc/participating-agencies/>

## 2.3 Prioritization Rationale

Currently housed rapid rehousing participants receiving case management services and homelessness prevention program participants will be given the highest priority for services provided through the Employment Pathway Initiative because it is more feasible for an individual to dedicate energy to finding and sustaining employment when their housing needs are met. However, if additional funds are available, other individuals receiving housing assistance and seeking employment opportunities will be considered.

## 3 Referral and Enrollment

### 3.1 Referrals from Rapid Rehousing, Homelessness Prevention, and Other Supportive Housing Case Managers

Once a housing-focused case manager begins working with an individual (whether that person has been housed or is awaiting housing) they can be referred to the Employment Pathway Initiative. Referrals may also be made by homelessness prevention and other supportive housing case managers – however, please note the eligibility and prioritization guidance and rationale above.

It takes time to secure employment and rapid rehousing subsidies are time-limited. The earlier an unemployed or underemployed individual can be informed about the opportunities available to them, the higher the chances of successful outcomes.

#### 3.1.1 Steps for Rapid Rehousing and Other Case Managers to Refer and Enroll Individuals in the Employment Pathway Initiative

##### 1. Introduce the program.

- JobTrain provides employment support and career pathway training to anyone considered low-income. With a track record of over 55 years, JobTrain has mastered strategies in providing workforce development programs, services and supports for the communities they serve.
- Note that employment is the goal of the program as opposed to a guarantee. See *Section 5. Outcomes*.

##### 2. Have a direct conversation with the individual to ensure that they are ready to begin a training, enter the workforce, and/or increase their income to be able to afford rent and basic expenses after temporary financial assistance ends.

- Individuals who are either unemployed or underemployed (working less than 30 hours a week or earning less than \$17.50 per hour) and are willing to commit to employment as a path toward housing stability are encouraged to participate in the Employment Pathway Initiative.

3. **Support the individual in obtaining documents that establish identity and employment authorization.**<sup>10</sup>

- A document that establishes identity may be a driver's license/government ID, school ID with photograph, voter registration card, or a U.S. military card or draft record, among others.
- A document that establishes employment authorization may be a U.S. Social Security account number card that is unrestricted or a birth certificate, among others.
- The housing-focused case manager should notify JobTrain if there are challenges in securing this documentation to receive assistance.

4. **Complete the JobTrain Referral Form.** See

5.

6.

7. *Appendix A. Employment Pathway Initiative Participation Agreement and JobTrain Referral Form.*

- Submit the completed form to:

Kenya Rawls  
Regional Director of Employment and Training Programs  
JobTrain  
(650) 796-1838

[krawls@jobtrainworks.org](mailto:krawls@jobtrainworks.org)

- A referral form should never be sent without the individual's awareness.
- The individual and the housing-focused case manager will receive a welcome email within three business days of submitting the Referral Form. The email will confirm that JobTrain received the Referral Form and indicate that a JobTrain employment specialist will follow up with them.

8. **Schedule a three-way meeting with the JobTrain employment specialist and the individual to gather additional information and to begin constructing their Individualized Employment Plan (IEP).**

- The meeting will focus on program goals and services, partner roles, and timelines, which will be documented in the IEP.
- The housing-focused case manager should work with the JobTrain employment specialist to support in supporting the individual in resolving barriers to employment.

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.uscis.gov/i-9-central/form-i-9-acceptable-documents>

## 3.2 Referrals from Other Sources

For all other parties wishing to refer individuals to services available through the Employment Pathway Initiative, if the individual is already in rapid rehousing, an emergency shelter, transitional housing, is enrolled in homelessness prevention, or is awaiting placement in permanent supportive housing, please contact:

Kenya Rawls  
Regional Director of Employment and Training Programs  
JobTrain  
(650) 796-1838  
[krawls@jobtrainworks.org](mailto:krawls@jobtrainworks.org)

If the individual is experiencing homelessness and not currently awaiting housing placement, please offer them this [List of Santa Clara Access Points](#)<sup>11</sup> so they can access Santa Clara County's coordinated assessment system and have their eligibility for housing and other services assessed.

## 4 Program Standards

### 4.1 Housing-Focused Case Manager Responsibilities

The housing-focused case manager's required responsibilities include:

- Supporting the individual in obtaining [documents that establish identity and employment authorization](#).<sup>12</sup>
  - A document that establishes identity may be a driver's license/government ID, school ID with photograph, voter registration card, or a U.S. military card or draft record, among others.
  - A document that establishes employment authorization may be a U.S. Social Security account number card that is unrestricted or a birth certificate, among others.
- Connecting with the JobTrain employment specialist to discuss the requirements for the employment or employment training program in which the individual wishes to participate.
- Scheduling the initial meeting with the JobTrain employment specialist and the individual to gather additional information and to begin constructing their Individualized Employment Plan (IEP).
- Making sure the individual understands their responsibilities to both the Employment Pathway Initiative and the employment or employment training program in which they enroll.
- Completing and submitting to JobTrain the *Appendix A. Employment Pathway Initiative Participation Agreement and JobTrain Referral Form*.
- Continuing all housing stability services with the participant after enrollment in the Employment Pathway Initiative program.

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<sup>11</sup> <http://scc.hmis.cc/participating-agencies/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.uscis.gov/i-9-central/form-i-9-acceptable-documents>

- Maintaining an ongoing case conferencing relationship by checking in with the JobTrain employment specialist at least monthly to ensure continuity and intensive, wrap-around support. Please email or call as appropriate depending on the participant's situation and maintain records of check-ins in HMIS case notes.
- Notifying the JobTrain employment specialist regarding any life-changing events or circumstances that may impact the participant's employment pathway, including but not limited to anticipated discontinuation of rental assistance or risk of losing housing.

Housing-focused case managers are encouraged to:

- Attend bimonthly Employment Pathway Initiative meetings (see [CoC calendar<sup>13</sup>](#)) to meet with JobTrain employment specialists and obtain program updates.
- Join the Employment Pathway Initiative listserv by sending a request to:  
Kenya Rawls  
Regional Director of Employment and Training Programs  
JobTrain  
(650) 796-1838  
[krawls@jobtrainworks.org](mailto:krawls@jobtrainworks.org)

## 4.2 Employment Pathway Initiative Participant Responsibilities

The responsibilities of Employment Pathway Initiative participants are outlined in Appendix A. They include:

- Understanding the rules of the employment or employment training program in which the participant participates.
- Making a good-faith effort to follow these rules.
- Communicating regularly with the housing-focused case manager.
- Communicating regularly with the JobTrain employment specialist.
- Keeping contact information up to date.
- Contacting both the housing-focused case manager and JobTrain employment specialist if there is a problem.
- Giving a best effort in the employment or employment training program as part of an ongoing solution to end their experience of homelessness.
- Understanding that, as a participant in the Employment Pathway Initiative, they are working towards increasing their income so that they can support themselves and remain on the path to housing stability.

## 4.3 JobTrain Employment Specialist Responsibilities

The JobTrain employment specialist's required responsibilities include:

- Confirming the eligibility of the individual for the Employment Pathway Initiative.
- Supporting the participant as they make the transition into employment.

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<sup>13</sup> <https://www.sccgov.org/sites/osh/continuumofcare/osh-events/pages/home.aspx>

- Clearly communicating the rules and requirements of the employment or employment training program to both housing-focused case managers and participants.
- Providing supportive services to assist participants in retaining their employment for up to 12 months after they have been hired.
- Working with housing-focused case managers and participants to resolve and problems that arise during employment or employment training.
- Maintaining timely and accurate HMIS data related to employment outcomes specified in contracts.

## 5 Outcomes

Destination: Home will track the outcomes of this Initiative over time. Outcome targets for 2021 are as follows:



## 6 Interested Employment Partners

### 6.1 Steps to Partner with the Employment Pathway Initiative

If you are a private employer or non-profit entity interested in partnering with the Employment Pathway Initiative to provide employment opportunities and/or training to low-income individuals and increase your organization's earning potential, please contact:

Kenya Rawls  
 Regional Director of Employment and Training Programs  
 JobTrain  
 (650) 796-1838  
[krawls@jobtrainworks.org](mailto:krawls@jobtrainworks.org)



Appendix A. Employment Pathway Initiative  
Participation Agreement and  
JobTrain Referral Form



**Rapid Employment Program  
Submit Referral to  
[krawls@jobtrainworks.org](mailto:krawls@jobtrainworks.org)**

<b>Client Name:</b>	
<b>Address:</b>	
<b>HMIS #:</b>	
<b>Phone:</b>	
<b>Email:</b>	
<b>Date of Birth:</b>	
<b>Exit Date:</b>	

**Current Employment Status (Circle All that Apply):**    \*Unemployed    \*Employed (Full Time)

\*Employed (Part-Time)    \*Intern/Extern    \*Student    \*Retired    Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Employment Barriers (Circle All that Apply):**    \*Excused Absences Needed (Medical/Legal/Other)

\*Medical Condition (short or long)    \*Dependent Adult/Child Care Assistance    \*Legal/Expungement Assistance  
 \*Housing Navigation Needed    \*Domestic Violence Assistance    \*Child Welfare Service (CPS) Navigation  
 \*Wellness Assistance    \*Disability (Learning)    \*No GED/HSD    \*ESL Assistance  
 \*Substance Abuse Navigation    Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Do you have reliable transportation during program hours (Flexible)?**     Yes     No    (Add Comments Below)

**Do you have a Child Care Plans during Program Hours?** (If yes, please describe plan on the space below)

Yes     No     N/A-

**Additional Employment Barrier Information:**

**Employment Needs (Circle):**    \*Employed (Full Time)    \*Part-Time Employed    \*Student    \*Intern  
 \*Retired    \*Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Top 3 Employment Interest:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**ALL ADDITIONAL COMMENTS (please discuss any additional information as required or needed):**

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**TO BE COMPLETED BY REFERRING PERSON:** NAME (Please Print): \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE: \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

AGENCY NAME (Please Print): \_\_\_\_\_

## Employment Pathway Initiative Participation Agreement

Participant Name: \_\_\_\_\_

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (name of participant), agree to participate in the Employment Pathway Initiative. As a participant in this Initiative, I understand that it is my responsibility to:

1. Make a good-faith effort to understand and follow the rules of the employment or employment training program in which I participate that were provided by JobTrain. JobTrain is eager to answer any questions that come up and to help troubleshoot any challenges.
2. Communicate regularly with my housing-focused case manager.
3. Communicate regularly with my employment training or job supervisor and keep my contact information up to date.
4. Contact both my housing-focused case manager and my supervisor if I have a problem with the training or at work. Most barriers can be overcome but we need to know about them to help.
5. Give my best effort in this employment or employment training program as part of a solution to end my experience of homelessness.

I also understand that:

6. As participant in the Employment Pathway Initiative, I am working towards increasing my income through employment so that I can support myself and remain on a path to housing stability and economic self-sufficiency.

Participant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Housing-Focused Case Manager Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_