



## Rebound Workforce Development Program for Youth: Transferring Skills from the Basketball Court to the Workplace (April 2016)

Geography plays a major role in determining one's opportunity for health, well-being and future success. In East New York (ENY) and Brownsville, high-poverty Central Brooklyn neighborhoods, nearly one in four young people ages 16 to 24 are out of school and out of work, shut out from major avenues to stability, social mobility and success.<sup>1</sup> Good Shepherd Services' sports-focused Rebound program strengthens participants' connections to their communities and to broader education and employment networks by fostering the personal and social skills required for success on a basketball court and helping youth to apply those skills in the workplace. **In 2015, 88% of Rebound participants achieved employment or accessed education as a result of the program.**

### Workforce Skill Development at Good Shepherd Services

Good Shepherd, a youth and family development, multi-service organization with more than 80 programs in New York City, has a history of providing workforce development programming to youth through the agency's network of child welfare and school- and community-based programs. Good Shepherd has been a partner with the NYC Department of Education's Learning to Work (LTW) program since its inception more than 10 years ago, and has provided educational and vocational development through its foster care, supportive housing, youth justice and other school-based programs for years.



### A Proven Approach to Engaging Youth and Strengthening Employment Readiness

For disconnected youth, the challenges of obtaining a job can be daunting. Some lack a high school diploma or GED, often closing off job opportunities that provide a living wage or the potential for advancement. Furthermore, employment tends to be "path dependent," meaning those with more working experience are more likely to work.<sup>2</sup> This creates challenges for youth eager to work, but lacking the educational and work experiences sought by employers. Recognizing the human consequences, lost promise, and financial costs to society that result from ignoring these disparities in opportunity, Good Shepherd works to break the cycle of negative outcomes for disconnected youth by investing in their potential. Our job exposure and training opportunities for youth and families utilize our strength-based, evidence-informed Youth and Family Development approach, which builds on existing competencies while recognizing the importance of setting high expectations, providing engaging activities, taking a holistic approach to youth and families and building caring and trusting relationships.

**Results: Before participants are able to move on to employment or education, they must complete certain milestones in order to increase their chances of success. From summer 2014 – spring 2015:**

**76%**

received financial skills training

**89%**

participated in social-emotional and life skills development training

**88%**

secured a job interview



**88%**

achieved employment or accessed education

### Components of Good Shepherd's Rebound Model

Rebound employs a unique approach modeled on Barclay's successful "Spaces for Sports" programs in low-income communities around the world. This approach harnesses a young person's passion for sports - in this case basketball - to teach critical leadership, job readiness, financial management and social-emotional skills, and ultimately open up linkages to broader learning and work opportunities that may otherwise have been inaccessible to disconnected youth. The Rebound model is built around several key components:

 **Primary Person Approach:** Throughout the program, the participant is supported by a Success Coach - a Primary Person on staff with whom the participant develops an engaging and enduring relationship.<sup>3</sup> The Success Coach is responsible for developing employer connections, offering job-related counseling through individual career success coaching, and getting to know the young people, their strengths and their areas of need.

 **Sports-Based Youth Development:** In Rebound, basketball is used as a vehicle to teach young people critical social-emotional and life skills. The program's basketball coach creates a playbook that incorporates concepts applicable in the world of work such as taking direction, resolving conflict, being a part of a team and developing and following through on a plan. Basketball clinics are coupled with workshops, in which participants learn financial literacy, create

resumes, explore career options and prepare for job interviews. Research is emerging on best practices in the field of sports-based interventions, which reinforces a number of components of our Rebound model, including a safe environment, opportunities for skill-building on and off the court, and staff who help youth foster self-efficacy and a sense of mattering in the world.<sup>4</sup>

-  **Cohort-Based Approach:** Rebound runs three cohorts each year, putting a strong emphasis on community-building in order to facilitate the development of a positive peer network. Research demonstrates that belonging to a cohort of peers with a common purpose contributes to skill development and has a positive impact on persistence within a program.<sup>5</sup> This sense of community is augmented by the utilization of Restorative Practices, which emphasizes the maintenance of positive relationships within a community.
-  **Network of Employers:** Rebound's full-time Success Coach in ENY has developed a strong network of employer partners through which to refer youth for job placements. During the first year of programming, Rebound placed youth at 45 different employers in the business/retail, nonprofit, government and media sectors. **Employers included: the NYC court system, Black Entertainment Television (BET), the NYC Sanitation Department, Man Up – an ENY-based nonprofit – and numerous other nonprofits and retailers throughout NYC.** Rebound staff are primed to continue to build upon the network, given that we have hired Success Coaches from within our target communities who are familiar with the job landscape in the neighborhoods and can bring connections to local employers. Staff also have the advantage of being able to draw on Good Shepherd's long-standing linkages and collaborations with corporate partners and nonprofits throughout the city.
-  **Post-Program Support:** Lastly, the program involves a post-job placement component. Staff continue to work with young people as they begin their new jobs in order to improve job retention and satisfaction. Youth who have started a job participate in weekly "Snack and Rap" sessions, where they meet to talk about their job experiences and receive support from staff and peers related to issues such as job expectations. Staff also remain involved in helping young people to navigate common pitfalls to successful job retention, such as providing referrals to address issues related to child care and transportation.

## Next Steps

Rebound is a part of Good Shepherd's larger strategic shift toward building capacity in workforce development services, which has included two major expansions this year: 1) the launching of our Jobs+ initiative, a sector-based apprenticeship program and 2) the expansion of Rebound into Red Hook. As in ENY, Good Shepherd has concentrated services in Red Hook and has had a presence in the neighborhood for more than 40 years. The new Rebound site, which opened in November 2015, joined Good Shepherd's network of support services in Red Hook, including three afterschool programs, a Transfer School, a Prevention program and a community center. The agency also played a large role in the neighborhood's efforts to aid recovery following Hurricane Sandy and continues to be involved via the Red Hook Coalition, a group of service providers, residents and business owners committed to neighborhood improvement. The new Rebound program is housed inside of one of Good Shepherd's existing community centers in Red Hook.

**"I thought (Rebound) was just to make myself better as a basketball player, but it made me better as a person. I can actually do something with my life. Something good for the world."**

*-Rebound graduate*

**Who We Serve:** During Rebound's first year of programming (summer 2014 – spring 2015), Rebound served:

**76**

youth in the fall (12 weeks), spring (12 weeks) and summer (8 weeks) cohorts

**89%**

of youth were African American/Black

**81%**

of youth were ages 16-24 years, a critical time period when a youth transitions from school to work

### Citations:

1 American Community Survey, 2014 1-year estimates, PUMS file.

2 Sum, Andrew, et. al. The Path Dependence of Teen Employment in the U.S.: Implications for Youth Workforce Development Policy. Center for Labor Market Studies, Northeastern University (2007).

3 Youth Development Institute. Promising Practices in Working with Young Adults. (March 2008).

4 Perkins, Daniel, and Noam, Gil. Characteristics of Sports-Based Youth Development. New Directions for Youth Development, Vol 2007, Issue 115. (Fall 2007).

<sup>5</sup> Drago-Severson, Eleanor, et. al. The Power of a Cohort and of Collaborative Groups. National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy, Vol. 5, Issue B (October 2001).

*Good Shepherd Services is a leading multi-service organization in New York City that operates over 80 programs in neighborhoods where children, youth and families face the greatest challenges to provide the support they need to succeed. To learn more about Good Shepherd Services, please visit [www.goodshepherds.org](http://www.goodshepherds.org). This report was written by the Program Evaluation and Planning Department at Good Shepherd Services. Rebound is currently funded entirely through private grants. We gratefully acknowledge the support of Barclays.*