



Margaret Levy

Eli J. Segal Citizen Leader Program

Brandeis Segal Fellows Summer Internship Report

When I arrived at Jobs for the Future, I felt well prepared to begin my internship. The week prior to my start date, Tom Broussard arranged for me to meet my supervisor, Maria Flynn, the Vice President of the Building Economic Opportunity Group, the subset of JFF in which I would be working. At this time we had an opportunity to discuss the organization, the project I had been assigned to and the type of work I would be doing once I started my internship. I also met Rebecca Starr, the Deputy Director of the Jobs to Careers project; she and Maria described the project and gave me an idea of the kind of work I would be doing. They reiterated that they were excited to be working with me because of my background in public health policy, which was very nice to hear.

I also felt well prepared by the Segal kick-off event and having a chance to meet with my coach before I started my internship at JFF. Sarah was able to answer any questions I had about starting a new job which made me feel more comfortable. Of course, that didn't mean that there wasn't a learning curve when I first started. It did take me a while to learn where everything was in the office (office supplies especially!), but that's only natural, and the JFF staff was always willing to answer my questions.

Throughout the course of my internship I learned a lot about leadership, followership, teamwork and civic engagement and the importance of all four in making change. By observing my supervisors I had the opportunity to study different leadership styles. One of my supervisors preferred to sit back and hear what the rest of the team had to say before she influenced the brainstorming process with her own opinions. Another would use meetings to delegate tasks to other members of the team. The most important thing, I realized, was that whether a leader or a follower, everyone has important contributions to make to the group and that the best work gets done when everyone works together as a team. I had my own opportunity to help the Jobs to Careers team by volunteering to write a gap analysis and case study. By stepping up and offering to take on the projects, I helped both the team and myself. I ensured that I had a substantive project to work on for the summer that would provide me (and them) with deliverables for my internship. I also helped my coworkers by taking over projects that would have otherwise been assigned to them and thus freed up their time to do other work for the initiative.

I also learned the importance of having a clear mission. The mission statements of Jobs for the Future and Jobs to Careers were very clear about the need to help people gain the education and workforce development training necessary to provide them with a good job with a family-supporting wage and the opportunity for promotions. A clear mission can be like a good leader, motivating people to do their best work and bringing together people of different backgrounds with different skills to work toward a common goal. The people working on Jobs to Careers were dedicated to helping frontline health care workers build knowledge and skills necessary to move up a career ladder. They understood that helping frontline workers would help improve communities and make both stronger. This goal was the theme that held everyone together and helped the group work as a team.

My accomplishments at Jobs for the Future included a gap analysis of tools related to the Jobs to Careers initiative and a case study of one of the J2C sites, in addition to preparing notes and talking points for my supervisor for meetings and conferences she was attending. For the gap analysis, I researched a wide variety of workforce development tools to determine what, of those available, might be useful to Jobs to Careers sites. After researching existing tools, I determined that there were five major areas where Jobs to Careers could benefit from additional tool development: work-based learning, supervisor training and support, partnering with community colleges, remediation, and employer engagement. For each of these five topics, I summarized the existing tools, highlighted areas for improvement or development, and suggested possible tools that could be created. Many of the tools already available were reports that I was afraid would be too long and detailed to be of much use for busy directors and supervisors in charge of implementing Jobs to Careers. Although the information was accessible, if the reports were boiled down to a checklist of steps to take in gaining supervisor buy-in for the project or a list of common challenges to be aware of when forming a partnership with community colleges, the project sites might have an easier time using the tools and thus would have more success in implementing the program.

The case study I wrote focused on SSTAR, a substance abuse treatment center in Fall River, Massachusetts. On my third day of work at Jobs for the Future, I accompanied my supervisor, Maria, the Jobs to Careers administrator, and the new JFF Vice President of Communications on a site visit to SSTAR. We met with the COO, Patricia Emsellem, and a number of frontline workers who were participating in Jobs to Careers who told us about their experiences and what the program meant to them. We were also given a tour of the SSTAR facility so we could better understand both the structure of the organization and the type of work they do. During a Jobs to Careers staff meeting, we decided that SSTAR should be one of the sites we would highlight in a case study and, since I had recently visited the site, that I would be the one to write it. In addition to the inspiring personal stories of SSTAR workers, the implementation of Jobs to Careers helped the facility become financially solvent for the first time in over 30 years. My case study, which will be published by Jobs for the Future, focused on SSTAR's increased ability to be reimbursed for services provided because more of their employees were able to earn certifications in addictions counseling through Jobs to Careers.