

Challenges and Lessons Learned: Santa Fe College

The most challenging aspects of the Walmart Brighter Futures 2.0 Project center on many of the same issues that hinder the success of low-income individuals, especially those living in generational poverty. There are many barriers to success and program completion for participants living in generational poverty, including a lack of reliable transportation, childcare, and quality nutrition; legal issues; and housing problems. Wraparound services provided by referral from the Walmart Brighter Futures Project alleviate some of these typical roadblocks; however, there are not resources and supports available to alleviate all the difficulties individuals face.

Even with supports, many individuals are used to failing and expect to fail. Having support and changing one's self-image and expectations are imperative for an individual to be successful. The individual has to realize that an incredible amount of work and perseverance is necessary to make life-long changes. He or she has to be provided with a quality program that he or she knows will care for, nurture, and challenge him or her. Individuals who live in poverty are used to programs that promise a lot but either end or don't live up to promises made. It takes a while to build trust and credibility with individuals who have had these experiences. The many services of the Walmart Brighter Futures 2.0 Program are becoming institutionalized in the SF Adult Education Program. Partnerships are being created and funds are being sought to make sure this quality program continues for this population.

The most difficult individual to serve is the participant with an extensive or serious criminal background. Anything in the health care or child care field is most often unobtainable for these individuals. The project works with these participants to find training programs that are appropriate for their skills and interests and offer the chance of future employment. Industrial technology programs and commercial truck driving are areas that have been researched for these individuals. Additionally, participants are referred to counselors and legal advisors to determine the true implication of their former charges. Some individuals have been successful petitioning the appropriate agencies to be allowed to work in their chosen fields. A bonding program is also available through CSNCFL to give these individuals an opportunity to prove themselves.