

DRIVE Program

Mississippi Home Corporation

Special Needs Housing: Combating Homelessness

HFA Staff Contact

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Developing Responsible Individuals with Valuable Education (DRIVE) Program

Summary

In 2020, the Mississippi Home Corporation (MHC) and the Mississippi Department of Transportation (MDOT) began a partnership to increase ridership on public transportation across the state. Initially, the focus was to expand services to residents that lived in public housing authorities and tax credit apartments. In addition to transportation, other needs came into focus. For example, the need for gainful training and employment among those who are homeless or were at risk of homelessness. This need became more dire as the COVID-19 pandemic led to a lot of low-income individuals losing their jobs and becoming homeless.

To address this need, MHC, MDOT and other providers joined forces to provide needed services. MDOT noted that a need existed for additional drivers of public transportation vehicles and MHC identified that Emergency Solution Grant (ESG) funds could be used to cover the costs of employee training activities. In 2021, a strategy to assist homeless persons to become gainfully employed was developed and new partners from Grace House, Mercy Housing, Catholic Charities, and the City of Jackson joined the effort to help identify candidates. Once the Driver Improvement Agency was in place to provide CDL training, the **Developing Responsible Individuals with Valuable Education (DRIVE) Program** was born. The program has since been expanded to include trades in the healthcare industry as well.

This program continues to evolve as we gain new partners and realize new ways to utilize this program. The most recent addition is a re-entry piece for prisoners. They will be offered training to become certified Diesel Mechanics/technology and Heavy Equipment Operators.

In short, this program takes individuals who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and houses them. They then begin training to learn a skill, once they have finished training, they are offered a letter of recommendation to help them find a job. They come out making a salary once not attainable. Homeless to employed.

The Need for Drivers

Transit drivers are the backbone of the transit industry, without them there are no services to the community. In recent years, transit agencies nationwide have been faced with a **critical driver shortage**.

Some of the contributing factors are:

- The spread of COVID-19 and other variants of the disease
- Transit agencies not able to compete with the wages of truck drivers and sometimes school bus drivers.
- Recruiting and hiring drivers that can obtain the appropriate CDL certification, pass background checks and drug and alcohol test. All requirements to be hired as a driver.

- Retaining drivers can also be difficult for a transit agency. Too often, they leave for higher paying jobs in the trucking industry.

Program Results

- From the start of the program 49 individuals have been enrolled in DRIVE. 14 males and 35 females. 25 were households with children.
- 18 individuals were homeless and 31 were at risk of homelessness.
- 22 Individuals have completed their training
- 8 so far have been successfully placed in jobs.
- The average monthly income for DRIVE participants at discharge is **\$2,947**
- The average annual income after completing DRIVE is **\$35,360**, which is more than double the average income participants had at program entry.
- Out of those who have successfully graduated, how many are still housing and employed (employed anywhere)? **100%**
- We keep clients in ESG for up to 6 months depending on how substantial the new income is in relation to family size and expressed need.

MHC's Role

MHC is the state recipients of the Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG). One of the eligible activities provided through the ESG program is essential services which includes Employment Assistance and Job Training. In 2020, MHC received \$18 million in ESG-Cares funds to prevent, prepare for, and respond to COVID. The ESG-CV funds and the flexible waivers served as the building block for the DRIVE program.

Program Costs:

- The DRIVE program costs about \$1,600/ participant with the average class lasting 3 weeks.
- The average cost to house an individual in a 1-bedroom unit in Jackson + utilities is about \$9,300/year.

Trainings Offered

- DRIVE offers a variety of training programs and job placements thanks to community partnerships
 - CDL
 - Medical Assistant
 - Pharmacy Tech
 - Phlebotomy
 - Diesel Mechanics/technology
 - Heavy Equipment Operators

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES/VISUAL AIDS

<https://www.mshomecorp.com/drive/>

Developing Responsible Individuals with Valuable Education (DRIVE)



DRIVE

Developing Responsible Individuals
with Valuable Education

Developing Responsible Individuals with Valuable Education (DRIVE) Program offers housing and job training for individuals who are homeless or are at risk of homelessness. In 2020, the Mississippi Home Corporation (MHC) and the Mississippi Department of Transportation (MDOT) began a partnership to increase ridership on public transportation across the state. Initially, the focus was to expand services to residents that lived in public housing authorities and tax credit apartments. In addition to transportation, other needs came into focus. The need for gainful training and employment among those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. To address this need, MHC, MDOT,

Grace House, and other organizations have joined forces to provide needed services to these individuals.

MHC's Role

MHC is the state recipient of the Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG). One of the eligible activities provided through the ESG program is essential services which include Employment Assistance and Job Training (24CFR576.102(iv)). In 2020, MHC received \$18 million in ESG-Cares funds to prevent, prepare for and respond to COVID. The ESG-CV funds and its flexible wavers (CPD-21-08) served as the building block for the DRIVE program. DRIVE can assist those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness by helping them find both stable employment and housing.

Partnerships: "Together We Are Better"

To carry out this program, we have partnered with several organizations that help identify candidates. These partnerships continue to grow and evolve as the program does. If you are interested in seeing if you might be a good candidate for the program please scan the QR code below to see a list of available partners.



Scan for more
info on MHC's
DRIVE Program

Trainings Offered

DRIVE is currently offering the following training programs and job placements thanks to community partnerships.

- CDL
- Medical Assistant
- Pharmacy Tech
- Phlebotomy
- Heavy Equipment Operator (accepting applicants with criminal background)
- Diesel Technology (accepting applicants with criminal background)

Program Impact

- The ESG program can pay for the rent of those who qualify for up to two years, depending on funding availability and family need.
- The average annual income after completing DRIVE is more than double the average income participants had at program entry.
- The average training is approximately 3 weeks.
- Participants who graduate will obtain a license to work in the chosen field.
- DRIVE offers assistance and recommendation letters to help find jobs.



