Individual Development Accounts – Case Study

Beyond Acquiring Work to Fulfilling Dreams

Samuel, an individual with a developmental disability, had achieved many of his goals. He was living in a supported living program, working in the community and furthering his education, but Samuel had a dream of being a homeowner. Unfortunately, Samuel and his Support Coordinator, Carol, felt this dream was likely out of reach because he needed to maintain his Medicaid benefits.

Carol had a different view after attending the Social Security Work Incentive component of the Supported Employment training hosted by the Agency for Persons with Disabilities and funded by Florida’s Medicaid Infrastructure Grant. Carol learned that an individual can have an Individual Development Account (IDA), an asset building program, and still maintain their public benefits. An Individual Development Account (IDA) is a matched savings account designed to enable low-income individuals to save, build assets, and enter the financial mainstream. IDAs support an individual in saving monthly to realize an asset building goal of buying their first home, paying for post-secondary education, or starting a small business.

Carol shared information about United Way of Palm Beach County’s IDA program with Samuel. Samuel and Carol connected with the IDA program through the Northwest Riviera Beach Community Redevelopment Center, a United Way of Palm Beach County funded Prosperity Center. Dennis Martin worked with Samuel and Carol to open an account at Washington Mutual. This account holds Samuel’s IDA savings and is not counted as an asset for any public benefit. When Samuel reaches a savings level of $2,000, United Way of Palm Beach County will provide a 2:1 match of $4,000. Samuel will have $6,000 to use towards becoming a homeowner.

Samuel will work with the Northwest Riviera Beach Community Redevelopment Center to complete the First Time Homebuyers program, which provides financial literacy and a subsidy for first time homebuyers. The program provides access to a few housing programs (HOME, SHIP and ADDI) that may be combined for assistance of up to $85,000 (depending on the household's gross annual income).

Currently, Samuel has a balance of $1,700 in his savings account. He is very close to his savings goal and, more importantly, to his dream of being a homeowner.

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1 Individual Development Account must be funded through TANF Block Grant dollars or AFIA funds.