

Community Action Voice Mail Community Report

In 2004 The Human Development Corporation of Metropolitan St. Louis (HDC) premiered free Community Action Voice Mail (CAVM) to homeless/jobless individuals not only in the city of St. Louis and Wellston but in the Midwest.

Together, HDC with the help of its partners provide CAVM to the community. As of 9/23/2009 we have established 29 partnerships referring clients to HDC for CAVM Mailboxes. HDC's Family Support conducts Enhanced Skills Workshops and hands out CAVM mailboxes. We have one advocacy only agency. HDC currently allocates 800 voice mailboxes for CAVM and 360 are currently initialized by individuals and in use. Those mail boxes initialized but not used in over 6 months are recycled. Hundreds have been recycled since CAVM was started.

HDC has purchased additional equipment and software to accommodate 10 digit phone numbers. These 700 DIDs eliminated any remaining sense of difference between the CAVM regular individual phone answering machine.

Our partners refer their clients to HDC Family Support at 929 N. Spring Avenue on Tuesdays at 2:00 PM. This is our Central Office situated behind the Veteran's Hospital on Grand and Bell Avenue (Spring and Bell). An HDC's Family Support worker explains what services HDC has to offer, then issues and sets up a CAVM phone number and mailbox for those individuals. This process allows us to educate and inform those individuals and get reimbursed for the classes, thus generate the needed funding to keep CAVM free.

REALIZED OUTCOMES OF CAVM:

- Housing
 - "...used her voice mail box to receive important health information and finding housing."
 - "...found an apartment through using community voice mail."
 - "...using the voice mail to help her find housing and employment."
 - "I was homeless and jobless... I located housing through that system (CAVM)."
 - "I was able to keep in touch with my son's father. That contact allowed his dad to baby sit him while I was out job hunting and house hunting."
 - "Removes stigma attached to transitional housing"
 - "This VM was a life saver when I was homeless...I got a job and I am no longer homeless..."
- Family
 - "...One of the requirements of gaining custody of my children is that I must be able to be contacted 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by their case worker. Voice mail made that possible."
- General
 - "able to reach client that used to be unreachable"
 - "able to communicate with case worker"
 - "I really needed that voice mail box and I will tell anyone who asks me that this program works and it's very important to have it."
 - "I had a cell phone, but it would be disconnected at different times because I didn't have the money to pay the bill." – St. Louis CAVM is free.

- Abuse
 - “She used that number to keep in touch with me and some of her close friends with out her abuser being able to find her based on the phone number. He can’t call information (411) to find her number or trace it back to a building or house.”
- Employment
 - “I was able to let jobs call me for interviews. I was able to get that message without having to call five (5) different houses of relatives and friends to see if someone called for me.”
 - “After 6 months of unemployment, a client received CAVM then obtained employment one week later!”
 - “Ex-offender still living at workhouse used CAVM to land full-time job - 40-50,000/yr”
 - “One of our clients was offered a position ... and was able to get the message through her CAVM phone number.”
 - “A client found out this morning that she was offered a position with a local housekeeping service, she starts tomorrow.”
 - Unemployed client received call back message from downtown hotel; followed up and is currently an assistant manager”
 - “...came into the shelter, stayed 90 days then moved to transitional housing. Received employment through CAVM and has been working for two years and is now in market rate housing. Communicated with employer until she was able to afford a home phone”
 - “Veteran received employment through constant communication while bouncing from house to house”
 - “...scheduled pre-employment tests with CAVM and was hired full-time at Home Depot”

When the Mayor of St. Louis called HDC for help with the imminent arrival of evacuees from the Katrina hurricane, CAVM was identified as an extremely useful tool for families to use for contacting family, friends, relatives, prospective landlords, realtors, caseworkers, etc. HDC created several thousand new voice mailboxes, training documents, signs, and procedures for the large volume of evacuees expected any day. As you know, bringing evacuees to St. Louis’s Welcome Center was cancelled, but HDC was ready.



June 26th 2009 HDC hosted one of the eBus visits at our Northeast center at 935 N. Vandeventer. We provided a full sized phone booth to draw attention to C.A.V.M. and passed out brochures and cards explaining the service HDC provides.



Several attendees of the CAP National Convention were sent information requested about CAVM when I mentioned it to them. CAP is celebrating it’s 45 year of “Helping People and Changing Lives”

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