

## Getting Ahead Monthly Networking Meetings

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The **Monthly Networking Meeting** is an important feature for Getting Ahead graduates to develop effective strategies, resources and social capital for moving to economic self-sufficiency. Each Monthly Networking Meeting will combine time for each Getting Ahead graduate to share their successes and challenges, to connect with Community Allies and to learn about supportive community resources.

As graduates learn about resources, they determine if they are interested, and begin the process of getting connected themselves. They ask for support as they need it. Because this format is information sharing **and** relationship-building, we believe it will be much more effective to hear about these programs first-hand than through only through written material, the internet or other media.

**Building Resources:** Each Getting Ahead graduate is working on building their resources across 11 resource areas. At the Monthly Networking Meetings, each person will share how their process is going and report out their gains, strategies and the challenges they encountered. This help the individual process and problem-solve, share resources for the benefit of the whole group, and help us as a community to identify where there are problems or gaps in services. This information gets shared with our committees such as Predatory Practices or Economic and Political Structures for action, and becomes part of our qualitative data gathering.

**Connecting with Community Allies:** Community Allies are committed community members who assist Getting Ahead graduates with building their resources and solving problems. They listen, suggest, encourage and support the participants. Often they have particular knowledge or skills sets, like financial planning or parenting, which can be of particular assistance. They also help record and analyze the information shared by the graduates for committee action.

**Connecting with Community Resources:** Getting Ahead graduates need to get connected with the many community resources that can assist them with building their resources and stabilizing their environment. Our community partners are excited to come and present on their programs such as United Way's tax preparation program, the Unity community gardens, or the new LaSalle health clinic.

**Data Collection and Evaluation:** SJC Bridges Out of Poverty is asking the question, "What does it take to move one family to self-sufficiency?" Working with our Research and Evaluation committee led by Dr. Sandra Collins (Mendoza School of Business, University of Notre Dame), we will be collecting baseline data for our quantitative research.

At each meeting, a meal will be served and childcare provided so that working parents can attend the meetings. We will be giving incentives to a local grocery store with a gas station. Incentives help pay for basics like gas to attend meetings. Please join us for dinner and conversation.