

# *Center House Employment Supports: Center House Enterprises*

*A collection of business enterprises  
designed to provide supported employment  
to people with mental retardation and  
people with mental illness*

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## **Summary**

Center House Enterprises (CHE), a component of Center House Employment Supports (CHES), is a collection of business enterprises designed to provide supported employment to people with mental retardation and people with mental illness. Individuals referred to CHE are funded through either the Department of Mental Retardation (DMR) or the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC). The program provides skill evaluation, job training and job placement. The program also provides support for individuals who already have their own jobs in the community, at work crews located at community businesses, and at a



*Reception duties at Center House Enterprises include answering the telephone, taking messages and greeting visitors.*



*Center House Enterprises is located on the third floor of a large industrial complex in South Boston.*

mailing and packaging business located at the program site in Boston.

## **Evaluation and Skill Development**

In CHE, individuals can take part in skill evaluations in a variety of areas. Each day individuals have the opportunity to choose to learn or apply new job skills in:

- **Landscaping:** raking, mulching, lawn care, trimming shrubs
- **Recycling:** paper collection, sorting by color, professional interactions with the business community
- **Reception:** answering telephones, taking messages, greeting visitors
- **Janitorial Skills:** sweeping, mopping, floor buffing, facility maintenance
- **Shipping and Receiving:** packing boxes, making deliveries, preparing mail for the Post Office and UPS
- **Production:** labeling, assembling, collating, sealing, metering mail
- **Business etiquette:** professional attire, business attitudes
- **Time management:** maintaining a schedule, budgeting time, scheduling appointments
- **Career Development:** career exploration, resume writing, interview skills

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*The workshop serves as a base of operations and safety net for many people as they try different community jobs.*

- **Travel:** using the public transportation system including subways and buses, commuter rail, walking, directions, personal safety

Individuals have access to a computer classroom with standard business software, software training modules (CD-ROM based) and Internet connections. Participants use the computers during computer classes as well as during their breaks to learn Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel. They also use the computers to search for jobs on the Internet. The computer classroom features a scanner and overhead projector for further technical education.



*Staff members give help on an individual basis to people learning new skills in the workshop.*

### **Individual Community Employment**

CHE Employment/Education Counselors, Case Coordinators and the Business Developer assist individuals in preparing for community employment by helping them:

- explore career opportunities,
- write resumes,
- develop interview skills,
- look for community employment, and
- receive on the job coaching and travel training.

*Many individuals find satisfaction in working at paid jobs at Center House Enterprises.*



The individuals in community placements earn competitive wages in their field. Center House Enterprises staff lends support to individuals who work at such businesses as: Brigham and Women's Hospital, the Boston Public Library, Border's Bookstore, Hollywood Video, Star Market, Stop & Shop, Dunkin' Donuts, CVS, Filene's, Bazic's Cafe and McDonalds.

### Community Supported Work Crews

People who are not yet ready for individual placement can participate in supported work crews in order to gain work skills, confidence, professional work attitudes and good work



*Gathering shopping carts at Stop & Shop requires lots of energy.*

habits. These work crews consist of two to five individuals with one to two job coaches. Work sites have included: Fenway Park, Bay Cove Human Services, EDIC, NESN, Au Bon Pain, Verizon and the Women’s Educational and



*The process of packaging together various items for promotional mailings can be quite involved.*

Industrial Union. Participants receive minimum wage or above for working on an off-site crew.

### Mailing and Packaging Business

Center House Enterprises has a mailing and packaging business on site. Here participants

*Center House Enterprises has operated a successful mailing and packaging business for almost thirty years.*

*Individual tasks include:*



*stuffing envelopes,*



*gathering parcels into bins according to zip code,*



*using machinery to affix proper postage, and*



*the delivering of materials to the post office.*

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can work alongside staff to earn money and develop job skills.

- People can choose from a variety of activities including job preparation classes, computer classes, shipping and receiving, and production work.
- People have the opportunity to work on the production floor Monday-Friday 9:00-3:00.

CHE business customers have included: Fidelity, Perseus Publishing, Visiting Nurses Association, Spare Change Newspaper, Federal Reserve Bank, Massachusetts Attorney General, ASID, Minuteman Press and WGBH. Production jobs pay either minimum wage or a



*Janitorial skills training includes the learning of many different tasks such as mopping the hall and cleaning mirrors and sinks in the restrooms.*



“piece rate” which is based on prevailing wages under a license with the Federal Department of Labor.

### **Location**

Center House Enterprises is located in the Marine Industrial Park in Boston’s historic waterfront district. CHE is accessible by bus #3, #6, and #7 from South Station and bus #6 from Haymarket Station. There is also a shuttle service from South Station that charges a nominal monthly fee.

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*For more information about the Center House Enterprises and other programs of Center House Employment Supports, please contact Yohanna LaRoche Program Director at (617) 878-2540*



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