

Service Provider Promising Practice

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TOPIC:
Staff Qualifications
and Knowledge

LCS in Wisconsin: An Organizational Investment in Capacity-Building and Staff Training

Background

Over the last five years, LCS, a provider in Racine, Wisconsin, has developed the capacity of its staff to expand integrated employment service options. LCS has hired and retained staff who are passionate about integrated employment, and has invested in supporting them to deliver high-quality integrated employment services.

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Through state-of-the-art training and other resources, LCS has navigated internal and external challenges to building staff competencies, and has solidified its mission of sustaining highly qualified staff.

Implementation

Since 2010, LCS leadership has ensured that its staff can access formal training options on topics such as discovery, job coaching, and job development. The agency has also invested in long-term staff development by providing all community employment services staff with memberships to APSE, access to employment training webinars from APSE and Virginia Commonwealth University, and support to earn and maintain certification as Community Employment Support Professionals.

LCS's investment in training and resources to support community employment has been a positive, exciting change for some staff. However, it has been a challenge for others. Throughout the transition to expanded employment services in the community, LCS has maintained a commitment to hiring and retaining staff who support the vision of integrated employment.

Its leadership has also realized that some staff do not share this vision. As Director Mary Beth Popchock states, "We have learned that in order to be successful in achieving the vision of inclusion, staff must buy into this vision. This means that sometimes some staff need to move on to another organization or to other employment that better matches their personal values."

LCS leadership created an organizational infrastructure that incorporated peer learning and information sharing. For example, the employment team established weekly meetings to discuss their work with job seekers and to share solutions and ideas. They also encouraged staff from other teams to submit employment leads, and publicly recognized staff who helped bring about a successful employment outcome. Staff from employment services and other departments also began sharing offices, which generated greater visibility for the employment team and familiarity with their work.



Impact

LCS's financial investment in staff training and support for education and mentoring around integrated employment impacted its entire sense of mission. The centrality given to community integration and employment and the education around implementing new strategies has led to the sense that everyone at LCS is there to assist people to live and work in their communities.

Some tangible results of these investments include the creation of new community-based employment pathway programs, the hiring of case managers and other staff whose main responsibility is to coordinate community-based work experiences, and the launch of a new program to support individuals' greater community engagement outside of employment.

Suggestions for Replication

- » LCS ensures access to a range of formal training options on topics such as discovery, job coaching, and job development.
- » By supporting membership in national organizations, leadership communicates a high level of professional expectations and uses the resources of these organizations to meet their training goals.
- » LCS structured activities within their organization to create peer learning and information sharing opportunities for staff. The team providing employment services approached other staff to brainstorm effective support strategies, creating a cohesive approach to employment service delivery.
- » As LCS invested in their training and capacity building, they realized that all staff needed to be aligned with the mission of full inclusion. They were willing to sacrifice staff who were not fully aligned philosophically to ensure the highest-quality integrated employment services.

For more information on this practice contact thinkwork@umb.edu



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