



SERVICES TO ENHANCE POTENTIAL (STEP)

ACCESSIBILITY PLAN/REPORT FISCAL YEAR (2008-2009)

STEP's Vision is to be responsive to a dynamic, diverse environment serving as a catalyst and a champion for full, meaningful community life for all individuals. The Accessibility Plan must work in conjunction with other organizational plans and goals to assist individuals in reaching their vision.

The Self-Determination Plan requires STEP to “provide supports for individuals which enable them to live a self determined life”. STEP is an active member with Michigan Partners for Freedom. The Self-Determination Plan is to identify and support self-determination initiatives and integrate the plan in line with the Organization's Strategic Plan.

The Strategic Plan and Organizational Positioning (2008-2011) has goals that address accessibility by increasing employment & self-employment, serving more individuals with developmental disabilities and mental illness in Wayne and Washtenaw Counties, achieving benchmarks established by D-WCCMHA, and developing needed Senior Supports.

The Quality Assurance Improvement Plan (QAIP) provides organizational goals that are outcome based that directly move the organization to increase accessibility and sets implementation strategies to meet these goals. The goals are 1) Implementation of the Organization's Self-Determination Initiative. 2) Provide opportunities for individuals to be empowered and achieve an enhanced quality of life. 3) Expand the Organization's service and support options. 4) Improve communication with external stakeholders and families. 5) Improve Organizational Outcomes. 6) Increase the number of individuals employed. The QAIP has specific objectives that improve accessibility for consumers and staff.

Changes to the Michigan Mental Health Code, Medicaid, the Detroit-Wayne County Community Mental Health Agency and the Managed Comprehensive Provider Network (MCPN) have presented and will present challenges and opportunities to the systems of mental health providers for persons with disabilities. The weak economy in Michigan and the Nation will be especially challenging for providers this fiscal year.

New opportunities are available to persons with disabilities due to the various changes in the service delivery system that emphasize self-determination, community involvement, person-centered planning, and consumer choice. It is the responsibility of Services To Enhance Potential to assist the persons it serves to access these opportunities. This process of gaining access is greatly enhanced by use of STEP's Customer Service Representative, who assists persons in attaining the mental health services that they need.

“Our mission is to support individuals in the pursuit of their chosen goals and the achievement of personal satisfaction in their lives.” A proactive accessibility plan will help our organization to fulfill its mission by identifying and removing architectural, environmental, attitudinal, financial, employment, transportation, communication and any other barriers to persons served, employees, contractual employees, volunteers, interns, and those doing business with Services To Enhance Potential. Our organization will address these barriers at the resource centers and in the community. Barriers to persons served will also be addressed on an individual basis with the Person Centered Plan (PCP).

ARCHITECTURAL BARRIERS:

Architectural/physical barriers that prevent access to the organization's buildings, rooms/offices, utilities, and restrooms will be identified and the removal of these barriers will be addressed. Architectural/physical barriers that limit access to community programs will also be identified and addressed.

The resource centers are currently addressing architectural/physical barriers within the framework of their resource center budgets. The Dearborn South Resource Center has moved to a permanent site this fiscal year. The Washtenaw Resource Center has moved from the second floor to a more accessible first floor office.

ARCHITECTURAL BARRIERS (continued):

The newly acquired Detroit & Eastern Resource Centers have made architectural changes to accommodate more persons in their skills training programs.

ENVIRONMENTAL BARRIERS:

Environmental barriers that prevent or limit full participation in programs and services will be identified and addressed.

More consumers are in need of assistance and support as they age and as STEP serves persons with more severe disabilities. In reviewing the budget, it was determined that lifts to assist with toileting would be approved through the accessibility/accommodations process. This will improve safety for staff and consumers.

Community settings and events may not be conducive and/or supportive of participation by persons with disabilities. Services To Enhance Potential will continue to advocate for improving community awareness of environmental barriers through its employment, community and volunteer opportunities. STEP teamed up with Gateway to provide homeless individuals with information about mental health services and employment opportunities.

ATTITUDINAL BARRIERS:

There is a lack of awareness of the abilities that persons with disabilities possess. There is too much focus on the disability and what a person can not do, instead of what they can do. This is a barrier that exists in the community and regrettably in the mental health community and families as well.

In an effort to promote cultural awareness of the large Arab community in Southeastern Michigan, STEP has trained all STEP staff at the Arab American National Museum. This has allowed staff to have a better understanding of the Arab culture, and better serve persons trying to enter the Mental Health System.

ATTITUDINAL BARRIERS

Attitudinal barriers will be and have been addressed with staff training, board presentations by persons served, community and volunteer programs, persons with disabilities serving on committees/boards, and community employment. STEP is collaborating with the Disability Network of Wayne County – Detroit to promote self-advocacy among persons with disabilities. The first formal joint venture will be in November, 2008, The University of Independence will be offered to 20 STEP consumers to “empower individuals with disabilities to improve the quality of their lives.”

The Quality Assurance Improvement Plan has an objective to develop a Parent Advisory Council to increase community awareness. This group has been formed and is called the Community Advocacy Committee (CAC). The CAC sponsored an Employer Open House in Detroit to focus on reducing attitudinal barriers by

employers. This effort is leading to additional Employer Open House events at other STEP locations this fiscal year.

FINANCIAL BARRIERS:

Limited financial resources demand planning by the organization to address the removal of barriers to accessibility. Training, staffing, community programs and employment, building improvements, transportation, etc. all rely on limited financial resources to improve accessibility. This makes it imperative that the Accessibility Plan/Report be reviewed by the board of directors by to ensure a portion of those resources are designated to improving accessibility. The Agency will also actively pursue grants that will address barriers. This year two grants are being implemented to address employment (Gateway) and self-employment (D-WCCMHA).

Persons with a disability often have inadequate income and financial resources. This barrier prevents their full participation in the community. Services To Enhance Potential addresses this problem through job placement services, self-employment, micro-enterprises, and organization based employment services.

EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS:

Michigan currently has one of the highest unemployment rates (over 7%) in the country. This is making it increasing difficult to find employment for persons served. Services To Enhance Potential uses employment representatives at each Resource Center to assist in job development. The organization is also venturing into self-employment and micro-enterprise to provide alternatives to produce income.

Persons served also need training in various aspects of successful employment seeking, such as, interviewing, preparing applications and resumes, determining the type of job wanted, development of basic job skills, etc. This training can and should be provided to a greater extent through skills training, community experience, and volunteering. The program of community enhancement at the Northwest Resource Center should and has provided examples of how to achieve success in this endeavor and it is being implemented at the other resource centers.

A Gateway grant (RECOVERY THROUGH EMPLOYMENT) has begun implementation to assist individuals with mental illness in achieving employment. This will be accomplished by using evidence based practices and providing peer support to remove barriers in attaining and retaining employment.

A Center for Entrepreneurial Development (CED) has been established in Detroit. This Grant from D-WCCMHA will provide assistance in exploring the opportunities, learning the fundamentals, and starting a micro-enterprise.

STEP is involved with Project Search in cooperation with CLN, Detroit Public Schools, MRS, Commission for the Blind, Michigan Business Leadership Network, plus major businesses in Detroit to assist students in transition to experience and attain employment. This model can also assist persons in the Resource Centers to obtain jobs.

STEP has installed computers at the Resource Centers for consumer usage to develop resumes, find employment, and learn new computer skills.

EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS (continued):

STEP is assuming the role of Lead Disability Provider for the Detroit-Wayne County Council of the Michigan Business Leadership Network (MI-BLN). This Council will increase exposure with employers who can hire persons with disabilities.

STEP has started a social enterprise “Tried and True” resale shop in the City of Wayne. It provides retail employment for several persons with disabilities. It also provides positive exposure to the community of the abilities of persons with disabilities, as well as, community involvement in this enterprise.

TRANSPORTATION BARRIERS:

Public and private transportation is not adequate to meet the needs of persons with disabilities. People have difficulty obtaining economical and punctual transportation for their social, employment and medical needs.

Services To Enhance Potential contracts with several transportation companies to provide transportation for 500 persons to and from the resource centers, community programs, and employment. Seventy-five persons have received instruction to ride the line haul busses independently to employment, community activities, and the STEP resource centers.

STEP participates with local and regional transportation companies/authorities in their planning projects to improve services for persons with disabilities. The organization

provides transportation for community services with its fleet of cars and vans. Several new mini-vans have been obtained to assist consumers.

COMMUNICATION BARRIERS:

Removal of communication barriers is necessary to promote participation in the community, mental health services and employment. Services To Enhance Potential continues to improve its ability to communicate with individuals who have communication difficulties.

COMMUNICATION BARRIERS (continued):

This is accomplished by providing a variety of ways to communicate with the organization (Michigan Relay, staff trained in American Sign Language, a web-site that is accessible (www.stepcentral.org), Language Line, LEP, Customer Service Representative, etc.). Computers are available at the Resource Centers.

OTHER BARRIERS:

Persons with disabilities must become active participants, leaders, and self-advocates to ensure that community services, mental health services and employment are not only accessible, but also the services that they want and need.

Services To Enhance Potential involves persons with disabilities on a number of committees (consumer advisory, safety/accessibility, board membership and board presentations, etc.) to ensure input and accessibility to its programs. The organization also takes an active role in promoting self-advocacy (Michigan Partners for Freedom, RICC conferences, consumer fairs, development of a self-advocacy group called People First of Detroit, presentations at the Detroit City Council on Transportation, Disability Network-University of Independence etc.) and self-determination projects (Local, State, and National).

At Dearborn South Resource Center, most of the consumers have the disability of mental illness. Since STEP provides services for all of the MCPNs, STEP now provides services to people with mental illness at all of the Resource Centers. It is felt that there is a need to obtain awareness training to the STEP staff to increase their skills with consumers who have mental illness. The first two sessions of training has been provided to all STEP staff.

CONCLUSION:

Services To Enhance Potential will continue to plan and promote accessibility to mental health services, employment and community activities. The STEP Quality Assurance Improvement Plan, the STEP Strategic Plan and the STEP Steering Committee, CAC, SAC, and the Focus Group address accessibility directly and indirectly for attitudinal, employment, communication barriers, etc. STEP is increasing its collaboration with other businesses, agencies and groups to improve accessibility for persons with disabilities at STEP and in the community.

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