

SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT (SE) FIDELITY REPORT

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To: Karen Gardner, CEO

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ADHS Fidelity Reviewers

Method

On September 23-26, 2014, Georgia Harris and Karen Voyer-Caravona (Fidelity Reviewers) completed a review of Focus Employment Services. This review is intended to provide specific feedback in the development of your agency's Supported Employment (SE) services program, in an effort to improve the overall quality of behavioral health services in Maricopa County.

Focus Employment Services has offices located in both Phoenix and Tempe. Focus has a number of distinct programs that serve a range of youth and adult populations, including individuals with psychiatric, physical, learning and/or developmental disabilities, and veterans. Focus serves a culturally diverse population and provides accommodations for Spanish speakers, as well as persons who are deaf or hearing impaired. Services include: career counseling, resume development, work exploration, employer diversity training and work adjustment. The SE program is distinct from pre-employment, trial work, and paid work activities in which positions are set aside for people with disabilities. Currently, eight "career counselors", referred to in this report as "Employment Specialists" (ES), are co-located within, or provide services to, nine clinics in the Southwest Network, CHOICES Network and Partners in Recovery provider network organizations (PNO). Of the 125 SE program participants across all clinics, 43 members are working in competitive, community-based employment.

During the site visit, reviewers participated in the following:

- Observation of an SE monthly staff team meeting;
- Observations of the referring clinics' morning treatment team meetings;
- Individual interviews with the SE Program Manager and two Employment Specialists;
- Group interviews with the SE Leadership, three Employment Specialists; three clinic Rehabilitation Specialists and five Case Managers; and approximately five members receiving services; and

- Review of SE agency and referring clinic member records/charts.

The review was conducted using the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) SE Fidelity Scale. This scale assesses how close in implementation a team is to the SE model using specific observational criteria. It is a 15-item scale that assesses the degree of fidelity to the SE model along three dimensions: Staffing, Organization and Services. The SE Fidelity Scale has 15 program-specific items. Each item is rated on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 (meaning *not implemented*) to 5 (meaning *fully implemented*).

The SE Fidelity Scale was completed following the visit. A copy of the completed scale with comments is attached as part of this report.

Summary & Key Recommendations

Focus Employment Services appears to be fulfilling its mission of “providing hands-on services that are timely, highly professional, and customized to meet the needs of applicants with disabilities and employers.” The agency literature states that they seek to help program participants improve their overall quality of life through involvement in the community and gainful employment. All SE staff interviewed articulated a shared understanding of competitive, community-based employment as the immediate and long-term goal of SE services rather than a distal target, beyond the reach of behavioral health recipients without a period of job readiness activities. This may in part be due to the fact that the CEO continues to carry a caseload as a vocational rehabilitation employment professional. The agency demonstrated strengths in the following program areas:

- Employment Specialists engage members in the search for competitive, permanent employment rather than short-term, pre-vocational and job readiness programs or work assignments set aside specifically for people with a disability status.
- Employment Specialists carry out all phases of vocational services including engagement, assessment, job development and placement, job coaching and individualized, follow-along supports.
- Anyone with a stated interest in finding a job is considered ready to work. Employment Specialists do not use screening instruments, tests or trial work periods in order to assess an individual’s job readiness; substance abuse is not seen as a barrier to job readiness or program participation.
- Job searches begin immediately, with assessment focused on identifying employment interests/preferences, work history, education and needs required to achieve goals, such as the creation of a resume, collection of references and setting up an email account.
- Job searches are individualized, reflecting member needs and preferences, with a diversity of job settings and job types.

The following are some areas that will benefit from focused quality improvement:

Integration with Mental Health Treatment

- While co-located within clinics, supported employment services appear to be poorly integrated with mental health treatment, partly due to administrative changes affecting access to member records/documentation. Some Employment Specialist office space is physically segregated from that of treatment team members due to PNO concerns about confidentiality. This separation, however, limits Employment Specialists' ability to participate as fully functioning members of the treatment teams and suggests that not all clinic and/or PNO decision makers recognize the important role that competitive employment plays in recovery.
- Employment Specialists do not have an opportunity to participate in regularly scheduled group and/or peer supervision. Group and peer supervision allows Employment Specialists to function as a vocational unit where individual members help each other with cases by sharing struggles and successes, presenting case studies, exchanging information on new job leads, and exploring strategies and techniques for overcoming perceived barriers to employment.

Community Based Services

- The majority of supported employment activities occur in the clinics rather than delivered in the community. According to the evidence-based supported employment practice, the goal is for 70% of each Employment Specialists' total scheduled hours to occur in community settings such as coffee shops, public libraries, potential jobs sites and job fairs, with either the member or a potential employer. Services conducted in natural, community settings help members become more comfortable in public, work-like environments and, in turn, lead to better outcomes.

SE FIDELITY SCALE

Item #	Item	Rating	Rating Rationale	Recommendations
Staffing				
1	Caseload:	1 – 5 5	Currently, eight Employment Specialists are co-located at nine CHOICES and Southwest Network clinics. Agency rosters for each Employment Specialist show an average caseload of 16.25, with a range of between 2 and 26. All staff reported that caseloads go up and down depending on referrals received.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The agency should continue to monitor the caseload size for Employment Specialists, with the goal of maintaining caseloads of 25 members or less. All members (including mental health and developmental disabilities) served by an employment specialist are counted in the caseload size.
2	Vocational Services staff:	1 – 5 4	Three of the Employment Specialists interviewed reported they provide non-vocational services approximately 20 – 25% of the time, in the form of weekly groups with topics that include: restoration of rights, dressing for the interview, resume writing, and mock interviewing. “We provide activities that the treatment team doesn’t have time to do.” One Employment Specialist teaches the Wellness Recovery Action Planning (WRAP) group twice weekly. Another Employment Specialist periodically facilitates a single session group activity “designed to address the challenges and needs associated with entering the labor market with a felony or misdemeanor history”. Participation in these groups is not limited to individuals enrolled in the SE program, although, it might help generate potential referrals if members begin thinking about the benefits of working. While relevant to finding employment, the groups cannot be classified as “individual job development”.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is recommended that the clinics and PNO explore staffing options other than Employment Specialists for providing independent living and vocational rehabilitation groups to members, so that Employment Specialists can focus on conducting vocational activities in the community as much as possible.

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3	Vocational generalists:	1 – 5 5	Based on interviews with Employment Specialists, clinic Rehabilitation Specialists and Case Managers, and members, Employment Specialists conduct all phases vocational services, including ongoing on-site job development and placement, job coaching, and follow along services for those members who request it.	
Organization				
1	Integration of rehabilitation with mental health treatment:	1 – 5 1	<p>Supported employment services appear to be poorly integrated with mental health treatment at the clinics. Rather than share office areas, Employment Specialists are segregated at some clinics from clinic treatment team members due to limited space and PNO concerns that housing outside contractors with CM and RS staff poses a potential violations of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). Likewise, Employment Specialists lack access to members’ clinic records, which can leave them unaware of clinical and situational issues (i.e.: increased presence of positive or negative symptoms, a death in the family, loss of housing or changes in medication) that might affect the member’s job search or current employment.</p> <p>Employment Specialists compensate by building relationships with CM and RS staff members and scheduling time with the treatment team to promote new or existing services. Employment Specialists use face-to-face conversations, email and phone calls to communicate concerns that may need the treatment team’s attention. One Employment Specialist meets regularly with an RS and a CM to discuss member issues. Employment Specialists also submit monthly written summaries, although it is unclear if they are</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On the clinic and PNO level, it is recommended administrative processes and procedures be established to increase integration of SE and mental health services. Employment Specialists need access to member records, whether hard copy or electronic, and records should include the vocational profile (and updates), the employment plan, and monthly progress notes. The Employment Specialist’s office should be in close proximity or shared with the clinic treatment team. • It is recommended that clinic, PNO and RBHA leadership provide training across all the mental health teams about the principles of SE and the role competitive work plays in recovery. • In good fidelity SE programs, Employment Specialists regularly attend at least one weekly treatment team meeting in order have up-to-date information on the members disability and other issues pertinent to job finding. Additionally, the ES can have a voice in decision making and to help the team think about employment for people who have not previously been

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			integrated into members' clinical records, or reviewed by the CM or treatment team.	referred or who have been assumed unsuitable for work due to their symptomology or continued use of drugs and alcohol. To start, the agency might consider ES attending treatment team meetings once a month, then work up to weekly.
2	Vocational Unit:	1 – 5 3	<p>Employment Specialists do not meet as a vocational unit for group or peer supervision but convene monthly for a monthly company meeting. At the meeting observed by the fidelity reviewers, the agenda was largely administrative in nature. Though the meeting included a cultural competency component focused on prevailing attitudes about family, education and work among first and second generation Latino households, the vocational unit did not use the information to explore engagement strategies with Latino members. Supervision is largely provided weekly on an individual basis by the Program Manager.</p> <p>While the Employment Specialists do not meet as a group with the Program Manager on a regular basis for group or peer supervision, they assist one another by providing back up services and call on one another with questions or concerns. One Employment Specialist was repeatedly identified as sharing his previous professional experience in corrections and parole in order to facilitate the job searches of members with criminal histories.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is recommended that the SE Supervisor (Program Manager) role and responsibilities be clearly outlined, including meeting weekly as a group with the Employment Specialists to discuss member issues, present challenging cases, celebrate successes, provide information on new job leads, and share knowledge and expertise. • Professional development trainings provide an excellent opportunity for the vocational unit to acquire new information that informs their practice of supported employment. It is recommended that future such trainings include discussion of how the new information, for example, Latino values respecting family, education and work, could be applied to working with job seekers.

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3	Zero-exclusion criteria:	1 – 5 2	<p>Employment Specialists will work with anyone who states a desire to work regardless of symptomology or current use of drugs or alcohol. Employment Specialists acknowledge to members that drug and alcohol use may undermine their job search (i.e.: drug testing), but rather than deny services, they use logical consequences to help members learn and find solutions. Employment Specialists suggest supportive services such as counseling to promote sobriety and a drug free life style but also express the belief that the job search and attainment of employment goals can motivate commitment to treatment.</p> <p>Interviews with clinic staff suggest that symptomology, level of functioning and drug and alcohol use may be used as a reason for denying a member a referral for SE services. Supported employment is only provided by Focus staff if they are referred by the clinic treatment team. Some Employment Specialists will advocate for a member’s stated interest in competitive employment if it is brought to their attention. Some, but not all, interviewed RS and CM staff members expressed willingness to make a referral for SE in spite of substance use, even if they believe it will prevent successful employment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is recommended that the PNO and RBHA provide ongoing review of and educational training in the SAMSHA evidenced-based practice of supported employment in order to increase understanding of the role of competitive employment in the recovery of people living with an SMI or co -occurring disorder. Citations and educational resources are available on the SE section of the SAMSHA and the Dartmouth Psychiatric Research Center websites.

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Services				
1	Ongoing, work – based vocational assessment:	1 – 5 5	There was no evidence that the Employment Specialists make use of tests, evaluations, work samples or pre-vocational activities such as piece work, paid work or trial employment. It was repeatedly confirmed through multiple sources that members are ready to work when they express an interest in working. In fact, one member reported that he wanted to try a sheltered work program, but the Employment Specialist and RS had discouraged this option. Employment Specialists sometimes use typing tests to gauge specific job skills that might benefit from further training or administer the Myers Briggs to help members identify interests. One Employment Specialist said that he uses an initial vocational checklist but described the job search as a job within itself and said that members develop skills, especially computer skills, through the very act of working with him on a job search. The reviewers did not find vocational profiles in the member agency records, although Leadership provided a hard copy of one that the Employment Specialists use. It is not clear how often or if the vocational profile is routinely updated.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is recommended that the Employment Specialists maintain copies of the vocational profile (and any updates) in the member record in order to document new skills, employment experiences, changes in needs and preferences, and progress toward long-term career and/or educational goals.
2	Rapid search for competitive jobs:	1 – 5 4	The Employment Specialists help members attain competitive employment. Staff reported that a member’s first contact with employers begins within the first month of engagement with the Employment Specialist, often within the first two weeks of entry into the program. A review of member records indicate that <i>online job searches</i> and submission of applications indeed do begin within that time frame. While Focus Employment Services considers online job applications as an	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is recommended that the agency develop a system for clearly tracking and documenting first contact with employers, defined as first face-to-face contact between the member and/or the Employment Specialist on behalf of a member. In-person contacts are encouraged not only to create relationships between the ES and the employer, but also

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			<p>employer contact, the SE model considers only face-to-face encounters with potential employers by the member or the Employment Specialist on behalf of the member as a contact. Focus Employment Specialists take members to job fairs for direct contact with potential employers, and engage in outreach and networking activities with potential employers; however, it was unclear from the record review to what extent this occurs within the first 30 days of member engagement</p> <p>Because many employers discourage job seekers from applying in person, Employment Specialists rely increasingly on online job search engines and employer website applications. Employment Specialists report challenges to this trend on the clinic/ PNO level. PNOs block computer access to many on-line job search tools necessary to apply for employment, and IT security protocols disallow the use of SE agency hardware such as thumb drives and laptops that could resolve access barriers. Additionally, Employment Specialists describe out-of-date clinic IT operating systems that are incompatible with current software utilized by many employer websites and job search engines.</p>	<p>to help the member get comfortable in work settings, talking with potential employers, all in preparation for future job interviews and eventual work.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On the PNO/clinic level, it is recommended that IT solutions be developed that will allow Employment Specialists the access to the online job search/digital data-sharing tools required to assist members in securing competitive employment. • While online job applications are often required by employers, Employment Specialists should still supplement this with in-person job development in the community. It is recommended that the agency's entire employment team get more specific training on job development strategies and skills.
3	Individualized job search:	1 – 5 5	<p>Members and staff interviews indicate that jobs explored are based on member preferences. Employment Specialists report that member preferences are sometimes based on self-identified barriers, such as a paucity of employment options close to home, lack of reliable transportation, and high summer temperatures interacting with medications.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the clinic level, it is recommended that the treatment team document specific job/career goals, preferences and needs in the member's Individual Service Plan (ISP) and subsequent updates rather than simply noting that the member would like to find a job.

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4	Diversity of jobs developed:	1 – 5 5	Agency documentation indicated that out of 41 recent placements, 39 were at unique employers. Types of jobs included IT support, security officer, cashier, machinist, administrative assistant, recovery coach, baker warehouse worker, and plant technician. Per member interview, job search goals included entry-level and paraprofessional positions, as well as jobs in skilled and semi-skilled trades.	
5	Permanence of jobs developed:	1 – 5 4	Employment Specialists help individuals find permanent employment. Some Employment Specialists occasionally assist members in applying at temporary agencies in order to fill gaps in employment and build resumes, especially with members with felony convictions or who have been out of the job market for a long time. Additionally, many employers try temporary contractors before extending an offer for a permanent position.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Given changes in the job market and current hiring practices at many companies, the agency may wish to establish a clear, written protocol for the use of temporary placement agencies to distinguish its use from time-limited trial work assignments, explaining how the option of temporary work supports the goal of permanent, full-time employment. It is recommended that the Program Manager assist the vocational unit in developing a repertoire of creative strategies and techniques for helping members with criminal histories find employment, such as writing letters of explanation, role play to practice explaining convictions, obtaining letters of recommendation and facilitating face-to-face meetings with employers. The Dartmouth Psychiatric Research Center has resources for assisting members with criminal histories find work.
6	Jobs as transitions:	1 – 5 5	Employment Specialists will assist members in leaving old jobs when they are ready to seek new employment and offer to help them finding new jobs that better suit their needs and preferences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is recommended that Employment Specialists review and update vocational profiles with members in order to identify new skills and proficiencies, education and

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			<p>Of members who quit or lose jobs, Employment Specialists report that 30% - 70% want help finding a new job. Employment Specialists attempt to help members identify what they liked and didn't like about their old jobs and use that knowledge to help guide their new search. One RS encourages members to allow the Employment Specialist to help them resign "properly" with notice.</p> <p>Substance abuse is not considered a barrier to finding a new job. If a member loses a job due to factors such as drugs and alcohol, Employment Specialists will follow up with the CM to suggest counseling support but will continue to work with him or her to identify solutions and find new employment.</p>	<p>training completed, and changing work and career goals. Vocational profiles should be "living documents," updated with each new job experience and should be readily accessible in member record.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The agency may wish to consider creating written protocols, based on member needs and fiduciary responsibility, for withholding of renewed SE services in the event that a member loses or quits a job due to factors suggesting danger to self or others.
7	Follow-along supports:	1 – 5 4	<p>Many Employment Specialists provide various types of follow along supports, some at the job site or in the community, others in the clinic or over the phone depending on the needs and preferences of the member. One Employment Specialist said he has gone to work sites and assisted members with their task/check lists of job responsibilities for that day. Another Employment Specialist often communicates directly with employers to help resolve conflicts or issues at the workplace. Some provide direct assistance with learning skills such as data entry on-site, in the clinic or at the public library. Employment Specialists report that some members do not disclose their diagnosis to their employer, preferring to meet somewhere in the community other than their work location. For those members who do eventually choose to disclose their</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue promoting the benefits of individualized follow-along supports as a service to assist members in developing skills in finding and keeping jobs, and transitioning to new opportunities. It is recommended that Employment Specialists collaborate with treatment teams and members to develop written follow-along support plans that reference the member's vocational profile and whenever possible support networks that are invested in the member's success such as friends, family, coworkers and the treatment team.

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			<p>diagnosis to employers, Employment Specialists aid the disclosure process using a tool developed by the agency.</p> <p>Interviewed Employment Specialists said the rate of follow along support requests by members ranged from 15 – 100%, and it is always available to anyone who wants it.</p>	
8	Community-based services:	1 – 5 2	Interviews suggest that community-based services occur within the range of 25 – 75%, depending upon the individual Employment Specialist. One Employment Specialist said he spends 75% of his time in the community, often at job sites, job fairs, job development centers and locations where he can more easily assist members in applying for job online. His report was corroborated by a CM. One Employment Specialist estimated that 75% of his time is spent in the office. Another said that while he prioritizes services provided in the community, he sometimes hears complaints that he is not in the office to meet with potential referrals immediately. A review of member records indicate that community based services occur anywhere from 0 – 75%, with an average of 28% occurring in the community. For this item, the score was weighted toward the record.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is recommended that the SE Program Manager periodically review member records to monitor location of delivery of vocational services, working toward at least 70% of services provided in the community. Program Managers may also wish to consider going into the field with Employee Specialists to mentor and model community service. This does not just apply to job development, but meeting with members to get them more comfortable in community settings. • The SE Program Manager should explore with Employment Specialists, individually and in group supervision, creative and flexible strategies for delivering community-based services to members or on their behalf. Non-vocational activities such as WRAP or communication skills groups divert Employment Specialists time from community based vocational services, and efforts should be made to collaborate with the treatment team to reassign those responsibilities. • Agency leadership may wish to consider asking future Employment Specialist candidates spend time job shadowing a

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				current ES before accepting a job so that the individual understands the importance of community-based services in helping members find competitive jobs.
9	Assertive engagement and outreach:	1 – 5 4	<p>Employment Specialists use telephone, mail and community visits (including to the member’s home or to see family when there is a release of information) to stimulate continued engagement. Employment Specialists persist through missed appointments and cancelations, and factors interrupting job searches such as hospitalizations, housing and transportation issues and interpersonal difficulties. Some Employment Specialists enlist the assistance of the CM or RS to encourage engagement. Another Employment Specialist, however, asks CM staff not to prompt members to engage preferring to see internally motivated participation.</p> <p>Employment Specialists report making multiple attempts to engage clients who stop attending. Employment Specialists report making one to two attempts a week for one to three months before sending a 30-day “Intent to Close” letter, which often results in member contact.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is recommended that the agency review creative and effective strategies to solicit CM and RS support in encouraging active engagement on the part of members in the SE program for as long as possible, not just 3 months.

SE FIDELITY SCALE SCORE SHEET	
Staffing	Score (1-5)
1. Caseload	5
2. Vocational services staff	4
3. Vocational generalists	5
Organizational	
1. Integration of rehabilitation with mental health treatment	1
2. Vocational unit	3
3. Zero-exclusion criteria	2
Services	
1. Ongoing work-based assessment	5
2. Rapid search for competitive jobs	4
3. Individual job search	5
4. Diversity of jobs developed	5
5. Permanence of jobs developed	4
6. Jobs as transitions	5
7. Follow-along supports	4
8. Community-based services	2
9. Assertive engagement and outreach	4
Total Score	58