

**SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT (SE)  
FIDELITY REPORT**

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**Method**

On August 26, 27 and 28, 2014, the above-listed fidelity review team and consultants completed a review of Marc Community Resource's Supported Employment (SE) services for adults with serious mental illness (SMI). This review is intended to provide specific feedback on the current status of the implementation of SE services, as part of improving the overall quality of behavioral health services in Maricopa County. Supported Employment refers specifically to the evidence-based practice of helping SMI members find and keep competitive jobs in the community based on their individual preferences, not those set aside for people with disabilities. Services are reviewed starting with the time that an SMI participating member indicates an interest in obtaining competitive employment, and the review process continues through the provision of follow along supports for people who obtain competitive employment. In order to effectively review Supported Employment services in Maricopa County, the review process includes evaluating the working collaboration between each SE provider and two of the referring clinics with whom they work to provide services. For the purposes of this review at Marc, the two referring clinics included were the Southwest Network Hampton Clinic and the Choices Arcadia Clinic.

Marc Community Resources provides a wide range of employment and other treatment services to people with various disabilities. The agency has a long history in Maricopa County that dates back to the late 1950's when the agency was originally founded to serve people with developmental disabilities. In addition to employment services, the agency's broad spectrum of services includes:

outpatient clinics, group homes, housing services, as well as health and wellness services. The agency serves approximately 3300 people across 7 different locations.

During the site visit, reviewers conducted the following activities:

- Meetings with agency executive leadership, Supported Employment leader, job developers, employment specialists, intake staff, clinic case managers (2 sites) and clinic rehabilitation specialists (2 sites)
- Group meeting with service participants
- Individual telephone calls with family members of participants
- Observation of a Supported Employment team meeting
- Observations of clinical team meetings (2 sites)
- Reviewing clinical records (all sites)

The review was conducted using the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Supported Employment Fidelity Scale. The scale assesses how closely an organization's Supported Employment services match with the identified evidence-based components of Supported Employment. The 15-item scale assesses the degree of fidelity to the SE model along 3 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**

The agency demonstrated strengths in the following program areas:

- Marc Center has a longstanding commitment to providing a wide spectrum of human services, including employment services, for people with various disabilities.
- Marc Center appears to have many different relationships with a variety of clinical service providers and a variety of employers in their community and especially within their immediate neighborhood.
- Marc Center has expressed their desire to improve their current implementation of Supported Employment services for adults with mental illness.

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

- It is recommended that the leadership from Marc Center work with the leadership from the Regional Behavioral Health Authority and their clinic partners to provide focused training and consultation on evidence-based Supported Employment

services for adults with mental illness. This comprehensive training and consultation should include emphasis on:

- A clear description of the principles of Supported Employment and the implications for employment staff.
- Creating a clear understanding of the critical differences between evidence-based Supported Employment and other employment activities and services at Marc Center.
- Focusing Supported Employment staff exclusively on helping people with direct and rapid placement in competitive community-based employment where the member “owns” the job (i.e., working directly for and paid by the employer).
- Developing staff understanding and changing policies and procedures to eliminate the multiple screenings and assessments now present in Marc’s SE services.
- Developing employment specialist positions and job descriptions where staff provide only individualized SE services.
- Training employment specialists on individual job development with potential employers in the community.
- Developing and implementing clear strategies to achieve regular, consistent integration between Supported Employment services and other mental health services.

## SE FIDELITY SCALE

Item #	Item	Rating	Rating Rationale	Recommendations
<b>Staffing</b>				
1	Caseload:	5	For the purposes of this review, four people were regarded as employment specialists --two people who are working full time doing job development and helping people with placements, and two other people who just started and are building up caseloads. Across all four of these staff, the caseload average is less than 25 members per full time staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The agency should continue to monitor the caseload size for employment specialists. All members (including mental health and developmental disabilities) served by an employment specialist are counted in the caseload size.</li> <li>• The agency should consider designating Supported Employment staff (employment specialists) that work exclusively with members who have mental illness and are pursuing competitive employment.</li> </ul>
2	Vocational Services staff:	3	In Supported Employment, employment specialists provide only Supported Employment-specific services. Employment specialists at Marc are also providing other services (e.g. pre-employment groups and agency-based work activities). While these may be related to pre-employment activities, they are not part of the SE model.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The agency should consider re-structuring the job descriptions of SE employment specialists, so they are exclusively dedicated to providing all phases of SE services and do not have other regular responsibilities.</li> </ul>
3	Vocational generalists:	4	In the SE model, employment specialists provide the full spectrum of services to each individual member starting from intake all the way through follow along employment supports. Employment specialists at Marc provide only some of the SE services such as job development, job placement and some follow along supports. Intakes and assessments are done separately at Marc. There are also several assessment points in SE services done by other staff working with members, at both the clinics and agency.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marc should re-structure the job descriptions of employment specialists and the flow of SE services, so that employment specialists provide the full range of SE services to each of their individual members. This improves member retention in services, as well as increases the strength of the relationship between the member and the employment specialist.</li> </ul>

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<b>Organization</b>				
1	Integration of rehabilitation with mental health treatment:	1	In good fidelity SE programs, SE services are regularly and seamlessly integrated with other mental health services. The current structure of SE services at Marc and with their clinical partners for this review does not lend to integrated services. Several sources consistently indicated that employment specialists do not attend clinical team meetings at referral sites. There is no regular consistent person-to-person contact mechanism for SE services integration either at Marc or with their clinic partners. Agency leadership seemed to realize this was an area that needed improvement.	Leadership at Marc, their clinical partners and from the Regional Behavioral Health Authority should work on re-designing SE services to be more in line with the key principles. The clinic sites that were visited stated they do have some staffing meetings where the rehabilitation specialists sometimes attend; however, employment specialists do not participate. Integrating and aligning mental health services to support members in achieving their competitive employment recovery goals will be challenging work but will help increase competitive employment outcomes significantly.
2	Vocational Unit:	5	The employment specialists at Marc meet on a regular weekly basis with their supervisor. Individual members are reviewed at these meetings as well as potential employment leads and job development ideas. Reviewers observed a weekly meeting, and minutes were provided for the previous meeting.	It is important for the SE team to continue regular weekly supervision meetings, especially with the addition of new staff members.
3	Zero-exclusion criteria:	1	Zero exclusion of any interested person with a mental illness in Supported Employment services is one of the critical principles of the practice. Members at clinics, and later at Marc, who are interested in competitive employment are screened and assessed for their readiness for SE services both formally and informally. Reviewers heard the mention of “barriers” to a member working on numerous occasions by various staff. There appears to be an exclusion filter going on throughout the member’s referral process, from the case managers to the	Leadership at Marc, their clinical partners and from the Regional Behavioral Health Authority should work on steps to re-design SE services to assure that members who express an interest in competitive employment in the community and/or Supported Employment services are not screened out or redirected to other pre-employment services during the SE referral process. It should also be noted that SE is

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			<p>rehabilitation specialists at the clinics, then again during intake at the agency and with the job developer.</p> <p>One agency staff member described the use of agency-based work activities as a way to see how members do with supervision and work skills, and as an ongoing work site analysis for people who want SE services. Another staff noted that when a member says, "I am ready to work", then they have to complete Marc's evaluation process first, before trying to get them searching for a job. Members who are in the intake phase of SE services at Marc are given a self-assessment test regarding their own readiness for SE services. Also, many staff at both the clinics and the agency were clear that members who use substances are not eligible for SE services. As one person noted, "We let members know that using substances is a complete no-no if they want to work in the community."</p>	<p>designed for members with the most severe symptoms and challenges related to their mental health, and it is subsequently intended to be provided to all members who express an interest without the use of formal or informal exclusion criteria. It appears that staff at the clinics and at the employment agency may not have received comprehensive training in some of the key principles of Supported Employment services, so investing in comprehensive SE training and plans for full implementation may also be important.</p>
<b>Services</b>				
1	Ongoing, work – based vocational assessment:	1	<p>SE is designed as a straight to work employment program that helps members to learn about the world of work while working in competitive jobs. SE services at Marc (and at their clinical partners for this review) include numerous vocational assessments, vocational steps, agency-based work programs and pre-vocational activities. These all significantly delay or eliminate members receiving direct assistance with contacting competitive employers in their communities quickly (on average within 30 days of intake).</p>	<p>Agencies often have profound challenges with providing good fidelity Supported Employment services for adults with mental illness alongside other employment interventions. It is recommended that Marc work to establish a free standing SE program that does not use components of other vocational services to assure SE members receive comprehensive and timely SE services.</p>

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			<p>At one point, Marc’s program was described as a “stepping stone” to more competitive employment in the community eventually.</p> <p>Numerous staff at Marc described their agency-based work activities (including on-site and off-site) as assessments designed to see if the member is really ready for competitive work. One staff stated, “We refer (members who say they want to work) to a workshop first to gain more confidence before starting job development.” One member at Marc who wants to be competitively employed in the community said she was told that the (agency-based work activity) is a training job to get her back in the community. Various clinic staff described how they determine when to refer a member to SE services. One staff noted that “The team decides if work is a good goal for the member at this time. It might be that the additional stress of work will make things worse.” Another clinic staff noted that if a member is job ready, “then they need to demonstrate their job readiness skills first before we refer them to Supported Employment.”</p> <p>Members who are placed in the agency’s work activities are also evaluated for employment readiness in formal ways. As one document clearly states, “A performance appraisal is used by Marc at least biannually to objectively evaluate an individual’s past performance.” The form also includes a place to check if the member has job readiness or not.</p> <p>While all of the above approaches may have their places in other types of employment services, these are not consistent with evidence-based Supported Employment services for adults with mental illness.</p>	

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2	Rapid search for competitive jobs:	1	<p>Given the complicated current referral process for SE services within the system and at Marc, it is challenging to understand how much the direct search for competitive jobs is delayed by numerous formal and informal assessments as well as referrals to other vocational activities. Marc employees described some members who had been in the work shop for 1 to 2 months, some for 1 to 2 years, and some for several years. Other members who were interviewed stated they had been searching for a competitive job in the community (one that the member owns and receives the paycheck directly from the employer) within a month or two of starting SE services, while other members stated that they have not received any assistance from their employment specialist with contacting potential competitive employers in their communities.</p> <p>While the specific time frame from intake at Marc to first in-person contact with a potential employer (that matches the member's individual employment goal) is difficult to measure precisely, there were significant cumulative delays in person-to-person contact with potential employers. It appears that some members are waiting months to years for a face-to-face contact with a community-based employer.</p> <p>Several staff at Marc seemed to feel that members should go through pre-employment classes and other training before starting to search for a job in SE. As one staff member stated, "Pre-employment (classes) is essential because in the beginning of SE, if someone has not worked for a while or at all, then they need this information."</p>	(Please re-read rationale and recommendation for services #1 on the preceding item.)

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3	Individualized job search:	1	<p>While some employment or pre-employment activities are provided in a group format, evidence-based Supported Employment services are provided only in an individual format. In SE services, each individual member develops a specific employment goal (e.g. “I want to work in a bookstore part-time”), and the individualized job search is then conducted by the employment specialist and the member based on matching the member’s own goal.</p> <p>The SE program at Marc relies heavily on what is available for work activities or for job openings instead of relying exclusively on the member’s employment goals. In SE, employer contacts and job searches start with the person and not with what is available in work activity programs or from employers with pre-arranged work sites or slots.</p> <p>Marc has a unique philosophy regarding job development that is to promote its reputation in the community by developing business relationships that enhance its own economic development. While this may be a useful position for some employment models, it is not part of evidence-based SE services.</p> <p>As one staff member described the biggest challenges with SE at Marc, “We need to get better at the deliverables. If we go out there and push a business to agree for us to do work for them, then we need to build up our supply so we can do this delivery.” This approach is completely contrary to the principles of SE services.</p>	<p>It would be useful for the leadership at Marc and their partner clinics as well as leadership at the Regional Behavioral Health Authority to develop strategies for training providers in the fundamental principles of evidence based Supported Employment services and the differences between SE and other pre-employment services or activities.</p> <p>According to evidence-base SE, each person entering SE services should have the opportunity to develop a specific, personally-meaningful employment goal with their own employment specialist shortly after entering SE services, and then pursue strategies for direct, individualized in- person employer contacts in a timely way.</p> <p>It might be helpful for Marc to develop a specific tracking sheet for each member in SE that includes information such as intake for SE date, date of development of specific individual employment goal, date of in person employer contacts related to that goal, date of hire, etc. to help track timeliness and individualization of job development activities.</p>
4	Diversity of jobs developed:	2	<p>As previously described, SE is an individualized employment service; therefore, the nature of a member’s community-based competitive job should be diverse like the community’s workforce. The lack of clear separation</p>	<p>(Please re-read rationale and recommendation for services #3 on the preceding item.)</p>

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			<p>among Marc’s other pre-employment activities and interventions seem to complicate the way this is implemented. The pressure and expectations of fulfilling agency-based work activities or contracts with employers often impedes employment specialists from helping to develop diverse competitive jobs that members “own” in the community (i.e., those where the member works directly for, and is paid by, the employer).</p> <p>There was very little evidence of any community-based member owned jobs that were developed by employment specialists to match individual member employment goals. Nearly all members who were identified as “employed” were working in some type of agency-based (either on-site or off-site) work crews or at pre-arranged positions with employers.</p>	<p>Additionally, it is recommended that Marc have job development logs located in each SE member’s chart that specify the member’s individual employment goal and tracks all of the job development activities for that member in the community. This log should only include face-to-face employer contacts in the community and not phone calls, newspaper, or internet employment searches, but it can include contacts both with the member or just the employment specialist alone.</p>
5	Permanence of jobs developed:	1	<p>Another of the core principles of evidence based Supported Employment services is that members are provided with all the assistance they need to obtain and retain competitive community based jobs that match their individual employment goals. SE focuses on helping people to get jobs that may lead to long-term employment or careers based on their own recovery vision.</p> <p>The effective implementation of this principle for SE members at Marc is complicated by the presence of multiple employment programs and strategies. Very few permanent jobs are being individually developed for members in SE services, rather there is a strong reliance (and potentially strong steering) toward the use of agency-based or agency-arranged work activities, including paid daily work activities. These strategies are in direct contrast with the principles of evidence-based SE services.</p>	<p>It would be useful for the leadership at Marc and the leadership at the Regional Behavioral Health Authority to develop strategies for training providers in the fundamental principles of evidence based Supported Employment services and the differences between SE and other pre-employment services or activities.</p> <p>It might also be useful to redesign the employment specialist job descriptions to emphasize the need for employment specialist to focus on helping members in a timely way to obtain permanent competitive jobs with community employers that members “own”. This includes providing a significant amount of community-based individualized job</p>

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				development by each member's employment specialist.
6	Jobs as transitions:	5	Employment specialists at Marc stated they are willing and ready to help members who might choose to leave employment or who might lose their job to find another job in a timely manner. All members who were interviewed stated they felt their employment specialist would provide ongoing supports if they stopped working in their agency-based work activities.	
7	Follow-along supports:	4	<p>In good fidelity SE programs, follow along supports are provided to members who obtain community-based competitive employment to help members to successfully retain their jobs. The program does provide substantial ongoing evaluation, monitoring, assessment and supports for members who are working in agency-based work activities. However, there are very few people in the Marc program who are competitively employed in their own jobs in the community.</p> <p>Two members described lengthy and complex situations where they received follow along supports to help manage situations with their supervisors. As one member stated, "No matter what my issues have been, my employment specialist has always been there for me." Another member stated, "My employment specialist has always been very supportive with work. When I was not doing well, I called her to let her know. I appreciate all the services that are provided by the Marc Center."</p>	
8	Community-based services:	2	As described before, SE is an individualized competitive employment service, designed to be provided in the member's own community and not agency based. As such, it is important for employment specialists to be in the community for the vast majority of the time meeting	It would be useful for the SE leadership at Marc to review all times that employment specialists are required to be on-site at the agency and to evaluate how much time is left for employment specialists to be in the

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			<p>with potential competitive employers and helping members to be successful with their employment.</p> <p>At the Marc Center, the amount of time that employment specialists spend providing individualized SE services in the community is significantly impacted by the amount of time that employment specialists are providing pre-employment classes and activities, or meeting with members at agency-based work sites. As one employment specialist stated, "I know that I am supposed to be in the community something like 60 percent of my time, but it is nowhere near that."</p> <p>Only a very limited number of members stated that they have met with their employment specialist out in the community at potential employment sites. A few mentioned meeting at local restaurants, but the majority of members stated that most of their contacts with employment specialists were at the Marc center or at agency-based work sites.</p>	<p>member's community working on job development and follow along supports for member who are competitively employed. It might be helpful to do a time study to identify the barriers to employment specialists spending more time in the community doing SE work.</p>
9	Assertive engagement and outreach:	5	<p>If a member is referred to Marc services and an intake is completed, it does appear that staff work actively with their clinical partners to establish an initial engagement with members. Staff at the clinics and at Marc center stated they use several different techniques to engage members who are referred, including shared meetings, checking with case managers, phone calls and outreach to family (with permission) to evaluate what is happening with members who appear to disengage. Even within the various employment methods and activities, members do find employment specialists at Marc to be engaging. As one member stated, "They work with you here no matter where you are at."</p>	

<b>SE FIDELITY SCALE SCORE SHEET</b>	
<b>Staffing</b>	<b>Score (1-5)</b>
1. Caseload	5
2. Vocational services staff	3
3. Vocational generalists	4
<b>Organizational</b>	
1. Integration of rehabilitation with mental health treatment	1
2. Vocational unit	5
3. Zero-exclusion criteria	1
<b>Services</b>	
1. Ongoing work-based assessment	1
2. Rapid search for competitive jobs	1
3. Individual job search	1
4. Diversity of jobs developed	2
5. Permanence of jobs developed	1
6. Jobs as transitions	5
7. Follow-along supports	4
8. Community-based services	2
9. Assertive engagement and outreach	5
<b>Total Score</b>	<b>41</b>

