

Job Skills Trainer Manual to Aid in Supported Employment Trainings

FY 19 Third Quarter

Goal 2, Objective 4.1—Partner through a multi-agency taskforce to expand Supported Employment Services

A multi-agency task force is working collaboratively to expand the availability of Supported Employment Services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).

Partners include the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services, The Mississippi Council on Developmental Disabilities (MCDD), The Arc of Mississippi, the Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE), Disability Rights Mississippi, Goodwill Industries of Mississippi, and Willowood Developmental Center.

Funded by MCDD, the group in 2018 developed a manual to provide information and support to Job Skills Trainers. Sometimes known as job coaches, they provide one-to-one support in workplaces to assist people with IDD who are taking part in Supported Employment Services.

Supported Employment Services focus on someone's abilities, not disabilities, while also providing individual support to the person and advice and information to employers. They enable people with disabilities to search for and find employment in their communities – and not just any job they can find, but a job they choose, enjoy, and that offers competitive wages.

The Job Skills Trainer Manual covers a variety of topics, from the benefits of supported employment and job skills training strategies to providing forms a Job Skills Trainer may utilize on the job. As the manual reminds readers, Job Skills Trainers may take

on the roles of job trainers, technicians, consultants, or advocates, with each role requiring its own skills and abilities.

Matt Nalker, Executive Director of The Arc of Mississippi, said his advocacy organization became involved with this project because of the high rate of turnover in job coaches statewide.

“When we get calls from families wanting their loved one to get a job, we need to link them with a person who knows how to support someone,” he said. “This is difficult to do because our state is lacking a trained group of folks in the community who know how to do this much-needed service.”

Putting the manual together was a process of editing together information about all of the progress and good work that has gone on around the state and country regarding Supported Employment Services. The stakeholders group met regularly to determine what should be highlighted in the manual that would work in Mississippi.

In the first half of FY 19, the number of people utilizing Supported Employment Services increased from 339 to 374. Those numbers will hopefully increase further as train-the-trainer events to distribute the manuals take place during the remainder of this fiscal year.

Funded by MCDD and APSE, trainings will be taking place at the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation, The Arc of Mississippi's Gulf Coast office, and at North Mississippi Regional Center.



MSH Forensic Services Decreases Wait Times

FY 19 Third Quarter

Strategy 1.1.5—Expand forensic competency restoration bed capacity by conversion of current acute psychiatric treatment beds

Mississippi State Hospital's Forensic Services has increased its bed capacity and decreased its waiting list through several new initiatives.

Forensic Services provides competency evaluation and restoration services for Circuit Courts throughout the state. Historically, the limited number of beds on the Forensic Services unit has been the main factor contributing to delays in completing evaluations and providing expert opinions to courts. Of the 35 beds available through 2018, only 15 were available for competency evaluations and restoration services.

To aid in decreasing wait times, Mississippi State Hospital (MSH) converted a 21-bed unit on the campus and designated additional clinical staff for use by Forensic Services to provide competency restoration services. Currently, 12 of the 21 beds are fully-staffed, representing an increase of 80% based on the "staffed" beds available for admissions. When all 21 beds are fully-staffed, it will represent a 140% increase in total competency restoration beds available for Forensic Services admissions.

Additionally, MSH has separated the evaluation and treatment components of the competency evaluation and restoration processes by creating the Forensic Evaluation Service. This has allowed evaluators to apply greater focus on completing initial evaluations of competency and thereby decrease wait times for Forensic Services.

The filling of additional beds and the creation of the Forensic Evaluation Service have decreased the number of people on the wait list and the average wait times.

In March 2018, there were 90 people waiting on the MSH Forensic Services wait list, 29 of them waiting for an initial evaluation. One year later, those numbers have decreased significantly - in March 2019, there were 53 people waiting for services, with eight of them waiting for an initial evaluation.

Of the evaluations completed in January through March 2019, the average length of wait was approximately 51 days. However, approximately half of those cases were placed on the waiting list in 2018. Of the cases placed on the waiting list in 2019, the average length of wait is approximately 33 days.

MSH is also renovating a building on the campus to serve as a 60-70 bed Forensic Services unit. That project is currently in the design and development phase, with construction estimated to start in November 2019. When complete, it will roughly double the capacity of the current unit.

In addition, MSH piloted a jail-based Competence Education Services program in 2017 in Hinds and Madison Counties, which has been expanded to Holmes, Harrison, Jackson, Lamar, and Forrest Counties. Through this program, MSH contracts with Region 8 and Gulf Coast Community Mental Health Centers to provide jail-based services to defendants awaiting an inpatient bed at MSH.

Through the first half of FY 19, 25 defendants had been evaluated through this program, and approximately half were restored to competency. Of those who were admitted to MSH, their length of stay was reduced due to the jail-based services they received prior to admission.

