



Three-Year Accreditation

**CARF**  
**Survey Report**  
**for**  
**LifeDesigns, Inc.**

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## Three-Year Accreditation

### Organization

LifeDesigns, Inc.  
200 East Winslow Road  
Bloomington, IN 47402

### Organizational Leadership

Susan G. Rinne, M.P.A., Chief Executive Officer

Janessa Gerber, Director of Services

Danie Norris, Director of Support Services

### Survey Dates

July 11-12, 2013

### Survey Team

Kathy Leuelling, Administrative Surveyor

Leah D. Rosenbaum, M.A., LMSW, LPC, Program Surveyor

### Programs/Services Surveyed

Community Employment Services: Employment Supports

Community Employment Services: Job Development

Community Integration

Supported Living

*Governance Standards Applied*

### Previous Survey

August 30-31, 2010

Three-Year Accreditation

## Survey Outcome

Three-Year Accreditation

Expiration: September 2016

# SURVEY SUMMARY

**LifeDesigns, Inc., has strengths in many areas.**

- LifeDesigns has an excellent leadership team as evidenced by positive working relationships with the board of directors and staff members.
- LifeDesigns benefits from an engaged board of directors that has many members with long-term commitments to the organization. The board of directors supports innovation and collaboration to accomplish the mission and vision.
- The strategic planning process is excellent. A committee of board members, leaders, and staff members spends a considerable amount of time researching trends and influencing factors before developing a comprehensive plan that addresses short-term and long-term goals. Plan progress is reviewed monthly by the leadership and the board of directors to ensure implementation.
- LifeDesigns is acknowledged for taking an active role in a community collaboration to develop apartments for homeless persons with disabilities. The apartments provide shelter and the mental health and other support services needed by the individuals.
- LifeDesigns has successfully completed a merger of Options and Christole since its previous CARF survey. The board of directors and leaders from both organizations completed a thorough due process before committing to the merger and developed plans for bringing policies, procedures, and organizational cultures together.
- The organization's annual report is a comprehensive document that brings together updates on the strategic plan, risk management, critical incidents, accessibility, technology, financial position, customer outcomes, and human resource measures. The report identifies trends along with areas of focus for the next year.
- LifeDesigns has an active safety committee that ensures compliance with the safety program, reviews critical incidents, and conducts inspections and monthly drills. The committee meets monthly and develops actions to address incidents or other safety concerns.
- LifeDesigns has excellent processes for performance measurement and improvement with extensive data collection, monthly reviews, and trending analysis. The data are used in strategic planning and to develop actions that address identified trends.
- LifeDesigns leadership and staff members are recognized for maintaining a focus on quality services for their customers, with an approach that facilitates community integration and personal choice.
- Despite the inherent challenges, the organization utilizes flexible scheduling to provide each person with the supports needed to live in his or her own home.
- The staff members are actively involved in the Job Development Council, which includes representatives from schools, vocational rehabilitation, and employment providers. This group has worked cooperatively to educate and engage employers, with the ultimate goal of increasing placement outcomes for the persons served.

- LifeDesigns has developed an array of community partners that provide space and volunteer opportunities for the customers to participate in activities in the community. The staff members are recognized for their creativity in selecting and expanding available options to provide a variety of opportunities.
- Employment staff members are complimented for developing job sites that reflect a person-centered approach with jobs that represent a broad variety of employment options with good wages.
- LifeDesigns has earned a good reputation among stakeholders, including commendation for maintaining good communication, good working relationships, and availability.

**LifeDesigns should seek improvement in the areas identified by the recommendations in the report. Consultation given does not indicate nonconformance to standards but is offered as a suggestion for further quality improvement.**

On balance, LifeDesigns is in substantial conformance to the CARF standards. The organization provides high quality services and supports in employment, supported living, and community integration. The board, leadership, and staff members have successfully merged two organizations to ensure that quality services continue to be available to the customers as the state of Indiana plans changes in the service delivery process. Although there are a few recommendations scattered throughout the ASPIRE to Excellence<sup>®</sup> section, the organization demonstrates an understanding of the recommendations and willingness to bring these areas into conformance. In addition, the organization demonstrates a strong commitment to continuous performance improvement.

LifeDesigns, Inc., has earned a Three-Year Accreditation. The organization is complimented on this achievement. It is encouraged to continue use of the CARF process to support continuous improvement.

## **SECTION 1. ASPIRE TO EXCELLENCE<sup>®</sup>**

### **A. Leadership**

#### **Principle Statement**

CARF-accredited organizations identify leadership that embraces the values of accountability and responsibility to the individual organization's stated mission. The leadership demonstrates corporate social responsibility.

## **Key Areas Addressed**

- Leadership structure
  - Leadership guidance
  - Commitment to diversity
  - Corporate responsibility
  - Corporate compliance
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## **Recommendations**

There are no recommendations in this area.

## **Consultation**

- LifeDesigns has a cultural competency policy along with goals in the affirmative action, risk management, and training plans. It is suggested that these be consolidated into one written plan that addresses the persons served, personnel, and other stakeholders.
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## **B. Governance**

### **Principle Statement**

The governing board should provide effective and ethical governance leadership on behalf of its owners' /stakeholders' interest to ensure that the organization focuses on its purpose and outcomes for persons served, resulting in the organization's long-term success and stability. The board is responsible for ensuring that the organization is managed effectively, efficiently, and ethically by the organization's executive leadership through defined governance accountability mechanisms. These mechanisms include, but are not limited to, an adopted governance framework defined by written governance policies and demonstrated practices; active and timely review of organizational performance and that of the executive leadership; and the demarcation of duties between the board and executive leadership to ensure that organizational strategies, plans, decisions, and actions are delegated to the resource that would best advance the interests and performance of the organization over the long term and manage the organization's inherent risks. The board has additional responsibilities under the domain of public trust, and as such, it understands its corporate responsibility to the organization's employees, providers, suppliers, and the communities it serves.

### **Key Areas Addressed**

- Ethical, active, and accountable governance
- Board composition, selection, orientation, development, assessment, and succession
- Board leadership, organizational structure, meeting planning, and management

- Linkage between governance and executive leadership
  - Corporate and executive leadership performance review and development
  - Executive compensation
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### **Recommendations**

There are no recommendations in this area.

### **Consultation**

- The compensation philosophy for the organization as a whole is outlined in the compensation manual. It is suggested that the policy on executive compensation more specifically outline the executive compensation philosophy along with the compensation mix.
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## **C. Strategic Planning**

### **Principle Statement**

CARF-accredited organizations establish a foundation for success through strategic planning focused on taking advantage of strengths and opportunities and addressing weaknesses and threats.

### **Key Areas Addressed**

- Strategic planning considers stakeholder expectations and environmental impacts
  - Written strategic plan sets goals
  - Plan is implemented, shared, and kept relevant
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### **Recommendations**

There are no recommendations in this area.

### **Consultation**

- In order to ensure that goals can be tracked and monitored for progress, LifeDesigns might want to review all goals to ensure that they are measurable.
  - Management staff members take ownership for specific goals or actions to ensure implementation. The organization might want to take this further and include individual staff goals linked to the strategic plan in employee evaluations.
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## D. Input from Persons Served and Other Stakeholders

### Principle Statement

CARF-accredited organizations continually focus on the expectations of the persons served and other stakeholders. The standards in this subsection direct the organization's focus to soliciting, collecting, analyzing, and using input from all stakeholders to create services that meet or exceed the expectations of the persons served, the community, and other stakeholders.

### Key Areas Addressed

- Ongoing collection of information from a variety of sources
  - Analysis and integration into business practices
  - Leadership response to information collected
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### Recommendations

There are no recommendations in this area.

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## E. Legal Requirements

### Principle Statement

CARF-accredited organizations comply with all legal and regulatory requirements.

### Key Areas Addressed

- Compliance with all legal/regulatory requirements
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### Recommendations

There are no recommendations in this area.

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## F. Financial Planning and Management

### Principle Statement

CARF-accredited organizations strive to be financially responsible and solvent, conducting fiscal management in a manner that supports their mission, values, and annual performance objectives. Fiscal practices adhere to established accounting principles and business practices. Fiscal management covers daily operational cost management and incorporates plans for long-term solvency.

## **Key Areas Addressed**

- Budget(s) prepared, shared, and reflective of strategic planning
  - Financial results reported/compared to budgeted performance
  - Organization review
  - Fiscal policies and procedures
  - Review of service billing records and fee structure
  - Financial review/audit
  - Safeguarding funds of persons served
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## **Recommendations**

There are no recommendations in this area.

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## **G. Risk Management**

### **Principle Statement**

CARF-accredited organizations engage in a coordinated set of activities designed to control threats to their people, property, income, goodwill, and ability to accomplish goals.

### **Key Areas Addressed**

- Identification of loss exposures
  - Development of risk management plan
  - Adequate insurance coverage
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### **Recommendations**

#### **G.3.b.**

It is recommended that LifeDesigns implement written procedures regarding communications that address social media.

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## H. Health and Safety

### Principle Statement

CARF-accredited organizations maintain healthy, safe, and clean environments that support quality services and minimize risk of harm to persons served, personnel, and other stakeholders.

### Key Areas Addressed

- Inspections
  - Emergency procedures
  - Access to emergency first aid
  - Competency of personnel in safety procedures
  - Reporting/reviewing critical incidents
  - Infection control
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### Recommendations

#### H.5.c.(5) through H.5.c.(7)

It is recommended that LifeDesigns' procedures for evacuation address temporary shelter and the identification and continuation of essential services.

### Consultation

- The monthly safety committee meeting includes a review of incidents that occurred the previous month along with cumulative year-to-date totals. It is suggested that the safety committee use the final year-end review to summarize trends for the year, actions taken, and plans for prevention in the coming year.
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## I. Human Resources

### Principle Statement

CARF-accredited organizations demonstrate that they value their human resources. It should be evident that personnel are involved and engaged in the success of the organization and the persons they serve.

### Key Areas Addressed

- Adequate staffing
- Verification of background/credentials
- Recruitment/retention efforts

- Personnel skills/characteristics
  - Annual review of job descriptions/performance
  - Policies regarding students/volunteers, if applicable
- 

## **Recommendations**

### **I.2.a.(2)**

Although LifeDesigns has a policy to verify credentials from the primary source beginning in 2013, verification from the primary source has not been completed for employees hired before 2013. The organization should fully implement written procedures that address verification of the credentials of all applicable personnel (including licensure, certification, and registration) with primary sources.

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## **J. Technology**

### **Principle Statement**

CARF-accredited organizations plan for the use of technology to support and advance effective and efficient service and business practices.

### **Key Areas Addressed**

- Written technology and system plan
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## **Recommendations**

There are no recommendations in this area.

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## **K. Rights of Persons Served**

### **Principle Statement**

CARF-accredited organizations protect and promote the rights of all persons served. This commitment guides the delivery of services and ongoing interactions with the persons served.

### **Key Areas Addressed**

- Communication of rights
- Policies that promote rights
- Complaint, grievance, and appeals policy
- Annual review of complaints

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## **Recommendations**

There are no recommendations in this area.

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## **L. Accessibility**

### **Principle Statement**

CARF-accredited organizations promote accessibility and the removal of barriers for the persons served and other stakeholders.

### **Key Areas Addressed**

- Written accessibility plan(s)
  - Status report regarding removal of identified barriers
  - Requests for reasonable accommodations
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## **Recommendations**

There are no recommendations in this area.

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## **M. Performance Measurement and Management**

### **Principle Statement**

CARF-accredited organizations are committed to continually improving their organizations and service delivery to the persons served. Data are collected and information is used to manage and improve service delivery.

### **Key Areas Addressed**

- Information collection, use, and management
  - Setting and measuring performance indicators
- 

## **Recommendations**

There are no recommendations in this area.

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## **N. Performance Improvement**

### **Principle Statement**

The dynamic nature of continuous improvement in a CARF-accredited organization sets it apart from other organizations providing similar services. CARF-accredited organizations share and provide the persons served and other interested stakeholders with ongoing information about their actual performance as a business entity and their ability to achieve optimal outcomes for the persons served through their programs and services.

### **Key Areas Addressed**

- Proactive performance improvement
  - Performance information shared with all stakeholders
- 

### **Recommendations**

There are no recommendations in this area.

### **Consultation**

- LifeDesigns does an excellent job of collecting and reviewing data regarding service and business operations along with developing goals and actions for overall performance improvement. It is suggested that the organization take the next step toward excellence by performing an in-depth data analysis with specific goals and actions to improve results.
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## **SECTION 2. QUALITY INDIVIDUALIZED SERVICES AND SUPPORTS**

### **A. Program/Service Structure**

#### **Principle Statement**

A fundamental responsibility of the organization is to provide a comprehensive program structure. The staffing is designed to maximize opportunities for the persons served to obtain and participate in the services provided.

#### **Key Areas Addressed**

- Services are person centered and individualized
- Persons are given information about the organization's purposes and ability to address desired outcomes
- Documented scope of services shared with stakeholders

- Service delivery based on accepted field practices
  - Communication for effective service delivery
  - Entrance/exit/transition criteria
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### **Recommendations**

There are no recommendations in this area.

### **Consultation**

- The staff members maintain a working record at the homes of their customers to facilitate access to information and timely documentation. A photocopy of the Social Security card is routinely included in each person's binder. It is suggested that this information be removed from all binders and maintained only in the administrative office to ensure restricted access.
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## **B. Individual-Centered Service Planning, Design, and Delivery**

### **Principle Statement**

Improvement of the quality of an individual's services/supports requires a focus on the person and/or family served and their identified strengths, abilities, needs, and preferences. The organization's services are designed around the identified needs and desires of the persons served, are responsive to their expectations, and are relevant to their maximum participation in the environments of their choice.

The person served participates in decision making, directing, and planning that affects his or her life. Efforts to include the person served in the direction or delivery of those services/ supports are evident. The service environment reflects identified cultural needs, practices, and diversity. The person served is given information about the purposes of the organization.

### **Key Areas Addressed**

- Services are person-centered and individualized
  - Persons are given information about the organization's purposes and ability to address desired outcomes
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### **Recommendations**

There are no recommendations in this area.

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## C. Medication Monitoring and Management

### Key Areas Addressed

- Current, complete records of medications used by persons served
  - Written procedures for storage and safe handling of medications
  - Educational resources and advocacy for persons served in decision making
  - Physician review of medication use
  - Training and education for persons served regarding medications
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### Recommendations

There are no recommendations in this area.

### Consultation

- LifeDesigns maintains organized records and systems for safe handling of medications taken by the persons served. Although the records include a listing of the top two or three potential side effects of each drug, it is suggested that more comprehensive information be included in each person's record to ensure that support staff members are quickly able to identify side effects or indications of potential medication errors. The organization might also want to consider including a picture of medications used in the event that one is found on the floor, so it could be easily tracked.
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## D. Employment Services Principle Standards

### Principle Statement

An organization seeking CARF accreditation in the area of employment services provides individualized services and supports to achieve identified employment outcomes. The array of services and supports may include:

- Identification of employment opportunities and resources in the local job market.
- Development of viable work skills that match workforce needs within the geographic area.
- Development of realistic employment goals.
- Establishment of service plans to achieve employment outcomes.
- Identification of resources and supports to achieve and maintain employment.
- Coordination of and referral to employment-related services and supports.

The organization maintains its strategic positioning in the employment sector of the community by designing and continually improving its services based on input from the persons served and from employers in the local job market, and managing results of the organization's outcomes management system. The provision of quality employment services requires a continuous focus on the persons served and the personnel needs of employers in the organization's local job market.

#### **Key Areas Addressed**

- Goals of the persons served
  - Personnel needs of local employers
  - Community resources available
  - Economic trends in the local employment sector
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#### **Recommendations**

There are no recommendations in this area.

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### **F. Community Services Principle Standards**

#### **Key Areas Addressed**

- Access to community resources and services
  - Enhanced quality of life
  - Community inclusion
  - Community participation
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#### **Recommendations**

There are no recommendations in this area.

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## **SECTION 3. EMPLOYMENT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES**

#### **Principle Statement**

An organization seeking CARF accreditation in the area of employment and community services assists the persons served through an individualized person-centered process to obtain access to the services, supports, and resources of their choice to achieve their desired outcomes. This may

be accomplished by direct service provision, linkages to existing generic opportunities and natural supports in the community, or any combination of these. The persons served are included in their communities to the degree they desire.

The organization provides the persons served with information so that they may make informed choices and decisions. Although we use the phrase *person served*, this may also include *family served*, as appropriate to the service and the individual.

The services and supports are arranged and changed as necessary to meet the identified desires of the persons served. Service designs address identified individual, family, socioeconomic, and cultural preferences.

Depending on the program's scope of services, expected results from these services/supports may include:

- Increased inclusion in community activities.
- Increased or maintained ability to perform activities of daily living.
- Increased self-direction, self-determination, self-reliance, and self-esteem.
- Increased independence.
- Increased employment options.
- Employment obtained and maintained.
- Competitive employment.
- Economic self-sufficiency.

## **C. Community Employment Services**

### **Principle Statement**

Community employment services assist persons to obtain successful community employment opportunities that are responsive to their choices and preferences. Through a strengths-based approach the program provides person-directed services/supports to individuals to choose, achieve, and maintain employment in integrated community employment settings.

Work is a fundamental part of adult life. Individually tailored job development, training, and support recognize each person's employability and potential contribution to the labor market. Persons are supported as needed through an individualized person-centered model of services to choose and obtain a successful employment opportunity consistent with their preferences, keep the employment, and find new employment if necessary or for purposes of career advancement.

Such services may be described as individual placements, contracted temporary personnel services, competitive employment, supported employment, transitional employment, mobile work crews, contracted work groups, enclaves, community-based SourceAmerica™ (formerly NISH) contracts, and other business-based work groups in community-integrated designs. In Canada employment in the form of bona fide volunteer placements is possible.

Individuals may be paid by community employers or by the organization. Employment is in the community.

## **Job Development**

Successful job development concurrently uses assessment information about the strengths and interests of the person seeking employment to target the types of jobs available from potential employers in the local labor market. Typical job development activities include reviewing local employment opportunities and developing potential employers/customers through direct and indirect promotional strategies. Job development may include facilitating a hiring agreement between an employer and a person seeking employment. Some persons seeking employment may want assistance at only a basic, informational level such as self-directed job search.

## **Employment Supports**

Employment support services are activities that are employment-related to promote successful training of a person to a new job, job adjustment, retention, and advancement. These services are based on the individual employee with a focus on achieving long-term retention of the person in the job.

The level of employment support services is individualized to each employee and the complexity of the job.

Often supports are intensive for the initial orientation and training of an employee with the intent of leading to natural supports and/or reduced external job coaching. However, some persons may not require any employment supports at the job site; others may require intensive initial training with a quick decrease in supports, while some will be most successful when long-term supports are provided.

Supports can include assisting the employee with understanding the job culture, industry practices, and work behaviors expected by the employer. It may also include helping the employer and coworkers to understand the support strategies and accommodations needed by the worker.

Supports are a critical element of the long-term effectiveness of community employment. Support services address issues such as assistance in training a person to complete new tasks, changes in work schedule or work promotion, a decrease in productivity of the person served, adjusting to new supervisors, and managing changes in nonwork environments or other critical life activities that may affect work performance. Routine follow-up with the employer and the employee is crucial to continued job success.

## **Key Areas Addressed**

- Integrated employment choice
- Integrated employment obtainment
- Pays wages at or above minimum wage
- Provides a benefits package
- Employment provided in regular business settings

- Integrated employment retention
  - Provides career advancement resources
  - Business plan is used to design service
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## **Recommendations**

There are no recommendations in this area.

## **Consultation**

- LifeDesigns provides a variety of employment services to help its customers choose, obtain, and retain employment. However, in a results-based payment environment, staff members are not achieving all benchmark payments. It is suggested that the staff members evaluate data and implement targeted strategies to reduce the time to achieve placement and facilitate long-term employment outcomes.
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## **L. Supported Living**

### **Principle Statement**

Supported living addresses the desires, goals, strengths, abilities, needs, health, safety, and life span issues of persons usually living in their own homes (apartments, townhouses, or other residential settings). Supported living services are generally long-term in nature but may change in scope, duration, intensity, or location as the needs and preferences of individuals change over time.

Supported living refers to the support services provided to the person served, not the residence in which these services are provided. A sampling of people receiving services/supports in these sites will be visited as part of the interview process. Although the residence will generally be owned, rented, or leased by the person who lives there, the organization may occasionally rent or lease an apartment when the person served is unable to do so. Typically, in this situation the organization would co-sign or in other ways guarantee the lease or rental agreement; however, the person served would be identified as the tenant.

Supported living programs may be referred to as supported living services, independent living, supportive living, semi-independent living, and apartment living; and services/supports may include home health aide and personal care attendant services. Typically there would not be more than two or three persons served living in a residence, no house rules or structure would be applied to the living situation by the organization, and persons served can come and go as they please. Service planning often identifies the number of hours and types of support services provided.

The home or individual apartment of the person served, even when the organization holds the lease or rental agreement on behalf of the person served, is not included in the intent to survey or identified as a site on the accreditation outcome.

## **Key Areas Addressed**

- Safe, affordable, accessible housing chosen by the individual
  - In-home safety needs
  - Support personnel available based on needs
  - Supports available based on needs and desires
  - Living as desired in the community
  - Persons have opportunities to access community activities
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## **Recommendations**

There are no recommendations in this area.

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## **P. Community Integration**

### **Principle Statement**

Community integration is designed to help persons to optimize their personal, social, and vocational competency to live successfully in the community. Persons served are active partners in determining the activities they desire to participate in. Therefore, the settings can be informal to reduce barriers between staff members and persons served. An activity center, a day program, a clubhouse, and a drop-in center are examples of community integration services. Consumer-run programs are also included.

Community integration provides opportunities for the community participation of the persons served. The organization defines the scope of these services and supports based on the identified needs and desires of the persons served. This may include services for persons who without this option are at risk of receiving services full-time in more restrictive environments with intensive levels of supports such as hospitalization or nursing home care. A person may participate in a variety of community life experiences or interactions that may include, but are not limited to:

- Leisure or recreational activities.
- Communication activities.
- Spiritual activities.
- Cultural activities.
- Pre-vocational experiences.
- Vocational pursuits.
- Development of work attitudes.

- Employment activities.
- Volunteerism in the community.
- Educational and training activities.
- Development of living skills.
- Health and wellness promotion.
- Orientation, mobility, and destination training.
- Access and utilization of public transportation.
- Interacting with volunteers from the community in program activities.
- Community collaborations and social connections developed by the program (partnerships with community entities such as senior centers, arts councils, etc.).

### **Key Areas Addressed**

- Opportunities for community participation
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### **Recommendations**

There are no recommendations in this area.

### **Consultation**

- Although staffing levels allow for small group supervision, activities include the entire group of approximately twenty customers. It is suggested that staff members explore options to decrease the number of participants in each activity to facilitate the development of interpersonal relationships in the community.
-