

## **Steering Committees**

Sometimes referred to as stakeholder or leaderships groups, these committees help plan and monitor supported employment implementation and sustainability.

### **Committee Purpose:**

Steering committees serve several purposes. First, steering committees keep the agency focused on supported employment. Supervisors and administrators are busy and it is possible for good intentions to be forgotten in the rush of daily work. Knowing that a group of stakeholders will soon convene to discuss program implementation helps keep everyone focused on their assigned tasks. Another function of steering committees is to keep stakeholder groups informed about the new practice. Finally, stakeholders provide valuable ideas and feedback to help the agency provide services in an effective manner.

### **Committee Members:**

Steering committees strive to include a diverse range of stakeholders that may change over time depending upon the needs of the agency. Participants may include:

- Representation from the agency executive team
- Family members and/or family advocacy groups
- Clients and/or family advocacy groups
- The supported employment supervisor
- The local VR supervisor and/or VR counselors
- The agency clinical director or a mental health supervisor
- Local chamber of commerce or economic development group
- Local Work Incentive Planning and Assistance (WIPA) project
- Others (transportation providers, mental health authorities, ...)

### **Frequency of Meetings:**

Initially, steering committee meetings should meet at least once each quarter. As the program becomes established, the group may decide to meet twice each year. It is recommended that steering committees continue to meet even after the program is well established. Ongoing steering committees can help sustain the program.

Internal workgroups (usually a few people from the agency) should also meet on a monthly basis while the program is being established. These workgroups are usually comprised of four or more people who know the agency well and have the authority to make needed changes, for example, the QA director, clinical director and supported employment supervisor with occasional participation from the executive director.

## **Resources for Steering Committees:**

Dartmouth Psychiatric Research Center (<http://dms.dartmouth.edu/dsec/>) has resources that may be used for steering committee meetings. For example, an eight-page brochure provides a basic overview of the model. It is important that all committee members understand the specific approach that the agency is attempting to implement. Also, we hope that this implementation kit will be used in steering committee meetings. For example, if the agency was trying to improve “Collaboration with Vocational Rehabilitation”, copies of that card could be used to educate the group and start the discussion.

## **Activities:**

During implementation steering committees:

- Learn about supported employment. Each member should understand the principles of supported employment
- Examine the agency and system of care for policies or practices that conflict with supported employment fidelity
- Review current employment outcomes, if available
- Build consensus for supported employment
  - Talk about the importance of employment
  - Share stories from working consumers
- Discuss plans for supported employment implementation
- Use fidelity reports to develop plans for improved fidelity.

Sample agenda for a program in the early stages of implementation:

1. Review of the evidence-based practice; IPS principles
2. Review of recent fidelity visit—agency is at fair implementation
3. Discussion of two items to improve: Work Incentives Planning, Collaboration with VR
4. Current employment outcomes and goals
5. Carolyn will share her experiences regarding her return to work

After the program achieves good fidelity, steering committees:

- Monitor changes in fidelity and outcomes
- Focus on strategies to increase service capacity
- Celebrate success and recognize those who have supported the service
- Continue to look for ways to improve the quality of services.

Sample agenda for a sustaining program:

1. Review of IPS program outcomes and overall agency rate of competitive employment
2. Partnership with VR—how might we further develop this relationship
3. Local NAMI would like to include supported employment class for each Peer-to Peer and Family-to-Family training course. Group to discuss resources to help
4. Sharon shares her perspective as an employer working with the supported employment program.