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PROMISING PRACTICES



Working SMART, employees strengthen their competencies

When [The Arc of Bristol County](#) in Attleboro, Massachusetts, created its five-year strategic plan, a key goal was to recruit and retain a competent and adequate workforce to meet the organization's service delivery needs.

To carry out the goal, The Arc began the journey of educating its more than 250 employees on the importance of engaging in work activities that are SMART:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Attainable
- Relevant
- Time sensitive

Goal development training reinforces core values

SMART goal development training was completed by inviting employees from all levels of the organization, from direct support staff to department directors, to participate. SMART strategic planning sessions explained the concept of SMART goal planning and explored ways in which the SMART goal concept would be used throughout the organization, including employee evaluations.

The Arc's human resource job descriptions and employee evaluations were revised to incorporate the organization's six core values:

- People First
- Democracy
- Visionary Leadership

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About the ECS Promising Practices newsletter series

An organization receiving exemplary recognition in its CARF survey report stands out because of its professional and strategic response to a service or business need. CARF presents these ECS Promising Practices articles to encourage dialogue among service providers and to offer examples of creative solutions for improving service quality.

Find current and past issues of ECS Promising Practices at:

www.carf.org/ecspromisingpractices

Issues are categorized by topic: Business Practices, Community Services, and Employment Services.

- Community Partnerships
- Diversity
- Integrity and Excellence

Employees' individual responsibilities are grouped under appropriate core values. The groupings allow employees at all levels to understand their roles in advancing the organization's mission and to demonstrate best practices in supporting the individuals whom The Arc serves.

Ongoing testing verifies competency

The Arc's philosophy is that competency-based assessment, training, and staff development needs to begin on the date of hire. As part of their orientation, new employees receive an interactive presentation of competency material and then are tested on what they learned.

In successive years, employees receive an annual competency-based recertification test to remain in compliance. An employee who fails to reach an 80 percent success in testing performance must re-attend the presentation and test again.

Educational series builds leadership skills

To nurture superior talent from within The Arc's employee cadre, the organization created a Leadership Series. Ten employees (including mid-level supervisors, case managers/coordinators, and department directors) are selected to participate in the learning exercise over a six-month period. The series covers a variety of management topics, including control versus commitment leadership styles, coaching, internal and external motivation, and SMART goal development.

The ten participants in the Leadership Series are divided into five groups and paired with a partner who demonstrates a contrasting style of working (determined by the Work Personality Inventory Questionnaire).

Each of the five groups is assigned a topic and a question. After reviewing its assigned topic, a group posts its answer to the question on a shared internal computer drive for the other groups to review. Each group also crafts a question related to its assigned topic and posts it on the shared internal computer drive for the other groups to answer.

This interactive Leadership Series cultivates an environment of peer-to-peer sharing of ideas. The series has proven to be a strong system for grooming leaders from within the



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organization.

Practices earn external recognition

The Arc's practices have been recognized by the state of Massachusetts Survey and Certification team and the CARF survey team as an exemplary among human service providers. The most recent [CARF](#) survey report observed, "The organization has developed a remarkable human resource function that includes the identification and application of competency-based assessment, training, and development."

The Arc's SMART program, competency-based training, and Leadership Series reinforce the organization's goal to develop and retain superior talent. The combination of practices enables The Arc of Bristol County to offer high-quality supports and services for individuals with developmental and intellectual disabilities.

Below: Training is a key component of The Arc of Bristol County's programs to build a competent workforce and encourage leadership abilities.



For more information concerning competency-based assessment, training, and development, contact John Neill, director of Human Resources at jneill@arcnbc.org. The Arc of Bristol County's website is at www.arcnbc.org.

www.carf.org