



SURVEY OUTCOME
Three-Year Accreditation

CARF
Survey Report
for
Abilities of Northwest
Jersey, Inc.

Organization

Abilities of Northwest Jersey, Inc.
264 Route 31 North
Washington, NJ 07882

Organizational Leadership

Richard D. Lowe, Chief Executive Officer

Survey Dates

October 20-22, 2010

Survey Team

Stephen O. Amusala, Administrative Surveyor
Leah Rosenbaum, M.A., LMSW, LPC, Program Surveyor

Programs/Services Surveyed

Employment Services: Community Employment Services: Job Development
Employment Services: Community Employment Services: Job Supports
Employment Services: Community Employment Services: Job-Site Training
Employment Services: Comprehensive Vocational Evaluation Services
Employment Services: Employee Development Services
Employment Services: Employment Transition Services
Employment Services: Organizational Employment Services

Previous Survey

September 17-19, 2007
Three-Year Accreditation



Survey Outcome

Three-Year Accreditation
Expiration: November 2013

SURVEY SUMMARY

Abilities of Northwest Jersey, Inc., has strengths in many areas.

- The organization has an active, well-organized, and dedicated board of directors committed to providing effective governance to the organization. It is evident that the board has a strong commitment to its mission and the quality of services the organization provides to persons served.
- The executive leadership is comprised of knowledgeable and dedicated individuals with extensive experience in human services who have earned the respect of staff, persons served, and other stakeholders.
- Abilities of Northwest Jersey has experienced and knowledgeable staff members committed to continuously improving the quality of services for the individuals they support. Staff members display genuine passion for the organization's mission and dedication to individuals served. It is this level of professionalism that continues to enable the organization to maintain and enhance its positive reputation in the community.
- Abilities of Northwest Jersey enjoys a strong financial position. Sound financial systems and practices are in place and have contributed to the organization's financial health. Its capital assets are carefully managed, and additional resources are developed through creative fundraising. The comprehensive risk management plan is designed to reduce vulnerability in many areas of the organization.
- The organization is commended for its commitment to staff training and development. Several training opportunities are afforded to staff members to enhance their skill levels and develop as professional caregivers.
- Stakeholders interviewed expressed a great deal of satisfaction with the programs and services offered by Abilities of Northwest Jersey. They highlighted the client-centered approach to service delivery, staff longevity and experience, and responsiveness of the executive leadership to the needs of persons served and business partners as contributing factors to their high level of satisfaction.
- Abilities of Northwest Jersey is commended for its commitment to removing access barriers to its programs and services. Worth noting is its transportation service initiatives that enable persons served to access its locations despite the absence of a public transit system in the counties it serves.
- It is evident the organization is committed to the health and safety of persons served, staff, and other stakeholders. Effective workplace safety initiatives such as ergonomics inspections by workers' compensation and related training that has been undertaken have resulted in significant decreases in workplace-related accidents and injuries.
- Staff members remain focused on helping each person served achieve success and devote the necessary efforts to facilitate this outcome. One particular example was the picture board that displayed photographs of an individual carrying out each of her job tasks to serve as prompts during her workday. This board was hanging in her work area at her job, and she talked about it with pride.

- Family members speak highly of Abilities of Northwest Jersey staff and services. They express gratitude for the care and compassion of staff members and their willingness to devote whatever efforts are necessary to meet the needs and desires of individuals served.
- Community employers report satisfaction with the supportive services of staff members. They report that individuals served by Abilities of Northwest Jersey who work at their job sites receive quality training and ongoing supports that help the individuals succeed on the job. Employers further expressed appreciation for the benefits this brings to their businesses.
- The organization communicates qualifications of staff members by including each job description and the requirements of each. This provides prospective consumers and their family members with necessary information when selecting a service provider.

Abilities of Northwest Jersey 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, it is evident that Abilities of Northwest Jersey is highly regarded both in the public and professional communities. The services it provides expertly fill the needs of persons served and communities covering a wide range of geographical locations. The organization's numerous strengths far exceed the areas for improvement noted in this report. Strengths include being an opinion leader in the field of human services among the communities the organization serves and having a vibrant and responsive executive leadership team; involved and dedicated board of directors; management staff with long-term experience in human services; and overall group of staff that is knowledgeable, caring, and works well together. The organization is creative in obtaining the resources it requires to continue meeting its mission. Worth noting are its efforts aimed at providing transportation to persons served in a rural setting where public mass transit does not exist, thereby eliminating a key barrier to its service access. The organization continually obtains input from persons served and other stakeholders and uses the input effectively to improve its services. Abilities of Northwest Jersey demonstrates substantial conformance to the CARF standards. Opportunities for improvement noted herein focus on enhancing practices already in place. There is no doubt the organization has the capacity and willingness to address these by simply modifying, updating, or correcting existing systems. The organization is encouraged to continue improving on its fine record of providing quality outcomes for persons served.

Abilities of Northwest Jersey, Inc., has earned a Three-Year Accreditation. This is a significant testament to the skill and dedication of its leadership, management, staff, persons served, and other stakeholders. The organization is encouraged to use the tenure of this accreditation award to implement the opportunities for improvement and maintain its commitment to quality service.

SECTION 1. ASPIRE TO EXCELLENCE®

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
-

Recommendations

There are no recommendations in this area.

Consultation

- It was noted that the organization places strong emphasis on staff training. There are resources and educational opportunities provided for staff to stay current in the field to demonstrate program strategies based on accepted practices in the field. To further improve on this endeavor, Abilities of Northwest Jersey is encouraged to explore ways and means of setting up a lending library at its main location that could be stocked with literature on evidence-based practices, peer-reviewed scientific and health-related publications, and clinical practice guidelines that staff could sign out periodically.
-

C. Strategic Integrated 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
-

Recommendations

C.1.h. through C.1.k.

The organization's published strategic plan should be revised to reflect an assessment of service area demographics, relationships with external stakeholders, and regulatory and legislative environments. This may be achieved by including an extensive scan of its external environment as part of the strategic planning process.

C.2.

To strategically position the organization to fully harness the potential of technology to effectively support its operations and service delivery, it is recommended that the organization's strategic planning process be expanded to include a consideration of current literature and professional consensus regarding the use of current and emerging technology.

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
-

Recommendations

There are no recommendations in this area.

E. Legal Requirements

Principle Statement

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

Key Areas Addressed

- Compliance with all legal/regulatory requirements
-

Recommendations

There are no recommendations in this area.

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
-

Recommendations

There are no recommendations in this area.

Consultation

- The organization is encouraged to establish additional opportunities for comparing fee schedules it sets. This may include a collaborative process with other similar service providers or local professional associations to facilitate a monthly finance officers breakfast meeting. This could create an ideal forum in which financial matters relevant to all members are discussed, including a comparison of their fee schedules.
-

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
-

Recommendations

There are no recommendations in this area.

Consultation

- The organization's risk management plan is based on thorough and extensive consultation with various knowledgeable professionals in the field of risk assessment. It identifies and analyzes risk elements related to physical structures and program/service delivery. However, the plan presentation appears to be comprised of a collection of loosely connected, risk-related elements. The organization is encouraged to structure this plan in such a way that it is comprehensive and fully integrated with the organization's performance improvement activities. The presentation format may include documentation of specific elements that were reviewed for loss exposure, details of the risk identified, action plans for addressing the risk, and follow-up results of the plan.
-

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
-

Recommendations

H.6.b.

It was noted that some first aid kits were outdated or missing essential supplies. It is recommended that the organization develop a system for ensuring that all first aid kits are well stocked with supplies that are not past their due date. This may be done on a regular basis as part of the monthly health and safety checks conducted by the nurse.

H.13.c. through H.13.e.

Although unannounced tests of all emergency procedures are being conducted at least annually on each shift, there was no evidence of drill analysis having been performed in the recent past. It is recommended that the organization's drill reports be analyzed for performance improvement and result in improvement or affirmation of current practice. This analysis should be evidenced in writing.

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.7.b.(1) through I.7.b.(3)

I.7.c. through I.7.g.

Although there is evidence of due process that is followed when engaging the services of volunteers, the organization is urged to develop written guidelines on the use of volunteers and/or students. The guidelines should cover identification of duties, scope of responsibilities, supervision, orientation and training, performance assessment, policies and written procedures for dismissal, confidentiality policies, and background check requirements. This could be presented in the form of a volunteer handbook that could be given to potential volunteers.

Consultation

- It is suggested that the employee handbook be revised to include grievance and appeal procedures for all personnel. Although this information is available in the corporate compliance plan and administrative procedure manual, including it in the employee handbook might make it readily accessible when needed.
-

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
-

Recommendations

There are no recommendations in this area.

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
-

Recommendations

There are no recommendations in this area.

Consultation

- As required by the Division of Developmental Disabilities, Abilities of Northwest Jersey requires information related to hepatitis screening for individuals served. Staff members report they have attempted to work with the funding source to eliminate this requirement. In light of the standards related to universal precautions and to ensure that rights of their consumers are protected under HIPAA, it is suggested that staff members continue to advocate with both their funding source and the human rights office on behalf of individuals served to determine if this requirement violates rights under HIPAA.
 - It is suggested that the abbreviated grievance procedure in the consumer handbook be revised to include all the steps that will be followed if the person lodging the grievance is not satisfied with the response provided by the program supervisor or facility case manager. Although this information is covered in sufficient detail in the procedure in the administrative procedure manual, including the full version in the consumer handbook might make it readily accessible to persons served when needed.
 - Although it is stated in the nonharassment policy in the consumer handbook that reporting will not result in retaliation or barriers to services, it is suggested that this statement be repeated in the grievance procedure.
 - Even though no formal complaints have been filed in the recent past, it is suggested that a system for conducting annual reviews of formal complaints be developed. This function may be added to other annual reviews performed by the health and safety committee. If there are formal complaints lodged in the reporting period, the system could document them.
-

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
-

Recommendations

There are no recommendations in this area.

M. Information 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.

Consultation

- It was noted that the organization collects extensive data about its business and service delivery improvement functions. There is evidence of a comprehensive outcomes management system with performance indicators and measurements of the indicators using data collected from various elements that are analyzed for efficiency, effectiveness, access, and satisfaction. However, it is suggested that the organization include in its outcomes management plan more performance indicators related to its core business functions improvement. Data for setting and measuring these performance indicators may be derived from financial information, human resources, accessibility, and resource allocation.
-

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.

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
-

Recommendations

There are no recommendations in this area.

Consultation

- Although the organization has a comprehensive list of entry criteria for each program, information distributed to prospective consumers is abridged. It is suggested that specific information be communicated to facilitate decision making regarding the appropriateness of particular individuals for various services offered.
-

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

- Complete, confidential records are maintained
-

Recommendations

B.6.b.(2)

A coordinated service plan is developed for each individual served that is reviewed on a regular basis. Although some objectives, especially those related to increased productivity, are written in measurable terms, not all objectives are written in this manner. It is recommended that staff consistently write objectives that are observable and measurable to assist personnel, individuals served, and other stakeholders in measuring, noting, and celebrating progress. This might also help in identifying when the individual is not progressing according to plan and determining if alternative strategies are warranted.

Consultation

- Staff members consistently gather medical information that is relevant to service planning. In certain files it was noted that allergies were printed in red on the personal data sheet so this information stands out prominently. The current computer system that generates this form does not allow for this function. Given the benefit of rapid access to critical information in the event of an emergency, it is suggested that significant information such as this be highlighted to ensure communication of this type of information as needed.
-

C. Medication Monitoring and Management

Principle Statement

These standards apply only to programs that are responsible for monitoring and/or managing medications for the persons served.

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
-

Recommendations

C.1.e.

Although the organization provides only limited medication monitoring, it is important that information related to potential side effects be readily available for any medication accessed by staff. It is recommended that staff members ensure that they have a list of potential side effects for all medications they monitor during the workday.

D. Employment Services Principle Standards

Principle Statement

The standards in this subsection assert basic principles that should be demonstrated by any organization seeking accreditation in the area of employment services.

Key Areas Addressed

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

Recommendations

There are no recommendations in this area.

Consultation

- Staff members conduct and document time studies for all jobs paid on a piece-rated basis. It is suggested that the information sheet for each job also include the setup of the workstation to ensure that staff members replicate the work setting used in the time study process.
 - The organization is commended for maintaining an organized and timely system for gathering information related to prevailing wages for light bench work and cleaning jobs. It is suggested that the information gathered be expanded to include the number of workers covered by each employer in the relevant classifications so wages can be weighted to better reflect actual wages paid in the community.
-

SECTION 3. EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Principle Statement

An organization is free to choose which of its services it will seek to have accredited, but when a service has been selected, all locations at which the service is provided must be included in the survey. CARF will not accredit only a portion of a program or service. CARF does not consider the funding or referral entities or the populations served as differentiating a service so as to exclude portions of it from being included in the survey.

If the geographical service area is extensive, however, CARF may choose to impose geographical limitations on the extent of a single survey in order to ensure that the most meaningful survey will be conducted.

Each organization is encouraged to submit all applicable services and supports for accreditation in order to be identified as a quality organization by potential recipients of services and to facilitate funding arrangements. All accredited programs and services and organizational contact information are identified on the CARF website (www.carf.org) to assist persons in connecting to your quality services and supports.

B. Employment Transition Services

Principle Statement

Employment Transition Services (ETS) are designed within an employment outcome-oriented process that promotes movement from school to successful post-school employment related activities, including post-secondary education or training, vocational training, employment (including supported employment and volunteer placement), and continuing and adult education. Employment transition services are integrated, systematic services for the student and his/her family provided through a jointly planned approach, involving broad-based community collaboration, linkages, advocacy, and natural supports. Individual self direction and community resources are arranged and used to meet the needs of the person served and their family as appropriate.

Employment Transition Services may include providing instruction, developing job-seeking skills, coordinating with community transition services, facilitating employment experiences, and developing employment, benefits planning and other post-school objectives. Transition services for the student include, when appropriate, coordinating the interagency responsibilities or any needed linkages. Outcomes are collected and the information is used to help educational and skills training programs to improve their curriculum or training sites and to enhance the use of collaborative partnerships to meet the needs of the person served, employers, and the community. Accreditation in this service category is available for schools and community-based organizations.

Key Areas Addressed

- Integrated, employment-oriented services for students and their families
 - Outcomes such as postsecondary education, vocational training, and integrated employment
 - Jointly planned approach with community collaboration and linkages
-

Recommendations

There are no recommendations in this area.

E. Comprehensive Vocational Evaluation Services

Principle Statement

Comprehensive vocational evaluation services provide an individualized, timely, and systematic process by which a person seeking employment, in partnership with an evaluator, learns to identify viable vocational options and develop employment goals and objectives. A vocational evaluator or vocational specialist provides or supervises the services.

An accredited comprehensive vocational evaluation service is capable of examining a wide range of employment alternatives. The following techniques are used, as is appropriate to the person being assessed, to provide comprehensive vocational evaluation services:

- Pre-evaluation assessment of assistive technology needs
- Assessment of functional/occupational performance in real or simulated environments
- Work samples
- Employment exploration model
- Psychometric testing
- Preference and interest inventories
- Personality testing

- Extensive personal interviews
- Other appropriate evaluation tests, depending on the individual
- Analysis of prior work experience and transferable skills

Key Areas Addressed

- Vocational options
 - Various exploratory techniques used by qualified evaluators
 - Employment goals
-

Recommendations

There are no recommendations in this area.

F. Employee Development Services

Principle Statement

Employee development services are individualized services/supports that assist persons seeking employment to develop or reestablish skills, attitudes, personal characteristics, interpersonal skills, work behaviors, functional capacities, etc., to achieve positive employment outcomes.

Such services/supports are time limited and can be provided directly to persons seeking employment or indirectly through corporate employer/employee support programs. These services/supports can be provided at the job sites, within formal and organized training and educational settings, through counseling sessions, by tutorial services, or within the organization. These services may be offered in a free-standing unit or as a functional piece of other services.

Key Areas Addressed

- Skills development/reestablishment
 - Work behaviors development/reestablishment
 - Attitude development/reestablishment
 - Employment outcomes
-

Recommendations

There are no recommendations in this area.

H. Organizational Employment Services

Principle Statement

Organizational employment services are designed to provide paid work to the persons served in locations owned, leased, rented, or managed by the service provider. A critical component and value of organizational employment services is to use the capacity of the organization's employment and training service design to create opportunities for persons to achieve desired employment outcomes in their community of choice.

Service models are flexible and may include a variety of enterprises and business designs, including organization-owned businesses such as retail stores, restaurants, shops, franchises, etc.

Key Areas Addressed

- Paid work provided by organization
 - Legal guidelines adherence
 - Employment goals of persons served
-

Recommendations

There are no recommendations in this area.

I. Community Employment Services

Principle Statement

Job Development

Successful job development concurrently uses assessment information about 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.

Job-Site Training

Job-site training services vary according to the needs of the new employee and the complexity of the job. Training can include assisting the employee with performance on the new job task and helping the person to understand the job culture, industry practices, and work behaviors expected by the employer. It may also include training the employer and coworkers to understand the training methods and accommodations needed by the worker. Job-site training is intensive for the initial orientation of an employee to the job tasks. Job-site training may consist of customizing the job to

meet the needs of the new employee and employer, task analysis, counseling, and supports with the intent of leading to natural supports and/or reduced external job coaching. These services are typically not long-term, ceasing after the individual has become stabilized on the job.

Job Supports

Ongoing job support services are activities that are employment-related and needed to promote job adjustment, retention, and advancement. These services are based on the individual needs of the employee with focus on long-term retention of the person in the job after the initial training period.

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

Key Areas Addressed

- Integrated employment choice
 - Integrated employment obtainment
 - Integrated employment retention
-

Recommendations

There are no recommendations in this area.

PROGRAMS/SERVICES BY LOCATION

Abilities of Northwest Jersey, Inc.

264 Route 31 North
Washington, NJ 07882

Employment Services: Comprehensive Vocational Evaluation Services

Employment Services: Employee Development Services

Employment Services: Organizational Employment Services

Employment Pathways

150 Boulevard, Suite 2
Washington, NJ 07882

Employment Services: Community Employment Services: Job Development

Employment Services: Community Employment Services: Job Supports

Employment Services: Community Employment Services: Job-Site Training

Employment Services: Employment Transition Services