

**CARF Accreditation Report
for
Abilities of Northwest Jersey, Inc.

Three-Year Accreditation**



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About CARF

CARF is an independent, nonprofit accreditor of health and human services, enhancing the lives of persons served worldwide.

The accreditation process applies CARF's internationally recognized standards during an on-site survey conducted by peer surveyors. Accreditation, however, is an ongoing process that distinguishes a provider's service delivery and signals to the public that the provider is committed to continuous performance improvement, responsive to feedback, and accountable to the community and its other stakeholders.

CARF accreditation promotes providers' demonstration of value and Quality Across the Lifespan® of millions of persons served through application of rigorous organizational and program standards organized around the ASPIRE to Excellence® continuous quality improvement framework. CARF accreditation has been the recognized benchmark of quality health and human services for more than 50 years.

For more information or to contact CARF, please visit www.carf.org/contact-us.

Organization

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

Organizational Leadership

Cynthia B. Wildermuth, Chief Executive Officer

Survey Number

123727

Survey Date(s)

September 23, 2019–September 25, 2019

Surveyor(s)

Michael J. O'Malley, PhD, LPC, CRC-MAC, Administrative
Chris D. Steed, LSW, Program

Program(s)/Service(s) Surveyed

Community Employment Services: Employment Supports
Community Employment Services: Employment Supports (Autism Spectrum Disorder-Adults)
Community Employment Services: Job Development
Community Employment Services: Job Development (Autism Spectrum Disorder-Adults)
Comprehensive Vocational Evaluation Services
Comprehensive Vocational Evaluation Services (Autism Spectrum Disorder-Adults)
Employee Development Services
Employee Development Services (Autism Spectrum Disorder-Adults)
Organizational Employment Services
Organizational Employment Services (Autism Spectrum Disorder-Adults)
Transition Services
Transition Services (Autism Spectrum Disorder-Adults)

Previous Survey

September 26, 2016–September 28, 2016
Three-Year Accreditation

Accreditation Decision**Three-Year Accreditation**

Expiration: November 30, 2022

Executive Summary

This report contains the findings of CARF's on-site survey of Abilities of Northwest Jersey, Inc. conducted September 23, 2019–September 25, 2019. This report includes the following information:

- Documentation of the accreditation decision and the basis for the decision as determined by CARF's consideration of the survey findings.
- Identification of the specific program(s)/service(s) and location(s) to which this accreditation decision applies.
- Identification of the CARF surveyor(s) who conducted the survey and an overview of the CARF survey process and how conformance to the standards was determined.
- Feedback on the organization's strengths and recognition of any areas where the organization demonstrated exemplary conformance to the standards.
- Documentation of the specific sections of the CARF standards that were applied on the survey.
- Recommendations for improvement in any areas where the organization did not meet the minimum requirements to demonstrate full conformance to the standards.
- Any consultative suggestions documented by the surveyor(s) to help the organization improve its program(s)/service(s) and business operations.

Accreditation Decision

On balance, Abilities of Northwest Jersey, Inc. demonstrated substantial conformance to the standards. Abilities is highly regarded by the consumers, families, educational and professional communities, and employers across its service area in Warren, Hunterdon, Morris, and Sussex counties of northwest New Jersey. The organization benefits from an exceptionally enthusiastic and capable management team; a dedicated board committed to excellent strategic planning, development, and follow-up activities; staff members who are committed to carrying out their responsibilities with professionalism; and a culture of enthusiastic advocacy for the employment rights of consumers with different abilities. Since 1974, Abilities has been proficient in securing and wisely utilizing financial and human resources, educational groups, and employers to carry out its mission of improving the employability and quality of life for people with different abilities through consumer-centered training, vocational evaluation, and employment services. The consumers, funders, referral sources, family members, and employers uniformly praised the dedication, knowledge, and advocacy efforts of the management team and staff members for doing what is right to help the consumers reach their goals. Over the last 35 years, Abilities has embraced continuous quality improvement through the CARF standards and the accreditation process. Current areas for improvement include modification of the documentation process for billing records reviews, enhancing its critical incident reporting, expanding its ineligibility notification and service alternatives, enhancing its unsafe behaviors policy to specifically address the use of seclusion and restraint, and further documenting details in the individual medication records. Abilities has the resources and the business and program expertise to address the recommendations in this report. The receptivity and enthusiasm of the management team and staff members to the consultation and other feedback provided during this survey instills confidence that the team possesses the willingness and capacity to bring the organization into full conformance to these international standards for accreditation.

Abilities of Northwest Jersey, Inc. appears likely to maintain and/or improve its current method of operation and demonstrates a commitment to ongoing quality improvement. Abilities of Northwest Jersey, Inc. is required to submit a post-survey Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) to CARF that addresses all recommendations identified in this report.

Abilities of Northwest Jersey, Inc. has earned a Three-Year Accreditation. The leadership team and staff are complimented and congratulated for this achievement. In order to maintain this accreditation, throughout the term of accreditation, the organization is required to:

- Submit annual reporting documents and other required information to CARF, as detailed in the Accreditation Policies and Procedures section in the standards manual.
- Maintain ongoing conformance to CARF's standards, satisfy all accreditation conditions, and comply with all accreditation policies and procedures, as they are published and made effective by CARF.

Survey Details

Survey Participants

The survey of Abilities of Northwest Jersey, Inc. was conducted by the following CARF surveyor(s):

- Michael J. O'Malley, PhD, LPC, CRC-MAC, Administrative
- Chris D. Steed, LSW, Program

CARF considers the involvement of persons served to be vital to the survey process. As part of the accreditation survey for all organizations, CARF surveyors interact with and conduct direct, confidential interviews with consenting current and former persons served in the program(s)/service(s) for which the organization is seeking accreditation. In addition, as applicable and available, interviews may be conducted with family members and/or representatives of the persons served such as guardians, advocates, or members of their support system.

Interviews are also conducted with individuals associated with the organization, as applicable, which may include:

- The organization's leadership, such as board members, executives, owners, and managers.
- Business unit resources, such as finance and human resources.
- Personnel who serve and directly interact with persons served in the program(s)/service(s) for which the organization is seeking accreditation.
- Other stakeholders, such as referral sources, payers, insurers, and fiscal intermediaries.
- Community constituents and governmental representatives.

Survey Activities

Achieving CARF accreditation involves demonstrating conformance to the applicable CARF standards, evidenced through observable practices, verifiable results over time, and comprehensive supporting documentation. The survey of Abilities of Northwest Jersey, Inc. and its program(s)/service(s) consisted of the following activities:

- Confidential interviews and direct interactions, as outlined in the previous section.
- Direct observation of the organization's operations and service delivery practices.
- Observation of the organization's location(s) where services are delivered.
- Review of organizational documents, which may include policies; plans; written procedures; promotional materials; governing documents, such as articles of incorporation and bylaws; financial statements; and other documents necessary to determine conformance to standards.

- Review of documents related to program/service design, delivery, outcomes, and improvement, such as program descriptions, records of services provided, documentation of reviews of program resources and services conducted, and program evaluations.
- Review of records of current and former persons served.

Program(s)/Service(s) Surveyed

The survey addressed by this report is specific to the following program(s)/service(s):

- Community Employment Services: Employment Supports
- Community Employment Services: Employment Supports (Autism Spectrum Disorder-Adults)
- Community Employment Services: Job Development
- Community Employment Services: Job Development (Autism Spectrum Disorder-Adults)
- Comprehensive Vocational Evaluation Services
- Comprehensive Vocational Evaluation Services (Autism Spectrum Disorder-Adults)
- Employee Development Services
- Employee Development Services (Autism Spectrum Disorder-Adults)
- Organizational Employment Services
- Organizational Employment Services (Autism Spectrum Disorder-Adults)
- Transition Services
- Transition Services (Autism Spectrum Disorder-Adults)

A list of the organization's accredited program(s)/service(s) by location is included at the end of this report.

Representations and Constraints

The accreditation decision and survey findings contained in this report are based on an on-balance consideration of the information obtained by the surveyor(s) during the on-site survey. Any information that was unavailable, not presented, or outside the scope of the survey was not considered and, had it been considered, may have affected the contents of this report. If at any time CARF subsequently learns or has reason to believe that the organization did not participate in the accreditation process in good faith or that any information presented was not accurate, truthful, or complete, CARF may modify the accreditation decision, up to and including revocation of accreditation.

Survey Findings

This report provides a summary of the organization's strengths and identifies the sections of the CARF standards that were applied on the survey and the findings in each area. In conjunction with its evaluation of conformance to the specific program/service standards, CARF assessed conformance to its business practice standards, referred to as Section 1. ASPIRE to Excellence, which are designed to support the delivery of the program(s)/service(s) within a sound business operating framework to promote long-term success.

The specific standards applied from each section vary based on a variety of factors, including, but not limited to, the scope(s) of the program(s)/service(s), population(s) served, location(s), methods of service delivery, and survey type. Information about the specific standards applied on each survey is included in the standards manual and other instructions that may be provided by CARF.

Areas of Strength

CARF found that Abilities of Northwest Jersey, Inc. demonstrated the following strengths:

- Abilities has developed an important and strategic affiliation with Allies, Inc. for the purpose of expanding the continuum of care to Abilities' consumers. Allies' staff members are experts in developing and providing housing opportunities for people with disabilities, and Abilities has over 45 years' experience in the provision of a quality, consumer-centered continuum of comprehensive vocational evaluation, employee development, organizational employment, community employment (including job placement and employment supports), and transition services. The due diligence and positive planning process undertaken by both CEOs and their respective boards have led to additional measurable efficiencies for the organization's administrative, corporate compliance, and finance processes; a standardized electronic service record; an additional consumer base for Abilities' employment and transition services; and a significant improvement in access to appropriate housing opportunities for Abilities' consumers. This affiliation positions Abilities to optimize its services in the fee-for-service model, as evidenced by better outcomes for consumers.
- Abilities has a diverse and committed board of trustees with several business owners, including engineers, attorneys, medical professionals, and human service workers with longstanding board service. The board members are enthusiastic about shorter- and longer-term strategic planning and big picture ideas to help ensure Abilities' long-term viability to provide its continuum of evidence-based services. The first question they ask when considering a new initiative is "How does this help the consumer?" The board routinely discusses innovations that will help strengthen the partnership between the consumers, their families, and the Abilities organization. One board member stated, "We want to make sure that Abilities is in it for the long haul."
- The CEO is dynamic and energetic, and the management team is highly skilled. There is an excellent succession planning process, and several staff members have successfully moved throughout the organization into different positions. Abilities has a longstanding and well-deserved reputation for doing what is right and providing what is needed for the consumers to reach their goals. The commitment to focused and consumer-centered planning and the provision of the right service at the right time are evident at all levels of the organization. Positive energy to provide quality services is evident at all staff levels of the organization.
- Abilities is exceptionally well regarded by its referral and funding agents. The funders and referral sources report that Abilities has a good strategic individual planning process with consistent review and update of goals. Comments included that the staff members submit timely and complete reports with quality recommendations, return calls quickly, are easy to talk with, and provide the consumers with the opportunity to attain appropriate outcomes in Abilities' continuum of care. They appreciate the person-centered, expert, and professional approach consistently demonstrated across all services. Abilities was noted to be a "provider of choice" for Warren County and in the three local counties where the consumers reside. One funder noted, "It is evident that they have the consumers' best interests in mind with everything they do." Another funder reported, "They are outstanding with all forms of communication, timely with reports, and strong advocates for people with a variety of disabilities."
- Abilities is a consumer-driven, forward-thinking organization that is made up of diligent, compassionate, and well-trained staff members who consistently carry out the mission. The organization demonstrates its true commitment to creating community-based employment options and continues its proactive endeavors for supporting an inclusive community for every consumer with different abilities. There is strength in the community partnership with the local community college, offering soft skill development curriculum and individualized career development services. Abilities' dedication to the consumers served shines through its innovative programs and services.

- Abilities offers a range of social enterprises, including electronic recycling, hydroponics, PrintAbilities, traditional packaging and fulfillment, the PossAbilities Thrift Boutique, and a food pantry. This diverse group of social enterprises offers many choices to the consumers it serves and also provides important and significant benefits to the larger community.
- Abilities is well established in its community with a long-interwoven history. In addition to the many things that the consumers contribute, Abilities' staff members are active and involved in community organizations, such as the chambers of commerce, workforce development boards, and schools. Its community relationships are not only broad, but deep as well.
- The families of the consumers served by Abilities are, as a group, enormously pleased with the quality of services offered, and highlight the rapport, availability, and responsiveness of the staff members. One parent related that Abilities is "a partner to the end." Another family member reported, "I never believed that he could come this far," and again, "The job changed his attitude and self-esteem." These snippets are a testament to the dedication, talent, and enthusiasm throughout this organization.
- Helping consumers identify and, importantly, express their preferences is a clear strength of Abilities. As a result, excellent, consistent implementation follows, increasing the independence and dignity of the consumers served. Abilities does a good job of providing many pathways and levels of services. On a special note, it utilizes the sensory rooms well to the benefit of the consumers receiving specialized autism support services.
- In an unscripted, unplanned, and coincidental encounter, an educational partner representative said of Abilities, "They are one of the most amazing nonprofits in the area, and possibly the state. Many nonprofits are happy to take, but Abilities eagerly gives back as well. They get it."
- The organization provides an extremely well-received summer program for young adults. The consumers, families, school districts, and other funding sources are all impressed with the hard work and excellent job fits, and especially by the employment sites hiring two of the young adults on a permanent basis.
- Abilities has long-lasting and effective relationships with the local business community. A local employer related that he has had many years of experience hiring people with disabilities and has worked with multiple job coaching agencies. He far prefers Abilities because of its communication, expertise, and eager supports.

Abilities of Northwest Jersey, Inc. also demonstrated exemplary conformance to the standards as set forth below. Recognition of exemplary conformance indicates a practice that produces outstanding business or clinical results and/or is innovative or creative and beneficial to be shared with the field.

- Abilities has demonstrated exemplary efforts in advocating the employment rights of consumers with different abilities. Over the last year, the organization made concerted efforts to expand its list of employers interested in hiring its consumers. Due to northwest New Jersey's need for employees, the longstanding goodwill and support of the region for the organization, and the diligence of the staff members providing job placement and job supports, the organization was able to increase its employment placement outcomes by 64 percent from the previous year. Most recently, representatives from Disability Rights New Jersey visited the organization and were impressed with the staff members' dedication in supporting community rehabilitation programs as a viable and critical option for people with significant disabilities and the complete continuum of training opportunities and job development and support options for people at every level of ability. Abilities has a well-marketed philosophy of focusing on individual consumers' abilities and doing everything possible to create employment opportunities based on each consumer's individual employment goal. The organization also has an outstanding partnership with the local community college for additional on-the-job and soft skills training opportunities. (1.A.6.d.)

Opportunities for Quality Improvement

The CARF survey process identifies opportunities for continuous improvement, a core concept of “aspiring to excellence.” This section of the report lists the sections of the CARF standards that were applied on the survey, including a description of the business practice area and/or the specific program(s)/service(s) surveyed and a summary of the key areas addressed in that section of the standards.

In this section of the report, a recommendation identifies any standard for which CARF determined that the organization did not meet the minimum requirements to demonstrate full conformance. All recommendations must be addressed in a QIP submitted to CARF.

In addition, consultation may be provided for areas of or specific standards where the surveyor(s) documented suggestions that the organization may consider to improve its business or service delivery practices. Note that consultation may be offered for areas of specific standards that do not have any recommendations. Such consultation does not indicate nonconformance to the standards; it is intended to offer ideas that the organization might find helpful in its ongoing quality improvement efforts. The organization is not required to address consultation.

When CARF surveyors visit an organization, their role is that of independent peer reviewers, and their goal is not only to gather and assess information to determine conformance to the standards, but also to engage in relevant and meaningful consultative dialogue. Not all consultation or suggestions discussed during the survey are noted in this report. The organization is encouraged to review any notes made during the survey and consider the consultation or suggestions that were discussed.

During the process of preparing for a CARF accreditation survey, an organization may conduct a detailed self-assessment and engage in deliberations and discussions within the organization as well as with external stakeholders as it considers ways to implement and use the standards to guide its quality improvement efforts. The organization is encouraged to review these discussions and deliberations as it considers ways to implement innovative changes and further advance its business and service delivery practices.

Section 1. ASPIRE to Excellence®

1.A. Leadership

Description

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 and responsibilities
- Person-centered philosophy
- Organizational guidance
- Leadership accessibility
- Cultural competency and diversity
- Corporate responsibility
- Organizational fundraising, if applicable

Recommendations

There are no recommendations in this area.

Consultation

- Staff members have shared that it is sometimes difficult to access specialized training and education due to high demand and limited availability through existing training providers. It is suggested that Abilities explore opportunities to have its interested and capable staff members become training specialists for high-demand curriculum areas and that the organization consider developing a "train the trainer" option. It is further suggested that, once it is developed, Abilities explore opportunities for marketing its training resources to other organizations.

1.C. Strategic Planning

Description

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

- Environmental considerations
- Strategic plan development, implementation, and periodic review

Recommendations

There are no recommendations in this area.

1.D. Input from Persons Served and Other Stakeholders

Description

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

- Collection of input
- Integration of input into business practices and planning

Recommendations

There are no recommendations in this area.

1.E. Legal Requirements

Description

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

Key Areas Addressed

- Compliance with obligations
- Response to legal action
- Confidentiality and security of records

Recommendations

There are no recommendations in this area.

1.F. Financial Planning and Management

Description

CARF-accredited organizations strive to be financially responsible and solvent, conducting fiscal management in a manner that supports their mission, values, and 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

- Budgets
- Review of financial results and relevant factors
- Fiscal policies and procedures
- Reviews of bills for services and fee structures, if applicable
- Safeguarding funds of persons served, if applicable
- Review/audit of financial statements

Recommendations

1.F.7.b.(2)

1.F.7.b.(3)

1.F.7.b.(4)

Although Abilities conducts a quarterly review of a representative sample of bills of the consumers, it is recommended that the organization document the review, addressing trends, areas needing improvement, and actions to be taken. Currently, the controller regularly reviews a sample of the billing records to ensure accuracy and documents this activity with an initialed billing form. It is suggested that Abilities consider creating a quarterly financial and quality management staff meeting with an agenda and meeting minutes for the purpose of documenting a review of financial, billing, and quality initiatives and trends.

1.G. Risk Management

Description

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

- Risk management plan implementation and periodic review
- Adequate insurance coverage
- Media relations and social media procedures
- Reviews of contract services

Recommendations

There are no recommendations in this area.

1.H. Health and Safety

Description

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

- Competency-based training on safety procedures and practices
- Emergency procedures
- Access to first aid and emergency information
- Critical incidents
- Infection control
- Health and safety inspections

Recommendations

1.H.9.f.(2)

It is recommended that Abilities enhance its written procedures regarding critical incidents to include the use of seclusion.

1.I. Workforce Development and Management

Description

CARF-accredited organizations demonstrate that they value their human resources and focus on aligning and linking human resources processes, procedures, and initiatives with the strategic objectives of the organization. Organizational effectiveness depends on the organization's ability to develop and manage the knowledge, skills, abilities, and behavioral expectations of its workforce. The organization describes its workforce, which is often composed of a diverse blend of human resources. Effective workforce development and management promote engagement and organizational sustainability and foster an environment that promotes the provision of services that center on enhancing the lives of persons served.

Key Areas Addressed

- Composition of workforce
- Ongoing workforce planning
- Verification of background/credentials/fitness for duty
- Workforce engagement and development
- Performance appraisals
- Succession planning

Recommendations

There are no recommendations in this area.

Consultation

- It is suggested that Abilities review all current job descriptions to ensure that the essential job functions and skills correlate with the competencies required for the specific positions.

1.J. Technology

Description

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

Key Areas Addressed

- Ongoing assessment of technology and data use
- Technology and system plan implementation and periodic review
- Technology policies and procedures
- Written procedures for the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) in service delivery, if applicable
- ICT instruction and training, if applicable
- Access to ICT information and assistance, if applicable
- Maintenance of ICT equipment, if applicable
- Emergency procedures that address unique aspects of service delivery via ICT, if applicable

Recommendations

There are no recommendations in this area.

1.K. Rights of Persons Served

Description

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

- Policies that promote rights of persons served
- Communication of rights to persons served
- Formal complaints by persons served

Recommendations

There are no recommendations in this area.

1.L. Accessibility

Description

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

Key Areas Addressed

- Assessment of accessibility needs and identification of barriers
- Accessibility plan implementation and periodic review
- Requests for reasonable accommodations

Recommendations

There are no recommendations in this area.

1.M. Performance Measurement and Management

Description

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

Key Areas Addressed

- Data collection
- Establishment and measurement of performance indicators

Recommendations

There are no recommendations in this area.

Consultation

- Although the organization consistently meets its performance goals and collects program-level data on service access, service efficiency, service effectiveness, and satisfaction data at appropriate times, Abilities is encouraged to develop new performance targets in each of these domains for each of its programs.
- It is suggested that Abilities conduct facilitated focus groups with the consumers to get their input regarding what they feel is appropriate to measure for the effectiveness of services. Focus groups might also be implemented with family members or employers.

1.N. Performance Improvement

Description

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

- Analysis of performance indicators in relation to performance targets
- Use of performance analysis for quality improvement and organizational decision making
- Communication of performance information

Recommendations

There are no recommendations in this area.

Section 2. Quality Individualized Services and Supports

Description

For an organization to achieve quality services, the persons served are active participants in the planning, implementation, and ongoing review and revision of the services offered. The organization's commitment to quality and the involvement of the persons served spans the entire time that the persons served are involved with services.

The service planning process is individualized, establishing goals and measurable objectives that incorporate the unique strengths, abilities, needs, and preferences of the persons served. Services are responsive to the expectations of persons served and their desired outcomes from services, and are relevant to their maximum participation in the environments of their choice.

2.A. Program/Service Structure

Description

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

Recommendations

2.A.4.a.

2.A.4.c.

When a person is found ineligible for services, the reason for this decision is not clearly spelled out in the "Ten-day letter," and alternatives to service provision are not provided. When a person is found ineligible for services, it is recommended that the organization provide more detail regarding the reasons for the ineligibility decision and also make recommendations for alternative services.

2.A.17.b.(1)

2.A.17.b.(2)

Although the organization has implemented a policy for each program that identifies how it will respond to unsafe behaviors of the consumers, this policy should be expanded to also identify whether and under what circumstances seclusion is used and whether and under what circumstances restraints are used.

Consultation

- According to staff reports, the primary cause of ineligibility decisions is the lack of communication on the part of the consumer, such as the consumer may have moved, changed telephones, used up all of his/her minutes, or experienced any number of other barriers. This consumer may be unaware that he/she can return to services, if he/she so chooses, and have the appropriate sponsorship. Abilities may wish to consider establishing a process to reach out to these "lost consumers" after services have ended. Often, referral agents, emergency contacts, or family members eventually make contact with the person, or phone plan minutes are refreshed. Such outreach may benefit the consumer by re-engaging with the organization, and Abilities may expand some revenue streams.

2.B. Individual-Centered Service Planning, Design, and Delivery

Description

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 desired outcomes from services, 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.

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

- Abilities does a good job of providing coordinated, individualized services. Its services are very accessible, and there are many paths to participation. Various programs are in no way isolated in silos, and in fact, the reverse is true. This strength also presents a challenge as programs, services, and the numbers of persons served grows. The organization may wish to develop a process or system where one individual staff member is assigned as the "quarterback," coordinating information flow across these multiple activity streams. This may also result in an increase in people referred to Abilities, as referral agents develop relationships with one single point of contact.

2.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

Recommendations

2.C.1.e.

2.C.1.f.

2.C.1.g.(2)

Although the organization acquires some information about medications that are self-administered by the consumers, it often misses getting full details, such as potential side effects, drug interactions, and prescriber and pharmacy information. It is recommended that the individual records of all medications, including prescription and nonprescription medications, used by the consumers include potential side effects; drug interactions; and, for prescribed medications, the dispensing pharmacy and contact information.

Consultation

- As the organization grows and additional planned services, such as residential supports, are provided, it is suggested that Abilities move toward a medication management service approach and philosophy. Additionally, it may be that the existing nursing staff members could be helpful in this endeavor.

2.D. Employment Services Principle Standards

Description

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.

Some examples of the quality results desired by the different stakeholders of these services and supports include:

- Individualized, appropriate accommodations.
- A flexible, interactive process that involves the person.
- Increased independence.
- Increased employment options.
- Timely services and reports.
- Persons served obtain and maintain employment consistent with their preferences, strengths, and needs.
- Person served obtains a job at minimum wage or higher and maintains appropriate benefits.
- Person served maintains the job.

Key Areas Addressed

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

Recommendations

There are no recommendations in this area.

2.E. Community Services Principle Standards

Description

An organization seeking CARF accreditation in the area of community services assists the persons and/or families served in obtaining access to the resources and services of their choice. The persons and/or families served are included in their communities to the degree they desire. This may be accomplished by direct service provision or linkages to existing opportunities and natural supports in the community.

The organization obtains information from the persons and/or families served regarding resources and services they want or require that will meet their identified needs, and offers an array of services it arranges for or provides. The organization provides the persons and/or families served with information so that they may make informed choices and decisions.

The services and supports are changed as necessary to meet the identified needs of the persons and/or families served and other stakeholders. Service designs address identified individual, family, socioeconomic, and cultural needs.

Expected results from these services may include:

- Increased or maintained inclusion in meaningful community activities.
- Increased or maintained ability to perform activities of daily living.
- Increased self-direction, self-determination, and self-reliance.
- Increased self-esteem.

Key Areas Addressed

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

Recommendations

There are no recommendations in this area.

Section 3. Employment Services

Description

An organization seeking CARF accreditation in the area of employment 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 self-direction, self-determination, and self-reliance
- Self-esteem.
- Community citizenship.
- Increased independence.
- Meaningful activities.
- Increased employment options.
- Employment obtained and maintained.
- Competitive employment.
- Employment at or above minimum wage.
- Economic self-sufficiency.
- Employment with benefits.
- Career advancement.

3.B. Comprehensive Vocational Evaluation Services (CVE)

Description

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 and/or volunteer experience and transferable skills.

Some examples of the quality results desired by the different stakeholders of these services include:

- Realistic job opportunities are explored and identified for individuals.
- Employment barriers are identified and ways to overcome these are suggested.
- Assistive technology or other accommodations needed are identified.
- The evaluation is completed within the authorization period.
- The person served understands the results.
- The cost per evaluation is acceptable.
- Interests of the persons served are thoroughly explored.
- Evaluation reports lead to job goals.
- Transferable skills are identified.

Key Areas Addressed

- Various exploratory techniques used by qualified evaluators
- Information obtained is shared
- Screenings are based on and answer referral questions
- Vocational options identified
- Employment goals
- Personnel meet applicable qualifications for the work

Recommendations

There are no recommendations in this area.

3.D. Employee Development Services (EDS)

Description

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 community job sites, within formal and organized training and educational settings, through coaching, 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.

Some examples of the quality outcomes desired by the different stakeholders of these services include:

- Person served obtains employment.
- Person served moves to a training program or better employment.
- Person served retains his or her job.
- Person served obtains improved benefits.
- Increased wages.
- Increased skills.
- Increased work hours.
- Movement to individualized competitive employment.
- Employment in an integrated environment.
- Job advancement potential increases.
- Job-seeking skills are developed.
- Job-keeping skills are developed.
- Career growth and development.
- Level of support needed is reduced.
- Exposure to and availability of a variety of jobs.
- Program is kept at capacity.
- Services are cost-effective for the results achieved.
- Responsiveness (days from referral to starting services).

Key Areas Addressed

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

Recommendations

There are no recommendations in this area.

3.F. Organizational Employment Services (OES)

Description

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, including individualized competitive employment.

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.

Some examples of the quality outcomes desired by the different stakeholders of these services include:

- Movement to individualized competitive employment.
- Movement to an integrated environment.
- Increased wages.
- Pay at or above minimum wage.
- Increased skills.
- Increased work hours.
- Minimized downtime with meaningful activities available.
- Exposure to and availability of a variety of jobs.
- Increased ability to interact with others as part of a professional team and to resolve interpersonal issues appropriately.

Key Areas Addressed

- Paid work provided by organization
- Legal guidelines adherence
- Employment goals of persons served
- Increased wages and skills

Recommendations

There are no recommendations in this area.

3.G. Community Employment Services

Description

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 individualized competitive employment, individual placements, contracted temporary personnel services, competitive employment, supported employment, transitional employment, mobile work crews, contracted work groups in the community, community-based SourceAmerica® 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.

Depending on the scope of the services provided, some examples of the quality outcomes desired by the different stakeholders of these services include:

- Persons obtain community employment.
- Persons obtain individualized competitive employment.
- Employment matches interests and desires of persons.
- Wages, benefits, and hours of employment achieved as desired.
- Average number of hours worked per week increases.
- Average number of hours worked per week meets the desires of the person served.
- Full-time employment with benefits.
- Transition-age youth move directly from their educational environment into community employment.
- Potential for upward mobility.
- Self-sufficiency.
- Integration.
- Responsive services.
- Safe working conditions.
- Cost-effective for placement achieved.
- Performance level achieved meets requirements of job or position.
- Increase in skills.
- Increase in productivity.
- Increase in hours worked.
- Increase in pay.
- Employment retention.
- Increase in natural supports from coworkers.
- Persons served treated with respect.
- Minimize length of time for supports.
- Type and amount of staff interaction meets needs.
- Employer satisfaction.
- Responsiveness to customers.

Job Development (CES:JD): 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 support for a self-directed job search.

Employment Supports (CES:ES): Employment support services 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
- Employment provided in regular business settings
- Integrated employment retention
- Provides career advancement resources

Recommendations

There are no recommendations in this area.

Section 4. Community Services

Description

An organization seeking CARF accreditation in the area of 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, and self-reliance
- Self-esteem.
- Housing opportunities.
- Community citizenship.

- Increased independence.
- Meaningful activities.
- Increased employment options.

4.B. Transition Services (TS)

Description

Transition services are integrated, community-oriented, systematic services for students/transition-age youth and their families provided through a jointly planned approach, involving broad-based community collaboration, linkages, advocacy, and natural supports.

Transition services/supports are planned and coordinated for multiple outcomes for youth leaving school, including post-secondary education, supported education, vocational assessments and targeted training, community employment (including supported employment and volunteer placement), independent or supported living, and community participation. The organization demonstrates early active outreach to and connection and partnership with school districts to address the transition needs of students and their families. The purpose of this collaboration and early planning is focused on ensuring that transition-age youth are not “missed” as they move from one system to another.

Some examples of the quality results desired by the different stakeholders of these services include:

- Community-oriented services.
- Post-secondary education.
- Transition-age youth move directly from their educational environment into community employment.
- Transition-age youth explore alternative community employment situations.
- Access to targeted vocational training or apprenticeships.
- Independent or supported living.
- Community participation.
- Employment.
- Volunteer placement.
- Connections to community resources.
- Appropriate benefits/supports as persons leave school.

Key Areas Addressed

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

Recommendations

There are no recommendations in this area.

Consultation

- The organization has recently completed a very successful summer program for young adult workers. Although virtually everyone familiar with the program sees it as a success, funding for next year is not committed. It is suggested that the organization present the existing and excellent outcomes data to a wider audience, including local school boards and the state office of vocational rehabilitation. This effort may be enhanced through the use of existing networks and the formation of parent advocacy groups.

Section 5. Specific Population Designations/Enhancements

5.D. Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD:A)

Description

Supports for adults with autism spectrum disorder (ASD:A) enhance accessibility and community membership opportunities for adults with ASD. Education, employment, residential, social, and recreational opportunities; identification from research of successful techniques to apply to service provision including treatment and intervention research; and lifelong planning are means to achieve full inclusion and participation.

Standards for ASD services and supports present a roadmap for successful outcomes in the lives of persons with ASD by encouraging organizational values that focus on individualized, person-centered services for persons to achieve full inclusion and participation as desired in their communities. Services involve families, networks of resources, and education and support communities for older adolescents transitioning to adulthood and adult persons with ASD.

The standards in this section focus on planning for transitions and development of supports as needed for persons with ASD, with the outcomes of employment, further education, community living, and life planning.

Some of the quality results (outcomes) desired by the different stakeholders of ASD services may include:

- Creating and supporting lifelong self-advocacy skills.
- Developing supports and community resources for persons and families.
- Enhancing quality of life by increasing social contacts and support communities.
- Encouraging service provider capacity building by networking with governmental, educational, business/employer, and other community resources.
- Recognizing and sharing reliable evidence-based knowledge, innovations, interventions, and therapies with proven, research-based, and peer-reviewed track records of getting results.
- Planning for transition from school to successful employment and community living supports.
- Individualized, comprehensive life planning that is transferred to other service providers to ensure continuity of service planning and supports.
- Persons served moving toward:
 - Optimal use of natural supports.
 - A social supports network.
 - Self-help.
 - Greater self-sufficiency.
 - Greater ability to make appropriate choices.
 - Greater control of their lives.
 - Increased participation in the community.
 - Employment and/or continued education.

Key Areas Addressed

- Services reflect current ASD research
- Increased community awareness and understanding are promoted
- Personnel receive specific competency-based training
- Connections to community resources are facilitated

Recommendations

There are no recommendations in this area.

Consultation

- As the organization expands its autism spectrum disorder programming, it may wish to consider using its existing in-house evaluations to assist in gathering assessment information in the area of life skills. One free and easily accessible resource to assess current life skills functioning can be found at **www.caseylifeskills.com**.

Program(s)/Service(s) by Location

Abilities of Northwest Jersey, Inc.

264 Route 31 North
Washington, NJ 07882

Comprehensive Vocational Evaluation Services
Comprehensive Vocational Evaluation Services (Autism Spectrum Disorder-Adults)
Employee Development Services
Employee Development Services (Autism Spectrum Disorder-Adults)
Organizational Employment Services
Organizational Employment Services (Autism Spectrum Disorder-Adults)

Employment Pathways

14A Brass Castle Road
Washington, NJ 07882

Community Employment Services: Employment Supports
Community Employment Services: Employment Supports (Autism Spectrum Disorder-Adults)
Community Employment Services: Job Development
Community Employment Services: Job Development (Autism Spectrum Disorder-Adults)
Transition Services
Transition Services (Autism Spectrum Disorder-Adults)