

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 a 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

162771

Survey Date(s)

November 16, 2022–November 18, 2022

Surveyor(s)

Daniel J. Sullivan, MSPA, Administrative
Sharon Meixner, MEd, CRC, 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 23, 2019–September 25, 2019
Three-Year Accreditation

Accreditation Decision

Three-Year Accreditation
Expiration: November 30, 2025

Executive Summary

This report contains the findings of CARF's site survey of Abilities of Northwest Jersey, Inc. conducted November 16, 2022–November 18, 2022. 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 provides community employment services, comprehensive vocational evaluation services, employee development services, organizational employment services, and transition services that are highly valued by and have garnered an outstanding reputation among stakeholders and the general public. The organization demonstrates a heartfelt commitment to the provision of high-quality, customized services to consumers with significant service challenges. It embraces continuous quality improvement. The organization benefits from a dedicated, actively engaged board; effective, mission-directed leadership; and personnel who are committed to the consumers' development, support, and success. Abilities is designed and operated to benefit the consumers. The consumers, their families, employers, and other stakeholders expressed a very high level of satisfaction with and appreciation for the organization and its services and staff members. The few areas for improvement noted in this report include the incorporation of the organization's business functions into the performance management and performance improvement processes and including measurable goals in the consumers' plans. The leadership, board of trustees, and staff members are complimented for their commitment and dedication to the accreditation process.

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):

- Daniel J. Sullivan, MSPA, Administrative
- Sharon Meixner, MEd, CRC, 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 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 does an excellent job in the areas of pre-employment transition services and out-of-school youth services. Efforts to launch Project SEARCH® with Newton Medical Center, the summer paid internship program, and the Center for Adult Transition program have resulted in employment opportunities and successful outcomes for the consumers. It is evident that the staff members' dedication, knowledge, and skills have contributed to unrivaled results for these services. Accordingly, Abilities is referred to as the "provider of choice" in the northern region of the state by stakeholders.
- The staff members of Abilities are high level, competent, visionary, flexible, creative, and passionate. They not only change lives within the organization but have a presence in the state of New Jersey, which enables them to stay on top of changes in the rehabilitation world. One staff member is co-chair of the Warren County Children's Inter-Agency Coordination Council. This council assists families and agencies in the process of seeking services in Warren County for children in need. In addition, this staff member co-chairs the New Jersey Transition Coordinators' Network. This network is for teachers, transition coordinators, school child study team members, and adult service providers to learn more about helping students transition to services as they graduate from high school, and it provides schools with resources they can use in their classrooms. The organization also has a close relationship with the New Jersey Department of Education and the Work-Based Learning office, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services, and The Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities through Rutgers University.
- Staff demonstrates a deep commitment to the well-being of the consumers and to the greater community through the provision of high-quality, person-centered services. A positive culture of hope, respect, and safety for the consumers is evident across the organization, which involves always approaching the consumers in a holistic manner, addressing their needs, and working diligently to remove barriers. The staff members embrace the organization's values in their day-to-day operations with a true sense of teamwork, camaraderie, and integrity, qualities which helped them navigate the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The organization has forged excellent relationships with many local companies that provide a variety of in-house training opportunities for the consumers that not only enhance their skill sets but prepare them for employment with local employers.
- Abilities' community employment program has had great success placing its consumers. In 2022, Abilities placed 27 consumers, and in 2021, 26 consumers were placed. The retention rate was 92 percent, with many job offers exceeding minimum wage.
- Staff members have established excellent relationships with companies and organizations to provide quality summer internship opportunities for the consumers. In addition, some consumers were hired when they completed their internships.
- There are numerous success stories of consumers who live with multiple barriers who have found a path to employment with the assistance of Abilities.
- The supports provided by job coaches are great and one of the critical factors that have contributed to the organization's success with job retention. There are numerous success stories illustrating the level of caring, follow-through, and effective techniques used by the coaches. One consumer stated, "I am so thankful for my job coach," adding, "My job coach helps me to manage my feelings and actually cares. She is amazing, and I am so thankful." Another consumer expressed her profound gratitude for the support she received on the job and said, "Staff at Abilities trained me for my job, which has enabled me to have a feeling of freedom and self-worth. My coach is a great and caring person and has helped me in so many ways." Another consumer said, "Abilities helped me get a job. My job coach helps me with my comprehension, and when I have difficulty doing a job, she helped me to master the job. I love her."

- The organization has developed a vast array of programs that enable it to better serve a multitude of the consumers' needs within the community. This wide array of services can create a challenge for referral sources and consumers in identifying the best options based on their individual needs. One way that the organization has dealt with this was to create the new position of an outreach and care coordinator. The staff member in this role is an expert in assessing and referring the consumer and/or family to the best option.
- Parents expressed profound satisfaction with the services received by Abilities. One parent said, "I am very well pleased with staff. If there is a problem, they call. My son has liked every job coach and is successful in his job because of their help." Another parent shared a story about her son, who learned employability skills at Abilities, stating, "I don't know what I [would] have done without their help." She also noted that staff members "were a lifesaver." Another family member stated that their daughter has learned a lot, has become more independent, has increased her language skills, is eager to go to her job, and is now concerned about how she looks when she goes to her job. Another parent expressed that his daughter has done so much more than he would ever have expected and expressed gratitude for the teamwork and support the family has received. He can now rest because he knows his daughter is receiving the best services.
- A funder praised staff and stated that 60 to 70 percent of its cases were with Abilities and that the staff members are "proactive and always on top of client cases. Communication is great; they keep me informed about changes or issues as they arise. I really enjoy working with Abilities. It has been a very positive experience." Another referral source said, "Staff are excellent. They are truly engaged with the individuals they serve. They are very approachable. There are never issues, and we have a great relationship. There have been times when I have not had time to get paperwork ready, and they got the paperwork ready for us. They are phenomenal." Another referral source said, "The staff really care about the consumers and families. They really engage with the consumers. I greatly appreciated the fact that they continued to serve consumers during COVID. In addition, communication is great, and staff are committed to their programs and mission. They are a great provider and have a fantastic reputation."
- Employers were very appreciative of the collaboration with staff and said, "Staff are great—very attentive to the individuals served and to our needs as well. They are great." Another employer shared that the consumers from Abilities make a "big difference, and this has really helped us out. When they are not scheduled, we really notice a difference. I really enjoy working with Abilities. It has been a very positive experience."
- The organization is applauded for its constant efforts to improve and recognize missing links in services provided, and it recently invested in training a staff member to become a benefits specialist. The organization is aware that some consumers and/or their families were resistant to pursue employment because of a fear of losing benefits. Having a benefits specialist on staff helps families make informed decisions about employment because they will have all of the facts.
- The organization's board of trustees is an effective governing body that supports its mission and direction. The board includes representatives from the community, including business leaders and family members. The board is actively involved in all areas, including strategic planning and financial oversight.
- The annual statistical report and action plan and the incident review committee's annual report are two examples of information that is prepared and used to monitor the effectiveness of program operations. The reports are shared throughout the organization and improve the quality of services.
- The organization is committed to strategic planning. The planning process includes active input from all stakeholders. The goals identified in the plan are well thought out. The identified strategic goals are incorporated into program operations.
- A well-established safety committee includes representatives from throughout the organization, including consumers. The committee is engaged in the promotion of safe work environments.

- The organization is fortunate to have a number of staff members who have been with it for many years. The institutional knowledge and experience they bring are noted strengths. The leadership and management team effectively work together and support each other. Team members regularly share their time and skills to support the organization’s mission.
- The leadership has successfully managed the organization through the COVID-19 pandemic. Foresight and planning have allowed the organization to address the needs of staff, consumers, and the organization. As a result, Abilities has maintained its position as a strong and vibrant organization.
- The organization obtains input in many ways and from a variety of stakeholders. The feedback is integrated into the quality improvement processes and is used to improve services.

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

- Abilities does an effective job of incorporating consumers into boards and committees throughout the organization. The board of trustees has expressed a desire to include a consumer on its board. The organization might consider identifying a mentor on the current board who could support and guide a consumer to become an active board member.

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 from persons served, personnel, and other stakeholders
- Integration of input into business practices and planning

Recommendations

There are no recommendations in this area.

Consultation

- The organization may consider ways to provide feedback to stakeholders on the results of questionnaires and surveys that are used to solicit input.

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
- Review/audit of financial statements
- Safeguarding funds of persons served, if applicable

Recommendations

There are no recommendations in this area.

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.

Consultation

- Abilities might consider incorporating into the risk management plan the risk of loss of key personnel and the risk that negative publicity could have on the organization's reputation.

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

- Healthy and safe environment
- Competency-based training on health and safety procedures and practices
- Emergency and evacuation procedures
- Access to first aid and emergency information
- Critical incidents
- Infections and communicable diseases
- Health and safety inspections

Recommendations

There are no recommendations in this area.

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 backgrounds/credentials/fitness for duty
- Workforce engagement and development
- Performance appraisals
- Succession planning

Recommendations

There are no recommendations in this area.

1.J. Technology

Description

Guided by leadership and a shared vision, CARF-accredited organizations are committed to exploring and, within their resources, acquiring and implementing technology systems and solutions that will support and enhance:

- Business processes and practices.
- Privacy and security of protected information.
- Service delivery.
- Performance management and improvement.
- Satisfaction of persons served, personnel, and other stakeholders.

Key Areas Addressed

- Ongoing assessment of technology and data use, including input from stakeholders
- Technology and system plan implementation and periodic review
- Technology policies and procedures

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.

Consultation

- In the past, Abilities used a picture format to communicate rights in an alternative format. It is suggested that this information be incorporated into the current consumer handbook or otherwise made available to consumers who may need assistance with understanding their rights.

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.

Consultation

- Transportation has been identified as a barrier in the accessibility plan. The organization has effectively worked to identify ways to overcome this barrier. It is suggested that transportation services be explored as a resource for some consumers.

1.M. Performance Measurement and Management

Description

CARF-accredited organizations demonstrate a culture of accountability by developing and implementing performance measurement and management plans that produce information an organization can act on to improve results for the persons served, other stakeholders, and the organization itself.

The foundation for successful performance measurement and management includes:

- Leadership accountability and support.
- Mission-driven measurement.
- A focus on results achieved for the persons served.
- Meaningful engagement of stakeholders.
- An understanding of extenuating and influencing factors that may impact performance.
- A workforce that is knowledgeable about and engaged in performance measurement and management.
- An investment in resources to implement performance measurement and management.
- Measurement and management of business functions to sustain and enhance the organization.

Key Areas Addressed

- Leadership accountability for performance measurement and management
- Identification of gaps and opportunities related to performance measurement and management
- Input from stakeholders
- Performance measurement and management plan
- Identification of objectives and performance indicators for service delivery
- Identification of objectives and performance indicators for priority business functions
- Personnel training on performance measurement and management

Recommendations

1.M.1.b.

Abilities tracks some business functions through strategic planning and budget management. However, these measures are not incorporated into the organization's performance management system. It is recommended that leadership demonstrate accountability for performance measurement and management related to business functions.

1.N. Performance Improvement

Description

CARF-accredited organizations demonstrate a culture of performance improvement through their commitment to proactive and ongoing review, analysis, reflection on their results in both service delivery and business functions, and transparency. The results of performance analysis are used to identify and implement data-driven actions to improve the quality of programs and services and to inform decision making. Performance information that is accurate and understandable to the target audience is shared with persons served, personnel, and other stakeholders in accordance with their interests and needs.

Key Areas Addressed

- Analysis of service delivery performance
- Analysis of business function performance
- Identification of areas needing performance improvement
- Implementation of action plans
- Use of performance information to improve program/service quality and make decisions
- Communication of performance information

Recommendations

1.N.2.a.

1.N.2.b.

1.N.2.c.

1.N.2.d.(1)

1.N.2.d.(2)

1.N.2.e.(1)

1.N.2.e.(2)

1.N.2.e.(3)

1.N.2.f.(1)

1.N.2.f.(2)

1.N.2.f.(3)

1.N.2.f.(4)

The analysis of business function performance should be documented and completed at least annually and in accordance with the timeframes outlined in the performance measurement and management plan; address priority business function indicators determined by the organization; incorporate the characteristics of the consumers, if applicable, and the impact of extenuating or influencing factors; include comparative analysis and identification of trends and causes; and be used to identify areas needing performance improvement, develop an action plan(s) to address the improvements needed, implement the action plan(s), and determine whether the actions taken accomplished the intended results.

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

There are no recommendations in this area.

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 the person's 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

2.B.5.b.(2)

Although many coordinated individualized service plans contained measurable objectives, others did not. It is recommended that a coordinated individualized service plan consistently identify specific measurable objectives. Abilities is encouraged to use specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) objectives. Specific and measurable objectives may be critical to planning the steps that lead to the consumer being able to achieve goals and may also enable the consumer and staff members to assess progress toward goal achievement. In addition, this might help the staff members to better determine the effectiveness of the strategies when documentation of goal attainment is reviewed.

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

There are no recommendations in this area.

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 employment.
- 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 (CES)

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.

The following service categories are available under Community Employment Services (please refer to the program descriptions and applicable standards):

- Job Development (CES:JD)
- Employment Supports (CES:ES)

If an organization provides only Job Development or Employment Supports, then it may be accredited for only that service. If it is providing both Job Development and Employment Supports, then it must seek accreditation for both. If any clarification is needed, please contact your CARF resource specialist. There is no charge for consultation.

Note: In making the determination of what an organization is actually providing in comparison to these service descriptions, these factors are considered: the mission of the services, the program descriptions, brochures and marketing image for these services, and the outcomes of the services.

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.

Consultation

- The organization has many connections with business leaders in the community. Although it had a business advisory committee in the past, it might consider revisiting forming one again. Such a committee could potentially be an effective way to further engage persons and increase the organization's visibility in the business community. Business members have the potential to recruit new members. Some activities could include conducting mock interviews with the consumers, reviewing résumés, and assisting with social media training for consumers who are preparing for employment. This experience could enable the committee members to have a personal connection with the consumers. Committee involvement could also provide the opportunity for business members to have a better understanding of the organization's mission.
- The organization might consider starting a collaborative that consists of local agencies that provide similar services in assisting consumers to find employment. Staff members could share job leads for positions they have not been able to fill, and difficult cases could potentially be presented. Brainstorming at times could bring ideas for employment that staff members have not considered, along with potential job leads and connections.

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.

Section 5. Specific Population Designations/Enhancements

5.D. Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASDA)

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.

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

58 East Washington Avenue
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)