

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

201103

Survey Date(s)

April 22, 2026–April 24, 2026

Surveyor(s)

Carol S. Sherer, MEd, Administrative
Nathaniel Rogers, Jr., 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

November 16, 2022–November 18, 2022
Three-Year Accreditation

Accreditation Decision**Three-Year Accreditation**

Expiration: May 31, 2029

Executive Summary

This report contains the findings of CARF's site survey of Abilities of Northwest Jersey, Inc. conducted April 22, 2026–April 24, 2026. 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 has many areas of strength that include its acquisition of input and the way it uses this input. It manages its legal obligations and financials in a way that provides sufficient funds and other resources for consumers to meet their goals. Additionally, health and safety is managed with consumers served and staff members in mind. It is evident that the organization not only uses technology in administrative areas but also in program areas to assist consumers in acquiring employment. The program areas stand out with the number of successful placements made; staff members obviously listen to consumers and place them into jobs they want. There are some opportunities for improvement noted in this report, including in the areas of leadership, health and safety, workforce development and management, rights of consumers served, and performance improvement. Abilities seems to have the ability and desire to address these areas for the sake of providing quality services to consumers.

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):

- Carol S. Sherer, MEd, Administrative
- Nathaniel Rogers, Jr., 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 has a CEO with a wealth of experience. The thing that so clearly stands out about the CEO is the passion she brings to the program and to everything she does. This passion stems from a strong belief that every person has some abilities and deserves the right to utilize these abilities to have a better life. The CEO's belief in each person having their own dream, desires, and ability to achieve comes across not only in words but also in her body language when she talks about the organization or helping the consumers. This leaves no doubt that she wants the vision of the organization to come to reality.
- The organization has a management team composed of people who direct various administrative and program functions within Abilities. Many of these people have been with the organization for an extended period of time. Time with Abilities among the management team members ranges from four to 40 years. The team members are diverse in their backgrounds, and many have worked in other positions within the organization, some even starting out working with consumers and climbing up the career ladder to their present positions. In speaking to many management team members, it is not only evident that they believe in person-centered service but also that they live the mission on a daily basis. It is particularly noteworthy that the people heading both finance and human resources have a clear vision of how each of their actions ought to always positively affect the consumers.
- It is noteworthy that Abilities has a comprehensive and detail-oriented corporate compliance program. A corporate compliance officer has been appointed, and staff members are all informed about who this person is. There is a well-done, extensive corporate compliance risk assessment completed on an annual basis. There are regular reports to the board on the corporate compliance program and any investigations that are in progress. The board also receives an annual corporate compliance report, which it reviews and approves. Comprehensive competency-based training is provided to all staff members at orientation and annually thereafter. The corporate compliance officer conducts this training and ensures that it includes a description of her role and how to reach her if a staff member needs to do so.
- Abilities has a very robust grant program as part of its fundraising efforts. It has acquired grants for the sustainability program, lifts in the apartments, music and art programs, and the box truck. The organization sends thank you letters to all donors that include the total amount of money that was received, and it even has special thank you cards that are hand signed and sent out promptly after gifts are received. The donor tree in the lobby and the names on the doors of meeting rooms are other ways the organization visually thanks its donors. Gifts and donations help to provide special programs and items that the organization wants in order to enhance monies from state and federal sources.
- It is noteworthy that the organization gathers information from a wide variety of sources including staff, caregivers, consumers, funders, employers, and those who refer consumers for services. It has recently reactivated the employer advisory council and has received excellent input about employment. One example of how input has been used involves when the consumers in organizational employment wanted access to coffee just like staff members do, so the staff made sure that coffee was accessible to those who wanted it. It was also quite easy to see that input was used in the development of the strategic plan and other organizational plans.
- The entire financial management area appears to be very professionally managed. The budget process appears quite comprehensive and starts with input from a variety of sources, including funders. It then works through well-thought-out projections of revenues and expenses based on feedback and historical data. The approval process includes the finance committee of the board, the full board, and an affiliated organization. In addition, Abilities is in the process of acquiring a new software system intended to provide more capacity and make the work that needs to be done easier to do.
- There is evidence of all staff members completing the required competency-based trainings in the health and safety areas, including forklift training for both staff and consumers. There is also evidence that consumers receive training in a variety of health and safety areas. The organization provides transportation with a fleet of

40 vehicles, which appear to be well maintained, contain appropriate safety equipment, and provide drivers with regular training (including an excellent defensive driving training and training related to the special needs of the consumers being transported). The administrative office, Medicaid program, and organizational employment program are situated in a building that is clean, pleasant, and so well maintained that it does not appear to show its age. The safety committee has representation from each program and the organization's insurance broker. The safety committee reviews drills, incident reports, internal and external inspections, and the safety policies. The chair of the committee does an excellent job of making sure that items in need of repair or areas needing improvement are completed promptly, especially if the item to be fixed or improved relates to consumers. The organization appears to truly believe that the health and safety of its consumers is primary, and the fleet and facilities manager evidences this commitment through her daily tasks and quick response to any situation.

- It is especially notable that the workforce development office is composed of two staff members who manage all recruiting, background checks, and hiring with the hiring supervisor. They are also responsible for the onboarding and orientation as well as the personnel files that need to be set up and maintained. They not only complete background checks prior to the start of work but also, on a monthly basis, upload the entire staff to the central registry. The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) checks are completed at hire and every month thereafter and include a check of the professional license, if there is one. The organization has a robust benefits package and have even decided to offer pet insurance next year. The individual who oversees this area brings a desire for excellence to her position. She has achieved her certification with the assistance of the organization. The organization believes in hiring from within, and this belief is evidenced by the number of people presently on staff who started in other positions. The workforce development office posts job openings that are also sent out to all staff members with a copy of a modified application to fill out if interested. It is evident that the benefits and hiring from within both contribute to staff retention. The manager of human resources believes that staff retention is one of the keys to assisting consumers achieve their goals, and she places a lot of emphasis on things that can be done to help retain staff.
- It is noteworthy that one of the organization's board members received the Warren County Thomas Kennedy Award for accessibility for both his printing business and sensory gym, which are in the same building. Both appear to be very accessible to people with disabilities. The knowledge of this board member was passed down to the organization as it built its accessibility plan. The plan documents areas where the organization wants to eliminate barriers, but the organization clearly understands that accessibility does not stop at its four walls and includes accessibility for its consumers in their community of choice and employment of choice.
- The organization is recognized for using a variety of modalities to assist consumers to learn and grow. Among these is a service dog who regularly comes in and works with consumers. There is also another dog that comes in, named Imperfect Phil, as Phil did not pass his service dog training but is warm and loveable and everything that a dog should be. He helps consumers understand that they can still be wonderful even if not perfect. Phil is a great example of the creativity of the staff in assisting consumers to learn and develop self-esteem.
- Abilities is acknowledged for the consumer-first attitude it displays. Staff members were observed displaying compassion, patience, enthusiasm, and pride in the support they provide, and there appeared to be excellent rapport between staff and consumers.
- Feedback about Abilities from consumers and other stakeholders was complimentary, including praising staff members for their responsiveness and flexibility. One of the consumers stated that the staff is kind and responds well when there are issues to deal with. Another stated, "This program is bringing the best out of us." When one consumer was asked what made Abilities special, the reply was, "This place is the key to the gates of employment."
- The organization operates several thrift stores in the area and is complimented for providing consumers workplace attire free of charge. This program provides clothing for anyone who has an upcoming job interview and needs appropriate attire. There are suits, ties, shoes, jeans, and matching accessories, and all the items are in pristine condition.

- The employment programs are successful and have positively impacted the lives of many consumers. The program staff is truly dedicated to consumer success. The training provided is personalized and gives consumers needed experience for future employment. The programs are also notable for being flexible and person centered. The staff's knowledge of the consumers' desires and the extent to which the program goes to meet the needs of consumers is recognized by all stakeholders.
- The Project SEARCH Program makes it obvious that a spirit of teamwork has been cultivated. There is a sense of camaraderie and shared commitment to serving the consumers. Staff members are passionate and work together with parents to make sure that consumers receive high-quality services. Staff members have no concept of what it means to quit or fail. The inclusion of all stakeholders involved makes these programs feel like they are one big happy family. The organization has demonstrated excellent performance in its Project SEARCH outcomes. In 2024, it was recognized nationally for having placed 100 percent of the students going through its program. This is just one indication of how dedicated the employment staff is in achieving success for the consumers.
- Feedback from other stakeholders about Abilities' services was complimentary. They noted that staff members are always sensitive to the needs of the consumers.
- Staff members are dedicated and professional. They are also collaborative, supportive, diverse, and effective. Staff members extend themselves beyond assigned responsibilities and are always available to consumers. Staff members believe in the organization's mission, and the organization is truly consumer driven.

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, diversity, and inclusion
- Corporate responsibility
- Organizational fundraising, if applicable

Recommendations

- 1.A.5.b.(1)
- 1.A.5.b.(2)
- 1.A.5.b.(3)
- 1.A.5.b.(4)
- 1.A.5.b.(5)
- 1.A.5.b.(6)
- 1.A.5.b.(7)
- 1.A.5.b.(8)
- 1.A.5.b.(9)

The organization has implemented a cultural competency, diversity, and inclusion plan that includes goals; however, the goals appear to be quite generic and not reflective of the consumers, except in the areas of culture and language. It is recommended that the organization further implement a cultural competency, diversity, and inclusion plan that is more clearly based on consideration of the diversity of its consumers in the areas of culture, age, gender, sexual orientation, spiritual beliefs, socioeconomic status, language, race, and other factors (as relevant). Updating its plan to more clearly address these areas for consumers may help it set more definitive goals and actions to be taken that better reflect consumer needs and diversity.

Consultation

- The organization has several documents that together address all elements of the written codes of ethics, and these are signed off and maintained in personnel files. It might be beneficial to have one consolidated document, as there appear to be pieces of sections that may be important to have in writing for personnel rather than separated into individual ethics policies.

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.

Consultation

- The organization might benefit from reviewing the definition of social determinants of health. The World Health Organization defines social determinants of health as "the circumstances in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age, and the wider set of forces and systems shaping the conditions of daily life." By better understanding this definition, the organization might see how this fits into the development of its strategic plan.

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 gathers input from a variety of sources, which include suggestion boxes, its website, and surveys that go out to consumers, staff, employers, and referral sources, to name a few. These go out on an annual basis. The organization might find it helpful to set up an electronic mailbox for only positive suggestions to come into the organization. This mailbox could be separate from the email account of the responsible employee designated to monitor this mailbox. This type of email box could make it possible for a consumer, employee, or community member to email a suggestion from anywhere, at any time, day or night, and without delay.

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.

Consultation

- It might be beneficial for the organization to do a complete grammar and spelling review of all documents, especially those that are policy, given that policy is the legal guidance of the organization. In reading some of the documents, it was noticed that there were underlined words, including some in red that appeared to indicate the need for a grammar or spell check. It is also suggested that the organization add current dates to its documents, including the date of review and revision.

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.

Consultation

- The organization has a written fee structure based on the state rate. It might be beneficial to have a fee structure, although it cannot be higher than the state, that it could hand to someone interested in paying privately for services, especially if this person wants services that are not provided under state contract.

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

- The organization has determined its top two risks along with a list of other possible risks and does a constant review of where it is in remediating potential risks; however, it might be helpful to set up a secondary or even third-level review of its Medicaid documents, which is its top risk. Such reviews could look at the documentation for Medicaid on a daily basis so that it might be more promptly able to remediate this top risk.

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

1.H.7.c.(5)

The organization lists the actions to be taken on its drill forms; however, these do not close the loop by the performance analysis verifying that the action worked. It is recommended that an unannounced test of each emergency procedure also be analyzed for performance that addresses whether the actions taken accomplished the intended results.

Consultation

- The organization's vehicles used to transport consumers appear to evidence all elements of the standards; however, personal consumer information is kept in the vehicles when they are not in use. Even though this information is kept under lock and key in the vehicles, it is suggested that this information be removed when the vehicles are not in use in the event that a vehicle is stolen.
- It is suggested that the organization review all its grab bars and determine if they meet the newer ADA standards of having a textured surface, adequate diameter, and correct position and wall clearance to prevent hand, wrist, arm, and other injuries.
- It is suggested that the evacuation route maps be placed at eye level of a five-foot-tall person so that all, including those using wheelchairs, can have better visibility of the map. In addition, the organization might benefit from clarifying primary and secondary routes through the use of two different colors or a solid line and dotted line or through some other means the organization chooses.
- Given that the organization serves more consumers with mental health issues and behavioral issues, it might benefit from providing staff members who work with these consumers with mental health first aid training.

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

1.I.5.a.(2)(a)

Licenses and credentials are verified with the primary source; however, transcripts are provided to the human resources staff by the job candidate and are not verified. Therefore, it is recommended that the organization consistently implement written procedures that address verification of the educational credentials of all applicable workforce with primary sources. One way to accomplish this may be to have the job candidate request that his/her college/university registrar's office provide a transcript directly to the appropriate person in the organization's human resources office.

1.I.9.f.

Documented personnel performance appraisals include goals for the next review period, but only some of these are measurable, as the majority are not. The organization should consistently implement written procedures for performance appraisal that address measurable goals.

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.

Consultation

- The organization is about to embark on a technology training program for consumers who have autism. All of these consumers will work in the security of their own homes. The organization may find it helpful to look at the needs within the organization for technology and see if some of those needs might be woven into the training program.

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

1.K.3.a.(4)

The organization has implemented a grievance procedure that covers all levels internally; however, it does not include external review. The policy and written procedure by which consumers may formally complain to the organization should also specify, in addition to levels of review, the availability of external review.

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

- The organization conducts an assessment of its accessibility needs on an annual basis. It might be helpful to utilize an individual who uses a wheelchair to help determine some of the accessibility needs. This person might review the building housing the administration and program and other facilities. This person could also assess the community of choice for the 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

There are no recommendations in this area.

Consultation

- The organization might benefit from having its fundraising and human resources contribute an objective(s) to the business function objectives already set in the performance measurement and management system.

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.1.c.(4)

Although the organization had resources noted in some of the efficiency indicators analyzed, not all of the indicators analyzed included measuring the resources used to achieve the results for persons served. Therefore, it is recommended that analysis of service delivery performance consistently address service delivery indicators for each program/service seeking accreditation, including resources used to achieve results for the persons served (efficiency).

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 affect 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

There are no recommendations in this area.

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.

Consultation

- Abilities has several community partners that it has been involved with for years. Recognizing these local partners and recruiting new ones could be very important to the continual growth of the program. It is suggested that Abilities utilize a monthly newsletter to recognize and highlight these local partnerships and disseminate the newsletter to the community. When sending the newsletter to a partner being highlighted, it could send a copy in a picture frame so that it can be hung on the wall right away.

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:

- 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.

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

- Providing employment opportunities for consumers can sometimes be a challenge. It is suggested that the organization consider utilizing its relationship with the local chamber of commerce, as this could give the organization an opportunity to reach out on a mass scale and increase opportunities for consumers to find employment.

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.

Consultation

- The organization might consider using a member of the employer advisory council who has had successful placement experiences with consumers with autism to come and talk to a group of potential employers in a lunch-and-learn event. This could be conducted a few times during the year and has the potential to generate some placements for the consumers with autism.
- The organization is encouraged to implement its at-home computer work program for consumers who already have computer skills but need the safety of a work-at-home work environment.

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

150 Boulevard, Suite 1
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)