

STEP TA Webinar: Job Development and Creating Community Connections

STEP (Supporting Transformation to Empower People) Technical Assistance (TA) Summary

May 29th, 2024

Session Description

This TA session focused on approaches to developing relationships with employers in the community and supporting interested individuals to find positions that are a good fit for their skills and interests. MARC Community Resources shared details about their MARC Business Development Council. It emphasizes the relationship building component of job development and meets quarterly to work through priorities and actions. MARC CR also elaborated on their approach to employer education on the value of hiring individuals with intellectual disabilities (ID), an essential piece of the job development process.

Presentation and Discussion



1. MARC Business Development Council Overview

- MARC CR created this Council to establish and maintain business relationships in the community that educated businesses, help employers address staffing needs by matching them with talent from the ID community, and empower their individuals to reach employment and vocational goals.
- The Council has several core functions, including:
 - Creating and disseminating marketing materials
 - Community engagement at events
 - Community education
 - Establishing business relationships
 - Establishing measurable outcomes of employment relationships
 - Board member engagement
- One of the foundational purposes of this group has been to shift the public mindset that MARC CR and agencies like it are businesses to partner with instead of charities to support
- The Council works to build the idea that MARC CR connects employers with reliable, effective talent, almost like a temp agency.
- It meets on a monthly basis to track action items particularly on collaborative efforts like developing educational materials for employers.
- Sessions are led by a chairperson who keeps basic meeting minutes and helps manage the conversation.
- MARC CR finds that driving accountability and accurately reporting on progress is essential in maintaining the long-term success of this Council.
- A key outcome that the Council works toward is increasing the percentage of individuals with the agency that are employed.



2. Employment Approaches

- MARC CR understands that local businesses may lack information about working with individuals with ID. To help address gaps in knowledge, the agency works with employers to develop avenues for gradual employment.
- MARC CR has had success in using their Project SEARCH program to find full-time opportunities for individuals and has also worked with businesses to define internship and part-time opportunities that can serve as a trial period for full-time opportunities.



- This step-wise process has been extremely important in giving companies and employer a low-stakes entry point to hire from the ID community.



3. Educational Materials and Approaches

- Being able to articulate the employment value of the people MARC CR serves is an essential part of building relationships with employers.
- MARC CR developed brochures aimed at employers that outline the financial and qualitative benefits of hiring within the ID community that incorporate success stories.
- Their Project SEARCH site at Middlesex Hospital is developing a video testimonial reviewing the successes of MARC CR individuals in their programs that the agency plans to use in outreach.
- MARC CR attends job fairs as both an employer and as a talent manager to be on the ground with local businesses and make connections that can lead to short or long-term opportunities for their individuals.