

## **Madison County Board of MR/DD**

### **Areas of Excellence Application**

#### **Quality Framework Domain IV**

#### **Promoting Community Participation**

ODMRDD Expected Outcome: People participate fully in their communities.

Our Board's Mission Statement: *To insure the availability of programs, services and supports that assist eligible individuals with mental retardation and developmental disabilities in choosing and achieving a life of increasing capability so they can live, learn, work and play in the community; which establishes as a priority the health, safety, and well-being of these individuals; and to assist and support the families in achieving this objective.*

This Mission Statement was Board Adopted on June 13, 1991 and while our systems, funding streams, and rules have changed significantly our mission remains steadfast, our goals simply revolve around supporting individuals with disabilities and maximizing our resources to improve the quality of their lives.

Our community is small and predominantly rural with most of the individuals and families residing in and around London, Ohio. As with all small towns, gaps in resources exist, some such as the absence of a public transportation system, by their very nature impact individuals with disabilities to a greater degree than would be realized by most community members who drive.

In 1994 a County-Wide Task Force was formed to address the public transportation needs of the community. Because individuals that we serve represented a significant need in this area our Board developed Madison Ride. At that time, we were pretty much like every other county board—we did well at getting students to school and adults to the workshop. We realized, however that the lack of affordable public transportation limited choices for individuals and families. Madison Ride has for the past 15 years, made community participation in, around and well outside of the London area a reality for individuals with disabilities.

A recent example that serves to illustrate the importance of a transportation resource that extends beyond the London area, outside of "normal business hours" and at an affordable rate is Mike F. Mike obtained employment in May of this year through Priceline, whose office is located in Hilliard about 20 miles east of London. Mike was quoted a price of \$200.00 per week by a local cab company. We are currently transporting Mike to and from his job for a rate of \$10.00 per day or approximately \$200.00 per month. Mike is one of 20 individuals who access Madison Ride to travel to/from competitive employment. Creative route scheduling to combine trips whenever possible insures efficiency and makes it possible to keep costs reasonable.

Utilizing transportation grant opportunities to build a reliable fleet of vehicles is reflective of our Board's commitment towards maximizing resources. These same vehicles are provided at no cost for social

leisure/recreation activities sponsored by the Adult Services Program as well as the Board's Recreation and Special Olympics Program.

Another benefit of our Board's operation of the Madison Ride Program has been the positive impact on our community as a whole. Utilized by a multitude of Madison County residents, through collaboration with Madison County Job and Family Services, Veteran's Administration, and many other community agencies as well as on a private pay basis, this valuable resource has gone a long way towards establishing our Board as a vital and contributing component of the Madison County community.

The importance of opportunity for community integration has been a driving force in our agency. Our Mission Statement clearly stresses the importance of supporting individuals to *live, learn, work and play in the community*. We have learned that community is indeed where opportunity presents itself and sometimes as much as we think of community in terms of it being a public park, a local movie theatre, the grocery store (and it is certainly all of the above), community is also within our programs.

A great example of community integration can be found in our Children Services Program. Knowing that values and attitudes are formed at a very early age we insure opportunity for inclusion and interaction between both children with developmental disabilities as well as typically developing children. At this year's Fairhaven School Graduation ceremony the guest speaker was a young lady who had just graduated from London High School. She also happened to have been an alumna from a Fairhaven School Pre-School class of years ago. As she stood before the crowd in the gymnasium which included several of her former Pre-Schoolmates who were also graduating this year she spoke of the important life lessons in temperance and acceptance that this experience had given her. She spoke of the early lessons learned in valuing differences in individuals, the time that Michael bit her, perceptions of her schoolmates that had not had the benefit of an integrated Pre-School, and as she talked of her time in that class and of her classmates and her current involvement as a unified partner and assistant in our Special Olympics Program it was very clear that our program and the individuals we serve have a lifelong supporter in this young lady. We believe that the waiting list for typically developing children to receive Pre-School services in our integrated setting is testimony to the positive community perspective fostered by this program.

Even earlier than Pre-School our Early Intervention Program fosters integration as typically developing children are included in center based playgroups. A very close working relationship with Help Me Grow fosters this inclusion. Parents have the benefit of developing a strong support network that includes parents of children with disabilities as well as parents of typically developing children. Also of importance is the fact that in the same school where our Pre-School and Early Intervention Services are housed we provide space to two Headstart classrooms, further broadening the scope of positive community integration.

Our county board operates two school age classrooms that are housed within the London High School and the London Elementary School. The provision of these services was in response to parents' requests that we continue to provide school age services, but in an integrated setting. Focus on transition to adulthood for the High School class has included in-class emphasis on work adjustment as well as the operation of the Project Search Program in collaboration with Madison County Hospital.

Our Board has extended ancillary support to children with disabilities that are being served either through the local education agency, the ESC, or through a third party arrangement. Over the past several years we have provided assistance to Teachers and Aides in these settings in the area of

behavior support. Board staff have gone into these classrooms and assisted teaching staff in conducting assessments and developing positive intervention based plans that support students with challenging behaviors.

Community integration in the work force has been our mutual focus with MATCO Services, Inc. the agency that sub-contracts with the Board to provide Adult Day Support and Supported Employment. In addition to providing sheltered employment opportunities that include typical workers, individuals with disabilities are working in a variety of settings including an enclave at Krazy Glue, food services, janitorial, and scheduling.

In 1999 our Board responded to the need for increased recreational opportunities with the addition to the T.O. of a Recreation Coordinator. During the past year alone 147 individuals we serve took advantage of the myriad opportunities offered by this program. In addition another 53 volunteers, coaches, chaperones, parents and partners were actively involved. Recreational activities have included such varied forays as paintball, canoeing, plays, ballgames, the annual Madison County Idol competition, arts and crafts, and pretty much anything that our Recreation Coordinator or individuals can think of that would be fun. We have very active Special Olympics teams in bowling, softball, bocce, basketball, golf, skiing, soccer and volleyball as well as our own original flag football league. Our Volleyball Team has participated in National Championships in Texas and Minnesota. Including unified partners and volunteers from the community has further promoted integration.

In 1991 our Board took receivership of Sunnyhaven, which was an Amish run residential services agency. The Board quickly entered the area of residential services with the task of integrating the 35 former Sunnyhaven residents into community homes. Having just started employment with our Board the previous year, a challenge I encountered was learning the names of the 18 ladies who at the time all dressed in gingham, all wore pony-tails, and most wore glasses. Once the ladies moved into the community their choices in wardrobe, hairstyle, and personality (formerly very reserved) immediately began evolving as did all of the individual's choices in the areas of where they wanted to work, what they wanted to do for fun, as well as all of the other choices that were previously made for them.

That was 18 years ago. This past spring our program recognized two individuals, both former Sunnyhaven residents, now married to each other, with a Lifetime Achievement Award. During a time in which all county boards have had to closely examine how funds were expended to insure efficiency we felt it very appropriate to recognize the accomplishments of Willie and Eva A.. Because of the natural supports each was able to extend to the other, the need for staff support was reduced considerably. Our mission statement emphasizes *choosing and achieving a life of increasing capability*. In systems where we must take care to not let the plans of Teams and the convenience of doing for when teaching to do would take longer Willie and Eva serve as a great testament to what individuals can accomplish when their choices are respected and they share the responsibility for those choices. As professionals in the field we were humbled when presenting this couple, who has attained so much in their lives through perseverance, with the Lifetime Achievement Award. Willie and Eva have lived their lives as they chose, we've been there to provide supports, but the direction was theirs alone.

We currently serve 91 individuals in community settings through Home and Community Based Waivers and Supported Living. Our Housing Board now owns 13 houses that are in good repair in good neighborhoods with most being located within walking distance of local stores and churches. Funds provided through our Family Support Services Program help 41 individuals continue to live with their families.

Caleb S. and his family have chosen an alternate school placement at Step-by-Step Academy last year. Mike W. finds enjoyment and a sense of belonging through his participation on the golf and basketball teams. Briana K. started high school last year and her sense of pride is quite evident. Sue S. has worked at her dream job for several years—she is employed through the Humane Society where she is very much valued for her ability to work with even the most difficult dogs. Tom M. recently retired from a 27 year tenure at McDonalds, he's not officially retired from work though his current duties include helping us keep our fleet of vehicles clean and delivering the daily inter-office mail. Savannah W. continues to provide essential volunteer services at the Madison County Hospital where she initially started through Project Search. Marlyn Z. is busy raising her two boys as well as working at a local restaurant and serving on our BSHRC. Randy M. has found a positive course for expressing emotions through art—with his artwork featured on Christmas Cards last year. Our graduating class of 2009 has made it clear that each will choose his or her own path, their goals unique and not without challenge. Our goal is clear—simply to support them in their life choices.

We are constantly assessing the effectiveness of our systems and processes towards assisting individuals in achieving desired outcomes. An intensive Quality Assurance Review Process provides information to Teams as to how we can better support individuals within their communities, identifying gaps and offering suggestions. Through this same process we meet directly with the individual, family, guardian as appropriate and evaluate satisfaction levels—what in their life are they happy about—what could be better and ultimately how can we assist. Our systems for incident reporting and responding, health services coordination, ISP development, and the formal and informal means for individual and community input are well covered in the other Quality Framework Domains and help us determine on an individual basis as well as on a broader perspective what we are doing right and what we need to do better. Looking back over the past twenty years the changes are awesome! From a time when individuals were just learning the meaning of words such as “rights” and “choice” to where we are now and where we're headed is truly amazing.

Number of eligible individuals with disabilities in Madison County: 303

Number of individuals that have benefited from this area of excellence: 303