**Colonial Behavioral Health: Opportunities Unlimited Evaluation**

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**Abstract**

I completed my evaluation process by implementing an online survey that was sent to the staff members of the Opportunities Unlimited program at Colonial Behavioral Health. After speaking with the Director of Rehabilitative Services and Community Services Coordinator, I was able to identify the staff members to provide the survey to in order to receive substantial response. My survey focused on staff’s perspective of the program they worked in and the areas of improvement in which they could identify. All responses remained anonymous so that thorough and honest responses could be encouraged and received.

The conclusions from my findings show a desire of improvement for the program, solely based on enriching the experience of the program participants, rather than the staff. The conclusions from my findings show a high level of selflessness and dedication to the program from staff.

**Findings/Results**

When identifying the most successful aspects of the program that provide to the client’s overall growth and development within the program, “Functional training in the use of community resources, community safety, appropriate peer interactions, and social skills” was reported at a 66% favorable response and “Functional training in self, social, and environmental awareness skills” was reported at a 50% favorable rating. Interestingly, 0% of staff acknowledged “Functional training in learning and problem-solving skills” as one of the most successful aspects of the program, showing an area of improvement needed in that aspect.

When asked on how the aspects are measured to determine staff’s interpretation of success, it was discovered that these aspects are measured through implementation of each individual's (program participant) person centered plan which includes personalized goals, collection of the progress or lack of progress of those goals and the individual's satisfaction on how those goals are being carried out, with whom they are carrying them out and where they are carrying them out. Satisfaction is measured daily, summarized quarterly and discussed and analyzed annually.

With being asked their views of program success, the staff were also asked which area of Opportunities Unlimited could be improved. Opportunities Unlimited is divided into two main programmatic categories: Community Engagement and Group Day Services. Evenly between the two, staff identified both requiring the same amount of effort to improve the programmatic category. When asked how, staff responded by engaging the clients more in the community through volunteer opportunities, companionship programs, employment, and by increasing Group Day Services satisfaction through incorporating client responses of what a meaningful day means to them into the day.

Among specific improvements, 83% of staff identified that the best addition to the program would be to include Supportive Employment. When asked why, staff reported that There are many individuals with employable skills that would broaden their involvement and participation in their communities and enrich their lives in addition to the social benefits they are receiving from attending a day program.

When reviewing my findings, they can impact the program by becoming a resource when reviewing areas of improvement. By having data that presents staff opinions in statistical form, the appropriate stakeholders can utilize the data when creating new initiatives, programs, and service plans that reflect the before mentioned areas of improvement.

**Recommendation**

When reviewing the data given to me, my recommendation falls into the category of Supportive Employment. It is my recommendation the Colonial Behavioral Health incorporates a Supportive Employment service within their Opportunities Unlimited program that provides clients training, resources, support, and transportation to employment opportunities and sustained employment that would increase their community engagement/integration and improve their social skills and cognitive development. This service would also allow program participants to become more independent as it is a long-term support. A benefit to Support Employment, that could be integrated into other programmatic aspects of Opportunities Unlimited, is that program participants are “monitored for socialization and overall integration into the work culture [and community]” (What is Supportive Employment, 2005).

Stakeholders should consider the above recommendation as it will aide to the client satisfaction of the program, as it will introduce more variety, and will appeal to a large demographic of the Intellectually Disabled population. While someone who is Intellectually Disabled may not need the services currently offered with Opportunities Unlimited, they may benefit for Supportive Employment, which would then warrant their participation in Opportunities Unlimited. Not only would this increase program participation to a larger demographic, it would also increase Colonial Behavioral Health’s income as more participants would pay for services at Opportunities Unlimited.

With looking into beginning Supportive Employment, Colonial Behavioral Health should look to local businesses and organizations that have employment roles that would be appropriate for their clients. Colonial Behavioral Health should look to identify jobs that bring client satisfaction as they are jobs that are not created solely for individual’s with their needs, rather employment roles that equally aide to the company and organization’s overall mission and goal. Once identified, Colonial Behavioral Health should look to create relationships with those businesses and organizations with the intent to introduce and implement Supportive Employment initiatives among their business.

**Supportive Research**

My research article is one I discovered after reviewing my findings and browsing various articles on Supportive Employment. The article I looked to specifically also goes over an example of the benefits of someone in a Supportive Employment program setting. It shows the growth in ability and responsibility the individual receives from this placement. The article comes from Virginia Commonwealth University’s Rehabilitation Research and Training Center research on Supportive Employment’s process. The article takes the reader through the process of initiating the Support Employment process, by incorporating the client’s preferences and desires, partnering with the appropriate organization/company, developing goals, reviewing progress, and assessing long term goals and progress.

**Reference Page**

“Supportive Employment.” What Is Supported Employment?, VCU Rehabilitation Research and Training Center, 2005, vcurrtc.org/research/printView.cfm/473.