



As more people with disabilities move into community-based services and competitive integrated employment, recruiting, training, and retaining quality staff becomes a top priority for support organizations. The Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities gathered ideas from organizations involved in the Building Full Lives initiative about the strategies they use to develop committed, competent employees.

Ideas for Recruiting Quality Candidates:

Raise wages and expect more from candidates. Hire people with educational and personal experience for the position.
Name positions appropriately and use empowering job titles that reflect the actual work. Job titles for community-based positions should not be the same as facility-based positions.
Hire full time staff and cross train them to increase their value to the organization.
Allow job sharing for flexibility. This is a creative way to hire strong candidates who have limited availability.
Hire part time educators or school paraprofessionals for summer services and to cover vacation time of regular staff.
Develop a referral program where staff earn a \$250 bonus payment if they refer someone who completes the first 6 months of employment.
Provide sign-on bonuses for direct service staff.
Ask interview questions that provide more information about a candidate's core values and perspectives on disability. For example, "What kinds of jobs do you think people with disabilities can do?"
Include interview questions that examine a candidate's connection to and knowledge of the community and potential resources. If the agency's goal is to support people to be active community members, it is helpful for staff to be knowledgeable and engaged members.



Ideas for Training and Developing Competencies:

Create a culture of learning, growing and innovation within your organization.
Provide professional development opportunities in short doses that can be implemented in small group/team meetings. For example, show videos or webinars to staff and engage them in a discussion. Resources for low cost or free training, webinars and videos are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open Future Learning www.openfuturelearning.org • VCU https://vcurrtc.org/ • Lead Center www.leadcenter.org • Montana's Rural Institute http://ruralinstitute.umt.edu/transition • WINTAC www.wintac.org
Develop internal mentoring programs for the first 6 months of employment.
Supervisors regularly take time to provide "in the field", side-by-side mentoring and assistance for direct service staff.
Identify and capitalize on resident expertise.
Facilitate annual staff retreats. Make it informative, fun and a time to develop solutions.
Make a habit of asking staff "why" and "what's next?" to get their input, fully understand issues, create solutions that make sense and foster innovation.
Help staff see how they fit into the "big picture" of the organizations' mission/vision in supporting people with disabilities to live full lives in the community.
Develop an on-boarding training checklist that includes a meeting with the Executive Director/President.
Have team members shadow one another every so often so they understand each other's roles within the services the organization provides.



Ideas for Structuring Benefits and Financial Incentives:

Provide bonus incentive for staff who stay more than one month and longevity bonuses at different phases of employment.
Allow new staff to begin earning paid time off after 60 days of employment.
Give a bonus paid time off day on staff birthdays (or to use within their birthday month).
Encourage personal/mental health time off.
Provide flex time if staff have to work evenings and weekends.
Offer shift differential pay for evenings and weekends.
Be flexible with paid time off. Allow people to bank and use time (e.g. 200 hours per year rather than 8 hours per pay period).
Allow staff with unused sick time to convert it to vacation or get paid out annually.

Ideas for Management and Supervision:

Send managers to management and supervision related training on a regular basis.
Create a culture of transparency between management and direct service staff.
Conduct an annual staff satisfaction survey. Analyze findings and implement changes to improve satisfaction.
Host annual “Whine” and Cheese events to get staff input on organizational issues and possible solutions.
Establish professional growth ladders that can be staff-driven and interest-led.
Ensure staff have and use the resources needed to work effectively and thoroughly.
Express appreciation through fun gestures, staff shout outs, thank you cards, small gifts.
Keep coworkers who work remotely connected through weekly meetings to celebrate achievements and discuss challenges, remote meetings, annual celebrations, etc.
Intentionally explore reasons why people stay in their positions.
Reduce paperwork tasks so people have time to do the meaningful “stuff”.
Invest in technology and secured cloud software so staff can document remotely.
Recognize the value of each employee; show them how they fit into the vision.
Involve staff when deciding on changes and developing activities.
Avoid micromanagement. Allow staff greater autonomy to make decisions.
Recognition awards for both staff and people who the organization supports (staff and people nominate/vote).
Monthly team building activities; schedule regular potlucks.
Take staff to lunch (at a place of their choice) on their employment anniversary.
Take teams on an annual daytrip or event (pontoon ride, beach, spa day, stomping grapes at a winery, etc.).
Contribute to the community as a group (Habitat for Humanity, Adopt a Highway, etc.).
Show you are a team player by covering for staff and jumping in to help with their job.

Management Resources:

Business Acumen Center: www.hcbsbusinessacumen.org/

Business Acumen Toolkit:

www.hcbsbusinessacumen.org/toolkit.html

Business Acumen Webinar: “Holding the Course: Stabilizing Business Operations Webinar”

Understand efforts Community Based Organizations (CBOs) can make to stabilize their workforce and how they can monitor their programs to enhance efficiency: <https://bit.ly/2Yq1DZV>

The Independent Living Research Utilization program is a national center for information, training, and technical assistance in independent living:

www.ilru.org/training-on-demand

The Strategic Management Series: Sound Employment Practices for CILs:

www.ilru.org/training/strategic-management-series-sound-employment-practices-for-cils-part-1-effective-hiring

