

REPORT TO GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Implementation of career path for Direct Service Associates
January 1, 2007

PROGRESS REPORT:

Competency Development - A well-qualified study team has been formed to develop specific Direct Care Associates' (DSA) competencies for each of the three levels of the DSA career ladder as described in the framework for the program (see Developmental Career Path described below). The study team consists of representatives from each of the facilities and central office that includes program and staff level members. The study team last met December 14, 2006 to identify from a list of potential competencies using the Community Support Skill Standards developed nationally by the Human Services Research Institute. Additionally, the following criteria are being followed. The competencies must be observable and measurable, distinct at each level, directly tied to excellence on the job and contributes to the attainment of goals of the organization. Since the December 14th meeting sub-teams have been working to develop a complement of competencies meeting the established criteria, that are fully described at each level, and that are written in a consistent format. The sub-teams' work is scheduled for completion by January 19, 2007. The resulting work product will be shared with the full study team for further review and comment.

Next Steps: The next working meeting is scheduled February 1, 2007 for the study team to finally review and fine-tune the initial drafts of the newly developed competencies. The complement of developed competencies at each of the three described levels then will be validated through focus groups that will be held in the near future at each of the facilities. Direct Service Associate (DSAs) representatives will be presented with the draft competencies and will participate in a process to provide feedback and input into the final competencies that will be used in the administration of their DSA career ladder.

BACKGROUND:

The Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation Substance Abuse Services (DMHMRSAS) has had great difficulty in recruiting and retaining quality direct care personnel. Current rates of staff turnover are significantly higher than the state average and result in excessive overtime costs for our facilities. The General Assembly has approved general funds for 2007 in the amount of \$148,658 and \$811,861 for 2008 to develop and implement a career path program for these valuable employees. The career path program that is being developed will provide training and salary increases to direct care employees who have fulfilled skill and competency requirements and who demonstrate higher-level competencies on the job. This report is an update on the progress of the direct services associates' training and the development of career pathways.

PROGRAM INITIATIVE - College of Direct Support Training Program

Training and education programs will utilize distance-learning techniques, such as the interactive web-based training of the College of Direct Support, traditional classroom/experiential training and coursework at local community colleges. This variety of methodologies is being pursued to meet the needs of adult learners and allow operational and organizational flexibility in responding to the specific needs of individuals and organizations, such as amount of time required by individuals, available hours in a day, and the diversified locations of the learners. For example, distance learning techniques allow efficiency and cost savings because learners do not leave the work site and the training is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Note: The updated number of direct service associates participating at each facility will be provided on January 19, 2007 in a separate document.

PROGRAM INITIATIVE - Developmental Career Path for Direct Service Associates' (DSA)

The framework for the developmental path for DSAs is proposed to consist of three (3) levels and will be further developed with specific competency requirements and reward structure by a team consisting of representatives from each of our facilities.

The first level will require:

- The successful completion of the 12 month probationary period (which requires the receipt of a performance evaluation rating of "Contributor" or better);
- The successful completion of all mandatory orientation training; and
- The consistent demonstration of proficiency in all competencies associated with the orientation training, as assessed by supervisors and managers.

Upon successful completion of these three (3) requirements the DSA will receive a salary increase.

The second level will require:

- The completion of a minimum of 24 months of employment;
- The receipt of a performance evaluation rating of "Contributor" or better;
- The absence of active disciplinary notices;
- The successful completion of training and/or education in such competency areas as crisis intervention (identifying possible crises, evaluating situations and determining appropriate interventions, and defusing situations), organizational participation (understands theories/practices and can teach others such things as Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation [CPR], behavioral intervention and physical restraint techniques [TOVA], serves as preceptor or mentor), facilitation of services (facilitates the development and implementation of an individualized client plan in conjunction with

client and treatment, team taking into consideration client preferences, needs and interests)and assessments (assists in the initiation and conduct of client assessments).

- The consistent demonstration of the level 2 competencies obtained from training and education as assessed by supervisors and managers.

Upon successful completion of these requirements the DSA will receive a salary increase.

The third level will be focused on the development of leadership and/or advanced clinical skills and will require:

- The completion of a minimum of 36 months of employment;
- The receipt of a performance evaluation rating of “Contributor” or better;
- The absence of active disciplinary notices;
- The successful completion of training and/or education in such competency areas as group facilitation and leadership, full supervision of staff, understanding and teaching concepts and theories associated with behavior analysis, and the promotion of teamwork and collaboration.
- The consistent demonstration of the level 3 competencies obtained from training and education as assessed by supervisors and managers.

If funding is available, upon successful completion of these requirements the DSA will receive a base salary increase.