



COLLEGE OF DIRECT SUPPORT

PARTNER PROFILES

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New Horizons Boasts 5% Turnover, Cites CDS Role in Its Workforce Development

“CDS, more specifically the College of Frontline Supervision and Management (CFSM), has played an integral role in helping us maintain our DSP turnover rate of 5%. At NHR we train all Frontline Supervisors in the CFSM’s best practice skills of recruitment, retention, welcoming, and developing the workforce.”



New Horizons Resources, Inc. (NHR) is a not-for-profit agency providing supports to children and adults with developmental disabilities in the Hudson Valley Region of New York State. Our mission is to support people to have fulfilling lives within their local communities by establishing a home, belonging, self determination, productivity and life-long learning.

NHR was founded in 1974 by a group of parents seeking alternatives to institutional care for their sons and daughters. In 1981, the agency opened its first residences. Our founders wanted to create supports that would provide a home and a reasonable assurance of permanency for their family members. They also wanted people with disabilities to build friendships and establish relationships in their communities.

Today, NHR provides supports to 450 people where they need it most: in their homes, at their work sites, and in their communities. We operate within a 40-mile radius from our Training and Administrative Offices located in Pleasant Valley, NY. Our geography encompasses two counties divided by the Hudson River as well as two mountain ranges. This part of the Hudson Valley may be unsurpassed in its rural beauty -- but it creates significant challenges to recruiting and retaining Direct Support Professionals (DSPs). Despite these challenges NHR was recognized by the American Network of Community Options and Resources (ANCOR) national benchmarking project as a leader in staff retention.

We work with the specific intention to establish ourselves as an employer that

respects the DSP workforce. Our organizational chart outlines our philosophy and practices as it applies to DSPs; they are toward the top of the chart, the second most important people in the organization. Naturally the people we support are first. The quality of life for people receiving support is directly related to the continuity of the relationships they have with their DSPs. Successful DSPs are required to be well rounded, knowledgeable and competent in many areas. Everyone else’s job at NHR is to lift up and support DSPs to be successful.

At NHR we value “Learning: committing ourselves to continuous quality improvement of self and task outcomes, advancing understanding and applying skills effectively.” This emphasis on learning runs throughout the entire organization, but as it applies to DSPs we take a multifaceted approach. We created career ladders for our DSPs that encompass several paths; some are educational and credit based, others are non-credited training opportunities, but all lead to a credential. All of these credentialing programs, credit and non-credit alike, are recognized financially by NHR. They lead to compensation components which are cumulative in nature and can increase a DSP’s hourly rate significantly when added to their seniority-based step ladders. In our training programs we partner with the College of Direct Support (CDS) in several ways.

We established the first apprentice program for DSPs in New York State. One of the avenues for apprentices to complete their related instruction requirements is to attend facilitator-led classroom instruction based on CDS. Recently we have been successful in convincing the New York State Department of Labor to honor independent on-line study using the CDS. This will be a

helpful tool for apprentices as they progress toward journey worker status.

We had 40 DSPs (33 from NHR and 7 from sister agencies) complete a 200-hour training program which was designed to support them to apply for the National Alliance of Direct Support Professionals (NADSP) DSP-C (DSP-Certified) credential. We used the CDS as the foundation of our training course. We used a blended format where classroom discussion and activities reinforced the learning objectives from the CDS courses. This provided a strong foundation for the participants to begin work on their portfolios in which they are required to demonstrate mastery in 8 of 15 of the Community Support Skills Standards, a nationally recognized standard for DSP work.

We are proud that four of our DSPs -- Tina Fagan, Brooke McNally, Cammie Heiser and Lynda Dipressi -- are the first in New York and among the first 20 DSPs nationally to achieve the DSP-Certified status. Between them they have over 50 years of

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DSP practice, with 45 of those 50 years here at NHR. Here is what one of them said about the information they learned from the CDS: "After many years in the field, I thought I knew it all. Was I surprised! Although I work overnights I would not want to miss out on the rewarding experience of making time to help the human potential of the women I support become bigger than anyone of us could have imagined. I've been at direct support a long time but this process (CDS) made my work fresh." -- Cammie Heiser

These DSPs are the pioneers. Cammie's comment is great example of the potency and transformational power the CDS content can have on all the stakeholders within human services. We know the other class participants also experienced personal growth and were reinvigorated with knowledge and enthusiasm to achieve greater outcomes for people. We look forward to hearing that each DSP is successful in their application for the NADSP DSP-C

credential.

Recently we expanded the use of CDS courses to help meet our internal classroom training requirements. We continue to offer classroom training sessions but have offered people a choice in some select topics of classroom training or computer-based instruction using the CDS. We also have used the CDS platform to host some of our training topics, thereby making them more accessible to staff. Classroom instruction limits a particular topic to a set time and place and a finite number of offerings; using the CDS content or platform makes training available 24/7 and 365 days a year.

CDS, more specifically the College of Frontline Supervision and Management (CFSM), has played an integral role in helping us maintain our DSP turnover rate of

5%. Five years ago our turnover rate was 14%. Today it is 5%. CDS is definitely one factor in this reduction. At NHR we train all Frontline Supervisors in the CFSM's best practice skills of recruitment, retention, welcoming, and developing the

workforce. Again, we use blended learning reinforcing the computer-based CFSM with the University of Minnesota's Remove the Revolving Door curriculum. Many of our HR practices are a direct result of conscious application of the skills taught in these compatible courses.

We have used CDS in a more focused approach than some other agencies, and believe that our focused approach of utilizing CDS as a catalyst for personal and organizational change will continue to result in contributing to the success of our mission. CDS is always evolving, constantly adding more content and utility. At NHR we appreciate its impact on our agency, our workforce and the lives of the people we support. We look forward to learning and growing together in the future.

Written by Tom McCluskey, Staff Development Coordinator at New Horizons Resources. For more information you can contact Tom via email at tmclcluskey@nhrny.org or call him at 845.473.3000 (Ext. 310).

About CDS Partner Profiles

CDS Partner Profiles highlights the activities of state and local organizations that have integrated the College of Direct Support into efforts to elevate the preparation, performance, status, and compensation of direct support professionals (DSPs) and frontline supervisors and managers (FSMs). The purpose of the the CDS Partner Profiles is to identify and describe a variety of innovative and exemplary initiatives and activities into which the CDS has been integrated. CDS Partner Profiles are written by leaders of organizations that are actually engaged in these efforts.

College of Direct Support (CDS)
www.collegeofdirectsupport.com

The College of Direct Support (CDS) and its companion College of Frontline Supervision and Management (CFSM) are internet-delivered multimedia, competency-based training curricula for DSPs and FSMs supporting individuals with disabilities.

The CDS is available for review at: collegeofdirectsupport.com

For more information about the CDS, contact Bill Tapp at bill@collegeofdirectsupport.com or Donna Kosak at donna@collegeofdirectsupport.com or call toll-free, 877-353-2767

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