



CPAC Partner Profiles

The Arc of Mississippi Launches New CPAC Curriculum

It is said that every great journey begins with a single step, and the DirectCourse/College of Personal Assistance and Caregiving (CPAC) curriculum begins its journey with The Arc of Mississippi and Lisa Burck, who first saw its potential to help the organization. The Arc of Mississippi was established in 1961 and is an affiliate of The Arc of the United States, the world's largest advocacy group for people with cognitive, intellectual, and developmental disabilities and their families.



CPAC is Elsevier's new web-based curriculum designed to train and educate learners working with people with physical disabilities and older adults. It was created by the Center for Personal Assistance Services at the University of California, San Francisco, in collaboration with the University of Minnesota's Research and Training Center.

Burck, Program Director for Capacity Building and Systems Change, says that The Arc was eager to incorporate the CPAC curriculum as soon as it was made available. The Arc already enjoyed a long and fruitful relationship with the College of Direct Support curriculum, helping Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) train with the online curriculum for over nine years.

However, in the last couple of years The Arc developed a closer relationship as advocates

with Medicaid in Mississippi. This is mostly due to the launch of the Money Follows the Person waivers, whose purpose is to help fund individuals' transition away from institutionalized care to community-based care. "Mississippi has a higher rate of institutionalization than any other state," Burck says. Along with a Balancing Incentives Grant which helped Mississippi acquire rebates to help offset the cost of systems change, the money was in place to help train people to begin the process of turning Mississippi into a state with more a community-based support.

This funding helped put staff development and professionalization into the state budget. Various groups and individuals came to The Arc and said that they were rewriting their waivers, beginning with the Elderly and Disabled Waiver. When they presented The Arc with their list of requirements for training to meet Federal Regulations, Burck looked at the list and quickly realized that CPAC was integral.

Burck notes that The Arc uses both online courses, taking sections of each and incorporating them into customized courses, according to waiver and year. "Medicaid had a specific number of hours the training had to amount to, so we wanted to be very efficient," she says. After adapted it to meet the requirements, "we delivered that package to the thousands of people in the state who put their hands on folks," she adds.



The flexibility of the CPAC curriculum helped make it an ideal fit for The Arc. “CPAC is extraordinarily practical,” Burck says. “There are some wonderful vignettes in the videos that show you how to do specific tasks. People are able to go back and forth in the privacy of their own home, at their own speed. This is suited to adult learners. The 24/7/365 availability is a must for The Arc.” And the response from providers has been overwhelming. When The Arc ran a pilot program

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In addition, The Arc is training administrators and Medicaid staff with CPAC. As with The Arc’s application of CDS, they expect CPAC to be used in the University of Mississippi system, in special education classrooms for teachers’ assistants, for families, as a self-advocacy tool so people could learn more about themselves and disabilities by taking the courses, private and public direct support staff around the state.

“The Arc has traditionally offered their curriculum to advocates, to self-advocates, families, teachers, people who work in other venues and in that way the advocacy is spread by the goodwill of people trying to make life better,” Burck says. “We really see quality at the point of interaction between the giving and receiving of support. If we can have an impact of that point, even though we may not have the power to impact much else in your world, if we can impact that moment then your life automatically gets better.”

with one of Mississippi’s elderly waiver providers, they followed up with surveys, receiving about 100 responses. “I sent a list of the responses to Medicaid so they could report to their leaders,” Burck says with a laugh, “and I received an answer back asking us for the negative responses as well. We didn’t have any! Needless to say, they were pretty pleased about that.”

CPAC Partner Profiles

CPAC Partner Profiles highlight the activities of state and local organizations that have integrated the College of Personal Assistance and Caregiving into the efforts to elevate the preparation, performance, status, and compensation of Personal Care Attendants (PCAs). The purpose of *CPAC Partner Profiles* is to identify and describe a variety of innovative and exemplary initiatives and activities into with the CPAC online curriculum has been integrated. *CPAC Partner Profiles* are written by leaders or organizations that are actually engaged in these efforts.



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