

# ADHS Provider Response to SAMHSA Fidelity Review

Complete the following form in response to the SAMHSA fidelity review process conducted by ADHS behavioral health staff.

Date: 1.14.2015

Name and contact information of provider:

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 VALLEYLIFE  
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Type of evidence-based practice provider (select one):

	Permanent Supportive Housing
X	Supported Employment
	Consumer Operated Services
	Assertive Community Treatment

What was your experience with the fidelity review conducted at your agency?

VALLEYLIFE believes the fidelity reviews are an important part of improving and enhancing the vocational services that are provided to individuals with behavioral health diagnoses. VALLEYLIFE is committed to transitioning into the Supported Employment model and values all feedback and technical assistance provided as we move toward this model.

Throughout the review, we felt that there was an over-emphasis, and often potential bias, regarding our paid training programs and how they impact other services we provide, including SE services. We were then and are still concerned about how the belief that paid training settings are viewed in a negative light has impacted how we were rated in this review. The description of our site based paid training programs as "sheltered workshops" indicates a narrow, and we believe inflammatory, view of our programs.

The reviewers were professional and appeared very knowledgeable about the Fidelity Review process. We would have liked to have time at the end of the review to discuss any areas that the reviewers may have had questions or needed more information. There is a lot covered in two days, and there was never a time that the reviewers sought additional insight or clarification related to what they had heard, seen or been provided. We certainly appreciate the feedback, but believe there would be more benefit if this process was done in a consultative, collaborative way.

What was most helpful about the fidelity review process for your agency?

The feedback we received related to establishing specific strategies to achieve consistent integration between SE services and other behavioral health services was helpful.

VALLEYLIFE prides itself on being an agency that offers a wide array of meaningful employment services in order to meet the various needs of the individuals we serve in our community. It's a concern moving forward that the limited scope of the SE Fidelity Model may result in a misinterpretation of the value of all of our services; we feel that VALLEYLIFE can run an effective SE program while also maintaining other program/service options for our members.

What suggestions would improve the review process?

VALLEYLIFE believes the following would benefit the review process in the future:

- Review results should focus exclusively on the SE program, and that reviewers should enhance their knowledge of the variety of employment services options that exist, as well as the scope of work that exist for the different funding sources that some agencies serve.
- Review process should be conducted in a collaborative, thoughtful way with time to discuss findings during the review process, rather than weeks after the conclusion. There should be an effort made to clarify questions during the process, as well as request for additional information when needed.
- The current review process repeatedly appears to emphasize that the variety of programs that exist is somehow negative. This does not align with the recovery principle of meeting individuals where they're at and/or allowing them to choose their own goals and timeline for meeting these goals. No one program meets the needs of everyone and it appears that the SE model is attempting to place all individuals into the same service box.

Comments from your agency regarding the findings of the review and/or the fidelity report:

## **Organization**

### **Item #1 Integration of rehabilitation with mental health treatment:**

VALLEYLIFE believes this is a systems-wide issue that should be addressed at the RBHA level in order to facilitate closer integration of Supported Employment providers with behavioral health treatment. This integration is something that will require training and re-focus at all service levels, and extends to include making space available within the clinic settings.

## **Services**

### **Item #1 Ongoing, work-based vocational assessment:**

VALLEYLIFE feels this is an area that our multiple employment services options created confusion and, possibly, misunderstandings during the review process. We believe that the reviewers included observations, interviews, and conversations that extended to services that are outside of the scope of our SE program, and that those elements should not be included in our review results. VALLEYLIFE has feedback and satisfaction survey results from many members that indicate that our paid work training has had a positive impact on their path to recovery –whether they continued on to employment or chose to go in a different direction. There is value in offering a variety of services and we strive to meet the changing and real needs of the community we serve.

### **Item #2 Rapid search for competitive jobs:**

VALLEYLIFE, as in multiple occasions throughout the review, believes that our pre-job training activities have resulted in lower ratings, due to their inclusion in the SE Fidelity Review. The feedback states “many members do not go directly to Job Development services to pursue employment, but rather start with pre-job work activities. This results in a two to three month (or more in some cases) delay in the search for competitive jobs”. All of our members participate in a tour of our programs/services prior to initiating any services; members that make the choice to delay JD&P services have done so by choice in order to meet their current interests and needs.

Our use of tracking logs was clearly a source of confusion to the reviewers. This is an area that could have been addressed in a conversation while the reviewers were on site; the information in our tracking logs is in an excel spreadsheet, and could have easily been reformatted to clearly specify where each member was in their program status.

Additional areas that VALLEYLIFE would like to encourage the reviewers to research are state set aside employment opportunities, as well as Source America (formerly NISH) employment opportunities. These positions, while they are open to individuals with disabilities (as well as individuals that do not have a documented disability), are always integrated and competitive, and often pay far above a general entry level position.. In our rating rationale, it was mentioned “...an employer contact for four of the 32 members has positions set aside for individuals with disabilities on their website.”

### **Item #3 Individualized job search:**

VALLEYLIFE feels that the comments in this section were very biased and somewhat inflammatory. The remark, “However, it is not clear if permanent employment is actively pursued with all members” is unfairly judgmental and is clearly based in the devaluing of employment services options other than the SE model. This bias continues with the statement “it is not clear if the member’s changing goal or preferences are their own or influenced by staff based on options available at worksite locations”; it is unclear what supporting evidence was used to warrant such a statement.

VALLEYLIFE prides itself on connecting individuals to the type of competitive employment that they desire when they are receiving JD&P services. The suggestion that we somehow have an ulterior motive to our service delivery model is offensive. Again, it is possible that the overlap of services resulted in some confusion on the part of the reviewer team; this could have been addressed during the review or at an exit meeting.

### **Item #4 Diversity of job developed:**

Again, the continued inclusion of paid work training services appears to have resulted in comments that do not reflect our SE services. The comment “Due to member involvement in worksite activities, it does not appear VALLEYLIFE fully explores all potential employment opportunities for members” is an inaccurate description of our services; the “worksite activities” should not be included in the SE fidelity review as they are not JD&P services.

VALLEYLIFE believes that those members that are enrolled in JD&P services (SE model) are always provided an opportunity to develop a specific, personally-meaningful employment goal. Our placement results and a more comprehensive review of our programs would have provided a more insightful interpretation in this area.

### **Item #5 Permanence of jobs developed:**

This is another area where dialogue about our services offerings, follow up questions and/or an exit interview may have had an impact on the rating we received. The remark “...that many members are hired in pre-job training activities, which tend to be short-term” indicates a confusion about our available services, and the continued merging of multiple service offerings on the part of the reviewers demonstrates a pre-established belief about the value of programs other than the SE model. As mentioned previously, we encourage the reviewers to research the Arizona State Set Aside and the Federal Source America employment programs, as it might provide some clarity in addressing this comment: “...it is not clear if all positions are competitive, with one example of an employer with positions set aside for people with disabilities.” The employer reference in this comment offers integrated, competitive positions for qualified candidates, at a starting hourly wage of \$16.34/hour.

