



# COLLEGE OF DIRECT SUPPORT EVALUATION BRIEF

Volume 2 • Issue 1 • January 2006

## Purpose

The College of Direct Support (CDS) is committed to ongoing evaluation of the quality of its curriculum, its ease of use to learners, the usefulness of its learner management and human resource functions and its contributions to the lives of persons with disabilities. A wide range of quantitative and qualitative evaluation activities are being undertaken to provide this information. CDS is also committed to assisting organizations to implement evaluation into their workforce development activities. The Evaluation Brief provides information about CDS evaluation activities at the national, state, agency and individual levels. If you have questions about, suggestions for, or requests of the College of Direct Support in the area of evaluation, please let us know: [lakin001@umn.edu](mailto:lakin001@umn.edu).

## People are saying that...

"The College of Direct Support is an important national initiative that provides validated, competency-based training in the specific knowledge, skills and abilities needed by direct support professionals. The College of Direct Support has important features such as the scientific analysis of the content of the direct support role; its engagement of national experts in all courses; its platform that provides interactive, multimedia content; the permanency and portability of its training records; the articulation of its training into college credit; and its adherence to the principles of adult learning."

--James Reinhard, M.D.,  
Commissioner, Virginia Department  
of Mental Health, Mental  
Retardation and Substance Abuse

## College of Direct Support Introduces Online Human Resources Evaluation Tools

Effective workforce development in human services requires ongoing evaluation of organizational performance with regards to recruitment, training and retention of direct support professionals (DSPs). Failure to implement effective human resources assessment and development practices is associated with higher turnover, greater numbers of vacant positions, reduced continuity in support and poorer outcomes for the individuals being supported. Recognizing the importance of ongoing assessment in an organization's ability to maintain effective human resources practices, the CDS has integrated a range of validated human resources assessment tools into the CDS platform. The CDS human resources tools include six basic employee surveys and the Turnover/Vacancy Calculator for measuring and tracking a number of indicators of effective workforce development practices including: DSP and Frontline Supervisor Self-Assessments, Training Experience Satisfaction Survey, Staff Satisfaction Survey, New Staff Survey, Staff Exit Survey, and Organizational Commitment Survey.

The CDS evaluation system also allows users to tailor questionnaires to meet their specific information needs. The system does this in two ways. It allows users to adapt current survey questions and response options. It also allows users to develop surveys from scratch and integrate them within their own CDS site.

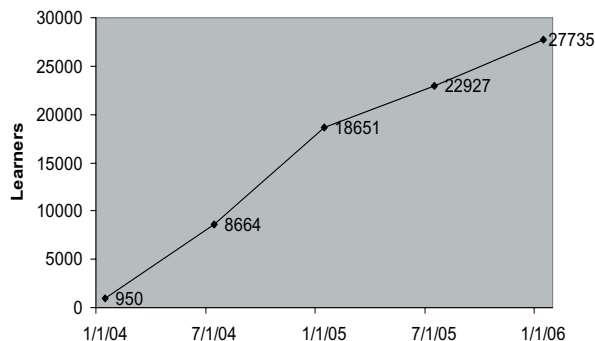
Once assigned, surveys can then be completed online. Aggregated responses to survey questions can then be retrieved in neatly displayed and understandable reports. For a graphical representation of responses, the user merely clicks the "graphical report" button and selects a specific survey and question. Regardless of what survey results they choose to review, users always have the option to view all surveys ever completed or limit their analysis to those completed in a specific time span. This gives evaluators control over what data they will retrieve and what comparisons they will make.

Through this system, human services organizations have access to valid, reliable and easy-to-use tools to evaluate various aspects of their human resources programs. CDS is confident these tools will help organizations more effectively meet their goals. (See page 2 for a new statewide application in Pennsylvania.)

## College of Direct Support Reaches 28,000 Active Learners in January 2006

The College of Direct Support continues to grow in terms of the states represented, organizations enrolled and total number of active learners in those states. Today there are 28,000 active CDS learners in 23 states in the U.S. and these learners are employed by 131 individual agencies. Chart 1 shows CDS growth in the number of active CDS students between January 1, 2004 and January 1, 2006. On January 1, 2006 CDS had 27,735 active learners enrolled in the CDS.

Chart 1. Growth in Active CDS Learners, January 1, 2004-  
January 1, 2006



The College of Direct Support is an internet-delivered multimedia, competency-based training curriculum for direct support professionals and frontline supervisors supporting individuals with disabilities. The College of Direct Support is available for review at <http://collegeofdirectsupport.com>. For more information about the College of Direct Support write Bill Tapp ([bill@collegeofdirectsupport.com](mailto:bill@collegeofdirectsupport.com)) or Donna Kosak ([donna@collegeofdirectsupport.com](mailto:donna@collegeofdirectsupport.com)) or call the College of Direct Support (toll-free) at 877-353-2767. The College of Direct Support is a program of MC Strategies and the University of Minnesota

## Pennsylvania Adopts CDS Turnover/Vacancy Calculator for Statewide Evaluation

Pennsylvania's Office of Mental Retardation (OMR) purchased the license to use the College of Direct Support (CDS) and began promoting its use on a statewide basis throughout its mental retardation system in 2003. Pennsylvania's decision to broadly utilize the College of Direct Support was based on input from system stakeholders including people who receive supports, their families, service providers, and county and state government officials. The College of Direct Support was viewed as an effective and cost efficient way to promote best training practices consistently across the state.

Pennsylvania's OMR encourages use of the College of Direct Support by Direct Support Professionals as well as by all other stakeholders. As of January 2006, 15,147 people throughout Pennsylvania were registered to use the College of Direct Support.

The use of the College of Direct Support is a critical component of the Commonwealth's quality management approach for workforce development. As is the case in many other states, the high rates of vacancy and turnover within direct support and frontline supervisory positions pose a barrier to the ability of Pennsylvania's mental retardation system to reach its maximum potential in providing high quality supports.

To address this concern, OMR is in the process of implementing a concerted statewide staff recruitment and retention initiative that includes the promotion of the College of Direct Support and other strategies and resources for improvement in this area. As a part of this effort OMR is using the Turnover/Vacancy Calculator developed by the College of Direct Support's University of Minnesota team as the tool to measure the success of this initiative. In order for Pennsylvania to maximize responses and simplify computations the survey was made available via the College of Direct Support. The tool's flexibility also allows it to be completed by hand as well as through the College of Direct Support's data base, so that CDS users throughout the Commonwealth as well as agencies that are not registered CDS users can participate in the survey process.

OMR is currently using the Turnover/Vacancy Calculator to gather baseline data. The goal is to develop a statewide picture of vacancy and turnover rates for providers of mental retardation services in Pennsylvania. The survey will be conducted again in one year to measure improvements in vacancy and turnover rates and thereby gauge the effectiveness of year-long implementation of various recruitment and retention strategies.

*By Sarah Rollin, Consultant, Pennsylvania Office of Mental Retardation Consulting System and Cathi Traini, Mental Retardation Program Representative, Pennsylvania Office of Mental Retardation. Sarah may be reached at [srollin@pattan.net](mailto:srollin@pattan.net).*



## National Field-Testing of College of Frontline Supervision and Management Completed

The College of Frontline Supervision and Management (CFSM) is an advanced curriculum within the College of Direct Support. Its purpose is to provide individuals in or being prepared for supervisory or management roles a solid background in the fundamentals of supervision and human resource management. To assure the quality and responsiveness of CFSM to the learning and work role needs of current and future human services supervisors and managers, the initial four courses of the CFSM underwent extensive field-testing. Altogether 513 individuals from 24 states participated in the field-test. Although the majority (75%) supported primarily people with developmental disabilities, 15% reported that they primarily supported people with mental health diagnoses and 9% primarily supported people with other types of disabilities. Participants provided supports in residential, own home, family home and job settings. A sample of other findings were that participants completing relevant CFSM lessons were significantly more likely to report feeling qualified to address workers who are dissatisfied and significantly more likely to have implemented the following interventions than were respondents who had not completed the relevant lessons: Revised orientation practices (37% vs. 18%); Revised agency training to be more competency based (21% vs. 6%); Supported and trained supervisors in new ways (26% vs. 4%); and conducted staff satisfaction surveys (29% vs. 13%); and Completed a turnover baseline (22% vs. 9%). Field-test participants completed a total of 4,328 CFSM lessons and 898 full courses. More than 80% of reviewers of each of the courses agreed or strongly agreed that, "Overall, this was an excellent course." Ratings of excellent were 88.8% for Developing a Workforce Intervention Plan, 84.6% for Fueling High Performance and 80.5% for Recruitment and Selection. On average, in 84.6% of individual course reviews it was agreed or strongly agreed that the course was excellent. Altogether 89.8% of course reviewers agreed or strongly agreed that "I learned something I can use in my work;" 86.7% reported that the course met their expectations and 88.6% reported that "The course was easy to access and use." Altogether 86.0% of those involved in the field-test agreed that the convenience of web-learning increased their opportunities to increase their skills. Other results can be found at: <http://www.collegeofdirectsupport.com>, under "News and Updates."

*By Sheryl Larson, Research Director, Research and Training Center on Community Living, University of Minnesota. Sheryl may be reached at [larso072@umn.edu](mailto:larso072@umn.edu)*