



ISS Kansas: CDS, Ethics, Person-Centered Planning Contribute to Nearly 70% Reduction of Turnover and Improved Service Quality

“The course on the history of persons with developmental disabilities was very interesting. I had no clue how people were treated so poorly and how the services have changed. That has stuck with me the most throughout the entire program.”

– *Patty Harriman,*
ISS Direct Support
Professional



“Call 911, I am going to have a behavior!!!!” It has been a number of years since Donald used

this phrase to let his staff know it was going to be a bad day. But years ago, when he said he was going to have a ‘behavior’, watch out!!!!

What has changed in Donald’s life that resulted in his no longer needing to warn staff that things weren’t going right? It’s simple...the incorporation of the College of Direct Support (CDS) and the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals Code of Ethics into Direct Support Professional (DSP) training at Individual Support Systems (ISS) Inc. of Topeka, Kansas.

Yes, there are other factors to consider, but CDS and the Code of Ethics played a major role. Staff working with Donald completed the module on Positive Behavior Support, focusing on prevention and teaching strategies to reduce the challenging behaviors Donald was presenting. Lessons in Positive Behavior Support also encouraged the staff to be respectful of Donald, while paying close attention to his skills and desires. Along with a solid behavior support plan, the staff was able to work effectively with Donald, improving his quality of life.

The CDS and the Code of Ethics align closely with the philosophy of ISS as a community service provider. The foundation of supports at ISS rests on Essential Lifestyle Planning as developed by Michael Smull and Susan Burke Harrison. CDS is an excellent source for building onto the foundation, as throughout the modules the staff are reminded to focus on the skills and desires of each individual as well as

the need to be respectful. CDS learners are reminded to listen to the individual they support, and respect their routines and rituals. Employees completing modules in CDS learn about ethics, as well as developing the skills and knowledge necessary to perform their job duties.

ISS, a not-for-profit organization, was founded in 1995 with the goal of placing individuals with severe reputations who were residing in state-run ICFs/MR into a community setting. Initially, 18 individuals were identified and accepted services. All services were developed based on the person’s Essential Lifestyle Plan, focusing on strengths and desires rather deficit-based services. DSPs work as members of self-directed work teams, providing supports to people either living on their own, or with one or two other persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities (ID/DD). Today, ISS supports approximately 90 adults and children, providing residential and day supports as well as targeted case management.

ISS has been a member of the group Kansans Mobilizing for Direct Support Workforce Change, which was the proud recipient of the 2006 Moving Mountains Award from the ANCOR Foundation.

ISS has used CDS paired with classroom training for the past four years. We began using CDS through a grant sponsored by the Kansas Council on Developmental Disabilities. The CDS was one of several strategies that community service providers had the chance to implement in order to reduce DSP turnover and increase retention. We saw the benefits of CDS and secured local funding to continue CDS use after the grant concluded. Kansans have subsequently convinced the state to provide funding for all developmental disability service providers to access CDS. Since

we began using CDS, 113 learners have completed 5,296 lessons, totaling 3,583 hours of staff training. That averages out to approximately 31 hours of web-based learning per learner!

It has been a great experience for board members, administrative and management staff and direct support staff who have worked on completing lessons. Board members at ISS were excited when CDS was introduced at ISS. Several board members enrolled in courses, and reviewed material that would be presented during the training. They particularly liked the varied learning methods that CDS provided employees. Written material as well as an audio narrative meets the different needs of adult learners. Supervisors have also completed coursework through CDS and the College of Frontline Supervision and Management.

DSPs have enjoyed the wide variety of topics that are covered in CDS. Patty Harriman, a DSP, noted that the "... history of persons with developmental disabilities was very interesting. I had no clue how people were treated so poorly and how the services have changed. That has stuck with me the most throughout the entire program."

With 115 DSPs supporting approximately 90 persons with ID/DD, it is important that individualized supports are provided, and that those supports are consistent across staff. ISS requires new employees to complete a mandatory 56-hour orientation that includes courses from CDS and classroom training. Supervisors have the ability to have staff assigned to take specific courses if it is determined that certain courses will help them improve their performance.

"The program is very flexible, and works well for our employees, giving them the chance to complete their training during hours that are convenient for each person," noted Sharon Kimbrough, Director of Supports and Services at ISS. "Not only is the CDS used for new learners, annual updates and staff who need additional re-training,

it is being used as the learning component of promotion opportunities for direct support professionals."

DSPs who have been employed with ISS for six months have the opportunity to apply for and complete two levels of certification: a Certificate of Initial Proficiency and a Certificate of Advanced Proficiency. Completion of these certificates can also lead to completion of a registered apprenticeship program for DSPs in the State of Kansas. Completion of the certification program is voluntary. The Certificate of Initial Proficiency requires nine months of working closely with a mentor; completing CDS modules, discussing ethical dilemmas and demonstrating competency through the completion of two work packets focusing on specific DSP competencies and other specific tasks.

The Certificate of Advanced Proficiency in Kansas requires completion of specific CDS modules, discussion of ethical dilemmas, and the demonstration of competency through the completion of three work packets that focus on specific competencies and other specific tasks. Completed work packets are reviewed by a committee of community service providers who oversee certification. The CDS provides the educational component for the certification programs.

In 2007, Individual Support Systems, Inc. boasted a turnover rate for direct support staff at 12.7%. Prior to using the CDS and other strategies that were implemented to reduce turnover, ISS had turnover rates averaging 40% or higher (a 70% reduction). We strongly believe that the CDS is an essential tool in our success in retaining staff. Staff retention can lead to higher quality supports for persons with ID/DD, which is our primary business.

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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

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