



COLLEGE OF DIRECT SUPPORT

PARTNER PROFILES

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SPIN's Spin on the CDS: Professionalization, Positive Impact on Recruitment and Retention

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SPIN, Inc. is a non-profit human service agency founded in 1970 by parents of children with disabilities whose first objective was the establishment of a summer camp. Since its founding 35 years ago, the agency has supported the development of a variety of innovative programs for children, adults and families throughout Philadelphia, PA. Today, SPIN, Inc. serves more than 2,000 people annually.

SPIN'S mission is to create and provide community resources, services and initiatives to assist people with disabilities and their families so they may responsibly determine for themselves their choice, preference and right, without limitation, to a fully inclusive life in the community. SPIN has a fundamental belief that all people have something to offer and can be more tomorrow than they are today. SPIN's commitment to best practices and high quality services is interwoven in all areas of the agency. Innovative and effective professional development programs support SPIN employees to be members of a workforce whose skills and competencies are second to none in our industry.

The agency's investment in workforce development created the emergence of a corporate university named SPIN Institute For Service Excellence providing professional development/training programs designed with trend-setting material to meet the needs of its diverse audience. The mission of SPIN Institute For Service Excellence is to create a nationally recognized professional workforce fully committed to growth and development in the pursuit of best practices on behalf of all stakeholders. SPIN has been recognized for its significant achievement in workforce development by Training Magazine's rankings of the Top 100 training companies internationally. SPIN ranked 87th in 2002, 37th

in 2004, 28th in 2005 and most recently, 20th in 2006.

SPIN was introduced to the College of Direct Support (CDS) over five years ago and saw the value immediately. To our pleasure and great benefit, in 2003, Pennsylvania contracted with CDS, purchasing the licenses for all MR provider agencies supporting people with disabilities. SPIN was the first agency in Pennsylvania to incorporate the CDS as a core learning tool in its staff development program. The month of December 2003 involved a rapid introduction and training to CDS and the role of the Administrator.

Without delay, beginning in January,

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2004, SPIN Institute For Service Excellence began to offer the CDS to its employees. Two Open House programs were implemented in which SPIN employees and interested external colleagues were invited to experience CDS. Members of the SPIN management

team, support departments, and volunteer Direct Support Professionals participated in pilot groups and provided feedback concerning log-in, lesson content and practical application. This research provided a great opportunity for modification, development and data analysis. The feedback was very positive and SPIN began to replace some In-service and mandated training courses with CDS lessons. SPIN created computer labs and supported employees through log-on as well as through the educational content and application of the lessons.

For many of the lessons, CDS is implemented in concert with professional development seminar discussions in which feedback is provided and practical application of the lesson(s) is discussed. High expectations for this national Direct Support Professional workforce curriculum have been met as employees have a new vision of the national scope of their profession. This strategy has been very successful in the transfer of skills and competencies as

supervisors have observed increased motivation and a clearer understanding of specific position accountabilities. In addition, SPIN employees have increased their role in supporting individuals in achieving their personal outcomes.

SPIN was fortunate to have Kevin Casey, the state's Deputy Secretary for Mental Retardation, visit SPIN Institute For Service Excellence and spend time experiencing CDS first-hand. In addition, he led the seminar discussion with SPIN employees and strongly underscored the critical essence of the lesson on the Code of Ethics. The professional development forums have been designed as open discussions about the Code of Ethics as well as the Community Skills Standards and using them as a guide for quality service delivery. In addition, SPIN had a visit from two research analysts from Syracuse University conducting a Qualitative Effectiveness Study on the CDS. They interviewed multiple SPIN employees and reported their initial themes finding that SPIN employees believe that CDS is clear, informative, relevant and applicable to their roles and that CDS complements and enhances SPIN's professional development program.

One recent learner wrote in her evaluation of the CDS's module on Direct Support Professionalism, that "the College of Direct Support is a great way to better understand my position/responsibilities as a Direct Support Professional as well as connecting with other professionals in the field and hearing their thoughts and comments".

SPIN also incorporates the College of Frontline Supervision and Management within the Management Training Program. New managers participate in three modules. Scenarios/portfolio activities are included within leadership development forums in the area of employee coaching, decision making, conflict resolution and others.

The response from the frontline supervisors has been positive and they enjoy using the strategies with their teams. There are so many valuable training options within the CDS. SPIN utilizes the On the Job Training/Portfolio activities within the seminar approach. Employees participate with their teams to complete the activities and gather ideas from one another. The surveys available on CDS are valuable and feedback from new hires, existing employees and those separating from the agency have been incorporated.

The benefits/outcomes of CDS are numerous.

- National recognition and professionalization of the direct support workforce
- Best Practice curriculum
- Efficiencies/budget impact in the area of professional development and training
- Increased awareness of resources in the field
- Enhanced skills and competencies
- Adult learning tool, customized, multi-media
- Encourages employees to reflect on their experiences, skills and competencies.

In addition, in Pennsylvania, a CDS Users Group has been established and provides an invaluable opportunity for training and discussion with colleagues' ideas and challenges concerning CDS. We greatly appreciate the efforts of Pennsylvania in support of this initiative.

Currently, over 750 SPIN employees have participated in CDS and have completed over 2,300 lessons. SPIN has also partnered with Community College of Philadelphia for a variety of initiatives. Most recently, Community College of Philadelphia has approved that employees who complete the full curriculum of CDS can

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register to receive three college credits in their School of Behavioral Health and Human Services. This opportunity has been marketed to SPIN employees and has received a great response.

Currently, SPIN employees are participating in Personal Professional Development Planning. Every employee in the agency has completed a plan that

provides an opportunity for the employee to reflect upon their personal outcomes and realize supports available across the agency to achieve their goals. SPIN believes that its investment in the professional development of its workforce has made a dramatic impact in overall agency recruitment and retention. SPIN currently has a 3.5% vacancy rate, and our 6-month retention rate for FY 06 is 81.43%.

It is the combination of many strategies that support the recruitment and retention of "Right Fit" employees; CDS is one of the important tools that support these efforts. The CDS has opened doors for SPIN employees at all levels of the agency and we look forward to actively participating in the continued efforts of the professionalization of the field of direct support.

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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

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

CDS Partners

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