



COLLEGE OF DIRECT SUPPORT

PARTNER PROFILES

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Starkey's Rich History Includes Its Commitment to the CDS

Kevin Harmon, a Starkey DSP since June 20, 2005, supports four consumers in a community living setting and says this about the CDS: "I found the CDS training invaluable in helping me perform my job more effectively and efficiently. After completing each lesson, it gave me a better understanding and insight into my job."



Starkey, Inc. is about history and service, as it has been since Hattie Starkey began this story in 1930 when she taught two children with developmental disabilities in her kitchen in Wichita, Kansas. It is an enduring legacy reflected in Starkey's Vision Statement: "Starkey will embrace its rich legacy, community partnerships and commitment to innovation to help persons with developmental disabilities achieve progress toward independence, experience meaningful relationships and be of value to their community."

Today, Hattie Starkey's spirit permeates the organization, now 76 years old. It is the oldest non-profit organization in Sedgewick County, Kansas that serves people with disabilities. It's also its largest, with 265 employees who serve approximately 400 persons with developmental disabilities and provides service coordination for 20 children.

"It's a very proud organization and everyone here feels like this is a big family," says its chief executive officer, Carolyn Risley Hill, who became the agency's CEO in June 2001.

Through the years there have been significant dates that reflect Starkey's history:

- 1952: Seven families took out second mortgages on their homes to build Starkey's first building.
- 1965: A new education building was built when the original building was destroyed by a tornado.
- 1978: Adult Residential Service program began with one home and 10 residents.
- 1984: County music singer Charlie Daniels lends his name and passion to the

Charlie Daniels Golf Classic to benefit the Starkey Foundation.

- 1996: Starkey becomes a state leader in the new process of developing Person-Centered Plans for all the individuals it supports.
- 2001: Carolyn Risley Hill hired as CEO.
- 2003: Starkey signs a three-year agreement with the College of Direct Support (CDS) to integrate into its training toolbox the Internet-based curriculum for its direct support professionals and frontline supervisors.

Hill says adding the CDS was the right thing to do at the right time. "We are very excited about having the College of Direct Support available to our DSPs and supervisors," she said. "The fact that the CDS is committed to revising and refreshing the courses on an ongoing basis and adding new topics annually in areas where people need new training really attracted us to the program. We are committed to the CDS."

That initial excitement in 2003 waned, says Judy Leiker, Starkey's training supervisor. She says Starkey's DSPs understand the benefits of the CDS but are not required to complete coursework. When DSPs were introduced to the concept, many were enthusiastic and initially completed some of the lessons. However, progress slowed considerably, she reports.

That changed in January 2006 when Starkey's training professionals introduced an incentive program to encourage DSPs to get back on track with their CDS lessons. While major budget changes were not feasible in the middle of the fiscal year, a modest incentive program was approved -- \$25 for completing the first

half of the learner’s assigned lessons, \$25 for completing the second half, and entry into a drawing for \$20 upon completing a module in a calendar month.

The incentives worked. By offering these incentives, the number of CDS lessons completed has jumped 85 percent. In fact, in the first three months of the incentive program, 293 lessons were completed, compared to 386 in the first two years of the program. Hill says 35 employees are working to complete the CDS. “I wish now we had done the incentives earlier,” she said. “I had no idea they would make such a huge difference.”

Hill said she and her staff are moving towards requiring the CDS training and making incentives available or increasing hourly wages.

Kevin Harmon, a Starkey DSP, began taking the CDS curriculum before the financial incentives were introduced. “I found the CDS training invaluable in helping me perform my job more effectively and efficiently. After completing each lesson, it gave me a better understanding and insight into my job,” he said.

Even though the idea of making additional money wasn’t the main motivator, Harmon agreed the financial incentives were a good idea. “Many things can deter learning -- family, job, and other problems can arise that take your mind off the program, so you can lose focus. Having financial incentives can get you refocused,” he explained.

Turnover is a problem at Starkey and it’s a problem being addressed. Hill says their turnover in 2005 was 50% agency-wide, but 71% among DSPs working in the community living program. She believes the CDS training and initiatives will combine to slow turnover this year.

Starkey’s training professionals see the benefits daily of the CDS.

“As a trainer, the information the CDS has provided has been invaluable,” said Brandt Haehn, staff development and

training coordinator. “Perhaps the most beneficial aspect of the program is the opportunity to gain knowledge of the duties required by the employees I train. This helps me address many of the concerns the program outlines.”

Starkey was a member of a provider group known as “Kansans Mobilizing for Change (KMFC),” which was formed in 2002 to improve the recruitment and retention rates of DSPs statewide and enhance their status through training, publications, information sharing and promotional activities. In March 2006 the Moving Mountains Award was presented to KMFC.

The Moving Mountain awards are presented by the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals and the Research and Training Center on Community Living at the University of Minnesota to recog-

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nize organizations and agencies that have demonstrated excellence in direct support workforce development.

During this two-year project, turnover decreased by 15% in the participating organizations, including Starkey. Implementation of the College of Direct Support

was a core element of Starkey’s strategy.

“Part of our enthusiasm (for the CDS) relates to the success we had with the curriculum we used several years ago, Introduction to Developmental Disabilities,” Hill said. “When we reviewed everyone who had completed it and the number still with Starkey, we concluded it had contributed significantly to retention. We hope for the same experience with the College of Direct Support. We have already had similar feedback from some of our learners using the CDS.”

(Written by Tom King, College of Direct Support, with contributions from Judy Leiker, training and development supervisor for Starkey, Inc. Tom can be reached at tking@collegeofdirectsupport.com and toll free at 877.353.2767. Judy can be reached at jleiker@starkey.org and at 316.512.4161.)

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

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