



Program Evaluation Report

Supported Living Services (SLS)

July 1, 2007 - March 31, 2008
Submitted May 15, 2008

SUPPORTED LIVING SERVICES PROGRAM EVALUATION
July 1, 2007 - March 31, 2008

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I. Introduction

Community Interface's Supported Living Services (SLS) are designed to provide support for adults with developmental disabilities who wish to live in the community but need significant support to do so. Key SLS principles are listed below and provided by the Department of Developmental Services *Developing Supported Living Services: A Guide to Essentials for Service Agencies and Regional Centers, September 2000*:

1. A Home of One's Own

Individuals live in homes that they own, lease or rent like other members of their community.

Individuals choose where they live and with whom and they control what happens in their home.

Individuals' housing is separate from their services so they are secure in their homes and do not have to move if their needs, their services or their service agency changes.

Individuals are safe in their home and neighborhood.

2. Choice and Self-Directed

Individuals make their own everyday choices.

Individuals plan for their futures.

Individuals direct the services they receive and have a choice of agencies and staff.

Individuals are supported (e.g., technology, communication devices, behavioral support) to communicate their preferences, choices and needs.

Individuals are satisfied with the services they receive.

3. Relationships

Individuals have family, friends and neighbors who support them in regular ways or as paid help.

Individuals and their circle of support work together as a team with the supported living agency and others to share responsibility for his or her well being.

4. Community Membership

Individuals fully participate in the mainstream of community life according to personal choice and preference.

Individuals have opportunities to join clubs, groups, organizations, and religious groups.

Individuals use local community resources and generic services.

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5. Flexible, Tailored Services and Supports

Individual Service Plans are developed through a person-centered planning process. Service plans reflect the support that each individual wants and needs and plans change as wants and needs change.

Individuals have opportunities to increase their abilities, confidence and quality of life and support to maintain an adequate level of health and safety.

Community Interface's Supported Living Services include: (1) assessment, (2) supported living plan development, (3) procurement of services, and (4) ongoing provision of supports.

II. Program Outcome Objectives

The ultimate goal of SLS is to assist adults with developmental disabilities to become as independent as possible while receiving necessary supports to live in their own communities. This goal can be met through any number of different support arrangements, and the exact structure of supports will vary depending on individual needs and desires.

To meet the overall program goal, two measurable objectives have been identified for the SLS program. The first objective is to facilitate each participant to meet or partially meet at least two measurable community living skills objectives as identified in the Individual Support Plan (ISP). Ninety-nine percent of the individuals that had ISP periods ending during the reporting period met or partially met at least two objectives.

The second objective of the program is for at least 80% of service recipients to maintain a community living situation. This objective was exceeded, with 100% of the program participants maintaining a community living situation¹.

¹ One service recipient passed away during this report period and two individuals transferred to another community living program.

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III. Evaluation Design

The purpose of the evaluation is to assist Community Interface in determining service effectiveness and efficiency in relation to program design and satisfaction with services. Aggregate data on service recipient progress is collected from individual support plan reports. Service recipient feedback information is collected through satisfaction surveys completed throughout the year.

Service evaluation information is distributed to San Diego Regional Center and Community Interface Services' Board of Directors, agency directors, and unit supervisors. The evaluation report is also reviewed with Community Interface Services' direct service staff members and the Advisory & Safety Committee. While the program evaluation process is continual, reports are generated annually. This report covers the period from July 1, 2006, through March 31, 2007, as specified in contract #H39475.

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Number of Persons Served:

A total of 28 persons received services during the report period and 25 people were receiving services on March 31, 2007, the end of the report period.

Needs Encountered:

Individual needs encountered during the report period were as varied as the individuals served. These needs were identified through assessments, personal futures planning, and service recipient input discussed at planning meetings and documented on Supported Living plans. Many of the needs fell into the following service categories:

- ▶ Household/Domestic
- ▶ Financial
- ▶ Health and Safety
- ▶ Mobility/Access
- ▶ Communication
- ▶ Social/Emotional/Sensory
- ▶ Personal Care
- ▶ Community Involvement
- ▶ Household Maintenance/Trash Removal
- ▶ Shopping
- ▶ Health/Exercise
 - ▶ Meal Preparation
- ▶ Pet Care
- ▶ Medication
- ▶ Problem Solving

Progress Related to Individual Support Plan (ISP) Objectives:

As stated earlier, one objective of SLS is for each participant to meet or partially meet at least two measurable community living skills objectives as identified in the ISP. Of the 19 individuals that received services and had Individual Support Plans end during the reporting period, 99% met or partially met at least two objectives.

Decreases in Paid Supports and Increases in Natural Supports/Self-Reliance:

Community Interface's SLS seek to foster the independence of all program participants. Participant skill acquisition, decreases in paid supports, and increases in involvement by informal support networks translate into greater independence. Throughout this report period, the Supported Living Program has witnessed countless examples of increased independence; some examples follow:

- ▶ David is now washing off his dishes and placing them in the sink.
- ▶ Angie took a vacation to Hawaii with friends and family.
- ▶ James took a cruise to Europe with friends and family.
- ▶ Angie speaks every weekend with her boyfriend.
- ▶ Jen is now shopping a bit more independently (locating items, placing items in basket, and putting items on conveyor).
- ▶ Tom continues to spend time with his girlfriend and her family.
- ▶ Tish went camping at Seal Beach with friends and family.
- ▶ Michelle continues to access her community. She frequently goes to the mall and Starbucks.
- ▶ Michael spends every Wednesday with his girlfriend and has taken a few vacations to Bishop with friends and family.
- ▶ Mike continues to participate in the Elks Lodge independently and spends some time with his girlfriend on the weekends.

Support Configurations:

Support configurations for the 28 individuals served during the reporting period were as follows:

- ▶ Lived with one staff roommate and one or more other roommates 5

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- ▶ Lived with a staff roommate and no other roommates 18
- ▶ Lived alone with supports from rotating staff 9

(Note: Some individuals utilized more than one support configuration during the year.)

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Staff members distribute satisfaction surveys several times throughout the year especially around the time of service recipients' planning team meetings and upon request. Survey responses were received from service recipients and data from the surveys was added to this report. Any issues or concerns were addressed individually with each service recipient. Of those that responded:

- ▶ 100% said that they were happy with the services they were receiving
- ▶ 100% said that they were developing the skills that they wanted to learn
- ▶ 100% said that they were learning to advocate/speak for themselves and make their own decisions
- ▶ 100% said that they were informed of social activities, meetings, and appointments
- ▶ 72% said that their social activities, meetings, and appointments were accessible to them
One service recipient indicated she could access more things if her wheelchair was fixed (her wheelchair is currently at the repair shop). Another service recipient indicated he was hospitalized but his staff came to see him.
- ▶ 88% said they have the adaptive equipment they need to help them be as independent as possible
One service recipient was waiting for her wheelchair to get fixed (her wheelchair is currently at the repair shop). Another service recipient wants a page turner, but it costs \$4,000.00. One service recipient is hospitalized but is working on getting a wheelchair (his wheelchair was obtained by the end of this report period).
- ▶ 100% said that they liked their Community Interface Services support team
- ▶ 100% said that their support staff helped them to be a part of their community
- ▶ 88% said there was nothing they would want to change about the Supported Living Services they receive
One service recipient said everything was fine except for her broken wheelchair (that is currently in the shop being repaired). Another service recipient said he would like more staff.

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Some of the responses to the question, “What do you liked best about Supported Living?” are listed below:

“Having my own place and making my own decisions.”

“Being as independent as I want and making my own decisions, advocating for myself, and having a normal life.”

“I am happy with the staff and support that I am receiving.”

“Going out with Woody.”

“Getting out through roommate transportation. Independence.”

VI. Staff Training and Qualifications

Applicants for employment with Community Interface Services are screened through a rigorous process including staff member interviews, service recipient interviews, site visits, and reference verifications. All job offers are contingent on the employee passing the agency's screenings which include a TB test, a lifting test, a medical exam, a drug screening, fingerprint clearance through the Department of Justice and/or the Federal Bureau of Investigation, a vehicle inspection, proof of valid insurance, and an acceptable motor vehicle record check.

All Supported Living positions require the following minimum staff member qualifications, skills, or education, as follows, to ensure that direct service personnel provide the highest quality support possible to service recipients in the Supported Living program:

- ▶ The skill, training, or education to do the following:
 - establish and maintain constructive and appropriate relationships with service recipients
 - minimize risks of endangerment to the health, safety, and well-being of service recipients
 - certify in first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation and operate 24-hour emergency assistance system, as appropriate to the need with respect to any specific service recipient (after appropriate training)
 - achieve the intended results of the service being performed
- ▶ Current and valid licences, certificates, or registrations legally required to provide service
- ▶ Demonstrate dependability and personal integrity as verified by employment and character references
- ▶ Valid California driver's licence, motor vehicle insurance, a safe driving record, and a vehicle in safe working condition

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Confirmation of a passing physical, TB test, lifting exam, and drug screening
Fingerprint clearance(s)
Willingness to adhere to and support Community Interface Services' philosophical orientation regarding service delivery

SLS at Community Interface are provided through the Supported Living unit, with a program director, a unit supervisor and a coordinator working with SLS recipients, and supervising and providing support to the direct service staff.

Supervisors and coordinators are required, at a minimum, to have three years of experience in a human services delivery system, including at least one year in a comparable program or a bachelor's degree in a human services related field, and the demonstrated ability to provide staff member training, supervision, and planning. Supervisors and coordinators are also required to have the ability to effectively communicate with adults having developmental disabilities, have strong communication and organizational skills, and have the ability to function effectively in pressure/crisis situations. *Preference* is given to internal candidates over external candidates when both are equally qualified.

The education and experience of the Supported Living program director, unit supervisor and the Supported Living coordinator is as follows:

Education		Experience	
12 to 14 years:	1	0 to 2 years:	0
15 to 16 years:	0	3 to 9 years:	2
17+ years:	2	10+ years:	1

Education level ranged from 12 to 18 years, with an average of 16 years. Experience level ranged from three and a half years to 12 years, with an average of 7 years.

The direct service staff members at Community Interface Services are a diverse group, coming from many different backgrounds. The education and experience levels of the 35 full-time and part-time Supported Living direct service staff members are summarized below:

Education		Experience	
12 to 14 years:	32	0 to 2 years:	9
15 to 16 years:	2	3 to 9 years:	12
17+ years:	1	10+ years:	14

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Education level ranged from 11 to 18 years, with an average of 15 years. Experience level ranged from two months to 25 years and three months, with an average of 11 years.

Community Interface Services is committed to the professional development of its staff members. New employees generally complete approximately two weeks of new employee orientation training. During this two weeks, each trainee receives approximately sixteen hours of training on Community Interface's mission, policies, practices, and philosophy; the use of Supported Living Services to promote self-reliance; service recipient protection and rights, including Community Interface's internal grievance procedures, Fair Hearing provisions, Special Incident reporting, rights of service recipients, and protections from abuse and financial exploitation; appropriate conduct of staff members in establishing and maintaining personal relationships; participation of service recipients in teaching and consulting; office procedures; general agency information; developmental disabilities; and the California service delivery system.

Trainees also view approximately eight hours of training videos on lifting techniques, defensive driving, person centered planning, teaching methods, and positive behavioral intervention. Additionally, trainees typically "shadow" an experienced employee or supervisor to observe direct service activities and then receive on-the-job training with the service recipient(s) they will actually be working with in their position. CPR and First Aid training are completed within the first 30 days of employment. Positive Behavioral Intervention training is typically completed within the first 90 days of employment and a refresher course is provided to all direct service staff annually. If a caseload warrants individual training prior to attending a regularly scheduled class, arrangements are made between the supervisor and direct care staff.

Community Interface staff members participate in ongoing training several times each month in various forums including individual staffings, unit meetings, and in-service trainings. The topics of each training session are planned annually to include information on health and safety; recent developments in theory and practice of supported living services; policies, procedures, and practices to meet service recipient objectives; identification of service delivery issues and challenges and how to deal with them; direct service techniques; regulatory requirements; and philosophical guidelines. Additional topics are added as needed.

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VII. Grievances/Incident Reports

Grievance Procedure:

Community Interface Services maintains a formal grievance procedure and provides training to service recipients upon intake and annually thereafter on how to follow the procedure. The grievance procedure outlines individual rights, as well as the step-by-step process for filing a complaint. No grievance procedures were initiated during the report period.

Incident Reports:

Community Interface Services completes a special incident report in the event of any unusual occurrence (i.e., service delivery-related accident, reports of abuse, etc.) in accordance with Title 17, CCR §54327(b). The incident report is completed and sent to the Regional Center within 24 hours of when the incident becomes known to Community Interface Services. Under Supported Living Regulations, any instances of abuse are also reported to the appropriate local law enforcement agency.

During the report period, a total of 15 incident reports were filed in Supported Living. Incidents were addressed with the individual service recipients and planning team members as appropriate.

VIII. Summary of Strengths, Challenges, and Recommendations

The greatest strength that continues to be apparent in the Supported Living program is its staff members. The program and service recipients benefit from relatively low staff turnover, and many long-term staff members. The stability and commitment of the direct care and supervisory staff help service recipients to develop trust and feel comfortable, which in turn allows the service recipients to try new things and develop new abilities and skills. As a result, over the years, many service recipients have made outstanding progress at becoming more independent.

The quality of the staff members is due, at least in part, to another identified strength: the intense, careful, and very selective recruitment process used to bring new staff members on board. Recruitment of staff members is guided by individual service recipient needs, wants, and preferences. Potential staff members are thoroughly screened and interviewed before meeting service recipients. If a potential match is identified and the applicant meets the basic job requirements, then the applicant and service recipient are introduced and supported to spend as much time as needed together for the service recipient to decide if s/he is interested in pursuing the applicant. If the service recipient and applicant decide to pursue a match, the applicant must successfully complete one or two more extensive interviews and detailed reference and background verifications. This rigorous screening process is designed to assist the agency in hiring only the most qualified, and the best suited, individuals.

Ironically, the greatest strength of the program stems from its greatest challenge - the recruitment of qualified staff members. As the cost of living, entry level wages in other industries, and business costs continue to increase, supported living wages are not competitive in today's job market. The agency has seen a dramatic decrease in its ability to effectively attract and retain qualified staff members. The agency continues to intensify its use of new and innovative recruitment methods to try to address this challenge.

Another challenge for many participants, is the lack of companies in the area that are able to attain and maintain the necessary repairs on wheelchairs or adaptive equipment. This decrease is in great part due to MediCal/Medicare and the amount they approve for the repairs of wheelchairs and adaptive equipment. Staff members continue to monitor MediCal/Medicare changes in order to inform service recipients of valuable information/changes that occur.

Recommendations to help overcome these challenges and to provide the highest quality services include continuing to:

- ▶ Monitor the state budget situation and advocate as necessary. Secure adequate funding to substantially increase wages to be competitive within the labor market.

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- ▶ Conduct intensive recruitment efforts to find the best qualified applicants, including attending local college job fairs, encouraging staff member referrals, and using Internet employment services.

Monitor changes and issues that may arise with attaining and maintaining necessary wheelchair and/or adaptive equipment repairs; forge relationships with vendors and develop expertise that will benefit service recipients in regard to wheelchairs and/or assistive technology.

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