



**Georgia Department of Behavioral Health & Developmental Disabilities**

*Frank W. Berry, Commissioner*

---

**Office of Adult Mental Health**

*Two Peachtree Street NW, 23<sup>rd</sup> floor, Atlanta, Georgia 30303-3142  
404-232-1644~FAX 404-463-7149*

**Supported Employment Fidelity Review Report**

**Provider:** Highland Rivers CSB

**Date(s) of Review:** November 17-18, 2014

**Reviewers:** Erica Walker, MS, SE Monitoring Specialist;  
Tammatha Kinder, MSW, SE Monitoring Specialist

**Purpose:**

This Supported Employment Fidelity Review was completed as part of the requirements for monitoring performance and ensuring that supported employment (SE) services delivered to ADASA consumers meet fidelity to the Dartmouth Individual Placement and Supports (IPS) model of SE, in accordance with the DBHDD ADA Settlement Agreement (ADASA). Information gathered from the fidelity review will be used to make recommendations to individual programs for quality improvement planning and will also be used to determine the need for further Training and Technical Assistance in providing evidence-based supported employment to consumers across the state.

**Background:**

Highland Rivers Community Services Board provides mental health, substance abuse, and disabilities services to over 15,000 individuals yearly in Rome, Georgia and surrounding counties. Highland Rivers serves consumers in many programs, including Aim Health, Crisis Stabilization, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities, Addiction Recovery, Mental Health and Wellness, Adolescent and Child, and Recovery and Support. At the time of the Fidelity Review, Highland Rivers had one Supported Employment Supervisor and one Employment Specialist, but has since hired another full-time ES. This is Highland Rivers' second SE Fidelity Review; on the previous Fidelity Review, Highland Rivers achieved a score of 92, which indicated Fair Fidelity.

**Method:**

The fidelity review was conducted on site and included the following activities:

1. Interviews: CEO, Compliance Manager, AD & Residential Services Manager, Residential Recovery Support Services Manager, SE Supervisor, Employment Specialist, Vocational Rehab Counselor, 4 Consumers, 2 Case Managers, Benefits Navigator, and Psychiatrist
2. Observations: SE Team Meeting and Community Job development by SE Employment Specialist
3. Review of consumer charts: 5 consumer charts

The Supported Employment Fidelity Scale was completed following the visit. This report contains the completed

scale, with scores and comments for each item. The scale measures three aspects of the program: staffing, organization, and services. Each item is rated on a 5-point response format, ranging from 1 = no implementation to 5 = full implementation, with intermediate numbers representing progressively greater degrees of implementation.

**SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT FIDELITY SCALE  
STAFFING**

<b>1. Caseload size</b>	<b>Rating</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Employment specialists have individual employment caseloads. The maximum caseload for any full-time employment specialist is 20 or fewer.	5	Caseloads appear to be in compliance with the 20:1 or fewer ratio. Based on documentation submitted for this Fidelity review, there are 21 total consumers; the SE Supervisor is responsible for 10 consumers and the ES is responsible for 11 consumers. The SE Supervisor stated that she attempted to balance caseloads and manage referrals while the full-time ES was on medical leave.

<b>2. Employment services staff</b>	<b>Rating</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Employment specialists provide only employment services.	5	Area of Strength. Highland Rivers' SE team has demonstrated consistent success in this area. The SE team's primary focus is employment services. The team provides an array of employment related services to consumers. Based on case notes and consumers' recounts, there is no evidence that the SE team provides services that are outside of employment related activities.

**Recommendation:**

<b>3. Vocational generalists</b>	<b>Rating</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Each employment specialist carries out all phases of employment service, including intake, engagement, assessment, job placement, job coaching, and follow-along supports before step down to less intensive employment support from another MH practitioner.	3	The SE team has a decreased rating in this area. The Supported Employment team should carry out all phases of SE services to include: intake, engagement, assessments, placement, job coaching, and follow-along supports. During the full-time ES's three month medical leave, the SE Supervisor stated that she was unable to provide job placement supports. In addition, case notes serve as verification that there have been limited consumer

	<p>engagements during that time frame. It is noted that the SE Supervisor made an attempt to manage the entire SE program during the ES's absence, but the executive leadership failed to provide adequate support and assistance during the ES's planned medical leave.</p>
--	--

**Recommendations:** It is recommended that the SE staff immediately implement a strategy to carry out all phases of employment services. Since the return of the full-time ES and the hiring of another ES, the SE team can resume providing a complete array of services to include job placements and consumer engagements. The agency's leadership will need to ensure a staffing plan is in place during the absence of any SE staff, to ensure continued success of the SE program. Furthermore, case documentations should be comprehensive and reflect all efforts and phases of employment services.

**ORGANIZATION**

<b>1. Integration of rehabilitation with mental health through team assignment</b>	<b>Rating</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<p>Employment specialists are part of up to 2 mental health treatment teams from which at least 90% of the employment specialist's caseload is comprised.</p>	<p>5</p>	<p>Area of Strength. The Employment Specialist receives at least 90% of referrals from the residential program. Currently, the SE team is a part of one weekly Mental Health Treatment team, which includes the Residential team. The SE Supervisor stated that once the new staff member is trained, she can focus on increasing referrals and attending MH team meetings in the other ten counties, Bartow County specifically.</p>

<b>2. Integration of rehabilitation with mental health through frequent team member contact</b>	<b>Rating</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ES attends weekly MH treatment team meetings.</li> <li>• ES participates actively in treatment team meetings with shared decision-making.</li> <li>• Employment services documentation (i.e., vocational assessment/profile, employment plan, progress note) is integrated into consumer's MH treatment record.</li> <li>• ES's office is located in close proximity to (or shared with) his/her MH treatment team members.</li> </ul>	<p>4</p>	<p>It is obvious that the SE team is attending and participating with one MH treatment team on a weekly basis, which includes the Residential staff. Supported Employment team openly discusses shared consumers and displays integration with the Residential</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ES helps the team think about employment for people who haven't yet been referred to supported employment services.</li> </ul>	<p>team. Offices are in close proximity to the MH team. However, there is a continuous concern that there are limited referrals by MH team members and the lines maybe blurred between the SE and Residential program, as 90% of referrals are from the Residential program, and the perception is that only Residential consumers can participate in SE services.</p>
---	--

**Recommendation:** As recommended in the previous Fidelity Review- FY 14, the SE team has demonstrated openness to integration with the MH team and is actively participating in weekly treatment team meetings. However, it is highly recommended that the SE team play a more active role in the treatment team meetings, by assisting the team in making decisions about potential referrals, educating all teams throughout the agency on the IPS model, and sharing in the decision making process on how employment should be included in recovery. Employment plays a vital role in the recovery process, and the SE team should be instrumental in communicating that message throughout all counties served. In addition, the SE team receives 90% of referrals from the Residential program, and it is the responsibility of the SE Supervisor and SE program leaders to ensure that other programs are made aware of SE services and the referral process. This message should resonate throughout all programs throughout the agency and should not be limited to the Residential program. Increased efforts should increase referrals from MH teams to Supported Employment.

<b>3. Collaboration between Employment Specialists and Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors</b>	<b>Rating</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<p>The employment specialist and VR counselors have frequent contact for the purpose of discussing shared consumers and identifying potential referrals.</p>	<p>4</p>	<p>Currently, VR and Highland Rivers are building a partnership with two shared consumers. Highland Rivers has recently been added to the VR provider list and has been meeting with the designated VR Counselor. The designated VR Counselor has started attending MH treatment team meetings once per month. In addition, phone and email correspondences verify the attempts from both agencies to collaborate services.</p>

**Recommendation:** Efforts to maintain a relationship with VR throughout all regions should be continuous. Due to the already established relationship with the VRC, additional referrals to VR should be seamless. The SE team should begin to have conversations with consumers who could benefit from both programs, offer an informed choice to consumers, and make referrals to VR. In addition, the ES and SE Supervisor should follow-up on the status of consumers that have already been referred to VR, in an effort to ensure that those consumers are actively enrolled in VR services. The IPS model should not be compromised, as consumers are shared with VR; therefore the ES, SE Supervisor, and designated VR Counselors should communicate weekly and staff consumers regularly to determine services that will be beneficial for IPS consumers.

4. Vocational unit	Rating	Comments
<p>At least two full-time employment specialists and a team leader comprise the employment unit. They have weekly client-based group supervision following the supported employment model in which strategies are identified and job leads are shared. They provide coverage for each other's caseload when needed.</p>	3	<p>The Supported Employment unit consists of one SE Supervisor and one full-time ES. Since this Fidelity review, the SE team has been approved to hire another ES. The SE Supervisor and ES serve as support and provide coverage for each other, as needed. The SE Supervisor served as back-up for the ES for three months while the ES was on medical leave. The team meets weekly to discuss consumers, identify strategies, and share job leads.</p>

**Recommendation:** Since this current Fidelity Review and after on-site technical assistance, Highland Rivers' executive staff has already rectified having a complete SE unit, by hiring another full-time ES. Moving forward, two full-time ESs and an SE Supervisor will comprise the SE Unit. It is expected that the entire team will meet weekly to share and provide coverage for each other when needed.

5. Role of employment supervisor	Rating	Comments
<p>Supported employment unit is led by a supported employment team leader. Employment specialists' skills are developed and improved through outcome-based supervision.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One full-time supervisor is responsible for no more than 10 employment specialists.</li> <li>• The supervisor does not have other supervisory responsibilities. (Program leaders supervising fewer than 10 employment specialists may spend a percentage of time on other supervisor activities on a prorated basis.)</li> <li>• Supervisor conducts weekly supported employment supervision designed to review client situations and identify new strategies and ideas to help clients in their work</li> <li>• Supervisor communicates with mental health treatment team leaders to ensure that services are integrated, to problem solve programmatic issues and to be a champion for the value of work. Attends a meeting for each mental health treatment team on a quarterly basis.</li> <li>• Supervisor accompanies employment specialists who are new or having difficulty with job development, in the field monthly to improve skills by observing, modeling and giving feedback on skills, e.g., meeting employers for job development.</li> <li>• Supervisor reviews current client outcomes with employment specialists and sets goals to improve program performance at least quarterly.</li> </ul>	4	<p>SE Supervisor has a clear understanding of the IPS model and sets clear goals for the program. The SE Supervisor's sole responsibility is the Supported Employment program. The SE Supervisor is highly involved, to varying degrees, with the consumers and their progression. Training and development for the Employment Specialist who is having difficulty is also a key focus. The SE Supervisor participates with one MH Treatment team; however, more integration is necessary throughout all MH teams.</p>

**Recommendation:** Increased efforts, to promote the IPS model across all counties and throughout all MH teams, should be demonstrated during Treatment Team meetings, so that integration is fully implemented. More frequent field mentoring and shadowing is highly recommended for the ES, as on-going training is needed in order for the ES to continue to build confidence in job development. While recognizing the SE Supervisor’s efforts to communicate with MH teams, increased efforts should be made to express the importance of employment as a vital part of recovery. This message should resonate throughout the agency to promote full integration. In addition, the SE Supervisor should take a lead role in educating other staff members, communicating the message about the IPS model, and discussing programmatic challenges with executive leadership to increase the support of the SE program. Additionally, Executive leadership has to provide avenues for the SE Supervisor to discuss programmatic challenges, by allowing the SE Supervisor to meet at least quarterly with management; the SE Supervisor should be well supported in increased efforts to broaden communications and messages about the IPS SE program throughout the agency.

6. Zero exclusion criteria	Rating	Comments
<p>All clients interested in working have access to supported employment services regardless of job readiness factors, substance abuse, symptoms, history of violent behavior, cognition impairments, treatment non-adherence, and personal presentation. These apply during supported employment services, too. Employment specialists offer to help with another job when one has ended regardless of the reason that the job ended or the number of jobs held. If VR has screening criteria, the mental health agency does not use them to exclude anybody. Clients are not screened out formally or informally.</p>	<p>1</p>	<p>There is a decreased rating in this area since the previous Fidelity Review- FY 14. The SE team has a clear understanding of the zero exclusion principle. In contrast, the manner in which the case mangers decide if consumers are ready for employment is consistently based on stability, readiness, and compliance. This is a continuous area of concern, as some executive leadership and case managers have limited knowledge of the IPS model. Case managers maintain the position that referrals are not made to the Supported Employment program until a staff member has deemed the consumer medically stable and medication compliant. Case Managers also stated that consumers’ compliance is openly discussed during Treatment Team meetings. More concerning, “Job Search Rule” forms have been added as standard documentation to consumers’ case notes and signed by consumers. “Job Placement Rule” forms have language regarding excluding consumers from working certain jobs, mandating that they job search up to eight hours per day, demanding certain work hours, and demanding consumers’ participation in post-employment</p>

		groups.
--	--	---------

**Recommendation:** To avoid exclusions into SE services, it is recommended that individuals should not be disqualified from SE services based upon staffs’ perception of “readiness” for employment. Urgently, the SE Supervisor and ES should provide ongoing training to promote the principles of the IPS model throughout the agency. The culture “be ready for work” must be demolished immediately, in order to be in compliance with the IPS model in this area. The agency should understand that employment is a vital part of recovery, and not based on readiness as measured by staff perceptions of stability. The MH team does not seem to have concrete understanding of the IPS model. If the agency utilizes case managers, therapists, and residential staff as a referral source to SE, then they must be trained immediately on the IPS model to avoid excluding consumers who have expressed a desire to work, regardless of symptoms, criminal history, and medication compliance. The IPS model emphasizes that all consumers interested in becoming employed must have access to SE services, and clients are not excluded on the basis of readiness. It is essential that agency leadership take a more active role in correcting the exclusion criteria. Further, the “Job Search Rule” forms must cease immediately, as this form contradicts all IPS principles. It was alarming that executive leadership, who directly oversees the IPS program, had no knowledge that this form had been implemented as a standard SE form, signed and dated by consumers. It is recommended that all consumers who signed this form receive an immediate retraction. The retraction should be signed by consumers, dated, and scanned into SE case notes as verification that consumers have a clear understanding of the IPS program.

7. Agency focus on competitive employment	Rating	Comments
<p>Agency promotes competitive work through multiple strategies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agency intake includes questions about interest in employment.</li> <li>• Agency includes questions about interest in employment on all annual (or semi-annual) assessment or treatment plan reviews.</li> <li>• Agency displays written postings (e.g., brochures, bulletin boards, posters) about working and supported employment services, in lobby and other waiting areas.</li> <li>• Agency supports ways for consumers to share work stories with other consumers and staff (e.g., agency wide employment recognition events, in-service training, peer support groups, agency newsletter articles, invited speakers at consumer treatment groups, etc.) at least twice a year.</li> <li>• Agency measures rate of competitive employment on at least a quarterly basis and shares outcomes with agency leadership and staff.</li> </ul>	4	<p>The agency’s referral forms, career profiles, and treatment plans include questions or goals about employment. Treatment plans are updated every six months to include changes in SE goals. The agency has SE brochures that focus on SE services; brochures are being revised and will be giving out at each service location. Currently, consumers have several avenues to share employment related stories. Consumers who have graduated from the Respect Institute have an opportunity to speak at peer groups, board meetings, and residential peer groups. The agency’s employment rate was not calculated, even though some executives knew how many consumers were employed.</p>

**Recommendation:** It is recommended that the SE employment rate (52%), outcomes, and trends are shared throughout the agency, to include executive staff. The agency should develop methods to collect data and track measurable goals. Additionally, SE should be more of a key focus in treatment team meetings and management meetings, so that every staff member will have access to information regarding SE services. It is the role of the SE Director to ensure monthly program information is available and discussed with all executive and leadership staff; this will ensure that SE is at the forefront of all other programs and viewed as an important and primary service.

8. Executive team support for supported employment	Rating	Comments
<p>Agency executive team members assist with supported employment implementation and sustainability.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Executive Director and Clinical Director demonstrate knowledge regarding the principals of evidence-based supported employment.</li> <li>• Agency QA process includes an explicit review of the SE program, or components of the program, at least every 6 months through the use of the Supported Employment Fidelity Scale, or until achieving high fidelity, and at least yearly thereafter. Agency QA process uses the results of the fidelity assessment to improve SE implementation and sustainability.</li> <li>• At least one member of the executive team actively participates in SE leadership team (steering committee) meetings that occur at least every six months for high fidelity programs and at least quarterly for programs that have not yet achieved high fidelity. Steering committee is defined as a diverse group of stakeholders charged with reviewing fidelity, program implementation, and the service delivery system. Committee develops written action plans aimed at developing or sustaining high fidelity services.</li> <li>• The agency CEO/Executive Director communicates how SE services support the mission of the agency and articulates clear and specific goals for SE and/or competitive employment to all staff during the first six months and at least yearly annually (i.e., SE Kickoff, all-agency meetings, agency newsletters, etc.). This item is not delegated to another administrator.</li> <li>• The SE program leader shares information about EBP barriers and facilitators with the executive team (including the CEO) at least twice each year. The executive team helps the program leader identify and implement solutions to barriers.</li> </ul>	1	<p>Rating in this area has decreased since Fidelity Review- FY 14. The CEO is aware that employment is a key element of recovery, and is knowledgeable about the collaboration and partnership with VR. The CEO demonstrated how SE services align with the mission of the agency; however, there seems to be a lack of commitment to SE services by other executive staff members to include the Manager of AD and Residential Services, Compliance Manager, and the Residential Support Services Manager. The Manager of AD and Residential Services, who oversees SE services, admitted that she had never read or seen the previous Fidelity Report- FY 14. The agency does not have a formal process to review Fidelity reports and benchmarks. The agency holds management or executive team meetings every other Friday. However, the SE Supervisor is not included in meetings, but SE services are discussed using a “dashboard” type system, per the compliance manager. However, when Reviewers asked what type of information was shared, executives were unclear about monthly reports, Fidelity reports, and SE challenges. It is noted that the compliance manager was more informed on programmatic data, slots, funding structure, and challenges than executives who directly manage the SE program.</p>

**Recommendation:** Executive Leadership should be more entrenched with SE services, especially with reaching high fidelity and helping to eliminate barriers. On site, it was recommended that the QI meetings and/or Leadership meetings could be held in lieu of a steering committee, as long as the meetings are SE focused at least quarterly. The quarterly leadership meetings should include members of SE team, executive staff, and/or someone who understands the IPS approach and is in a position to make programmatic changes. Family members, VR, employers, and community partners could also be included to help diversify the group. In addition, Directors



and the CEO should receive SE monthly reports and discuss data in monthly meetings. The employment rate should be measured and promoted throughout the agency, and the agency's dashboard tool could be a great tool to share information and to keep other staff members informed. As recommended at the last Fidelity Review- FY 14, it would be beneficial if the Executive team, Directors, and Managers play a more active role in the SE program by reinforcing goals and outcomes throughout the agency in order to promote a more cohesive and integrated SE program across all service lines. It is vital that the executive leadership and the QI team focus on SE program benchmarks and service delivery, and they should develop written action plans aimed at implementing and sustaining high fidelity services.

**SERVICES**

1. Work incentives planning	Rating	Comments
<p>All consumers are offered assistance in obtaining comprehensive, individualized work incentives planning before starting a new job and assistance accessing work incentives planning thereafter when making decisions about changes in work hours and pay. Work incentives' planning includes SSA benefits, medical benefits, medication subsidies, housing subsidies, food stamps, spouse and dependent children benefits, past job retirement benefits and any other source of income. Consumers are provided information and assistance about reporting earnings to SSA, housing programs, VA programs, etc., depending on the person's benefits.</p>	2	<p>One consumer has been referred for comprehensive work incentive planning, per the Benefits Planner. The Benefits Planner visited HR to do a group presentation and have discussions with consumers regarding how SSA benefits are affected due to employment. Per the SE Supervisor, many consumers do not qualify for SSA benefits.</p>

**Recommendation:** The SE team under-utilize the assigned Benefits Planner, mainly because most consumers have not been approved for SSA benefits. Also, Consumers are referred from residential services and not MH services. As the agency collectively focuses on improving integration of MH teams and SE service, more consumers will be able to benefit from work incentive planning. As recommended at the last Fidelity Review- FY 14, a detailed summary should be discussed with and provided to consumers and placed in consumers' files. A key element of work incentive planning is to assure that consumers are not steered into decisions regarding their benefits but are empowered with information to make their own choices regarding benefits and employment.

2. Disclosure	Rating	Comments
<p>Employment specialists provide consumers with accurate information and assist with evaluating their choices to make an informed decision regarding what is revealed to the employer about having a disability.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employment specialists do not require all consumers to disclose their psychiatric disability at the work site in order to receive services.</li> <li>• Employment specialists offer to discuss with consumers the possible costs and benefits (pros and cons) of disclosure at the work site in advance of consumers disclosing at the work site. Employment specialists describe how disclosure relates to requesting accommodations and the employment specialist's role communicating with the employer.</li> <li>• Employment specialists discuss specific information to be disclosed (e.g., disclose receiving mental health treatment, or presence of a psychiatric disability, or difficulty with anxiety, etc.) and offer examples of what</li> </ul>	5	<p>Area of strength: The SE team utilized recommendations given in this area in the FY 14 Fidelity Review. Consumers have individualized choice regarding disclosure, and the SE team does not require consumers to disclose information concerning their diagnosis. The topic of disclosure is now discussed during the initial SE intake, as well as, on an ongoing basis. A detailed disclosure note that encourages an in-depth conversation regarding pros and cons of disclosure was implemented on each case note. The SE team stated that the topic of disclosure is revisited when and if a</p>

<p>could be said to employers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employment specialists discuss disclosure on more than one occasion (e.g., if consumers have not found employment after two months or if consumers reports difficulties on the job).</li> </ul>		consumer changes his/her mind about information to be disclosed.
---	--	--

<b>3. Ongoing, work-based vocational assessment</b>	<b>Rating</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Initial vocational profile/assessment occurs over 2-3 sessions and is updated with information from work experiences in competitive jobs. A vocational profile form that includes information about preferences, experiences, skills, current adjustment, strengths, personal contacts, etc., is updated with each new job experience. Aims at problem solving using environmental assessments and consideration of reasonable accommodations. Sources of information include the consumer, MH treatment team, clinical records, and with the consumer's permission, from family members and previous employers.	3	Vocational profiles are completed initially to learn about the consumers' work history and job preferences. Some profiles are not included in electronic charts but are housed in SE paper files. Vocational assessments are completed on each consumer, but there is no evidence that vocational assessments are systematically updated as changes occur.

**Recommendation:** Updating of vocational assessments should be done routinely as preferences and experiences change. It is recommended that the SE team routinely meet with consumers to update vocational assessments with information obtained that includes new employment goals, job starts, and lessons learned. Completed vocational assessments ensure individualized preferences in job search. Sources of information to aid in completing career profiles should include consumers, treatment teams, case managers, clinical records, and with client permission, family members and psychiatrists. Information gathered should help determine accommodations and job supports. Vocational assessments could be completed over multiple sessions. As recommended in the previous Fidelity Report- FY 14, all vocational assessments should be added to electronic records, so that integration is encouraged throughout the agency, and individuals who provide treatment services will have access to SE information.

<b>4. Rapid search for competitive job</b>	<b>Rating</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Initial employment assessment and face-to-face employer contact by the consumer or the employment specialist about a competitive job occurs within 30 days after program entry.	2	This is a repeat area of deficiency. Based on documentation submitted for this review, the SE team averages about 26 days until initial employer face-to-face contact. However, there is no evidence of a concrete system or process for documenting, tracking, and/or monitoring the length of time from consumer beginning SE services to the first employer contact, as case notes do not consistently capture first face-to-face employer contacts. In addition, the SE team stated that they did not conduct job search for the past three months due to being

	short staffed. Job logs submitted for July and August did not include consumers' names. Therefore, it is unclear if the SE team tracked consumers individually.
--	---

**Recommendation:** Recommendations given in this area for the FY 14 Fidelity Review must be fully implemented in order to reach fidelity in this area. Rapid job search is an essential component of the IPS model. Therefore, it is imperative that the SE team ensure that the first employer face-to-face contact is tracked, documented, and occurs within 30 days after enrollment into the SE program. This would include employer contacts made by the ESs, consumers, or both. Case Documentation has to verify what occurred and what was reported. In addition, the SE team should make numerous attempts to contact consumers that are not engaging in services. However, the team can continue to make face-to-face employer contacts within 30 days on behalf of all consumers, contact consumers, and inform them of job leads. Efforts may motivate non-engaging consumers to meet with ESs or follow up on potential job leads. In the event that the SE team is unable to engage consumers after numerous attempts, consumers should be staffed with treatment teams and collaborative efforts should occur to engage consumers. After failed attempts, the team should decide whether to discharge non-engaged consumers from SE services.

<b>5. Individualized job search</b>	<b>Rating</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Employment specialists make employer contacts aimed at making a good job match based on consumers' preferences and needs rather than the job market (i.e. those jobs that are readily available). An individualized job search plan is developed and updated with information from the vocational assessment/profile form and new job/educational experiences.	2	There is a decreased rating in this area and a repeat area of deficiency. Some case notes verified that the SE team assisted with job search according to consumers' preference. For an example, one consumer's documented job preference was a cook, and the ES assisted the consumer with obtaining a job at Zaxby's. However, there was a lack of consistent evidence supporting individualized job search based on consumer's preferences and needs, as some case notes were vague and did not specify job leads; one ES documented, "met with consumer to discuss job leads". Per the SE Supervisor, she did not conduct job searches for almost three months due to being the only SE member, while the full-time ES was on medical leave. Also, dates and consumers' name are not tracked on job search logs. Therefore, logs do not track consumers for whom the team job developed.

**Recommendation:** It is imperative that logs reflect exact dates of employer contacts, as well as, consumers for whom the ESs job developed. Gathering this information would ensure that the team is exploring jobs based on consumers’ preferences, and that the majority of job developing activities are taking place in the community and face-to-face. It is noted that some consumers may not have specific job goals or preferences and may choose to work for any employer and any type of job; in these instances, ESs should assist consumers with being more specific in their employment preferences. Giving consumers the opportunity to broaden their employment preferences will ensure that job searches made by ESs are individualized, as required by the IPS model. In addition, job search plans should be developed with consumers during the initial SE intake and documented in consumers’ charts; this would be beneficial for both ESs and consumers and can aide in individualized job searches.

6. Job development- frequent employer contact	Rating	Comments
<p>Each employment specialist makes at least six (6) face-to-face employer contacts per week on behalf of consumers looking for work. An employer contact is counted even when an employment specialist meets with the same employer more than one time in a week, and when the consumer is present or not. Consumer-specific and generic contacts are included. Employment specialists use a weekly tracking form to document employer contacts.</p>	1	<p>There is a decreased rating in this area. Per the SE Supervisor, the SE team did not conduct job search for almost three months. Further, job search logs submitted for July and August did not include dates. Due to incomplete job logs for July and August and a lack of job search for almost three months, this area could not be calculated in order to find the total average for frequency of employer contacts.</p>

**Recommendation:** The IPS SE model requires six face-to-face employer contacts per week; this includes first time face-to-face with an employer, as well as, reengagement with employers. Employer contacts can be done independently by the ES or with a consumer. It is recommended that the SE team expand job searches within the counties that consumers reside, once SE referrals are made from MH teams in surrounding counties. It is recommended that the SE team immediately develop a schedule that will ensure that at least six face-to-face employer contacts a week are being met by each SE team member, and efforts should be documented on job logs and in case notes. An example of this recommendation includes the ES choosing two days out of the week to spend job developing in the community, engaging, and re-engaging employers with and without consumers. Utilization of these recommendations would ensure that the six face-to-face weekly employer contacts are occurring in order to meet Fidelity in this area.

7. Job development- quality of employer contact	Rating	Comments
<p>Employment specialists build relationships with employers through multiple visits in person that are planned to learn the needs of the employer, convey what the SE program offers to the employer, and describe consumer strengths that are a good match for the employer.</p>	1	<p>There is a decreased rating in this area. The ES reported that she has about four employer relationships in the community. Based on observations of the ES while job developing with a new business in the community, it was evident that the ES is comfortable inquiring whether an employer is hiring, but</p>

	<p>displayed insecurities in seeking to build employer relationships and discussing consumers skills, interests, and strengths. Some case notes showed documentation as evidence that the team provides job leads, but there was no documented evidence of the team having discussions with employers and building quality relationships. Additionally, July and August job logs did not show that ESs are visiting employers on a regular basis to build quality relationships. In addition, the SE Supervisor was unable to build quality employer relationships for the past three months, due to being the only SE member.</p>
--	--

**Recommendation:** Technical assistance in this area is highly recommended for the SE team; field mentoring and shadowing would also be beneficial in assisting the team in engaging and building relationships with employers. Having the team observe various job developing skills and techniques would be helpful in gaining more confidence when meeting with employers for the first time, discussing consumers’ skills and strengths, and building strong quality employer relationships. Now that there is an addition to the SE team, the SE Supervisor should provide extensive field mentoring for both ESs. ESs should continue to build employer relationships in the community. When meeting with an employer, it is recommended that ESs convey consumers’ strengths and skills and discuss how consumers’ skills align with the employer’s needs. Constant and consistent re-engagement with employers helps to build employer’s relationships and is ideal when discussing employment opportunities and consumer preferences. Case documentation should capture the team’s discussions and efforts, and job logs should reflect ESs constant employer engagements.

<b>8. Diversity of job types</b>	<b>Rating</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Employment specialists assist consumers in obtaining different types of jobs.	2	<p>Reviewers had a difficult time establishing job titles based on the information provided for this review, as job titles were not provided as requested.</p> <p>Out of eleven employed consumers, seven of them have the same job type: three are in food service, two in sales, and two are clerks.</p> <p>Highland Rivers is not diversified in this area.</p>

**Recommendation:** ESs should make every effort for diversity when seeking additional job types for consumers. It is noted that some consumers may have food service as a chosen job goal or may choose to work the same job types; however, it is important for ESs to document discussions around diverse job types and research other employment opportunities with consumers, to ensure consumers are given the opportunity to learn of other types of positions that they may find interesting or a good match.

9. Diversity of employers	Rating	Comments
Employment specialists assist consumers in obtaining jobs with different employers.	4	Based on information provided for this review, two out of eleven consumers are employed at Sonic.

**Recommendations:** The SE team should try to avoid having numerous consumers working for the same employer. The SE team should explore various ways to increase consumers’ interests in other employers. For an example, three consumers may have chosen to work for Wendy’s, but it is the responsibility of the SE team to discuss other employment opportunities with consumers, that address strengths, previous experiences, circumstances, and preferences. In addition, consumers should have the opportunity to work alongside and interact with non-consumers; therefore, diversified employment sites are important.

10. Competitive jobs	Rating	Comments
Employment specialists provide competitive job options that have permanent status rather than temporary or time-limited status (e.g. transitional employment slots). Competitive jobs pay at least minimum wage, are jobs that anyone can apply for, and are not set aside for people with disabilities.	5	Area of Strength. Consumers are earning minimum wage or higher, and the data provided from the SE team, showed that all of jobs are competitive in nature.

11. Individualized follow along supports	Rating	Comments
Consumers receive different types of support for working a job that are based on the job, consumer preferences, work history, needs, etc. Supports are provided by a variety of people, including treatment team members (e.g. medication changes, social skills training, encouragement), family, friends, co-workers (i.e. natural supports) and employment specialists. Employment specialist also provides employer supports (e.g. educational information, job accommodations) at consumer’s request. Employment specialist offers help with career development (i.e. assistance with education, a more desirable job, or more preferred job duties).	3	Employed consumers are receiving follow along supports according to the IPS model by the SE team. However, integration with MH teams is needed, so that consumers can receive other support services, after they have reached desired employment goals and are stable in their roles. Highland Rivers continues to assist consumers when learning about a job loss. Per consumers’ recounts, ESs are providing adequate follow-along supports according to their preferences. However, case documentations of follow along supports are limited.

**Recommendation:** Follow-along supports should include efforts from not only the SE team, but also MH teams at Highland Rivers. Other supportive services, outside of SE services, may be needed when consumers are employed, and working with a MH team can help promote seamless services for consumers. In addition, all ESs should be following the IPS model, documenting in case notes, and providing follow-along supports to all working consumers.

12. Time unlimited follow along supports	Rating	Comments
<p>Employment specialists have face-to-face contact within one (1) week before starting a job, within three (3) days after starting a job, weekly for the first month and at least monthly for a year or more on average, after working steadily and desired by consumers. Consumers are transitioned to step down job supports from a mental health treatment team member following steady employment. Employment specialists contact consumers within three (3) days of learning about the job loss.</p>	4	<p>Per consumers' recounts, the team is making contact with employed consumers, even though there is limited documentation that the SE team is adhering to the IPS model in this area and is providing following supports to their employed consumers, in accordance with the suggested IPS time frames. Per consumers, the SE team respects consumers' choice on disclosure. There is limited integration with MH teams and no evidence that consumers are transitioned to less intensive service, once they are working steadily in their desired job roles.</p>

**Recommendation:** The SE Supervisor should ensure that ESs are providing follow-along supports according to the model and documenting efforts. Case documentation should reflect ESs having face-to-face contact within one week before starting a job, three days after starting a job, weekly for the first month, and monthly for a year or more. It is also recommended that once a consumer becomes employed and is stable on that job for an established period of time, ESs should meet with employed consumers to create a step-down or discharge plan. Highland Rivers must create enhanced integration with all MH team, to ensure that consumers can receive other supportive services along with SE services, and so that consumers will have continued supports once he/she is discharged from SE. Unless otherwise stated by consumers, discussions regarding step-down plans can begin once the consumer is satisfied with his/her employment and has demonstrated a steady work performance.

13. Community-based services	Rating	Comments
<p>Employment services such as engagement, job finding and follow-along supports are provided in natural community settings by all employment specialists.</p>	2	<p>All ESs should provide services in the natural community setting and document efforts. The SE team reports that they spend a sufficient amount of time in the community. However, job logs were not completed accurately to reflect job development in the community and</p>

	there has been limited time in the community for the last three months, as stated by the SE Supervisor. Consumers interviewed stated that the SE team does provide SE services in the community.
--	--

**Recommendation:** Supported Employment is a community-based service, which means that the majority of the ESs' time should be in the community developing employer contacts and meeting with consumers. ESs should be spending 65% of time in the community conducting employment related activities a week. ESs can ensure that the required 65% of time is spent in the community, by calculating the numbers of hours the ES works and the total amount of time per day or week ESs should be spending in the community to make the 65%. For example, if an ES works a seven hour shift, the ES should be conducting five hours of community-based services a day. The SE Supervisor along with the ES should create and implement a daily tracking tool that will allow the ES to track the amount of hours per day that is spent in the community with consumers, employers, or both. All community-based services should be documented in case notes. Job logs should be filled out completely so that job development for each consumer is captured. Following this standard would ensure accurate and beneficial SE services.

14. Assertive engagement and outreach by integrated treatment team	Rating	Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service termination is not based on missed appointments or fixed time limits.</li> <li>• Systematic documentation of outreach attempts.</li> <li>• Engagement and outreach attempts are made by integrated team members.</li> <li>• Multiple home/community visits.</li> <li>• Coordinated visits by employment specialist with integrated team members.</li> <li>• Connect with family, when applicable.</li> <li>• Once it is clear that the consumer no longer wants to work or continue SE services, the team stops outreach.</li> </ul>	3	There is no evidence that services are terminated based on missed appointments. In fact, the SE team is willing to visit with consumers at their homes and make an attempt to connect with family when necessary, based on case documentation and consumers' reports. Once it is clear that a consumer no longer wants to continue SE services, the consumer is discharged. Highland Rivers is integrated with the Residential team but doesn't display full integration with MH teams. Therefore, documentation of engagement, outreach attempts, and coordinated visits do not include other team members at Highland Rivers.

**Recommendations:** SE staff should follow a systematic process for engagement and outreach attempts, which includes coordination with other MH team members. Well integrated teams provide layers of support for consumers. MH teams help re-engage consumers who are difficult to place and provide valuable information to help with consumers' success. Coordinated efforts should be documented in SE case notes.



**SUMMARY**

Highland Rivers’ SE team has a commitment to understanding the IPS model and is passionate about consumers and their recovery. The SE Supervisor should be commended on her dedication to the SE program. She is knowledgeable about SE consumers and their recovery, actively involved in treatment team meetings, and ensures that the ES receives needed supports. However, the SE program is not without challenges. For almost three months, the SE Supervisor served as the only SE member, with very limited supports. Of course this dilemma caused stress and strain to the program. The SE Supervisor was unable to conduct job development, and case notes did not fully capture consumers’ SE service delivery. A continuous issue is Highland Rivers’ lack of integration with MH teams. The SE team receives 90% of referrals from Residential Services, which blurs the lines between SE and Residential Services and limits participation of other MH consumers who could benefit from SE services. Additionally, Executive Staff and Clinical Staff do not display an inclusive understanding of SE evidence- based practices, as staff has continuously demonstrated a formal consumer-exclusion policy, as evidenced by the Job Placement Rule form and staff’s perception of consumers’ stability and readiness for employment. It should be viewed as an urgent matter, and the agency should implement systemic changes in this area immediately. Referrals will most likely increase as integration becomes more apparent and the “zero-exclusion” principle is strictly enforced. Further, communication about the SE program and services should be enhanced with the treatment team members and Executive leadership, as Executives should create an open door policy for the SE Supervisor to discuss SE services, challenges, and successes. The SE Supervisor should be allowed to meet with Executives at least quarterly and a Steering Committee must be immediately established to ensure that high Fidelity is obtained and sustained. A formal QIP process for SE services must be implemented immediately, so that all key players have access to and monitor benchmarks noted in Fidelity reports. Efforts to partner with VR should be continuous, as well as, improving service delivery in all six phases of the IPS model: intake, engagement, assessment, job development/placement, job coaching, and follow-along supports.

**The Supported Employment Fidelity Scale score is 81, which indicates Fair Fidelity.**

All programs receiving a review will be required to address any item that scores below a 3 with a quality improvement plan. Each provider is strongly encouraged to address any additional areas/items as they see important in their overall program’s quality improvement. The following fidelity items will need to be addressed with a Quality Improvement Plan:

Organization –6	Zero-Exclusion Criteria
Organization – 8	Executive Team Support for Supported Employment
Services – 1	Work Incentives Planning
Services – 4	Rapid Search for Competitive job
Services – 5	Individualized Job Search
Services-6	Job Development-Frequent employer contact
Services – 7	Job Development- Quality of Employer Contact
Services – 8	Diversity of Job Types
Services – 13	Community- Based Services

**SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT FIDELITY SCALE SCORE SHEET**

<b>Staffing</b>	<b>Score</b>
1. Caseload size	5
2. Employment services staff	5
3. Vocational generalists	3
<b>Organization</b>	
1. Integration of rehabilitation with mental health through team assignment	5
2. Integration of rehabilitation with mental health through frequent team member contact	4
3. Collaboration between employment specialists and Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors	4
4. Vocational unit	3
5. Role of employment supervisor	4
6. Zero exclusion criteria	1
7. Agency focus on competitive employment	4
8. Executive team support for SE	1
<b>Services</b>	
1. Work incentives planning	2
2. Disclosure	5
3. Ongoing, work-based vocational assessment	3
4. Rapid search for competitive job	2
5. Individualized job search	2
6. Job development- Frequent employer contact	1
7. Job development- Quality of employer contact	1
8. Diversity of job types	2
9. Diversity of employers	4
10. Competitive jobs	5
11. Individualized follow-along supports	3
12. Time-unlimited follow-along supports	4
13. Community-based services	2
14. Assertive engagement and outreach by integrated treatment team	3
<b>Total:</b>	<b>81</b>

<b>Score Key</b>	
115-125	Exemplary Fidelity
100-114	Good Fidelity
74-99	Fair Fidelity
73 and below	Not Supported Employment