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Strategies for Success in a Residential Program

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Strategies for Success in a Residential Program

Madison Kaye, LSW

Practicum Placement: Thomas Allen, Inc.

Field Instructor: Kari Schuster, LGSW

Task Supervisor: Stephanie Mox, Program Director

Field Liaison: Dr. Michelle Alvarez



About the Agency:

Thomas Allen, Inc. (TAI) is a for profit agency located in and around Minneapolis & St. Paul. It has been in existence for almost 40 years and started as a residential program for those who are diagnosed with a developmental disability. It has grown to include case management, guardianship/conservatorship, in home family support services, and community employment.

Purpose:

The question that this researcher sought to answer is the reasons for success of the Cedar Crest residential program. Hopefully, this information would help aid the program director and program manager with continuing the success of the program as well as to train incoming staff. In addition, it was the goal of this researcher to provide information to the program director that may help aid with success at other programs run by Thomas Allen, Inc. (TAI).

Literature Review:

Topics explored include:

- Organizational culture and how that effects staff treatment toward clients (Bigby, Knox, Beadle-Brown, Clement, and Mansell, 2012)
- Challenging behavior in clients with a developmental disability and how this effects staff retention (Dilworth, Phillips, and Rose, 2011; Dalton and Sweeney, 2010)
- Communication techniques for staff working with nonverbal clients (Dalton and Sweeney, 2010)
- Turnover and frequency of “burnout” in direct care staff (Strouse, Carroll-Hernandez, Sherman, and Sheldon, 2004; Mutkins, Brown, & Thorsteinsson, 2011)
- The use of grounded theory when working with qualitative data (Monette, Rosen, and Leana, 2009)

See handout for complete reference list

Amount of Total Experience

| 22-13 years (N=3) | 10 & 9 years (N=2) | 2 & 4 years (N=2) |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appreciate communication and honesty in a manager | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appreciate a manager who has the ability to recognize areas for growth and change | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appreciate a manager who acts as a leader |

Length of Time at Cedar Crest

| 5+ years (N=2) | 3-4 years (N=2) | 2 years or less (N=3) |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Had most of their overall experience come from Cedar Crest • Answers were client centered | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less than half of their overall experience came from Cedar Crest • Believe that consistency is important when working with clients | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Answers were staff centered • Did not agree as much as other categories that information is shared throughout Cedar Crest |

Level of Education

| Master's Degree (N=1) | College Degree (N=4) | Diploma or Some College (N=2) |
|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggest to continue to hire experienced staff | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State that teamwork is important for a successful staff team | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requested more training on clients who are low functioning |

Methodology:

- The idea was the product of meetings with task supervisor
- IRB application approved on March 8th, 2013 (Reference Number 436726-3)
- Guardian consent forms and client assent forms were received
- Staff questionnaire (along with IRB approved consent) distributed and collected- 70% response rate
- Utilized participant observation to become more familiar with the Cedar Crest program
- Secondary data was reviewed and put into a template created by the researcher for organization
- Results of the staff questionnaire were put into a spreadsheet for organization and analysis

Key Findings:

- Average amount of experience working with individuals with a developmental disability was 11 years
- Over half of the respondents had worked at Cedar Crest for three years or more
- 86% had some college education or more
- 57% of the respondents stated that teamwork is an important quality that they admire in a coworker
- Overall, staff feel that training is sufficient
- Most staff members want things to stay the same at Cedar Crest.

Conclusion:

Limitations

- Small sample size
- No data from Cedar Crest during time when things were not as positive
- Inability to link the performance of one specific staff member to a specific outcome

Suggestions/Implications for further practice

- The researcher suggests that similar studies be completed in each one of the residential programs at TAI to be able to generalize information
- Hiring experienced staff and reducing staff turnover seems to have contributed to the success at Cedar Crest
- Tailoring managerial techniques to each staff member (based on level of experience) can be a way to increase satisfaction and retention
- Information that is shared during a shift change was one of the few questions that every staff member answered indicating this is something that is important to staff
- Organizational and management structure have the ability to make or break a program