

Tracey Young, Community Options First to Complete the NJ Direct Support Professional Career Path Curriculum

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Starting, February, 2012, Community Options has begun its first semester in the CDS- College of Direct Support. The College of Direct Support is an on-line curriculum that consists of lessons and interactive training for staff. Seven staff throughout New Jersey are currently participating in the CDS curriculum, which is being facilitated by Demetria Garden. The curriculum is to provide staff, on-line training, that will add value to their work, and to the services they provide to the individuals. The on-line training is to help them become proficient by instruction, and practice in their profession; thus, enhancing their skills and the exemplary service they provide to the individuals.

The New Jersey Career Path, which is a part of the CDS, allows staff to take the structured coursework and to receive certification as a DSP- Direct Support Professional. In addition to the title, and the recognition as a Direct Support Professional, staff will earn up to nine credits towards their AA degree, if desired.

Staff who are participating in the CDS, are staff who embody the principles of: care, inclusion, person centered lifestyle, choice, and self determination while supporting the individuals. They exemplify the mission of Community Options through their ongoing efforts and service.

The current CDS participants: Joe Brown, Eletha Roberts, Britney Burnett, Ophelia Dempster, and Tracey Young have shown perseverance through the first semester that ran between February–August 2012. They gracefully balance the art of time management, while maintaining their work, and personal life, with the added, coursework of the College of Direct Support.

The participants meet monthly via teleconference to connect, to learn and to share their experiences. A common theme is that the participants recognize that they are not alone in their challenges, and their strides in working with the individuals and managing staff. This

connecting theme increases the rapport amongst the participants. The participants continually state that they are increasing their knowledge, and experience as result of taking the coursework. Their current skills are stretched, and enhanced because of this learning opportunity.

Tracey Young, Community Support Manager in Ocean County was the first of the Direct Support Professionals for Community Options to complete the NJ DSP Career Path Curriculum. During NJ's Direct Support Professional Recognition Ceremony, Tracey was recognized as one of 14 DSP to complete the Career Path this past year.

Congratulations, Tracey!

