

Advantages,
Inc.

June 29,

2023

The accessibility plan outlines strengths that may increase accessibility in our programs and community. It also outlines any weaknesses that may decrease accessibility in our programs and community and sets goals to eliminate identified weaknesses.

Accessibility
Plan FY 2024

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Advantages of Southeast AR, Inc. Accessibility Plan FY 2024

**Revised June 2023
DeAnna Doherty**

This Accessibility Plan outlines the work that lies ahead as our agency continues to identify, remove, and prevent barriers for persons with disabilities within the agency, as well as in the community. The plan will serve as a guide for the agency during the upcoming years and is reviewed regularly to document the progress in completing identified activities for barrier removal. This plan will address not only the challenges that face us in the areas of accessibility but also note the strengths that the agency has in this area.

To determine the level at which the agency meets accessibility needs and federal regulations, several methods are used. The agency conducts frequent and on-going reviews of facilities, programs and policies. The enrollment process provided by the agency includes identification of accessibility issues and any identified issue would be included in the consumer's annual plan. The plan is reviewed each year and revised to include any new identified barriers, if needed.

The agency completes an accessibility survey annually and will encourage employees, consumers and individuals associated with the agency to assist in identifying accommodation and accessibility needs. The monthly MESH (Managing Emergencies, Safety & Health) reports include a section for the reviewer to report any accessibility concerns they encounter while doing their monthly safety check. The agency has a form for individuals to use for reporting any accessibility concerns.

The accessibility plan is designed to enhance the quality of life for those served while at home or while attending services at one of our center-based facilities.

It is also designed to allow persons needing a workplace accommodation to continue working. The agency will strive to implement any reasonable accommodation and will follow the rules and regulations set forth in the American's With Disabilities Act (ADA).

The agency has policies in place to prevent workplace violations of the ADA in regards to hiring, promotions, and any other work-related personnel action. Those policies will be reviewed annually and revised to remain current with federal/state law and trends.

The following external agencies routinely conduct both regularly scheduled and unannounced visits to review both physical and programmatic activities:

- Developmental Disabilities Services
- Local Fire Departments
- Arkansas Department of Health
- DPSQA (Division of Provider Services and Quality Assurance)

- ARDoT Bus Inspector
- Medicaid Audit Division/AFMC
- Social Security Administration Audit Division
- Nutrition Reimbursement Program Monitors (CACFP)
- Searcy & Associates
- PASSE Audits

The agency will also solicit input from consumers and their families through scheduled meetings, newsletters, and through various surveys conducted throughout the year.

OUR PHILOSOPHY:

The philosophy of the agency is that all people should have access to services, programs, and activities in which they have an interest. Because we feel that persons with disabilities face a variety of challenges, we have selected attitudinal, architectural, communication, employment, transportation, environmental, ancillary services, housing and financial barriers as those that we want to impact in a positive manner.

The agency also takes into consideration any accessibility needs such as physical, cognitive, sensory, emotional, financial or developmental that may hinder full and effective participation on an equal basis with others. Accessibility needs are identified on the individual's plan of care along with the suggested accommodation needed to rectify the accessibility problem.

Policies will be in place to allow for consumers or employees to request an accommodation to their work or service environment. The request can be made without fear of retribution, loss of work, or loss of services. There is also an appeal process in place to appeal denials of requested accommodations.

TYPES OF BARRIERS:

Our agency has identified strengths and weaknesses in the following areas:

- Attitudinal – Attitudes that an organization's staff members, stakeholders, and the public have of persons with disabilities, reflected in the terminology and language that is used by our organization, how individuals with disabilities are viewed and treated, whether or not consumer input is solicited and used, and whether or not the entrance criteria for our organization screens out individuals with specific disabilities.
- Architectural – Physical barriers that prohibit or impede individuals from accessing a building or grounds.
- Environmental – Barriers that could be interpreted as any location or characteristic of the setting that compromises, hinders or impedes service delivery and the benefits to be gained.
 1. Home: examples would be the installation of computer-controlled devices to control the environment

2. Work: examples would be replacing fluorescent lighting that could cause seizures, ergonomic furniture or equipment
 3. Physical Office: examples would be strong odors or scents that could affect work, or excessive noise.
- Financial – Barriers that may include insufficient funding for services to benefit one or more individuals, or the need for bookkeeping assistance. Insufficient funds for housing or community involvement activities.
 - Employment – Barriers that may be evident not only in the organization, but the community, that decrease an individual’s ability to attain gainful employment. Also, barriers that the agency addresses with internal discrimination policies and interpretation of the ADA in regards to workforce accommodations and access to agency employment.
 - Communication – Barriers that would prohibit or impede a person’s understanding of important information or access to information, such as use of TDD, Braille, alternative language, communication device, or website.
 - Technology- Barriers that hamper a person’s ability to use technology
 - Transportation – Barriers that reduce a person’s ability to reach service locations or to participate in the full range of services and activities available to non-disabled citizens.
 - Housing – Barriers that exist which reduce a person’s ability to live in the least restrictive setting; host homes meet the definition in the Community Settings Rule.
 - Ancillary and Community Integration – Barriers that would prohibit or impede a person from full participation in their community of choice such as:
 1. Access to SNAP Benefits (Food Stamps)
 2. Doctor Appointments
 3. Sport Activities
 4. Waiver Services
 5. Therapy Services
 - Federal and State Regulations regarding discrimination in the workplace and service environment.

In addition to the barriers identified, this report will include an estimate of costs associated with the removal of the barrier and a general time-line for removal, and who is responsible for the accommodation.

It is our goal to provide a physical environment that is reasonably free from barriers to our staff, consumers, families, stakeholders and the general public within the framework of the American’s With Disabilities Act. All facilities used for the agency programs have either been constructed or will be modified, as funds are available or as reasonable, to meet the needs of persons with varying degrees of disability.

A review of all sites will be conducted to identify any barriers on a routine basis, at least twice a year. Recommendations will be forwarded to the Executive Director to be discussed at management team meetings for possible inclusion in the accessibility plan.

It should be stated that a request for a reasonable accommodation does not automatically require that the agency meet the request. When a request for an accommodation cannot be made due to budgetary or other reasons, the agency will either refer the individual to another provider or community resource that can make the accommodation or implement temporary alternatives in place of the accommodation requested.

ATTITUDINAL:

It is the mission of the agency to facilitate positive images regarding the abilities of persons with disabilities. All publications will focus on the abilities rather than the limitations our consumers may have. Policies and Handbooks will use “People First” language and we will strive to focus on the abilities of individuals. We promote inclusion and strive toward the integration of our consumers in their home community.

Strengths:

- The agency strives to include our consumers, families and community advocates in our goal-planning through annual surveys.
- The Board must consist of 20% advocate or consumer representation.
- A Consumer Council assists with planning of agency activities and gives input on their desires and concerns. The consumer council provides feedback and suggestions for improvements from families and persons served.
- Staff participate in Health and Job Fairs, as requested.
- The agency pays for membership dues for employees to join service organizations and the agency will allow employees time off during work hours to attend service organization meetings.
- The agency is a member of the Chamber of Commerce in Ashley, Drew and Lincoln Counties, and attends various functions supported by the Chambers. The Finance & HR Director is on the Chamber Board of Directors in Drew County.
- Programs submit news articles and pictures of agency events to the local paper and network media and makes announcements through the website and/or Facebook page. The agency also uses newsletters to inform stakeholders about agency news and events.
- The adult development program and preschool programs participate in local parades/fairs/community activities.
- Consumers participate in Special Olympics.
- The agency works with the Cooperative Extension service to conduct classes in health, fitness, cooking, crafts, etc.
- The agency staff and consumers volunteer in activities that promote the community.
- The agency has a cooperative spirit with UAM to have student organizations come and visit the various centers and interact with our children and adult consumers.
- Handbooks and other publications are written using understandable terms and in People First language. They are provided in alternative formats (Spanish, large print, etc.) when requested. Interpreters are furnished, when needed or requested.

- EIDT/ADDT programs work with school districts/SEARK Education Cooperative to promote smooth transition of services.
- The agency has a strong Affirmative Action Plan to promote non-discrimination practices in regards to services and employment.
- Monthly facility inspection reports include a section to note any accessibility issues found.
- The agency accesses grant funding to assist individuals served with expenses associated with field trips or other community integration activities where funds are needed to fully participate.
- The agency has a commitment to regulate Hosts Homes for compliance with the Community Settings Rule.
- The agency is committed to implementing Employment 1st through the Arkansas Works Program/Supported Employment.
- The agency entered into a partnership with Your Money Line to add a financial wellness benefit to the employee benefit package.

Weaknesses:

1. Perception of family and community members about people with DD as contributing members of the community.

Recommendation for solution:

- a) The agency staff will keep lines of communication open with the physicians that question our services.
 1. State entered into an agreement with a 3rd party agency (Optum) to evaluate individuals for eligibility of services and provide information for admittance into programs (there is chatter that this will be discontinued in early 2024, nothing official on this yet).
 2. The agency will provide informational packets that describe our services to health clinics to educate PCP, staff and stakeholders, as needed.
- b) The agency will participate in community awareness activities as well as provide many community options (entertainment, recreation, volunteer activities, religious, etc.) to the individuals we support to limit attitudinal barriers that may exist in the community.
 1. Adults and children attending center-based services will participate in field trips within the community
 2. Adults and children will participate in local parades and other community activities
 3. AR Works/Employment 1st job coaches and leadership will develop business contacts within the community that offer job placement opportunities that promote meaningful employment for our consumers.

- c) Various leadership personnel within our agency will be members of local service organizations in order to have the opportunity to inform the community about the agency and its purpose.
 1. The agency will pay membership dues
 2. The agency will allow staff time off work with pay to fulfill membership commitments
 3. The agency will seek community organization involvement with our consumer activities.
 - d) All invitations to speak at service organizations, churches, focus groups, etc. will be accepted. Leadership employees will include in the program handouts that provide information on how to communicate with and treat persons with disabilities.
2. Employees may not be familiar with the various ways to support their consumer in the community and use proper terminology when in public.

Recommendation for solution:

- a) Staff members will receive training in community integration and normalization practices and proper verbiage to use.
 1. All new-hires will attend required training.
 2. Annual training review topics will include CI.
Staff members will continuously involve themselves in training related to the abilities and limitations of persons with disabilities while learning to look at the person's strengths and minimize the impact of their limitations.
 3. The agency will seek out positive training materials, speakers or conferences for employees.
3. New State Senators and Representatives many times do not have the background or knowledge-base to understand the DD programs offered through Medicaid and many see the need to reduce Medicaid spending and bend the cost curve for services.
 - a) The agency will remain an active member of the Provider Association (DDPA).
 - b) The management staff will make contact and call local Representatives and Senators to invite them to visit the facility.
 - c) The management staff will respond to Legislative Alerts sent through DDPA and will make necessary contact prior to votes affecting our services.
 - d) The Executive Director and management staff will remain engaged in discussions with local legislators.

ARCHITECTURAL:

Although the Program Directors have primary responsibility for evaluating the architectural accessibility needs of individuals served, all staff members are charged with this responsibility. Plans for corrective action will be reviewed by the program directors, Administrative staff and/or the Board of Directors with implementation occurring as soon as practical and as monies are identified in the budget.

A review of all sites will be conducted at least two times each year to identify any accessibility barriers. Recommendations will be forwarded to the administrative office and then to the ED, for inclusion in the Accessibility Plan. The on-site supervisor will address issues as they arise, and/or consult with the ED to be included in the agency's Accessibility Plan. (Space for request is on the MESH monitoring sheet.)

Strengths:

1. ADA approved playground equipment at preschools.
2. The administration building includes a wheelchair ramp, wide hallways and office doorways that meet ADA standards.
3. DCC Monticello's building includes many ADA Features.
4. DCC- Hamburg was designed using many ADA standards, although some barriers have been identified
5. DCC-Star City is one level with wide surfaces and handicap accessible bathrooms.
6. Discovery Skills Center – the center is on one level allowing for access to all consumers. Hallways are wide and designated bathrooms are wheelchair accessible. Ventilation is good, each room has its own air/heat system to better control the environmental temperature. The building has 2 accessible entrances that do not require steps or use of a ramp. The rooms have a good source of natural lighting.
7. Handicap accessible parking is available at the administration office, Monticello and Hamburg preschools and Discovery Skills Center.

Weaknesses:

1. **DCC- Hamburg** – This site provides services to children ages 3 months to 5 years.

There are no automatic doors to the entrance or classrooms. Knobs on classroom doors may be hard to operate for some individuals in wheelchairs or with limitations on the use of their hands or arms. Automatic doors would be better.

Facility does not have alarms with both lights and sound; however it does have emergency lighting in case power is lost.

Recommendation for solution:

- a) When possible, add automatic doors to the budget for DCC Hamburg.

Alternative: Staff will be available during arrival and departure times to assist consumers and families with the entry doors and throughout the day to assist with classroom and bathroom doors, as needed. All Center staff will assist consumers throughout the day with entering/leaving through doors within the center. All center staff will assist during drills or emergency evacuations.

- b) Flashlights are available in each room and throughout in common areas.

2. DCC- Star City

Weaknesses:

4. No concrete or asphalt poured accessible parking

Recommendation for Solution:

Alternatives:

- a) Handicap accessible signs will be placed at the program site; staff will assist with loading and unloading of any child needing assistance.

3. DCC- Monticello

None noted

4. Discovery Skills Center

The following weaknesses were noted:

- There are no automatic entry doors
- Emergency lighting does not include sound

Recommendations for Solutions:

- a) The automatic entry doors are cost prohibitive at this time. The agency will designate staff to take bus duty on a daily basis to assist individuals with entry into the building. Also, consumers that are physically able to assist with the doors in the morning may be asked to help their peers.
- b) Emergency lighting with alarms will be added to the improvement plan.
Alternative: all classrooms are equipped with a flashlight and all areas have

an emergency exit map posted. Monthly drills are completed so that the adult consumers can learn exits from various parts of the building.

5. Administration Building, Monticello – Houses the business and personnel office.

Weaknesses:

- a) No alarm system with lights and sounds.
- b) Bathroom sinks are not wheelchair accessible.
- c) Soap dispensers are not reachable by wheelchair.
- d) Doors are not automatic.
- e) Kitchen is not wheelchair accessible.

Recommendation for solution:

- a) Installation of an alarm system with lights and sounds will be included in the Accessibility plan and a date for the removal of the barrier will be set and addressed as funds are available.
 - 1. Alternative: all offices will have a flashlight available for use and will assist any consumer, visitor or employee with exiting the building. Emergency Exit maps are located throughout the building and Safety Officers will conduct a monthly fire drill to enable staff to learn proper exiting procedures and location of all exits.
- b) Reconfiguration of the administration office bathrooms will be added to the improvement plan and will be addressed as funds are available.
 - 1. Alternative: hand sanitizer will be made available and placed within reach of any individual using the restroom.
- c) Administrative managers obtained cost projections for changing out the front door to automatic. The cost is considered prohibitive due to the need for a full re-design and additional space needed for the door to operate.
 - 1. Alternative: Administrative employees are available to assist with entry into the building.
- d) A kitchen remodel is cost prohibitive at this time. Should the need arise for there to be modifications to the kitchen which is only used by a few administrative staff, it will be looked at and bids will be received for widening the doorways and lowering the sink.

COMMUNICATION and TECHNOLOGY:

Recognizing that communication is essential in achieving our mission and assisting our consumers with understanding services available to them, our organization will continue to examine various means of communication through training and staying abreast of new technology. Wherever possible, the agency will assist with the acquisition of needed technological devices that can be used to assist consumers and employees with day-to-day activities.

Strengths:

- Materials for persons served are written in understandable language and pictures are frequently used to help with understanding.
- Staff is always available to assist individuals with answering questions and with completing necessary paperwork.
- Waiver Specialists remain current with funding and other resources available and offer referral services to providers that can assist with acquisitions.
- The agency will purchase Ipads and software to be used by non-verbal consumers during programming, as needed, and if funds are available.
- The IT plan includes a rotation that will allow computers taken out of office service to be transferred to the preschool or adult development program for use in programming.
- The agency provides for interpreters, as requested.
- The agency has a website that is user-friendly and is used to disseminate information about upcoming events, conferences, training, our mission statement, performance analysis, etc. (www.advantageseak.org)
- The agency provides any written material in an alternative format (Spanish, large print, etc.) if requested.
- Annual Strategic planning considers population growth in our minority and non-English speaking population.
- Individual consumer plans include a needs assessment and some funding for assistive technology.
- The agency does have a TTY system through Arkansas Relay Systems, available at no cost to the agency or individuals needing to use the TTY system.

Weaknesses:

- Lack of staff knowledge of sensory and communicative disabilities.
- Rural area has limited network of volunteers and/or contractors to provide interpretive services.
- Limited agency computers for consumers to use in communicating (loan, purchase, or on-site use).
- There is a lack of external funding for alternative communication devices.
- Staff members may not be aware of alternative ways to communicate effectively with their non-verbal consumer.

Recommendation for solution:

- a. Use therapy consultants and special education teachers to assist with developing individualized books for non-verbal consumers to use to express needs or desires and train support staff in alternative forms of communication.
- b. Hire staff that are bilingual.

- c. Analyze demographic material annually to stay abreast of changing ethnic population growth and address any need for an increase in this activity.
- d. Maintain a list of generic service providers that may assist with the purchase or loan of alternative communication devices when Medicaid will not pay.
 - o Alternative may be to use Family Support Funds as payer of last resort.
 - o Refer to Arkansas Rehabilitative Services to purchase, receive without fee, or borrow adaptive equipment.
- e. IT Plan will include a schedule to recycle old office computers to be used at the preschools and adult center.
- f. Maintain user-friendly website and include questions regarding the website on the annual review.
- g. Provide training material that instructs on alternative methods of communicating.
- h. Management staff will continue training in alternative methods of communication and new devices or software.
- i. Will use Facebook, website and other internet based media to disseminate information to employees, families, consumers, and the public.

TRANSPORTATION:

Strengths:

- The agency has been successful each of the last 10 plus applications with receiving a Section 5310 grant for the purchase of a new van.
- The agency has been financially solvent for each of the last 17 years and has been able to purchase vans from existing funds.
- Each Waiver Plan of Care can include transportation reimbursement to direct-care staff when the transportation is for community integration purposes.
- Fleet of Agency-owned vehicles used to transport to center-based services
- The agency has vehicles available for unexpected transportation needs of consumers when the companion staff is unable to use their own vehicle.

Weaknesses:

- Rural area with no public transportation.
- Medicaid does not provide reimbursement for medical miles for agency staff to transport the consumer. Securing a Medicaid transportation provider to transport a consumer requires communication of information at least 48 hours in advance. Consumers with behavior issues are often not allowed to use Medicaid transportation.

Additional Notes:

Neither Ashley, Drew, Bradley nor Lincoln Counties have public transit. It is also hard to schedule Medical Transportation Services because of the distance to specialists in Little Rock.

Recommendation for solution:

- a. The agency will continue to apply for Arkansas 5310 grants to purchase new vans. There is a backlog in this process due to Covid-19. Vans approved in FY 20 are just now being released to agencies. Other vans will be purchased as funds are available.
- b. Administrative staff will stay active in the Arkansas Statewide Transit Coordination Plan work group to study transportation needs within the state.
- c. Waiver Specialists will continue to assist consumers with making reservations for medical transportation. If the consumer does not have funds available to pay for the staff member's cost to ride the Medicaid Transport Vehicle, the agency will access Family Support/Title XX Funding.

ENVIRONMENTAL:

Recognizing that environmental factors can have a profound effect on the individuals that we serve as well as agency staff, our organization will continue to strive to provide service sites that are free from environmental barriers. Environmental barriers may occur in the home of the consumer, the work-site of consumers and employees, or in physical office or service sites. Such barriers will be addressed, as required, in quarterly health and safety meetings. Upon discovering that such a barrier exists, a corrective action plan will be developed. Implementation of this plan will occur as soon as practical and as monies are identified in the budget.

Strengths:

- Monthly inspections at all locations.
- The agency has a method to allow for consumers, families, or staff members to request an accommodation of their work setting or in home modifications.
- The management team reviews all requests and applies the appropriate ADA rules and regulations. Modifications or accommodations will be included in the Accessibility Plan for any reasonable request within guidelines.
- A review is completed at entry and during the annual review process to identify any needs for home modifications or other types of assistive devices needed to assist the consumer with living as independently as possible within the community.
- All plans must address environmental needs.

Weaknesses:

- Funding for in-home modifications for waiver consumers is limited to approval by individual PASSEs and has limitations such as the modification cannot add square footage or value to the property. There is also a monetary cap of \$7,687.50 annually.
- There is no funding available for environmental modifications for children or adults that are not served through the waiver.
- Available affordable housing in areas the consumer will feel safe (see housing pg 18).

Recommendation for Solution:

- a. Waiver Specialists will request that the PASSE care coordinator request the environmental modification on the waiver plan of care
- b. Center Directors/Supervisors/Waiver Specialists can submit any need for an environmental modification of a consumer's home to the Executive Director for consideration or to be placed in the Accessibility Management Plan. If the accommodation and the individual or family meets criteria for use of Family Support funding and the home is owned, not rented, the Executive Director may approve the request, if funds are available.
- c. Center Directors/Supervisors/Waiver Specialists will refer the individual or family to other providers that may offer assistance with the accommodation needed.
- d. Center Directors/Supervisors will assist any employee in making a request for an accommodation for any environmental barrier concern.

FINANCIAL:

Staff and board members of the agency understand the importance of finances and the direct impact that these finances have on agency personnel, individuals served, and the community at large. The agency will strive to maintain sufficient funds for each and every program of the agency. The agency also pledges to advocate not only at local levels, but also at legislative levels for increased funds. The agency staff members will work together to promote activities to directly raise monies for support of programs and the individuals served via our programs.

Strengths:

- The agency uses a Strategic and Risk Management Plan to guide the agency by addressing financial risks and implementing the strategy to face the risk
- The agency staff continually assists individuals served with obtaining and/or maintaining their funding sources and accessing entitlement programs. The agency actively applies for grants and the agency maintains membership in the statewide provider association to stay abreast of any adverse legislation that could affect funding.
- The agency has reserves available to adequately function within standards.

- The agency has not had a material audit exception included in the annual audit in the past 18 years.
- Financial Policies and controls are in place to enable management to closely monitor spending vs. income.
- The Professional Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards allow for employees or other interested parties to report waste, fraud and abuse without fear of reprisal.
- The agency conducts regular reviews of internal documents.
- Monthly financial reports are given to the Board for review and show revenue and expenses against budgeted allocations and year-to-date figures.
- The agency offers bookkeeping assistance to waiver consumers at no expense to them.
- Waiver Specialists offer budgeting advice to consumer's and financial goals are placed in the individual's plan of care as needed
- The agency has a procedure in place to implement corrective action when a division within the agency shows an unexplained loss for 3 consecutive months.
- The agency provides budgeting and bookkeeping support to consumers without a fee for service. Records are kept by individual consumer and reviewed with the consumer regularly.

Weaknesses:

- Program hours of 7:30 to 3:30 do not give any additional leeway for late arrivals due to Medicaid billing requirements of whole hours.
- The agency relies on Medicaid funding for operations. Medicaid funding levels are adversely affected by the health of the economy. Furthermore, it is not yet understood how Medicaid may be affected by Federal Legislation in 2023-2024.
- Children's services require a third party entity to perform a development screening on all children referred for services prior to seeking a prior authorization for a full developmental assessment. Children's services also require a child to qualify for at least one therapy and be developmentally assessed before entering services.
- There is no other funding source to allow us to serve eligible people that do not qualify for Medicaid, TEFRA (Tax Equity and Fiscal Responsibility Act) or ArKids A. DDPA is considering pushing for legislation to allow ArKids B to be a funding source for services. This is in part due to the ending of the PHE and the sudden change in the economy. Higher wages for working families pushed members to ArKids B because there has not been an adjustment in the gross family income limit.

Recommendation for solution:

- a. The agency will conduct a feasibility study for including private pay services for before and after school childcare and for a summer program of school-aged children. The changes with the preschool pay structure and proposed limitations of the number of allowable hours to bill per day may require that the hours of operation change to accommodate all allowable

developmental intervention and prescribed therapies. Management staff will continue to follow proposed regulations and advocate on the state level, as needed.

- b. Management staff will attend all Medicaid information meetings and will track proposed federal changes in funding.
- c. The Executive Director will remain involved in the Provider Association and be active in planning alternative methods for funding.
- d. The Executive Director will maintain contact with Federal and State representatives in regards to issues that will affect Advantages, Inc.'s ability to provide services to our consumers with or without a funding source.
- e. Apply for grants and hold fund raising events to supplement funding.
- f. Explore other funding streams for possible changes in services offered.

EMPLOYMENT:

Strengths:

- Advantages, Inc.'s Personnel Policies and Procedures prohibit discrimination of any sort based on a person's disability or any other Federally protected class.
- The agency will address all written requests for workplace accommodations and strive to meet reasonable requests.
- The agency will make appropriate referrals to other provider agencies, as needed.
- The agency completes a monthly safety check that addresses any newly identified accessibility barrier.
- The agency offers part-time employment to qualifying individuals attending the adult development program.
- The agency added Supported Employment to the Waiver Certification and has several individuals certified as job coaches.

Weaknesses:

- Lack of understanding by family members and/or consumers of benefits to working vs. the reduction in their monthly SSI check.
- Consumers must have the ability to work with a level of independence and without close supervision
- Lack of employers willing to work with the agency in supported employment efforts.
- Transportation services to and from a consumer's workplace is not reimbursable and there are no public transportation options.

Additional Notes:

The agency is receiving consultation services through a DHS/ARS grant for implementing AR Works/Employment 1st Supported Employment program.

Recommendation for solution:

- a. The adult center will include goals and objectives in consumer plans that include learning skills needed to advance to employment.
- b. Continue to work with statewide organization and work groups to redefine Medicaid services and supported employment in Arkansas that includes lobbying Congress/Senate to enhance funding for supported employment.
- c. Will seek training materials for consumers, family members and other concerned parties regarding the “Working Disabled” program, or host a speaker.
- d. Executive Director will address the possibility of building a fleet to transport consumers to and from work locations for a small fee.
- e. The agency will build business relationships with area employers.

Note: The agency sees Employment 1st/Supported Employment as a new revenue stream when/if the program begins to move forward at a steadier pace.

ANCILLARY SERVICES- THERAPY AND DAY HABILITATION:

Weaknesses:

All Centers

Funding for services is limited to Medicaid-eligible children and adults only. Currently Private Pay Insurance does not cover center-based services. Therefore, although they meet eligibility requirements, these individuals cannot be served without a funding source.

Rural nature of our service area translates into a large population of need, but a low number of therapists to meet the need. There is a shortage of Therapists in all disciplines in southeast Arkansas which breeds salary competition for therapists.

Preschools:

An EIDT facility has been excluded as meeting the Federal Early Intervention meaning of “natural environment” although children between birth and 5 years of age are often found in a preschool setting. Therefore, we cannot provide therapy services at the EIDT facility on an out-patient basis. Most therapy providers would rather see children in one location rather than travel the rural area we are located in to provide a short service. This decision may eliminate some children from service.

Recommendation for Solution:

- a) The rural nature of the Southeast area of Arkansas presents a problem with accessibility to medical and therapy services. The agency will continue to

advertise for therapists and try to locate therapy firms to contract with for needed services. At the time of this writing, we have a full therapy staff that is shared between EIDT centers.

- b) As an alternative, all children qualifying for ancillary therapy services will receive notification of the child's qualification and a referral list of other providers that may be able to provide the services. Staff will assist in the transition of services.
- c) The agency will arrange for a hearing specialist to provide hearing screenings at each center.

Adult Development

Strengths:

- Good location and open building flow
- Abundance of fun activities and socialization through field trips and outside sources
- PCP's do not question the need for services and quickly write prescriptions

Weaknesses:

- Therapy can only be offered to adults if they attend an ADDT facility.
- Transition from High School to Adult Development Program
 - High School Special Education Departments are not consistently including us in transition meetings due to transition conferences starting at age 16 and a true lack of understanding of our programs.

Recommendation for Solution:

- Appropriate management staff will maintain relationships with area school counselors to remind them to invite the agency to transition conferences for high school students.

HOUSING:

Strengths:

Waiver Specialists are knowledgeable and available to assist with obtaining Section 8 housing applications and available landlords.

Weaknesses:

- a. The agency provides Waiver CES Services in 14 counties located in SE Arkansas. The area is very rural and economically depressed. There is a lack of affordable housing and low income rentals which presents issues for consumers desiring access to community living. Coupled with the

problem of a lack of general housing is the attitudinal barrier that exists with the property owners and sometimes neighbors.

- b. Affordable housing often is only found in depressed, unsafe areas of the communities where individuals are served. Parents/guardians of adults fear for the safety of their family member, thus often keep them at home rather than letting them live in their own apartment, which limits the consumer's ability to fully grow as members of a larger society.
- c. Property owners are at times afraid to rent to one of our consumers because the consumer must be the leasee and they are unsure of their ability to get rental payments or evict the consumer.

We have had consumers in the past with difficult behavior problems whereby rental property has been destroyed. However, if the consumer does not have the means to repair the damage, the agency has always done so as a good faith gesture to property owners so that future rentals would not be influenced by a bad experience.

There have also been issues, with some of our consumers who have difficult behaviors, of neighbor complaints. The neighbors of consumers have called the property owner to complain about activities/behaviors of the consumer living in their rental property. This influences whether or not the property owner will rent to our consumers.

- d. The lack of housing, coupled with the transition from one of the State's Human Development Centers, causes a long waiting period for a person to transition into the community. Additionally, an individual leaving a HDC does not have furniture, appliances, kitchen needs, start up food and supplies and other household item or funds available for deposits. They also have only SSI; therefore, unless they can get a housing subsidy, they do not have the means to live in their community of choice, often prolonging the transition process.

Recommendations for solution:

- a. The agency staff will make every effort to assure property owners that the agency will guarantee that any damages to their property would be repaired.
- b. Care Coordinators through the PASSEs will assist with the application and re-certification for Section 8 housing vouchers for consumers.
- c. The agency will promote full access to community based housing for individuals with developmental disabilities by maintaining relationships with property owners that offer property for lease and assist individuals in obtaining Section 8 housing vouchers to ensure full access to community life and prevent further institutionalization.

- d. The agency will use our media and other community outreach agencies to try and secure needed household items for those we serve.
- e. The agency will use private fund donations or available grant money to assist with the start-up costs for consumer's transitioning from an HDC into our services.

COMMUNITY INTEGRATION:

Strengths:

- All ITP's (Individual Treatment Plans) address any recognized barrier and plans for reducing the barrier.
- The agency understands that consumers must have all ancillary services they qualify for to effectively live in the least restrictive setting and prevent institutionalization.
- The agency is a member of the local Athletic Club that covers both employees and consumers
- The agency is involved in Special Olympics
- Center-based services for children and adults use field trips as a learning tool and to integrate consumers into different community activities.
- The agency accesses State/Title XX grant funds to assist with paying activity fees.

Weaknesses:

- Consumers live on a very limited budget and the largest part of their monthly earnings goes towards rent and utilities, leaving very little for other needs. Access to food stamps, Section 8 housing, personal care, and medical appointments is obtained through an application process.
- Ancillary services require a long application process that would eliminate many of our consumers from receiving services because of their inability to complete the forms or express their needs.

Recommendations for solutions:

- a. The agency waiver specialists will continue to assist all consumers with obtaining applications and directing them to their care coordinator for assistance in completing applications for food stamps, utility assistance, commodities, healthcare, etc.
- b. The agency will monitor community action groups and advise consumers when there are additional free or affordable services available and will notify consumers and staff through a posting on the website, posting at service site or by phone.
- c. The agency will include a newsletter with calendar of events on the website to inform the public of our services

and will continue to build relationships with the surrounding local school districts.

- d. The agency will use social media to try and secure donations of needed goods and items needed for independent living.
- e. The agency will access individual support grant funds for individual consumers attending the adult center that will be earmarked for costs of field trips and other outings.

IDENTIFIED BARRIER AND PLAN FOR REMOVAL FY 2023

Coding for Chart:

Priority		Cost				
A = This year B= Next year C= 3 years D= Continual		Staff Time	\$= 1-99	\$\$ 100-500	\$\$\$ 500++	
BARRIER	SOLUTION	PRIORITY	COST	STATUS	DUE DATE	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
ATTITUDINAL						
Perception of community of people with disabilities as contributing members of the community.	1. Increase volunteer activities where we give back to the community through service organizations and include consumers whenever possible in volunteer activities					Agency Staff
	a. 4 volunteer activities during FY for staff and/or with participation of consumers	A & D	Loss of billing \$\$		June 2024	Center Dirs., Cons. Council
	b. plan 4 field trip opportunities for consumer Community Integration	A & D	Loss of billing & activity cost \$\$\$		June 2024	Center Dir. & Lead Instructor
	c. Srv Org Memberships- 6 management staff	A & D	Staff time & dues \$\$		June 2024	Supervisors, or designee
	2. Publicity of volunteer and other activities.					
	a. 5 articles per FY (newsletter, website, Facebook, media)	A & D	Staff Time Ad costs \$\$		June 2024	Exe. Dir, Supervisors, Management Team
Staff may not be aware of “people first” language or how to support their consumer in the community	3. Distribute informational packets at various community events or speaking engagements.					
	a. attend transition conf at public schls	A & D	Staff time \$		March 2024	ADDT Director
	1. Training will include how to focus on abilities rather than disabilities and “people first” topics/language.					
a. Purchase training material, send staff to conf/training or host speakers	A & D	Staff Time & training costs \$\$\$		June 2024	Exe. Director w/input from Mgmt Team	

<p>New Legislators need to be informed about importance of community-based services and Medicaid funding</p> <p>Dev. business contacts to inform them about benefits of hiring our consumers</p>	<p>Management will stay abreast of legislative issues affecting services</p> <p>a. remain active member of DDPA</p> <p>b. contact Rep/Senator for our service area to visit our facility</p> <p>c. follow legislative alerts and “call to action” reports and respond appropriately</p> <p>ADDT Director will proceed with Employment 1st program</p>	<p>A & D</p> <p>A & D</p> <p>A & D</p>	<p>Staff Time \$\$\$</p> <p>Staff Time \$</p> <p>Staff Time \$</p> <p>Staff Time \$\$</p>		<p>Renew annually</p> <p>As needed</p> <p>As needed</p> <p>June 2024</p>	<p>Exe Dir</p> <p>Exe Dir, Bd Members, Mgmt Team</p> <p>Exe Dir, Bd Members, Mgmt Team</p> <p>ADDT Director</p>
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COMMUNICATION and Technology	SOLUTION	PRIORI TY	COST	STATUS	DUE DATE	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
Lack of staff knowledge of sensory and communication disabilities	1. Provide CI during new hire training	A, B, & D	Staff Time & training costs \$		On-going	New Hire Trainer
	2. Annual review training will include CI	A, B, & D	Print cost \$\$		Dec 2024	ADF&HR
	3. Staff meetings, trainings/conf done by outside entities	A&D	Staff time, Cost of materials or speaker \$\$\$		June 2024	Exe Dir/Center Dirs.
Limited network of volunteers or contractors for interpreting services for Spanish or deaf	1. Maintain the list of people who work with the agency for fee for service	A&D	Staff time and interpreter costs \$\$		On-going	ADF&HR Center Directors
	2. Hire or maintain English/Spanish speaking staff at each location	A&D	\$\$\$+		As needed	Center Directors
	3. Use demographic information for strategic planning for staffing & programming needs	A&D	Staff time \$		June 2024	Exe Dir & Mgmt Team
Limited computers available for consumer use for communication	Use the IT plan as basis for rotating used computers	A,B,&D	\$\$		June 2024	IT Specialist
Alternative communication for non-verbal consumers	Work with therapy/teaching staff and consumers to assess ability to verbalize or gesture needs and develop a picture book or cards to assist them with communication	A&D	\$\$		June 2024	All staff as requested

Communication regarding the agency, services and events is not easily disseminated and available to community	Annual review of website/facebook page that is user friendly and posts information about the agency, services and events and obtain annual input as to its' "friendliness"	A&D	Staff time & contract labor \$\$		May 2024	Exe Dir/IT
Lack of technology used to assist individuals served in communicating their needs	<p>Research computer technology, phone technology, etc and resources available to assist with purchase.</p> <p>a. Refer to AR Rehab or other generic service provider</p> <p>b. Use Family Support Funding as payer of last resort for needed equipment</p>	A&D	<p>Staff time \$</p> <p>Staff time \$</p> <p>Agency match \$\$\$</p>		<p>On-going</p> <p>As needed</p> <p>As needed</p>	<p>All staff as requested</p> <p>ADDT Director</p> <p>WS's</p>

TRANSPORTATION	SOLUTION	PRIORITY	COST	STATUS	DUE DATE	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
Lack of public transportation within community	1. Stay active with Statewide Coordination activity	A&D	Staff Time \$		June 2024	Exe Director
	2. Apply for federal funding for purchase of new vans	A&D	Staff time for contract &/or grant prep Plus match= \$\$\$		June 2024	ADF&HR
Access to Medical Transportation provider takes the ability to communicate where/when the consumer needs to go for services	1. Case managers will assist by scheduling transportation for the consumer as needed	A&D	Staff time \$		On going As needed	WS
Cost of Medical transportation with the Medicaid provider only covers the consumer- not escort staff	1. Access family support funds, as needed	A	Staff time \$		As needed	WS
No local transit system to assist consumer to get to/from work	1. Research use of agency cars to begin a transport serv with possible small fee	A	Staff Time \$		June 2024	Exe Dir

FINANCIAL	SOLUTION	PRIORITY	COST	STATUS	DUE DATE	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
<p>The agency operates on Medicaid funding for services. The economy is the driving force for cuts.</p>	<p>1. Look at alternative funding a) Apply for grants as they become available.</p>	A&D	Staff Time \$		Ongoing	Exe Dir & ADF&HR
	<p>b)The agency will remain a member of DDPA and management will attend funding meetings and stay involved in statewide Medicaid reform</p>	A&D	Staff time \$\$\$ dues		Ongoing	Exe Dir & ADF&HR & Center Directors
	<p>c)Management staff will stay in contact with legislative representatives at federal and state levels to educate them in how policies affect our ability to serve consumers.</p>	A&D	Staff Time \$		Ongoing	Executive Director
	<p>d) Conduct 2 fundraising events</p>	A&D	Staff time \$		June 2024	Center Directors
	<p>e)Will explore other methods of payment such as private pay and longer operating hours for voucher recipients</p>	A&D	Staff time \$		June 2024	Exe Dire & Cen Dir
	<p>f) Will conduct a survey to gage interest and need for extending hours of operation upon enrollment of several voucher participants</p>	A	Staff Time \$		June 2024	Exe Dir
	<p>g)Research other funding sources 1. ABC slots 2. Emp Transportation 3. Children’s services 4. Personal Care 5. Head Start</p>	A	Staff Time \$		June 2024	Exe Dir, & Mgmt Team

SERVICES Therapy/Day Hab	SOLUTION	PRIORITY	COST	STATUS	DUE DATE	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
Enhance the public's awareness of our programs	a) Attend transition conferences	A	Staff Time \$		May 2024	ADDT Director
	b) Work with ARS/DHS to inform local LEA of Employment 1 st requirements and pre job skills training.	A&D	Staff Time \$		June 2024	Exe Director/ADDT Director
	c) Outcome measures will track enrollment process and set goals for timeframe	A&D	Staff Time \$		June 2024	Exe Director

BARRIER	SOLUTION	PRIORITY	COST	STATUS	DUE DATE	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
ARCHITECTURAL						
Administration Building						
Bathroom sinks in the admin building are not wheelchair accessible and soap dispensers are not within reach of wheelchair	Will rework the cabinetry to allow for wheelchair to access sink. In the meantime, the agency will provide antiseptic gel to clean hands.	C	\$\$\$ +		July 2025	Exe. Dir./ADF&HR
Entry doors are not automatic	Staff assist with entry and exit as appropriate due to major building construction costs to reconfigure entrance.	C	\$\$\$+		July 2025	Exe Dir
No alarm systems with lights and sounds.	Will use air horns/whistles to signal alarm. All offices have flashlights. Exits are lighted. Assistance will be given to people needing it. This will continue to be on the plan and reviewed annually for installation funding.	A&D	\$\$		June 2025	Exe Dir
Kitchen may not be accessible to larger wheelchairs	There is no current issue. If an issue arises, the agency will consider any reasonable accommodation needed or requested.	As needed	\$\$\$		As needed & reviewed annually	Exe Dir

Star City Preschool						
Does not have designated ADA parking	Designate a spot for a sign to be at all locations until asphalt parking lot is poured	A	\$\$		June 2026	Center Director
Hamburg Preschool						
No alarm with both sound and lights	Temporary solutions: Flashlights/emergency exit maps posted and staff assistance	A	Estimates are \$5,000 and up		June 2024	Center Director
Doors do not have automatic access	Staff will assist as needed	A	Staff time \$		June 2025	Center Director
Adult Development						
No automatic doors	Will replace as funds are available- temporary will use staff and other consumers to assist	C	Remodel of entryway will be required \$\$\$+		June 2024	Exe Dir
Emergency lighting does not have sound	Will use flashlights, emergency exit maps and staff assistance as temp solution Will install as funds are available	C	\$\$\$		June 2024	Exe Dir

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EMPLOYMENT	SOLUTION	PRIORITY	COST	STATUS	DUE DATE	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
Lack of understanding by family members about loss of Medicaid check when earning money	Get a speaker and host a family/consumer meeting	A&D	\$\$		June 2024	Exe Director
Jobs within the community for consumers are limited to those that need only minimal supervision	Include goals/objectives in the adult dev plans that will assist the consumer in learning skills necessary to work independently	A&D	Staff time \$		On-going	ADDT Director
Lack of Supported employment funding and partners	Develop partnerships with area employers	A&D	Staff Time \$		Ongoing	Exe Dir/ADDT Director

HOUSING	SOLUTION	PRIORITY	COST	STATUS	DUE DATE	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
Lack of safe/affordable housing in the area and assure landlords they are safe to rent for our consumers	a) will maintain a list of landlords with Section 8 housing	A	Staff time \$		On-going	Waiver Specialists
	b)will work with possible landlords to ensure coverage for damage	A	Staff time \$		On-going	Waiver Specialists
	c)assist with app for section 8	A&D	Staff time \$		As needed	Waiver Specialists

Start-up needs when a consumer transitions from HDC	housing access generic funding sources or use facebook and other media to ask for donations of goods	A&D	Staff time \$		As needed	Waiver Specialists/IT
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Community Integration	SOLUTION	PRIORITY	COST	STATUS	DUE DATE	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
Limited budget to use for recreational use	a) access grant funds to hold in consumer account for field trips/recreation	A&D	Agency match \$\$\$		June 2024	WS/ADDT Director
	b)keep membership at athletic club	A&D	\$\$\$		On-going	ED & ADF&HR
Lengthy applications for generic services needed to continue independent living	Assist consumers with applications for generic services	A&D	Staff time \$		On-going	WS/PASSEs
Lack of communication of community resources	Use newsletters, facebook, website and other social media to inform consumers and families of various community resources as they become available and to request needed donations of goods	A&D	Staff time \$		On-going	WS/IT

Environmental	SOLUTION	PRIORITY	COST	STATUS	DUE DATE	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
Environmental modification approval subject to each PASSE	a)Waiver Specialists will work with families to identify greatest need and notify the PASSE care coordinator of need	A&D	Staff time \$		On-going	WS

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