

**Achieve Tampa Bay
Accessibility Plan
Summary of October 2005 – September 2006 Results
Goals for October 2006 – September 2007**

INTRODUCTION: At the request of Achieve Management, Inc. Administrative Policies 9000 and 9010, the agency will develop an annual accessibility plan to address architectural, attitudinal, communication, employment, environmental, financial and transportation barriers to service. The plan is developed using input from program participants and staff via surveys, focus groups and other means. The plan is forwarded to the Board of Directors for review and approval.

ARCHITECTURAL BARRIERS TO SERVICE

Architectural Barriers Identified 2005-2006 and Accomplishments

- **Barrier:** Wheelchair accessible restrooms tend to become cluttered with storage items due to facility wide crowding and lack of space.
- **Accomplishment:** The Health and Safety Committee monitored this situation during facility inspections every other month and ensured restrooms remain clear for wheelchair access.
- **Barrier:** The automatic door switch in the lobby is too high, some light switches are not easily accessible to an individual in a wheelchair and many doors are difficult for an individual with limited strength and/or mobility to open.
- **Accomplishment:** We will include plans to permanently correct structural barriers when the building is remodeled. The timeline for completion is dependent on agency financial results and organizational long range strategic plans.
- **Barrier:** Directional and informational signs are not consistently posted in the facility.
- **Accomplishment:** Directional and informational signs have been posted in the facility.
- **Barrier:** The ramps enabling access to the Henry Avenue office are not under the covered drive-through area. This requires program participants in wheelchairs to navigate out of the covered area and into the rain to gain entry into the building.
- **Accomplishment:** The need for expanded ramps has been identified and was included in paving quotes for all Achieve Tampa Bay parking lots. As funds become available and this work is completed, ramp expansion will be accomplished.
- **Barrier:** It is very difficult for children with special needs to access a fitness program.
- **Accomplishment:** A grant allowed the therapy department to purchase fitness equipment that is being utilized by children with special needs.
- **Barrier:** The agency has three modular buildings and one permanent building with leaky roofs.
- **Accomplishment:** The agency applied for and was chosen by the West Coast Roofers Association as a charity roof project. The association replaced the three modular roofs and repaired the roof on the main building at Henry Avenue.
- **Barrier:** Leaking roofs increased the risk of mold and moisture in the three modular buildings.
- **Accomplishment:** Air quality testing of the facility was completed by AQC, Air Quality Consulting, Inc., Project #06-4115 on September 12, 2006. Recommendations were as follows: 1) Ensure modular units HVAC units work properly. 2) Repair Finance/Family Support modular rear wall. The former has been completed; the latter is being addressed at this time.
- **Barrier:** Achieve Tampa Bay continues to grow and expand and as such we have a continued need for additional space.
- **Plan and Timeline:** Achieve is working with architect Jonathan Moore of Rojo Architects to identify long term facility needs and to develop a plan for expansion.

ATTITUDINAL BARRIERS TO SERVICE

Attitudinal Barriers Identified 2005-2006 and Accomplishments

- **Barrier:** The agency recognizes that there continues to be many attitudinal barriers and that overcoming these barriers is a long term effort.
- **Accomplishment:** Achieve Tampa Bay donates many hours of staff time towards reducing attitudinal barriers encountered by program participants. Staff and management are active within the community and participated in the following groups and activities:
 - **Children's Future Hillsborough** - CFH is a collaborative that was created to provide an integrated network of care for early childhood services and supports in Hillsborough County. It is comprised of 22 collaborative partners whose common goal is to deliver individualized, family driven, and culturally competent services to children and families.
 - **The Mayor's Alliance for People With Disabilities** - Agency representatives participate in monthly meetings of this group whose goal is accessibility, employment and community outreach/awareness for people with disabilities.
 - **Parent to Parent Night** - Achieve's family support staff hosts this monthly meeting for parents of children with disabilities. The group is open to the community at large; participants do not have to receive services at Achieve to attend. Topics are generated by the parents and include subjects such as long term estate planning for a disabled child, transition to public school, and methods parents can employ in order to be an effective advocate for their child.
 - **Family Care Council** - Staff members participate in this parent driven advocacy group. While the Parent-to-Parent meeting primarily reaches and connects with parents of children with disabilities, this group is run by and for parents whose children are adults with disabilities.
 - **The Hillsborough Alliance for Citizens with Disabilities** - Achieve's Employment and Training Services Program manager is chair of this advocacy group that promotes awareness of disability issues in Hillsborough County.
 - **Early Childhood Council** - The agency is a member of this group that seeks to assure a comprehensive continuum of services to all children under eight with educational, medical or social service needs in Hillsborough County. The council promotes effective utilization of personnel and resources so that children are identified and receive services in a timely fashion.
 - **Early Steps** - The Therapy services manager meets regularly with this early intervention service coordination group to ensure services for children ages birth to three years.
 - **Disability Service Providers of America** - The mission of this group is to strengthen the effectiveness of direct service provider agencies by prioritizing, shaping and advocating for focused and targeted national policies and legislation that will result in the promotion and enhancement of services and supports to individuals with disabilities.
 - **Florida Association of Rehabilitation Facilities Meeting** - Staff attended this two-day meeting. Topics covered included Florida Medicaid reform plans and strategies. Early awareness of upcoming changes allows the agency to help prepare program participants and enables them to position themselves in a way that protects their service needs.
 - **Children's Campaign, Inc.** - The agency is a member of this non-partisan advocacy group committed to focusing on Florida's children. The group sponsors high visibility public awareness campaigns; provides information to the media; distributes material to voters, candidates and community leaders around the common goal of helping children and creating an environment where children's needs come first.

- **Sibshops** - The family support department runs this monthly support group for siblings of children that have special needs. Sibshops is open to anyone in the community regardless of whether family members receive services at Achieve.
- **United Way Day of Caring** - Achieve hosts work groups at the center in order to enable United Way contributors to better understand our programs and services.
- **Voices for Florida's Children** - Achieve belongs to this alliance whose purpose is to inform, inspire and empower Floridians to create safe and healthy communities where children and families can prosper. Voices for Florida's Children places children in the spotlight of public attention so their needs can be identified and problems addressed.
- **Community Health Fairs** - Achieve's program staff regularly participate in community health fairs to inform citizens about the availability of health and human services.
- **Child Care Outreach Program Newsletter** - Our CCO program circulates a newsletter to area child care providers outlining the services we offer to help integrate children with special needs into child care centers that have never cared for those children before.
- **Family Connections** - A newsletter circulated by the Family Support Program providing information on Community News and Events, Educational Information, and other topics pertinent to our families.
- **Florida Respite Coalition** - A staff member sits on the advisory committee for this group and also sits on the state board. The group's purpose is to promote access to respite services for individuals that need them and to provide technical assistance to respite providers throughout the state.
- **Seniors in Service** - Agency employees sit on the Community Advisory Council for this organization whose mission is to connect volunteers with elders in need.
- **Family Advisory Council** - These monthly meetings allow parents of children served by one of the Children's Future Hillsborough collaborative the opportunity to provide input into how they would like services to be accessed and delivered.
- **Therapy Program Medical Consultant** - A pediatric neurologist meets regularly with the therapy team. He provides input regarding the program outcome report, as well as recommendations of ways to more effectively communicate to physicians and other referral sources regarding Achieve Tampa Bay's programs and services.
- **Community Outreach** - Staff from the family support program spoke regarding Sibshops at a 4-day symposium on Barth Syndrome.
- **Pediatrician Tours** - Pediatricians from the University of South Florida's School of Medicine tour the center monthly. The purpose of the tour is to inform them about best practice service delivery for children with disabilities including information about therapy services, developmental preschool, CARF and NAEYC accreditations, respite services and other supports available to children with disabilities and their families.
- **Partnership with the USF Communication Science Disorders** - Achieve operated a therapy clinic until July 2006 in the CSD Department which trains speech language pathologists. This partnership enabled SLP's in training to obtain clinical experience in a "real world" setting.
- **Hillsborough County Black Families Coalition** - A staff member participates in this group whose goal is to provide a voice for black families in Hillsborough County.
- **Student Internships** - The therapy department works with several college students through internships, practicums, and volunteer experiences to educate future service providers.

- **Barrier:** Community leaders have limited understanding of what it is like to have a disability.
- **Accomplishment:** Community leaders from local leadership groups toured the agency and participated in disability simulation activities to enhance their understanding of the challenges people with disabilities face.
- **Barrier:** The agency recognizes that there continues to be many attitudinal barriers and that overcoming these barriers is a long term effort.
- **Plan and Timeline:** Achieve will continue our advocacy efforts in the community. The agency will develop a PR budget and process for the 2006-2007 fiscal year. Program managers will complete impact statements to be used in increasing awareness of ATB programs by 1/30/07.

COMMUNICATION BARRIERS TO SERVICE

Communication Barriers Identified 2005-2006 and Accomplishments

- **Barrier:** Consumers tell us that the proposed changes to the Medicaid system are adversely affecting their ability to obtain therapy services, medication and medical equipment. They requested we advocate in these areas.
- **Accomplishment:** The therapy manager composed letters to local congressional representatives regarding the impact of proposed Medicaid changes. This packet also contained letters from four families detailing their experiences with Medicaid and how these changes would affect their personal situations.
- **Barrier:** Parents of children that have autism have requested they be able to meet adults with autism so they can better understand what they might be able to expect as their children age.
- **Accomplishment:** A married couple, both of whom have disabilities, attended Parent-to-Parent Night. The husband has cerebral palsy and the wife has autism. They spoke to the group regarding their challenges in school and their experiences with the Employment and Supported Living Programs at Achieve Tampa Bay.
- **Barrier:** Parents of children with disabilities have requested help navigating the school system.
- **Accomplishment:** Two parents of children with disabilities spoke at the Parent-to-Parent meeting regarding their experiences with a child growing up in the system.
- **Barrier:** We have limited name recognition.
- **Accomplishment:** The therapy manager visits referral sources on a quarterly basis to deliver brochures and marketing items to keep our name visible. We have hired RFB Communications to position Achieve as the bay area expert on disabilities. Over the past 12 months we have been featured in newspaper articles regarding: disaster preparedness; Achieve volunteers; hiring individuals with disabilities; and Sibshops. The executive director, associate executive director, and an Achieve parent appeared on a local talk show, Speak-up Tampa Bay, to discuss the challenges of having a child with a disability. The Hernando County staff participated in the Hernando United Way annual telethon. The staff was interviewed during this program telling the audience about Achieve Tampa Bay and the services we provide in the Hernando area. The Achieve Foundation coordinates events to raise money and awareness about Achieve Tampa Bay. Programs are highlighted during these events. In the last year the Foundation coordinated three events in which Achieve clients were either present and/or program materials were prominently displayed to increase awareness about Achieve Tampa Bay programs and services.
- **Barrier:** Achieve recognizes that many families of children with disabilities do not realize what community services are available.
- **Accomplishment:** The therapy manager and associate executive director spoke to a group of parents from MacDill Air Force Base whose children have disabilities to inform them of available services.

- **Barrier:** The agency recognizes that many communication barriers exist and overcoming these is a long term effort.
- **Accomplishments:** Achieve Tampa Bay donates many hours of staff time towards reducing communication barriers encountered by program participants. Staff and management are active with the following groups:
 - **KIDDS Seminar** - Achieve's family support coordinator participated in a seminar at Shriners Hospital representing Achieve and Sibshops.
 - **STAND 'Statewide Advocacy Network on Disabilities' Pinellas Accessing Resources Conference (SPARC)** - a representative from the Achieve respite program manned a table at this conference and handed out materials regarding Achieve programs.
 - **Form Translation into Spanish** - More forms from the therapy, respite, employment and supported living programs were translated into Spanish.
 - **Children's Future Hillsborough Partnership Meetings** - The group reviews how CFH programs and services are performing and also plans for the future.
 - **Family Connections Newsletter** – Achieve's family support staff produce and distribute resource information to parents of children receiving therapy services each month.
 - **211 Tampa Bay** - Agency programs and services are listed in the 211 registry for Hillsborough, Pinellas, Pasco, Hernando and Citrus counties. Inclusion in this registry is another way the organization attempts to communicate our presence to the community.
 - **Information and Referral Services** - Agency employees respond to requests for information from the public on a variety of issues related to disabilities.
 - **Doula Digest** - The doula program distributes a monthly newsletter to consumers and potential consumers. The newsletter provides pregnancy and childbirth information and advertises doula services to the community.
- **Barrier:** Achieve Tampa Bay recognizes that program participants continuously encounter communication barriers.
- **Accomplishment:** Therapy staff attended augmentative communication device training in order to offer more options for families.
- **Plan and Timeline:** The Achieve Doula Program will purchase and utilize Spanish marketing and educational materials in 2006-2007 to ensure Spanish speaking clients have optimal access to materials that will affect positive birth outcomes

EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS TO SERVICE

Employment Barriers Identified 2005-2006 and Accomplishments

- **Barrier:** The agency recognizes there are many barriers to employment for individuals with disabilities and that overcoming these barriers is a long term effort.
- **Accomplishment:** Agency employees participate in the following activities to promote increased access to employment for persons with disabilities:
 - **Florida Alliance for People With Disabilities** - The employment program's manager is chair of this group that promotes access for people with disabilities on a state wide level.
 - **Project Connect** - Employment staff participate in this group whose goal is to promote a smooth transition for individuals with disabilities into the work force after completing school in Hillsborough County.
 - **CHORE** - Our employment program staff also participates in this Pinellas County group whose goals are similar to Project Connect.
 - **POST** - We are also active in this Pasco County group with goals similar to Project Connect and CHORE.

- **The Florida Rehabilitation Council** - Our employment program manager is the chair of the council. The council is charged with oversight of the state Vocational Rehabilitation Program.
- **Pathways and Partnerships Conference** - Employment staff present at this annual conference for students and parents of students transitioning from school to work.
- **Barrier:** The agency recognizes there are many barriers to employment for individuals with disabilities and that overcoming these barriers is a long term effort.
- **Plan and Time Line:** The agency will commit staff time and resources and continue to actively participate in the groups noted above through September 30, 2007. We are open to the possibility of joining new groups as needs are identified.

ENVIRONMENTAL BARRIERS TO SERVICE

Environmental Barriers Identified 2005-2006 and Accomplishments

- **Barrier:** The agency recognizes there will always be environmental barriers for individuals with disabilities.
- **Accomplishment:** Our supported living specialists work with individual apartment complex managers to enable supported living program consumers to reside in residences that are barrier free or have reduced barriers to access.

FINANCIAL BARRIERS TO SERVICE

Financial Barriers Identified 2005-2006 and Accomplishments

- **Barrier:** Organizations that have historically provided significant amounts of funding have restructured. There is the potential for Achieve to have funding reductions in the future.
- **Accomplishment:** The therapy program developed new community impact statements that are in alignment with major funder's restructuring plans.
- **Barrier:** Consumers are having more and more difficulty obtaining funding for medical, therapeutic and employment services.
- **Accomplishment:** The agency has provided the following efforts towards providing or advocating for funding for services essential for individuals with disabilities.
 - **Tampa Bay Health Care Collaborative** - An Achieve Manager was board president of this group whose mission is to promote access to health care for the underserved.
 - **Grant Funding for Therapy** - Achieve continues to seek grant funding for services to supplement what the agency receives through third party reimbursement and to assist families who may not have a pay source for services.
 - **Developmental Screenings** - Achieve's therapy department provides free developmental screenings twice a year in collaboration with the Family and School Support Team. These screenings help identify children that may be eligible for services in the public school system.
- **Barrier:** The agency recognizes that financial barriers will always exist for individuals with disabilities.
- **Plan and Time Line:** The agency will commit staff time and resources and continue to actively participate in the groups and activities noted above through September 30, 2007. Achieve is open to the possibility of joining new groups as needs are identified.

SUMMARY

Achieve Tampa Bay is a strong advocate for individuals with disabilities. Over the past year, the organization conducted or participated in ten training/community education efforts. Managers and employees were active with twenty one different committees that work to promote access for people with disabilities. The agency participated in fifteen different media events (newspaper articles, television spots and community fairs) to highlight disability issues. The physical facilities were modified to increase access and reduce architectural barriers; faucet handles were replaced with ADA approved models, restroom locks were lowered, a ramp was installed and several changing tables for adolescents and young adults were put into service. Achieve remains committed to improving access for individuals with disabilities and other barriers.