

**Achieve Tampa Bay  
Accessibility Plan  
Summary of October 2006 – September 2007 Results  
Goals for October 2007 – September 2008**

**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 2006-2007 and Accomplishments**

- **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:** 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:** Leaking roofs increased the risk of mold and moisture in the three modular buildings.
- **Accomplishment:** A repair of the moldy Finance/Family Support modular rear wall was completed.
- **Barrier:** The men and women hallway bathrooms at Henry Avenue were hard to access due to the shape of the door knobs.
- **Accomplishment:** New door knobs were put on so consumers could access restrooms independently.
- **Barrier:** There was not an accessible swing for children in wheelchairs who attended the Achieve Tampa Bay preschool.
- **Accomplishment:** A wheelchair accessible swing was installed in the Achieve Tampa Bay playground.
- **Barrier:** A foster mother with children receiving respite services through Achieve Tampa Bay needed adaptations to her home completed after taking over the care of a child in a wheelchair.
- **Accomplishment:** Achieve Tampa Bay's respite family support worker was able to help her find the funding for and see the project through completion.
- **Barrier:** It is difficult for children with special needs to access a fitness program.
- **Accomplishment:** The preschool utilized a grant to integrate the Stretch and Grow fitness program accessible to all children.
- **Barrier:** Achieve Tampa Bay continues to grow and expand and as such we have a continued need for additional space.
- **Plan and Timeline:** Achieve has plans completed by Jonathan Moore of Rojo Architects to identify long term facility needs and to develop a plan for expansion. A presentation to the Board of Directors has been given identifying our growth in services but not in space. The presentation

highlights our needs and requests the start of a Capital Campaign to raise funds for a new facility.

## **ATTITUDINAL BARRIERS TO SERVICE**

### **Attitudinal Barriers Identified 2006-2007 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 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.
  - **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.
  - **Community Health Fairs** - Achieve's program staff regularly participate in community health fairs to inform citizens about the availability of health and human services.
  - **Community Outreach** – Therapy manager completed an in-service for local mental health providers on sensory issues and how to identify children who might need occupational therapy intervention. Family support staff spoke on Sibshops at the annual Cranial Facial Syndrome conference.
  - **DART-** Doulas and Residents Together. Program started via partnership with Dr. Takagishi and University of South Florida Pediatric Residents and the Achieve Tampa Bay Doula Program. The program objectives are: to increase knowledge about doulas, breastfeeding, and culturally competent care, to assess doula satisfaction with resident linkage, and increase access to medical homes for newborns in high-risk communities.
  - **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 Childhood Coalition Special Needs Committee-** Child Care Outreach manager sits on this committee which works to ensure service availability and education for children with special needs.
  - **Early Steps** - The therapy services manager meets regularly with this early intervention service coordination group to ensure services for children age's 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.
  - **Disability Policy Collaboration-** UCP has joined forces with The Arc of the United States in establishing the Disability Policy Collaboration. This Collaboration focuses on legislative and legal supports to improve the lives of individuals with disabilities and their families. The Disability Policy Collaboration staff interacts with Congress and the

Administration to meet the goal of improving the lives of individuals with disabilities and their families. Staff members participate in twice monthly conference calls to provide input on issues in the state of Florida. The conference calls provide updates on legislative issues and ideas for advocacy.

- **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.
- **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 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.
- **Parent to Parent Night** - Achieve's family support staff hosts this quarterly 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, first aid, and methods parents can employ in order to be an effective advocate for their child.
- **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.
- **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.
- **Student Internships** - The therapy department works with several college students through internships, practicums, and volunteer experiences to educate future service providers. Therapy department has also provided volunteer and observation experiences for local high school students who are interested in going into allied health fields.
- **Tampa Bay Healthcare Collaborative**-This is a collaboration of providers in Hillsborough and Pinellas Counties. The collaboration is intended to support its member agencies in their mission's to improve the health and well-being of the community as a whole. Staff member sits on the Advocacy Committee.
- **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.
- **TRAIN (Teens Reaching Animals in Need)**- This is program which educates committed youth on how to train Humane Society Dogs basic obedience. The youth who participate in this program come and volunteer their time to work with the children in Achieve Tampa Bay's preschool.
- **United Way Agency Tours**-Achieve tours local employers at the center in order to enable the community to better understand our programs and services.
- **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.

- **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.
- **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 has become an active member of the Florida Association of Rehabilitation Facilities. Program managers have completed impact statements. Program managers will begin providing client success stories every six months to increase awareness in the community.

## COMMUNICATION BARRIERS TO SERVICE

### Communication Barriers Identified 2006-2007 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. The therapy manager also composed a letter to families asking them to contact their local legislators. Therapy manager worked with a committee of local providers to organize a Medicaid Town Hall Meeting intending to increase awareness and advocacy to slow down Medicaid Reform. Two local legislators, a parent from Broward County, a provider working in Broward County, Florida Chain, and a representative from the Georgetown Health Policy Institute spoke at the event.
- **Barrier:** Individuals with disabilities and their families often do not know how to advocate for their rights and are often unfamiliar with the laws impacting them.
- **Accomplishment:** Family support staff in Achieve Tampa Bay's respite program have connected families with an organization called STAND (Statewide Advocacy Network on Disabilities). Families have received training on advocacy from this agency via attending their annual conferences.
- **Barrier:** Individuals with disabilities and their families often feel isolated and alone.
- **Accomplishment:** Family support staff at Achieve Tampa Bay have connected families with local support groups where families can learn from one another and make connections.
- **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 the following ways: a newspaper articles regarding supported employment, a newspaper article on potential budget cut on services for adults with disabilities, a newspaper article about the opening of our Downtown Early Learning Center, a television news story on Autism and how it impacts one of our therapy client and her family, two newspaper articles on our preschool's STARS (Students and Teachers Achieving Real Success) program, and featured story in a magazine on the President of our Foundation Board of Directors and his work with Achieve Tampa Bay.

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. This year, UCP National started a fundraising bike ride called "Ride Without Limits." Achieve was selected as one of four UCP affiliates for the event. There have been several information sessions in the community in which program staff presented our programs/services to encourage potential riders to sign up. Event 360 released a television and radio advertisement promoting the event as well. Three parents of children with special needs who are coming to or have been to Achieve Tampa Bay for services are participating in the ride. The foundation also has sent success story information in a Mother's Day ask for donations.

- **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:
  - **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 produces and distributes 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.
- **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. A speech therapist has begun work on creating an augmentative communication device partnership with a vendor so clients can try out options before purchasing.
- **Barrier:** Achieve Tampa Bay recognizes the behavior issues that arise in children due to difficulty with communication of their wants and needs.
- **Accomplishment:** The Achieve Tampa Bay Preschool has been selected to become a STARS (Students and Teachers Achieving Real Success) preschool. Via the STAR preschool program the program the teachers use Positive Behavior Support with their students and their families.
- **Barrier:** Achieve Tampa Bay recognizes that some program participants struggle with communication skills and require unique motivational tools to encourage communication.
- **Accomplishments:** Utilizing Sertoma funds, Achieve Tampa Bay received a therapy dog, Gwen, through Kids and Canines. Gwen will work in the speech therapy department to encourage children to learn how to communicate their wants and needs and learn how to read.
- **Barrier:** Achieve Tampa Bay recognizes that some of the women who needed our Doula services were unable to learn about or access the services due to a language barrier.
- **Accomplishment:** All of the Doula Services curriculum educational materials and marketing fliers are in Spanish.

- **Plan and Timeline:** Achieve will continue our community awareness efforts via a new partnership with our Foundation. Program managers will be submitting at least one success story every six months which can be used for media stories, foundation events and mailings, and marketing material. We will also ensure that our website is accessible to those who are visually impaired.

## **EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS TO SERVICE**

### **Employment Barriers Identified 2006-2007 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 served in 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.
  - **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 was 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.
  - **Brandon Chamber of Commerce**- Employment staff have joined this group to develop jobs in the community for individuals with disabilities.
  - **Florida Business Leadership Network**-Employment staff member has joined this group whose mission is to promote policies which protect the rights of those employed with special needs and promotes hiring practices that target individuals with special needs.
- **Barrier:** The agency recognizes that one of the barriers to employment for individuals with disabilities is finding employers to work for.
- **Accomplishment:** Through a United Way grant the agency is working to increase employer awareness via an employer marketing program.
- **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, 2008. We are open to the possibility of joining new groups as needs are identified.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL BARRIERS TO SERVICE**

### **Environmental Barriers Identified 2006-2007 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 2006-2007 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 programs 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.
  - **ASO (Administrative Services Organization)-**These funds have been used to help meet family needs which otherwise families could not afford such as car repairs so families can get to appointments, counseling services, etc.
  - **Bellow Funds-Bellows** funds have been used to help families purchase a wheelchair lift for a van and other needed medical equipment.
  - **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. This year we received additional grant funds for therapy from CVS. The CVS grant paid for therapy services for families who make too much money to be eligible for Medicaid/Government grants but who do not have adequate medical insurance.
  - **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.
  - **Lending Library**-Family support staff manage a lending library of equipment for families to utilize free of charge.
  - **Therapeutic Listening Library**-Therapy staff utilized Sertoma funding to purchase library of CDs and equipment families can loan out to implement the therapeutic listening at home.
- **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, 2008. Achieve is open to the possibility of joining new groups as needs are identified. Achieve will continue to look for new grant funding opportunities to provide services to clients.

## **TRANSPORTATION BARRIERS TO SERVICE**

### **Transportation Barriers Identified in 2006-2007 and Accomplishments.**

- **Barrier:** It has been identified that adequate transportation for our supported employment and supported living clients to and from appointments and/or work sites can be difficult to find.
- **Accomplishment:** The Therapy Manager was nominated to and then participated in Reality Check Tampa Bay. Reality Check was a one-day exercise intended to discuss, analyze, and develop alternative growth scenarios for the expanding Tampa Bay region. The project members focused on where they saw jobs and people living and working through 2050. The number one issue identified by all participants was lack of alternatives for transportation around the region. The results of the exercise will be used for further growth planning for the area.

**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 seventeen different committees that work to promote access for people with disabilities. The agency participated in eight 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. Achieve remains committed to improving access for individuals with disabilities and other barriers.