

July 3, 2018

Jay Bruns
Link Associates
1452 29th Street
West Des Moines, IA 50266

Dear Mr. Bruns:

It is my pleasure to inform you that Link Associates has been issued CARF accreditation based on its recent survey. The Three-Year Accreditation applies to the following program(s)/service(s):

Community Employment Services: Employment Supports
Community Employment Services: Job Development
Community Housing
Community Integration
Employee Development Services
Employment Planning Services
Services Coordination
Supported Living
Governance Standards Applied

This accreditation will extend through May 31, 2021. This achievement is an indication of your organization's dedication and commitment to improving the quality of the lives of the persons served. Services, personnel, and documentation clearly indicate an established pattern of conformance to standards.

Please note that the enclosed accreditation report identifies no recommendations. This accomplishment is achieved on only 3 percent of CARF surveys.

The accreditation report is intended to support a continuation of the quality improvement of your organization's program(s)/service(s). It contains comments on your organization's strengths as well as any consultation.

Your organization should take pride in achieving this high level of accreditation. CARF will recognize this accomplishment in its listing of organizations with accreditation and encourages your organization to make its accreditation known throughout the community. Communication of the accreditation to your referral and funding sources, the media, and local and federal government officials can promote and distinguish your organization. Enclosed are some materials that will help you publicize this achievement.

Your organization's complimentary accreditation certificate will be sent separately. You may use the enclosed form to order additional certificates.

If you have any questions regarding your organization's accreditation, you are encouraged to seek support from Ronald Tran by email at rtran@carf.org or telephone at (888) 281-6531, extension 7071.

CARF encourages your organization to continue fully and productively using the CARF standards as part of its ongoing commitment to accreditation. CARF commends your organization's commitment and consistent efforts to improve the quality of its program(s)/service(s) and looks forward to working with your organization in its ongoing pursuit of excellence.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brian J. Boon Ph.D." in a cursive script.

Brian J. Boon, Ph.D.
President/CEO

Enclosures

**CARF Accreditation Report
for
Link Associates
Three-Year Accreditation**



Contents

[Executive Summary](#)

[Survey Details](#)

[Survey Participants](#)

[Survey Activities](#)

[Program\(s\)/Service\(s\) Surveyed](#)

[Representations and Constraints](#)

[Survey Findings](#)

[Program\(s\)/Service\(s\) by Location](#)

About CARF

CARF is an independent, nonprofit accreditor of health and human services, enhancing the lives of persons served worldwide.

The accreditation process applies CARF's internationally recognized standards during an on-site survey conducted by peer surveyors. Accreditation, however, is an ongoing process that distinguishes a provider's service delivery and signals to the public that the provider is committed to continuous performance improvement, responsive to feedback, and accountable to the community and its other stakeholders.

CARF accreditation promotes providers' demonstration of value and Quality Across the Lifespan® of millions of persons served through application of rigorous organizational and program standards organized around the ASPIRE to Excellence® continuous quality improvement framework. CARF accreditation has been the recognized benchmark of quality health and human services for more than 50 years.

For more information or to contact CARF, please visit www.carf.org/contact-us.

Organization

Link Associates
1452 29th Street
West Des Moines, IA 50266

Organizational Leadership

Jay Bruns, Corporate Operations Director
Linda Dunshee, Executive Director

Survey Date(s)

May 21, 2018–May 23, 2018

Surveyor(s)

Charles Ogbeifun, M.Sc., C.Eng., Administrative
Jennifer Gajewski, Program
Robert Eickmeier, Program

Program(s)/Service(s) Surveyed

Community Employment Services: Employment Supports
Community Employment Services: Job Development
Community Housing
Community Integration
Employee Development Services
Employment Planning Services
Services Coordination
Supported Living
Governance Standards Applied

Previous Survey

Three-Year Accreditation
May 27, 2015–May 29, 2015

Accreditation Decision

Three-Year Accreditation

Expiration: May 31, 2021

Executive Summary

This report contains the findings of CARF's on-site survey of Link Associates conducted May 21, 2018–May 23, 2018. This report includes the following information:

- Documentation of the accreditation decision and the basis for the decision as determined by CARF's consideration of the survey findings.
- Identification of the specific program(s)/service(s) and location(s) to which this accreditation decision applies.
- Identification of the CARF surveyor(s) who conducted the survey and an overview of the CARF survey process and how conformance to the standards was determined.
- Feedback on the organization's strengths and recognition of any areas where the organization demonstrated exemplary conformance to the standards.
- Documentation of the specific sections of the CARF standards that were applied on the survey.
- Recommendations for improvement in any areas where the organization did not meet the minimum requirements to demonstrate full conformance to the standards.
- Any consultative suggestions documented by the surveyor(s) to help the organization improve its program(s)/service(s) and business operations.

Accreditation Decision

On balance, Link Associates demonstrated substantial conformance to the standards. Link Associates' leadership team and staff members are very committed to providing quality and dedicated services that meet the needs of the persons served in comfortable, safe, and healthy environments. The persons served are treated with dignity and respect and continually speak of the organization in positive terms. The family members, funders, and other stakeholders express high levels of satisfaction with the services provided by Link Associates. The organization is effectively run and, on a daily basis, seeks to provide the highest quality of services within its abilities and beyond. The organization has received high praise from its various stakeholders for its dedication and responsiveness to identified needs and expressed preferences and desires. The organization's strengths are many, and there is every indication that it will continue to apply the CARF standards in the provision of effective operations and quality services.

Link Associates appears likely to maintain and/or improve its current method of operation and demonstrates a commitment to ongoing quality improvement.

Link Associates has earned a Three-Year Accreditation. The leadership team and staff are complimented and congratulated for this achievement. In order to maintain this accreditation, throughout the term of accreditation, the organization is required to:

- Submit annual reporting documents and other required information to CARF, as detailed in the Accreditation Policies and Procedures section in the standards manual.
- Maintain ongoing conformance to CARF's standards, satisfy all accreditation conditions, and comply with all accreditation policies and procedures, as they are published and made effective by CARF.

Survey Details

Survey Participants

The survey of Link Associates was conducted by the following CARF surveyor(s):

- Charles Ogbeifun, M.Sc., C.Eng., Administrative
- Jennifer Gajewski, Program
- Robert Eickmeier, Program

CARF considers the involvement of persons served to be vital to the survey process. As part of the accreditation survey for all organizations, CARF surveyors interact with and conduct direct, confidential interviews with consenting current and former persons served in the program(s)/service(s) for which the organization is seeking accreditation. In addition, as applicable and available, interviews may be conducted with family members and/or representatives of the persons served such as guardians, advocates, or members of their support system.

Interviews are also conducted with individuals associated with the organization, as applicable, which may include:

- The organization's leadership, such as board members, executives, owners, and managers.
- Business unit resources, such as finance and human resources.
- Personnel who serve and directly interact with persons served in the program(s)/service(s) for which the organization is seeking accreditation.
- Other stakeholders, such as referral sources, payers, insurers, and fiscal intermediaries.
- Community constituents and governmental representatives.

Survey Activities

Achieving CARF accreditation involves demonstrating conformance to the applicable CARF standards, evidenced through observable practices, verifiable results over time, and comprehensive supporting documentation. The survey of Link Associates and its program(s)/service(s) consisted of the following activities:

- Confidential interviews and direct interactions, as outlined in the previous section.
- Direct observation of the organization's operations and service delivery practices.
- Observation of the organization's location(s) where services are delivered.
- Review of organizational documents, which may include policies; plans; written procedures; promotional materials; governing documents, such as articles of incorporation and bylaws; financial statements; and other documents necessary to determine conformance to standards.
- Review of documents related to program/service design, delivery, outcomes, and improvement, such as program descriptions, records of services provided, documentation of reviews of program resources and services conducted, and program evaluations.
- Review of records of current and former persons served.

Program(s)/Service(s) Surveyed

The survey addressed by this report is specific to the following program(s)/service(s):

- Community Employment Services: Employment Supports
- Community Employment Services: Job Development
- Community Housing
- Community Integration
- Employee Development Services
- Employment Planning Services
- Services Coordination
- Supported Living
- *Governance Standards Applied*

A list of the organization's accredited program(s)/service(s) by location is included at the end of this report.

Representations and Constraints

The accreditation decision and survey findings contained in this report are based on an on-balance consideration of the information obtained by the surveyor(s) during the on-site survey. Any information that was unavailable, not presented, or outside the scope of the survey was not considered and, had it been considered, may have affected the contents of this report. If at any time CARF subsequently learns or has reason to believe that the organization did not participate in the accreditation process in good faith or that any information presented was not accurate, truthful, or complete, CARF may modify the accreditation decision, up to and including revocation of accreditation.

Survey Findings

This report provides a summary of the organization's strengths and identifies the sections of the CARF standards that were applied on the survey and the findings in each area. In conjunction with its evaluation of conformance to the specific program/service standards, CARF assessed conformance to its business practice standards, referred to as Section 1. ASPIRE to Excellence, which are designed to support the delivery of the program(s)/service(s) within a sound business operating framework to promote long-term success.

The specific standards applied from each section vary based on a variety of factors, including, but not limited to, the scope(s) of the program(s)/service(s), population(s) served, location(s), methods of service delivery, and survey type. Information about the specific standards applied on each survey is included in the standards manual and other instructions that may be provided by CARF.

Areas of Strength

CARF found that Link Associates demonstrated the following strengths:

- Link Associates, which provides 8 CARF-accredited program services to 380 persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities, is led by a resourceful, dynamic, and very knowledgeable executive director who has over 23 years of corporate administrative experience. The organization's governing board president said that she is a strong leader, a dedicated advocate for the persons served, and also extremely knowledgeable of the complex Iowa healthcare system. The board confirmed that she continues to look for opportunities to strengthen the organization and faces all emerging issues head on.
- The executive director was formerly a member of the board of Iowa Association of Community Providers and is presently a member of the Government Relations Committee of the association, a platform she uses in promoting advocacy for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. She is committed to presenting matters to the funders and referral agencies in order to ensure that resources are committed to addressing the needs of the persons served. She also continues to advocate a respectable living wage for the staff working with people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The executive director is actively involved with the day-to-day operations of the organization, and the persons served and staff have access to her and the rest of the leadership team.
- Link Associates has a staff workforce of 316 members, and its leadership team has an average longevity of 16 years. The staff members are dedicated to their jobs, and an atmosphere of mutual respect and easy rapport exists among them. The organization conducts a week-long orientation training program for new employees, tagged "Equipping for Purpose," which has led to staff connection and retention. This training program also deepens the knowledge of the new employees regarding promoting the rights and dignity of the persons served. The staff members are happy and speak very highly of their leadership team. In a staff satisfaction survey conducted recently, one staff member wrote, "I want to take this time to recognize our directors at Link. They are great role models and inspirations for the rest of us at Link. They are truly the unsung heroes at Link, they are always advocating for Link consumers and Link employees, and are trying to provide a great working atmosphere and environment." Link Associates' direct care staff has been nominated for the 2018 Polk County Character Counts Award, an initiative that recognizes and rewards outstanding staff members who have distinguished themselves in the performance of their duties to the persons they serve in the community.
- In spite of financial constraints and reduction in state revenue, Link Associates continues to maintain a healthy balance sheet and remain financially solvent. This has been achieved by a major reduction in nine expense cost centers and strong fiscal discipline in its financial management. In addition, Link Associates has added transportation to its menu of services, an avenue through which it generates additional revenue.
- Due to Link Associates' continued CARF accreditation status, its insurance underwriting guidelines are considered lower risks, in part because of the organization's conformance to the CARF standards relative to risk management, health and safety, corporate compliance, and sound business practices.
- The use of tablets in the field allows the job coaches to document information about the persons served in a timely manner, keep the records up to date, and have accurate information at their fingertips. This use of technology also keeps data much more confidential than paper.
- The Comprehensive Consumer Service Plan (CCSP) is a very comprehensive document covering all aspects of a person's life, from the least-restrictive living arrangement to support goals, safety plans, and more. The quality and consistency of the CCSP are exceptional, which can be attributed to personnel training. The quality assurance practice of having each staff member submit his/her first ten CCSPs ensures a complete and comprehensive document and a continued training opportunity for the staff.
- The Link Council is a fun activity for the persons served. Beyond being fun, this group has made suggestions for the handbook for persons served, which makes information easier for them to understand; generated a letter to state legislators advocating transportation services; and helped with a training video for the staff. The Link Council is one of many examples that demonstrates how person centered and driven this organization is.

- The building is bright and inviting, celebrates community connections, and promotes the dignity and respect of the persons served and the staff.
- The role of the admissions coordinator is a definite strength. Designating one person to complete all of the intakes provides a consistent message to the persons served and their families, uniformity in admissions paperwork, and a smooth entry into Link Associates' services.
- The employment programs at Link Associates are dedicated to finding a job that fits the person's interests and skills. The staff and managers who work in these programs are committed, enthusiastic, and tireless advocates for the people they serve. The Link Employment Exploration Program (LEEP) is a great model, providing internships and building skills for those looking for employment. The organization is recognized for the great deal of work completed on the Project SEARCH curriculum and internship choices for the persons served, and Link Associates is encouraged to resurrect this program. The Supported Employment program does an excellent job of supporting the persons served in their jobs long term and is commended for its commitment to building long-term rapport with each person served and his/her employer.
- When asking parents and other stakeholders what Link Associates does best, the Leisure Services program came up repeatedly. This program is widely appreciated and life enriching for so many of the persons served.
- Stakeholders appear to appreciate the programs provided. Some comments from the persons served and parents include, "They help me to be more independent," "They found me a job I like," and "My job coach is awesome." One employer reported that it used to partner with other organizations but stopped because the partnerships were unsuccessful. Link Associates "stuck" because it is very good and its model worked best for both the employer and the persons served. The funder reported being very satisfied with the services that Link Associates provides, adding that there is a "connectedness between the people served and staff," and there is also a true sense of caring from the staff. The employees repeatedly reported feeling a sense of pride on the quality of Link Associates' services, the availability of upper management, and working in an environment that has a true family feel. Additional comments included everyone working together and jumping in to help to get the job done, feeling pride in helping so many people live the lives they want, being well trained to provide the supports to the persons served, feeling a sense of both autonomy and support, and also appreciating the "small feel" even though it is a large organization.
- The community integration program at the main site is a bright, well-planned operation with many different classrooms and activity locations to serve a variety of needs and challenges of the persons served. Although the programming focuses on a wide array of skill building activities, the program has done an excellent job of increasing the number of community integration opportunities, and a regular schedule of outings is available in each room where the persons are served. The supplies and materials are well organized and the persons served are able to choose from a wide variety of interesting, colorful, and educational activities during the day.
- The Volunteer Investment Program (VIP) is a community-based service that offers the persons served many opportunities to give back to the community while developing employment skills that can be used in future job development. The persons served can be involved in this service on either a full- or part-time basis, and there are over 25 sites in the community where the persons served volunteer on a daily basis. Small groups of three or four individuals and a staff member work side by side with other volunteers to gain knowledge about what is available in the community. Plans are currently underway to increase the number of sites, offering even more community integration.
- The Leisure Services program is a perfect adjunct to the Day Habilitation Services and provides many opportunities for the persons served to discover what is available in the community and to further enhance the day program curricula. Of special note is the small animal therapy service, offering the persons served the opportunity to work with kittens and other small animals to learn responsibility and at times where challenging behaviors might be more difficult to contain in a larger classroom setting.
- Link Associates offers an array of small home and apartment settings based on the needs of the persons served. A dedicated, long-tenured staff in the homes provides a normalized routine of life with an emphasis on home living and community skill building. Each home is unique, blends well into the community, and supports the

rights of the persons served to personalize their rooms and participate in resident meetings with their home staff. Plans are underway to increase the number of sites, which will offer the opportunity for more individuals to participate in the community.

- The Case Management Services program at Link Associates is commended for continuing to provide excellent coordination services for many persons served despite a major funding shift and loss of many staff members during the past year due to the state of Iowa's decision to introduce a managed care system. The staff in the program have long tenure, are professional, are very flexible during these changing times, and care deeply about the persons served. The individual plans are well written, thorough, and person centered.
- Of particular note, Link Associates has created a new staff position, the administrative specialist position. This offers the staff members the opportunity to move into a leadership track and provides a career ladder path for interested staff. There are currently four administrative specialists in the residential department, and the day program department also recently added this position for its staff members.

Opportunities for Quality Improvement

The CARF survey process identifies opportunities for continuous improvement, a core concept of “aspiring to excellence.” This section of the report lists the sections of the CARF standards that were applied on the survey, including a description of the business practice area and/or the specific program(s)/service(s) surveyed and a summary of the key areas addressed in that section of the standards.

In this section of the report, a recommendation identifies any standard for which CARF determined that the organization did not meet the minimum requirements to demonstrate full conformance. Link Associates received no recommendations from this survey. This accomplishment is achieved on approximately 3 percent of CARF surveys.

In addition, consultation may be provided for areas of or specific standards where the surveyor(s) documented suggestions that the organization may consider to improve its business or service delivery practices. Note that consultation may be offered for areas of specific standards that do not have any recommendations. Such consultation does not indicate nonconformance to the standards; it is intended to offer ideas that the organization might find helpful in its ongoing quality improvement efforts. The organization is not required to address consultation.

When CARF surveyors visit an organization, their role is that of independent peer reviewers, and their goal is not only to gather an assess information to determine conformance to the standards, but also to engage in relevant and meaningful consultative dialogue. Not all consultation or suggestions discussed during the survey are noted in this report. The organization is encouraged to review any notes made during the survey and consider the consultation or suggestions that were discussed.

During the process of preparing for a CARF accreditation survey, an organization may conduct a detailed self-assessment and engage in deliberations and discussions within the organization as well as with external stakeholders as it considers ways to implement and use the standards to guide its quality improvement efforts. The organization is encouraged to review these discussions and deliberations as it considers ways to implement innovative changes and further advance its business and service delivery practices.

Section 1. ASPIRE to Excellence®

1.A. Leadership

Description

CARF-accredited organizations identify leadership that embraces the values of accountability and responsibility to the individual organization's stated mission. The leadership demonstrates corporate social responsibility.

Key Areas Addressed

- Leadership structure
- Leadership guidance
- Commitment to diversity
- Corporate responsibility
- Corporate compliance

Recommendations

There are no recommendations in this area.

Consultation

- Link Associates trains its new staff during a week-long orientation program that includes corporate compliance and cultural competence and diversity. However, long-serving staff members are not retrained on these to update their knowledge with the latest information. It is suggested that the organization consider conducting refresher training seminars on corporate compliance and cultural competency and diversity for its long-serving staff on a regular and ongoing basis.

1.B. Governance (Optional)

Description

The governing board should provide effective and ethical governance leadership on behalf of its owners'/stakeholders' interest to ensure that the organization focuses on its purpose and outcomes for persons served, resulting in the organization's long-term success and stability. The board is responsible for ensuring that the organization is managed effectively, efficiently, and ethically by the organization's executive leadership through defined governance accountability mechanisms. These mechanisms include, but are not limited to, an adopted governance framework defined by written governance policies and demonstrated practices; active and timely review of organizational performance and that of the executive leadership; and the demarcation of duties between the board and executive leadership to ensure that organizational strategies, plans, decisions, and actions are delegated to the resource that would best advance the interests and performance of the organization over the long term and manage the organization's inherent risks. The board has additional responsibilities under the domain of public trust, and as such, it understands its corporate responsibility to the organization's employees, providers, suppliers, and the communities it serves.

Key Areas Addressed

- Ethical, active, and accountable governance
- Board composition, selection, orientation, development, assessment, and succession
- Board leadership, organizational structure, meeting planning, and management
- Linkage between governance and executive leadership
- Corporate and executive leadership performance review and development
- Executive compensation

Recommendations

There are no recommendations in this area.

1.C. Strategic Planning

Description

CARF-accredited organizations establish a foundation for success through strategic planning focused on taking advantage of strengths and opportunities and addressing weaknesses and threats.

Key Areas Addressed

- Strategic planning considers stakeholder expectations and environmental impacts
- Written strategic plan sets goals
- Plan is implemented, shared, and kept relevant

Recommendations

There are no recommendations in this area.

1.D. Input from Persons Served and Other Stakeholders

Description

CARF-accredited organizations continually focus on the expectations of the persons served and other stakeholders. The standards in this subsection direct the organization's focus to soliciting, collecting, analyzing, and using input from all stakeholders to create services that meet or exceed the expectations of the persons served, the community, and other stakeholders.

Key Areas Addressed

- Ongoing collection of information from a variety of sources
- Analysis and integration into business practices
- Leadership response to information collected

Recommendations

There are no recommendations in this area.

Consultation

- Link Associates obtains input from the persons served in a variety of ways, including the completion of satisfaction surveys. The survey questionnaire sheet has a section for the name of the person served who is completing the form. It is suggested that the organization consider either expunging this section of the questionnaire or making it optional for the person served.

1.E. Legal Requirements

Description

CARF-accredited organizations comply with all legal and regulatory requirements.

Key Areas Addressed

- Compliance with all legal/regulatory requirements

Recommendations

There are no recommendations in this area.

1.F. Financial Planning and Management

Description

CARF-accredited organizations strive to be financially responsible and solvent, conducting fiscal management in a manner that supports their mission, values, and performance objectives. Fiscal practices adhere to established accounting principles and business practices. Fiscal management covers daily operational cost management and incorporates plans for long-term solvency.

Key Areas Addressed

- Budget(s) prepared, shared, and reflective of strategic planning
- Financial results reported/compared to budgeted performance
- Organization review
- Fiscal policies and procedures
- Review of service billing records and fee structure
- Financial review/audit
- Safeguarding funds of persons served

Recommendations

There are no recommendations in this area.

Consultation

- Although the individual ledgers are used to track deposit and withdrawal of the personal allowance funds of the persons served along with a few backup receipts, it is suggested that the organization consistently collect all receipts to support all expenses incurred by the persons served that correspond to the ledger entries.

1.G. Risk Management

Description

CARF-accredited organizations engage in a coordinated set of activities designed to control threats to their people, property, income, goodwill, and ability to accomplish goals.

Key Areas Addressed

- Identification of loss exposures
- Development of risk management plan
- Adequate insurance coverage

Recommendations

There are no recommendations in this area.

1.H. Health and Safety

Description

CARF-accredited organizations maintain healthy, safe, and clean environments that support quality services and minimize risk of harm to persons served, personnel, and other stakeholders.

Key Areas Addressed

- Inspections
- Emergency procedures
- Access to emergency first aid
- Competency of personnel in safety procedures
- Reporting/reviewing critical incidents
- Infection control

Recommendations

There are no recommendations in this area.

Consultation

- It is evident that Link Associates conducts unannounced tests of all emergency procedures in all locations; however, the results of these tests are documented in the same reporting format for all of the tests, which does not give any details of the outcome of the tests. It is suggested that the organization consider using customized reporting forms for documenting the outcomes of the different types of emergency drills conducted.
- The organization is encouraged to keep a checklist of the contents of the first aid kits and emergency bags and conduct a quarterly check of the contents of all first aid kits and emergency bags to ensure that they have not expired.

1.I. Human Resources

Description

CARF-accredited organizations demonstrate that they value their human resources. It should be evident that personnel are involved and engaged in the success of the organization and the persons they serve.

Key Areas Addressed

- Adequate staffing
- Verification of background/credentials
- Recruitment/retention efforts
- Personnel skills/characteristics
- Annual review of job descriptions/performance
- Policies regarding students/volunteers, if applicable

Recommendations

There are no recommendations in this area.

Consultation

- Link Associates has a well-documented personnel training system that is stored electronically and can be retrieved with ease. However, it is suggested that the organization consider developing a staff credentials and training documentation checklist. This could easily track all staff training expiration dates and could be placed at the front of each staff file for easy checking.

1.J. Technology

Description

CARF-accredited organizations plan for the use of technology to support and advance effective and efficient service and business practices.

Key Areas Addressed

- Written technology and system plan
- Written procedures for the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) in service delivery, if applicable
- Training for personnel, persons served, and others on ICT equipment, if applicable
- Provision of information relevant to the ICT session, if applicable
- Maintenance of ICT equipment in accordance with manufacturer recommendations, if applicable
- Emergency procedures that address unique aspects of service delivery via ICT, if applicable

Recommendations

There are no recommendations in this area.

1.K. Rights of Persons Served

Description

CARF-accredited organizations protect and promote the rights of all persons served. This commitment guides the delivery of services and ongoing interactions with the persons served.

Key Areas Addressed

- Communication of rights
- Policies that promote rights
- Complaint, grievance, and appeals policy
- Annual review of complaints

Recommendations

There are no recommendations in this area.

1.L. Accessibility

Description

CARF-accredited organizations promote accessibility and the removal of barriers for the persons served and other stakeholders.

Key Areas Addressed

- Written accessibility plan(s)
- Requests for reasonable accommodations

Recommendations

There are no recommendations in this area.

1.M. Performance Measurement and Management

Description

CARF-accredited organizations are committed to continually improving their organizations and service delivery to the persons served. Data are collected and analyzed, and information is used to manage and improve service delivery.

Key Areas Addressed

- Information collection, use, and management
- Setting and measuring performance indicators

Recommendations

There are no recommendations in this area.

1.N. Performance Improvement

Description

The dynamic nature of continuous improvement in a CARF-accredited organization sets it apart from other organizations providing similar services. CARF-accredited organizations share and provide the persons served and other interested stakeholders with ongoing information about their actual performance as a business entity and their ability to achieve optimal outcomes for the persons served through their programs and services.

Key Areas Addressed

- Proactive performance improvement
- Performance information shared with all stakeholders

Recommendations

There are no recommendations in this area.

Section 2. Quality Individualized Services and Supports

2.A. Program/Service Structure

Description

A fundamental responsibility of the organization is to provide a comprehensive program structure. The staffing is designed to maximize opportunities for the persons served to obtain and participate in the services provided.

Key Areas Addressed

- Services are person-centered and individualized
- Persons are given information about the organization's purposes and ability to address desired outcomes
- Documented scope of services shared with stakeholders
- Service delivery based on accepted field practices
- Communication for effective service delivery
- Entrance/exit/transition criteria

Recommendations

There are no recommendations in this area.

Consultation

- Although the photo/media release identifies where the photo may be used and that permission may be revoked at any time, it does not specify that once a photo is on social media, there may be no way to retrieve all images. It is suggested that a clause be added to address this.

2.B. Individual-Centered Service Planning, Design, and Delivery

Description

Improvement of the quality of an individual's services/supports requires a focus on the person and/or family served and their identified strengths, abilities, needs, and preferences. The organization's services are designed around the identified needs and desires of the persons served, are responsive to their expectations and desired outcomes from services, and are relevant to their maximum participation in the environments of their choice.

The person served participates in decision making, directing, and planning that affects his or her life. Efforts to include the person served in the direction or delivery of those services/supports are evident.

Key Areas Addressed

- Services are person-centered and individualized
- Persons are given information about the organization's purposes and ability to address desired outcomes

Recommendations

There are no recommendations in this area.

Consultation

- Although the person responsible for implementing the action step is listed in the individual service plans, further clarification could be beneficial. Some action steps clearly define what both the person served and the Link Associates staff members are responsible for, while other action steps are less clear. It is suggested that the responsibility of the person served and the responsibility of the staff be further defined or broken out.

2.C. Medication Monitoring and Management

Key Areas Addressed

- Current, complete records of medication used by persons served
- Written procedures for storage and safe handling of medications
- Educational resources and advocacy for persons served in decision making
- Physician review of medication use
- Training and education for persons served regarding medications

Recommendations

There are no recommendations in this area.

2.D. Employment Services Principle Standards

Description

An organization seeking CARF accreditation in the area of employment services provides individualized services and supports to achieve identified employment outcomes. The array of services and supports may include:

- Identification of employment opportunities and resources in the local job market.
- Development of viable work skills that match workforce needs within the geographic area.
- Development of realistic employment goals.
- Establishment of service plans to achieve employment outcomes.
- Identification of resources and supports to achieve and maintain employment.
- Coordination of and referral to employment-related services and supports.

The organization maintains its strategic positioning in the employment sector of the community by designing and continually improving its services based on input from the persons served and from employers in the local job market, and managing results of the organization's outcomes management system. The provision of quality employment services requires a continuous focus on the persons served and the personnel needs of employers in the organization's local job market.

Some examples of the quality results desired by the different stakeholders of these services and supports include:

- Individualized, appropriate accommodations.
- A flexible, interactive process that involves the person.
- Increased independence.
- Increased employment options.
- Timely services and reports.
- Persons served obtain and maintain employment consistent with their preferences, strengths, and needs.
- Person served obtains a job at minimum wage or higher and maintains appropriate benefits.
- Person served maintains the job.

Key Areas Addressed

- Goals of the persons served
- Personnel needs of local employers
- Community resources available
- Economic trends in the local employment sector

Recommendations

There are no recommendations in this area.

2.E. Community Services Principle Standards

Description

An organization seeking CARF accreditation in the area of community services assists the persons and/or families served in obtaining access to the resources and services of their choice. The persons and/or families served are included in their communities to the degree they desire. This may be accomplished by direct service provision or linkages to existing opportunities and natural supports in the community.

The organization obtains information from the persons and/or families served regarding resources and services they want or require that will meet their identified needs, and offers an array of services it arranges for or provides. The organization provides the persons and/or families served with information so that they may make informed choices and decisions.

The services and supports are changed as necessary to meet the identified needs of the persons and/or families served and other stakeholders. Service designs address identified individual, family, socioeconomic, and cultural needs.

Expected results from these services may include:

- Increased or maintained inclusion in meaningful community activities.
- Increased or maintained ability to perform activities of daily living.
- Increased self-direction, self-determination, and self-reliance.
- Increased self-esteem.

Key Areas Addressed

- Access to community resources and services
- Enhanced quality of life
- Community inclusion
- Community participation

Recommendations

There are no recommendations in this area.

Section 3. Employment Services

Description

An organization seeking CARF accreditation in the area of employment services assists the persons served through an individualized person-centered process to obtain access to the services, supports, and resources of their choice to achieve their desired outcomes. This may be accomplished by direct service provision, linkages to existing generic opportunities and natural supports in the community, or any combination of these. The persons served are included in their communities to the degree they desire.

The organization provides the persons served with information so that they may make informed choices and decisions. Although we use the phrase person served, this may also include family served, as appropriate to the service and the individual.

The services and supports are arranged and changed as necessary to meet the identified desires of the persons served. Service designs address identified individual, family, socioeconomic, and cultural preferences.

Depending on the program's scope of services, expected results from these services/supports may include:

- Increased inclusion in community activities.
- Increased self-direction, self-determination, and self-reliance
- Self-esteem.
- Community citizenship.
- Increased independence.
- Meaningful activities.

- Increased employment options.
- Employment obtained and maintained.
- Competitive employment.
- Employment at or above minimum wage.
- Economic self-sufficiency.
- Employment with benefits.
- Career advancement.

3.A. Employment Planning Services (EPS)

Description

Employment planning services are designed to assist a person seeking employment to learn about employment opportunities within the community and to make informed decisions. Employment planning services are individualized to assist a person to choose employment outcomes and/or career development opportunities based on his or her preferences, strengths, abilities, and needs. Services begin from a presumption of employability for all persons and seek to provide meaningful information related to planning effective programs for persons with intervention strategies needed to achieve the goal of employment.

Employment planning uses some type of employment exploration model. This may involve one or more of the following:

- Situational assessments.
- Paid work trials.
- Job tryouts (may be individual, crew, enclave, cluster, etc.).
- Job shadowing.
- Community-based assessments.
- Simulated job sites.
- Staffing agencies/temporary employment agencies.
- Volunteer opportunities.
- Transitional employment.

Some examples of quality outcomes desired by the different stakeholders of these services include:

- Work interests are explored and identified.
- Recommendations for employment options are appropriate.
- Employment planning reports lead to job goals.
- Transferable work skills and employment barriers are identified.
- Benefits planning is included.
- Services are timely in their delivery.
- Services are cost-effective.
- Individuals served understand recommendations that are made.
- Individuals served identify desired employment outcomes.

Key Areas Addressed

- Employment opportunities within the community
- Informed decision-making by participants
- Referrals to services to implement employment plan

Recommendations

There are no recommendations in this area.

3.D. Employee Development Services (EDS)

Description

Employee development services are individualized services/supports that assist persons seeking employment to develop or reestablish skills, attitudes, personal characteristics, interpersonal skills, work behaviors, functional capacities, etc., to achieve positive employment outcomes.

Such services/supports are time limited and can be provided directly to persons seeking employment or indirectly through corporate employer/employee support programs. These services/supports can be provided at community job sites, within formal and organized training and educational settings, through coaching, by tutorial services, or within the organization. These services may be offered in a free-standing unit or as a functional piece of other services.

Some examples of the quality outcomes desired by the different stakeholders of these services include:

- Person served obtains employment.
- Person served moves to a training program or better employment.
- Person served retains his or her job.
- Person served obtains improved benefits.
- Increased wages.
- Increased skills.
- Increased work hours.
- Movement to individualized competitive employment.
- Employment in an integrated environment.
- Job advancement potential increases.
- Job-seeking skills are developed.
- Job-keeping skills are developed.
- Career growth and development.
- Level of support needed is reduced.
- Exposure to and availability of a variety of jobs.
- Program is kept at capacity.
- Services are cost-effective for the results achieved.
- Responsiveness (days from referral to starting services).

Key Areas Addressed

- Skills development/reestablishment
- Attitude development/reestablishment
- Work behaviors development/reestablishment
- Employment outcomes

Recommendations

There are no recommendations in this area.

3.G. Community Employment Services

Description

Community employment services assist persons to obtain successful community employment opportunities that are responsive to their choices and preferences. Through a strengths-based approach the program provides person-directed services/supports to individuals to choose, achieve, and maintain employment in integrated community employment settings.

Work is a fundamental part of adult life. Individually tailored job development, training, and support recognize each person's employability and potential contribution to the labor market. Persons are supported as needed through an individualized person-centered model of services to choose and obtain a successful employment opportunity consistent with their preferences, keep the employment, and find new employment if necessary or for purposes of career advancement.

Such services may be described as individualized competitive employment, individual placements, contracted temporary personnel services, competitive employment, supported employment, transitional employment, mobile work crews, contracted work groups in the community, community-based SourceAmerica® contracts, and other business-based work groups in community-integrated designs. In Canada, employment in the form of bona fide volunteer placements is possible.

Individuals may be paid by community employers or by the organization. Employment is in the community.

The following service categories are available under Community Employment Services (please refer to the program descriptions and applicable standards):

- Job Development (CES:JD)
- Employment Supports (CES:ES)

If an organization provides only Job Development or Employment Supports, then it may be accredited for only that service. If it is providing both Job Development and Employment Supports, then it must seek accreditation for both. If any clarification is needed, please contact your CARF resource specialist. There is no charge for consultation.

Note: In making the determination of what an organization is actually providing in comparison to these service descriptions, these factors are considered: the mission of the services, the program descriptions, brochures and marketing image for these services, and the outcomes of the services.

Depending on the scope of the services provided, some examples of the quality outcomes desired by the different stakeholders of these services include:

- Persons obtain community employment.
- Persons obtain individualized competitive employment.
- Employment matches interests and desires of persons.
- Wages, benefits, and hours of employment achieved as desired.
- Average number of hours worked per week increases.
- Average number of hours worked per week meets the desires of the person served.
- Full-time employment with benefits.
- Transition-age youth move directly from their educational environment into community employment.
- Potential for upward mobility.
- Self-sufficiency.
- Integration.
- Responsive services.
- Safe working conditions.
- Cost-effective for placement achieved.
- Performance level achieved meets requirements of job or position.
- Increase in skills.
- Increase in productivity.
- Increase in hours worked.
- Increase in pay.
- Employment retention.
- Increase in natural supports from coworkers.
- Persons served treated with respect.

- Minimize length of time for supports.
- Type and amount of staff interaction meets needs.
- Employer satisfaction.
- Responsiveness to customers.

Job Development (CES:JD): Successful job development concurrently uses assessment information about the strengths and interests of the person seeking employment to target the types of jobs available from potential employers in the local labor market. Typical job development activities include reviewing local employment opportunities and developing potential employers/customers through direct and indirect promotional strategies. Job development may include facilitating a hiring agreement between an employer and a person seeking employment. Some persons seeking employment may want assistance at only a basic, informational level, such as support for a self-directed job search.

Employment Supports (CES:ES): Employment support services promote successful training of a person to a new job, job adjustment, retention, and advancement. These services are based on the individual employee with a focus on achieving long-term retention of the person in the job. The level of employment support services is individualized to each employee and the complexity of the job.

Often supports are intensive for the initial orientation and training of an employee with the intent of leading to natural supports and/or reduced external job coaching. However, some persons may not require any employment supports at the job site; others may require intensive initial training with a quick decrease in supports, while some will be most successful when long-term supports are provided.

Supports can include assisting the employee with understanding the job culture, industry practices, and work behaviors expected by the employer. It may also include helping the employer and coworkers to understand the support strategies and accommodations needed by the worker.

Supports are a critical element of the long-term effectiveness of community employment. Support services address issues such as assistance in training a person to complete new tasks, changes in work schedule or work promotion, a decrease in productivity of the person served, adjusting to new supervisors, and managing changes in nonwork environments or other critical life activities that may affect work performance. Routine follow-up with the employer and the employee is crucial to continued job success.

Key Areas Addressed

- Integrated employment choice
- Integrated employment obtainment
- Employment provided in regular business settings
- Integrated employment retention
- Provides career advancement resources

Recommendations

There are no recommendations in this area.

Section 4. Community Services

Description

An organization seeking CARF accreditation in the area of community services assists the persons served through an individualized person-centered process to obtain access to the services, supports, and resources of their choice to achieve their desired outcomes. This may be accomplished by direct service provision, linkages to existing generic opportunities and natural supports in the community, or any combination of these. The persons served are included in their communities to the degree they desire.

The organization provides the persons served with information so that they may make informed choices and decisions. Although we use the phrase person served, this may also include family served, as appropriate to the service and the individual.

The services and supports are arranged and changed as necessary to meet the identified desires of the persons served. Service designs address identified individual, family, socioeconomic, and cultural preferences.

Depending on the program's scope of services, expected results from these services/supports may include:

- Increased inclusion in community activities.
- Increased or maintained ability to perform activities of daily living.
- Increased self-direction, self-determination, and self-reliance
- Self-esteem.
- Housing opportunities.
- Community citizenship.
- Increased independence.
- Meaningful activities.
- Increased employment options.

4.G. Community Integration (COI)

Description

Community integration is designed to help persons to optimize their personal, social, and vocational competency to live successfully in the community. Persons served are active partners in determining the activities they desire to participate in. Therefore, the settings can be informal to reduce barriers between staff members and persons served. An activity center, a day program, a clubhouse, and a drop-in center are examples of community integration services. Consumer-run programs are also included.

Community integration provides opportunities for the community participation of the persons served. The organization defines the scope of these services and supports based on the identified needs and desires of the persons served. This may include services for persons who without this option are at risk of receiving services full-time in more restrictive environments with intensive levels of supports such as hospitalization or nursing home care. A person may participate in a variety of community life experiences or interactions that may include, but are not limited to:

- Leisure or recreational activities.
- Communication activities.
- Spiritual activities.
- Cultural activities.
- Pre-vocational experiences.
- Vocational pursuits.

- Volunteerism in the community.
- Educational and training activities.
- Development of living skills.
- Health and wellness promotion.
- Orientation, mobility, and destination training.
- Access and utilization of public transportation.
- Interacting with volunteers from the community in program activities.
- Community collaborations and social connections developed by the program (partnerships with community entities such as senior centers, arts councils, etc.).

Key Areas Addressed

- Opportunities for community participation

Recommendations

There are no recommendations in this area.

4.H. Community Housing (CH)

Description

Community housing addresses the desires, goals, strengths, abilities, needs, health, safety, and life span issues of the persons served, regardless of the home in which they live and/or the scope, duration, and intensity of the services they receive. The residences in which services/supports are provided are typically owned, rented, leased, or operated directly by the organization, or may be owned, rented, or leased by a third party, such as a governmental entity. Providers exercise control over these sites in terms of having direct or indirect responsibility for the physical conditions of the facility.

Community housing is provided in partnership with individuals. These services/supports are designed to assist the persons served to achieve success in and satisfaction with community living. They may be temporary or long-term in nature. The services/supports are focused on home and community integration and engagement in productive activities. Community housing enhances the independence, dignity, personal choice, and privacy of the persons served. For persons in alcohol and other drug programs, these services/supports are focused on providing sober living environments to increase the likelihood of sobriety and abstinence and to decrease the potential for relapse.

Community housing programs may be referred to as group homes, halfway houses, three-quarter way houses, recovery residences, sober housing, domestic violence or homeless shelters, and safe houses. These programs may be located in rural or urban settings and in houses, apartments, townhouses, or other residential settings owned, rented, leased, or operated by the organization. They may include congregate living facilities and clustered homes/apartments in multiple-unit settings. These residences are often physically integrated into the community, and every effort is made to ensure that they approximate other homes in their neighborhoods in terms of size and number of individuals.

Community housing may include either or both of the following:

- Transitional living that provides interim supports and services for persons who are at risk of institutional placement, persons transitioning from institutional settings, or persons who are homeless. Transitional living is typically provided for six to twelve months and can be offered in congregate settings that may be larger than residences typically found in the community.
- Long-term housing that provides stable, supported community living or assists the persons served to obtain and maintain safe, affordable, accessible, and stable housing.

The residences in which Community Housing services are provided must be identified in the survey application. These sites will be visited during the survey process and identified in the survey report and accreditation decision as a site at which the organization provides a Community Housing program.

Key Areas Addressed

- Safe, secure, private location
- In-home safety needs
- Options to make changes in living arrangements
- Support to persons as they explore alternatives
- Access as desired to community activities
- System for on-call availability of personnel

Recommendations

There are no recommendations in this area.

4.I. Supported Living (SL)

Description

Supported living addresses the desires, goals, strengths, abilities, needs, health, safety, and life span issues of persons usually living in their own homes (apartments, townhouses, or other residential settings). Supported living services are generally long-term in nature but may change in scope, duration, intensity, or location as the needs and preferences of individuals change over time.

Supported living refers to the support services provided to the person served, not the residence in which these services are provided. A sampling of people receiving services/supports in these sites will be visited as part of the interview process. Although the residence will generally be owned, rented, or leased by the person who lives there, the organization may occasionally rent or lease an apartment when the person served is unable to do so. Typically, in this situation the organization would co-sign or in other ways guarantee the lease or rental agreement; however, the person served would be identified as the tenant.

Supported living programs may be referred to as supported living services, independent living, supportive living, semi-independent living, and apartment living; and services/supports may include home health aide and personal care attendant services. Typically there would not be more than two or three persons served living in a residence, no house rules or structure would be applied to the living situation by the organization, and persons served can come and go as they please. Service planning often identifies the number of hours and types of support services provided.

The home or individual apartment of the person served, even when the organization holds the lease or rental agreement on behalf of the person served, is not included in the survey application or identified as a site on the accreditation outcome.

Some examples of the quality results desired by the different stakeholders of these services/supports include:

- Persons served achieving choice of housing, either rent or ownership.
- Persons served choosing whom they will live with, if anyone.
- Minimizing individual risks.
- Persons served have access to the benefits of community living.
- Persons served have autonomy and independence in making life choices.

Key Areas Addressed

- Safe, affordable, accessible housing chosen by the individual
- In-home safety needs
- Support personnel available based on needs
- Supports available based on needs and desires
- Living as desired in the community
- Persons have opportunities to access community activities

Recommendations

There are no recommendations in this area.

4.J. Services Coordination (SC)

Description

Services coordination programs provide goal-oriented and individualized supports focusing on improved self-sufficiency for the persons served through assessment, planning, linkage, advocacy, coordination, and monitoring activities. Successful services coordination results in community opportunities and increased independence for the persons served. Programs may provide occasional supportive counseling and crisis intervention services, when allowed by regulatory or funding authorities.

Services coordination may be provided by an organization as part of its individual service planning and delivery, by a department or division within the organization that works with individuals who are internal and/or external to the organization, or by an organization with the sole purpose of providing community services coordination. Such programs are typically provided by qualified services coordinators or by case management teams.

Organizations performing services coordination as a routine function of other services or programs are not required to apply these standards unless they are specifically seeking accreditation for this program.

Some examples of the quality results desired by the different stakeholders of these services include:

- Access to a variety of services/supports.
- Access to choices of services.
- Individualized services to meet needs.
- Persons achieving goals.
- Persons achieving independence.
- Access to vocational training.
- Persons achieving employment.
- Access to career development.

Key Areas Addressed

- Goal-oriented and systematic process of advocacy
- Coordination of services
- Formation of linkages with community resources and services

Recommendations

There are no recommendations in this area.

Consultation

- With the recent changes in the way case management services are provided in the state of Iowa, the organization is encouraged to continue its involvement in helping provide input and feedback to the state to ensure that the needs of the persons served remain the focus during these times of great change.

Program(s)/Service(s) by Location

Link Associates

1452 29th Street
West Des Moines, IA 50266

Community Employment Services: Employment Supports
Community Employment Services: Job Development
Community Integration
Employee Development Services
Employment Planning Services
Services Coordination
Supported Living
Governance Standards Applied

12th Street

4122 12th Street
Des Moines, IA 50313

Community Housing

19th Street

1220 19th Street
West Des Moines, IA 50265

Community Housing

Amos

1319 Amos
Des Moines, IA 50315

Community Housing

Bel Aire

3301 Bel Aire Road
Des Moines, IA 50310

Community Housing

Elmcrest

10647 Elmcrest Drive
Clive, IA 50325

Community Housing

Hickory Hill

707 Hickory Hill
Des Moines, IA 50317

Community Housing

Hull

4007 Hull Avenue
Des Moines, IA 50317

Community Housing

Madison

4201 East Madison
Des Moines, IA 50317

Community Housing

Pebble

1421 Northwest Pebble Drive
Ankeny, IA 50021

Community Housing

SE 5th

4012 Southeast Fifth Street
Des Moines, IA 50315

Community Housing

Sunny Hill

8956 Sunny Hill Drive
Clive, IA 50325

Community Housing

Westwood

2501 Northwest Fifth Street
Ankeny, IA 50021

Community Housing