

Social Inclusion bulletin #3- June, 2017

Licensure and Certification Process- How it Supports Social Inclusion Initiative

Background and Introduction

Since its inception in 1994, the licensure and certification process has been a reflection of the goals and aspirations for the lives of individuals that self-advocates, families, providers and DDS value and support. These goals are articulated through a survey process that details specific measurable indicators. While licensure domains such as health and safety have always been and continue to be essential measures which form the foundation of safeguards for individuals, certification topics such as integration, access, relationships and social inclusion are equally as important. These important aspects of individuals' lives were affirmed when the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) published what is known as the "Community Rule" which articulates how CMS defines what community means. At around the same time, the State Legislature passed the Real Lives Act, further articulating the goal of full inclusion in the community for people with intellectual and developmental disability. While always committed to social inclusion, in the past year, DDS has embarked upon an initiative to bring even more attention and commitment to assuring that individuals are not only in the community, but **of** the community. It is understandable and important that the DDS licensure and certification process reflect these statewide and national trends. Therefore, in August, 2016, DDS rolled out a revised licensure and certification process which highlights the importance of full inclusion and integration into the fabric of the communities in which individuals live.

Below is a brief explanation of the revisions, their relationship to the overall process and the implications for licensure and certification. For further information please refer to <http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/consumer/disability-services/services-by-type/intellectual-disability/provider-support/licensure/> which describes the licensure and certification tool and process in great detail.

Explanation of What is Required

The licensure and certification process is separated into two components. The licensure component focuses on essential health, safety and human rights protections required of all providers in order to do business with the State. Providers receive a level of licensure, i.e. full 2 year license, license with a mid-cycle review or de-licensure depending on the percentage of indicators they successfully meet. Failure to achieve a prescribed percentage of indicators can result in withdrawal of a provider's license to operate.

The certification process, on the other hand, reflects specific indicators that if present, can be expected to lead to positive outcomes for individuals in their work, day or home life. Prior to the August 2016 changes, certification indicators were reported only by the number of indicators achieved over the number of indicators measured, e.g. 10/14 indicators achieved. The revisions of August, 2016, elevated

the certification process and the indicators measured, to a higher level of importance. The revised process now delineates two distinct certification levels. Providers meeting 80% or more of the certification indicators are certified, while providers meeting less than 80% of the certification indicators are certified with a progress report. Certification with a progress report allows a provider to develop a plan to address these areas, and to review at the one year mark, its progress towards achieving and sustaining positive change. The progress report is viewed as a service improvement process, not a punitive one.

Practical Guidance

A number of existing indicators were strengthened and enhanced. These include:

- Written and oral communication is respectful
- Individuals can use communication technology
- Individuals have privacy when taking care of person needs and personal matters
- Individuals and guardians have been informed of their human rights and know how to file a grievance or who to talk to if they have a concern
- Individuals have privacy in bathrooms

The new indicators in the revised certification tool include the following:

- Use of generic resources
- Access to transportation
- Individuals are part of the neighborhood
- The setting blends in with other homes in the area
- Individuals are part of the culture of the workplace
- Staff/home providers understand people's satisfaction with services and supports and help make changes as desired
- Individuals have choice of leisure and on-scheduled activities
- Individuals are support to eat what, when and with whom they want
- Individuals have assistive technology to maximize independence

It is important to note that these new and enhanced indicators have the same level of importance as other pre-existing measures. They simply reflect and fill out the menu of important expectations that go into assisting individuals to engage in rich and fulfilling lives.