

## The Arc of New Jersey – Project HIRE Fiscal Year 2017 Summary

Project HIRE has been assisting individuals who live with disabilities in obtaining and maintaining competitive, integrated employment in the community for more than 35 years. Each year, we like to highlight some of Project HIRE's achievements and look ahead to ways we can expand the agency for the coming year.

### Fiscal Year 2017 – The Stats

**28 field staff members**

**3.8 average years working for Project HIRE**

**14 New Jersey counties served**

**37,107 service hours logged**

**650 individuals served monthly**

**269 individuals placed in competitive employment**

### Staffing

Supported Employment agencies have a reputation of combating extremely high staff turnover rates. High turnover in direct support staff can negatively impact services. Additionally, retaining quality staff is vital to Project HIRE's success as we regularly promote from within. This is directly related to the fact that the average length in time working for Project HIRE is nearly 10 years for administrative positions held. Project HIRE is proud of the field staff members that provide direct support every day (and night) to participants at his or her job. When it comes to hiring practices, Project HIRE strongly believes that hiring employees who live in the communities they are serving improves services for participants and retention for Project HIRE employees. Our team enjoys the work they do because they are directly impacting the community, in which they live, in a positive way. On average, field staff at Project HIRE have been with the agency for 3.8 years. Finally, Project HIRE staff turnover rate is 25% compared to the industry average of 38%.

### Growth in Services Provided

Project HIRE is committed to providing Supported Employment services across the state of New Jersey. Historically, these services consisted mainly of connecting participants with work opportunities or supporting participants on the jobs they have obtained. While these services still make up the majority of services provided, fiscal year 2017 gave the program the opportunity to expand into more areas and serve new participants who may not have been able to access services in years past.

The first area is Project HIRE's Transition Services. This service is designed to work directly with New Jersey school districts to provide students who live with disabilities with integrated work experiences in the communities they live. This area has seen significant growth when compared to the last fiscal year. During fiscal year 2017, Project HIRE's Transition Services provided more than 9,000 hours of services to students across New Jersey. This is a growth of 29% when compared to the last fiscal year.

Project HIRE's Adult Services has seen an expansion in the types of services they are able to provide through referrals from the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS). While there are many new services available, the most significant for Project HIRE is Trial Work Experience. Trial Work Experience is a service that aims to identify how potential Supported Employment participants can benefit from DVRS services. Early in the introduction of this service, Project HIRE made a goal to become *the* Trial Work Experience provider in the state. Staying true to its word, Project HIRE Trial Work Experience reports are now used as an example by DVRS Central office when training other providers on how to properly vend the service. During fiscal year 2017 the program provided more than 1160 hours of Trial Work Experience activities. This accounted for a growth of more than 60% in hours provided compared to fiscal year 2016.

Project HIRE has also experienced significant growth and increase of referrals from the Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired. Early in fiscal year 2017 the program director designated one full time staff member to provide services for referrals from CBVI. Successes with CBVI participants has led to exponential growth in this area as well, starting with 3 referrals early in fiscal year 2017 and closing out the fiscal year with more than 40 referrals across 5 counties.

## Plans for the Next Fiscal Year

For the next fiscal year, the program director plans to focus on continued expansion in new DVRS service areas such as Trial Work Experience. Late in fiscal year 2017, the program director designated a Trial Work Experience Job Developer. This Job Developer currently has a full-time schedule consisting only of Trial Work Experience activities.

Transition Services are poised to grow in new areas such as Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) funded by DVRS. Pre-ETS services allow local DVRS offices to provide specific services to students who are preparing to graduate and work independently. As an approved provider, Project HIRE has designed several service delivery models for Pre-ETS that could be applied to almost any school district in New Jersey. The program director plans to apply for Pre-ETS grant opportunities and work with local schools and DVRS to implement these service models.

During fiscal year 2017, Project HIRE provided services to the first Project SEARCH graduating cohort in Union County. Project SEARCH provides a select group of students with the opportunity to participate in a comprehensive internship and training program at the Overlook Medical Center in Summit, New Jersey in place of his or her last year in high school. The 2016/2017 Project SEARCH cohort was a success and the program met all required benchmarks. Four students from the graduating class are now gainfully employed with the Overlook Medical Center in career areas such as surgical technology preparation, patient transport and linen processing. Project HIRE was again chosen as the provider for the 2017/2018 cohort and is excited to pursue continued positive outcomes for the next graduating class.

Project HIRE works with individuals referred from multiple funding sources and must adhere to the requirements from each unique source. Individuals receiving supported employment services through the Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) are experiencing a shift to the Supports Program in which providers must report and bill for services directly to Medicaid. Through staff training and working collaboratively with DDD supported employment monitors, the program director aims to meet and exceed the Medicaid requirements for documentation, reporting and submission of claims. The Supports Program expands the scope of supported employment services for DDD participants and Project HIRE is excited to provide new services such as Prevocational Training and Career Planning to qualifying participants.

Utilization of technology to improve service accuracy, quality and efficiency is another focus area for Project HIRE. The program director will be personally training staff members on ways in which technology can be used to enhance services for our participants. The program will also implement technological solutions for everyday business such as performance tracking, training and employee schedules.

In these ways Project HIRE will continue its success, grow in influence and maintain its positive reputation in the Supported Employment sphere.