

# What does it mean to be a Business Partner?

Lowe's, RSC, and Blanchard Valley Center working to increase employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities

Presentation at OACB Conference  
2011

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Rehabilitation Services  
Commission



# BLANCHARD VALLEY CENTER MISSION

- BLANCHARD VALLEY CENTER IS COMMITTED TO INCREASING OPPORTUNITIES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES TO LIVE, LEARN, WORK AND PLAY IN THE COMMUNITY.



# **BLANCHARD VALLEY CENTER SERVES 449 CHILDREN AND ADULTS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES LIVING IN HANCOCK COUNTY**

- **BLANCHARD VALLEY CENTER PROVIDES THE FOLLOWING SERVICES:**
  - EARLY INTERVENTION AND BLANCHARD VALLEY SCHOOL
  - ADULT SERVICES
    - ART STUDIO AND GALLERY
    - DAY HABILITATION SERVICES
    - SHELTERED EMPLOYMENT
    - WORK CREWS
    - **COMMUNITY EMPLOYMENT**
  - RESIDENTIAL SERVICES
  - CASE MANAGEMENT SERVICES
  - TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

# COMMUNITY EMPLOYMENT— OVERVIEW OF MISSION AND VALUES DRIVING DELIVERY OF SERVICES

Our mission focuses on opportunities for individuals to live, learn, **work** and play in the community.

- **Core Values** driving the delivery of services
  - **Exceptional customer service**—To be selected as a provider BVC/BVI must provide exceptional services.
  - Individual **choice**—Individuals do best when they participate in or actually choose their services and provider.
  - **Person centered services**-- Services are based on a person centered plan designed to meet the needs of each individual. We address the services needed on a case by case basis

# COMMUNITY EMPLOYMENT— OVERVIEW OF MISSION AND VALUES DRIVING DELIVERY OF SERVICES

Our mission focuses on opportunities for individuals to live, learn, **work** and play in the community.

- Full-time, competitive employment with benefits is:
  - many times not considered as an option for individuals with disabilities
  - a key component of the lives of all adults in our society
  - **a life changing experience for adults with disabilities, raising them out of poverty and isolation**

# **BLANCHARD VALLEY CENTER/INDUSTRIES COSTS/ BENEFITS FOR LOWE'S OUTREACH PROJECT**

- **Costs**

- Initial Start Up Costs from our Board

- **Benefits**

- 2010 Award of RSC Grant in the amount of \$200,000 for job placement, job coaching and initial follow up

- 2011 Award of RSC Grant in the amount of \$500,000 for job placement, job coaching and initial follow up

- Enrollment of individuals on Medicaid wavier to pay for ongoing supported employment follow up <sub>6</sub>

# BLANCHARD VALLEY CENTER/INDUSTRIES COSTS/ BENEFITS FOR LOWE'S OUTREACH PROJECT

- **Benefits**
  - Public Awareness
  - Reduced ongoing sheltered employment costs
  - Decreased dependency on taxpayers for public assistance, e.g. Social Security, Medicaid
  - Increased utilization of transitional benefit programs, e.g. Medicaid Buy in, Ticket to Work, etc. to address financial concerns that individuals/parents have

# COMMUNITY EMPLOYMENT—THEN AND NOW!

## *Community Employment Prior to June 2010*

- Historically Blanchard Valley Industries offered job development, job placement, job coaching and follow along services to adults.
- Eighteen (18) individuals of our total enrollment were employed in the community.
- Most of these jobs were part-time and generally do not offer benefits. The average wage was \$7.48 per hour.
- Individuals want and need full-time community employment with benefits.

# COMMUNITY EMPLOYMENT—THEN AND NOW!

## *Community Employment Now*

- The average hourly wage is \$10.56 per hour
- We have 19 individuals working at Lowe's: 8 full-time employees as well as 8 outreach employees and 3 on the cleaning crew.
- Trainees are paid \$9.50 per hour. After successful completion of a 45 day training program, these individuals are paid \$11.40 per hour plus full benefits. They can receive shift differentials and bonuses on top of their salary.

# COMMUNITY EMPLOYMENT—THEN AND NOW!

## *Community Employment Now*

- We have 13 individuals working on our cleaning crews, all earning minimum wage
- We have 2 individuals working on our maintenance crew earning minimum wage
- We have 1 individual working at Country Inn and Suites (more to be added soon)
- We have achieved almost a 100% increase in community employment in a little more than 1 year.

# NECESSARY ELEMENTS FOR A SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP

- A Business Partner, like Lowe's, that has made a commitment at the corporate and local level to employing individuals with disabilities
- Support of NOD to
  - build relationships and subsequent commitment at the corporate level; help corporate level translate that commitment to the local level
  - help develop an implementation plan, including initial training and regular follow up meetings with corporate contacts
  - measure success over time

# **Lowe's has had a long standing commitment to employee diversity**

"Pursuing the best, most qualified and diverse employees has always been important to Lowe's. This is why Lowe's has created a focus on recruiting and hiring people with disabilities. We understand that everyone has something to contribute."

Mark Stewart,  
General Manager,  
Lowe's Distribution Center  
Findlay, OH



# NECESSARY ELEMENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP

- A plan that strategically implements this commitment
  - Agency that Serves as the Single Point of Contact to establish a consistent process for referral, training and employment—Blanchard Valley
    - Connecting with a variety of agencies serving individuals with disabilities to obtain referrals, e.g. mental health, Veteran’s Administration, etc.
  - Initial Training for Business Partner staff
  - Buy in from Case Managers through tours, individual planning meetings and follow up communication

# NECESSARY ELEMENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP

- A plan that strategically implements this commitment
  - A leader, like Jenny Ferguson, within the BVC/BVI dedicated to exceptional customer service for those who chose community employment
  - Tours for individuals and families
  - Job coaches that not only provide training so the individual learns the job but also provide “life coaching”, e.g. social skills, financial skills, etc.
  - Continual follow up to “nip problems in the bud” for individuals and to address needs of the business partner

# Blanchard Valley's Commitment to Employers



## Blanchard Valley Center will:

- Ensure qualified, work-ready candidates are presented to employers
- Provide job coaches who understand and are fully trained on employers performance standards
- Provide job coaching, with permanent follow along, job support and temporary employment services to ensure individuals are meeting employment standards (more to come on this topic)
- Provide a staff person to be the primary point of contact for all employment needs related to any candidate referred, including those referred from other agencies

# Blanchard Valley's Commitment to Employers



## Blanchard Valley Center will:

- Partner with other agencies in Hancock County to ensure opportunities are offered to a variety of individuals with disabilities
- Serve as the ***single point*** of contact for candidates with disabilities and coordinate the services of other partner service provider agencies (e.g. veterans, mental health etc.)
- Ensure excellent service is provided to employers

# Provide Exceptional Customer Service To Our Business Partner

- Understand the Business Partner's employment needs
  - Understand the Business Partner's mission and goals and actively supporting them
  - Increase awareness of the abilities of individuals with disabilities through initial training of Business Partner staff
  - Build trust with the Business Partner
  - Communicate consistently up and down the organizational chain from General Manager to Team Members
  - Help the Business Partner problem solve

# Provide Exceptional Customer Service To the Individuals and Their Families

- Understand the needs for the individual and his/her family
  - Give tours to the individual and his/her family to give individuals a clear understanding of the employment site and expectations
  - Schedule meetings with Case Managers and individual/family to develop an individualized plan
  - Conduct pre-employment drug testing and background checks
  - Arrange and provide transportation



# Provide Exceptional Customer Service To the Individuals and Their Families

- Offer Job Coaching via Coaches who know and understand all aspects of the job
  - Job Coaches work for 2 weeks prior to starting as Job Coach
  - Job Coaches attend daily Lowe’s Coaching meetings to communicate with Lowe’s staff
  - Job Coaches emphasize safety and other “mission critical” aspects of the job



# Provide Exceptional Customer Service To the Individuals and Their Families

- Help individuals who have problems outside the work environment
  - Listen to individuals and addressing concerns that could affect their employment, e.g. fiscal, marital, housing, and other issues
  - Intervene before work situations arise which would prevent successful employment



# BVC will provide “job coaches” to assist the managers and employees to effectively train and integrate new employees with disabilities

## Roles & Responsibilities

### BVC Coaches will:

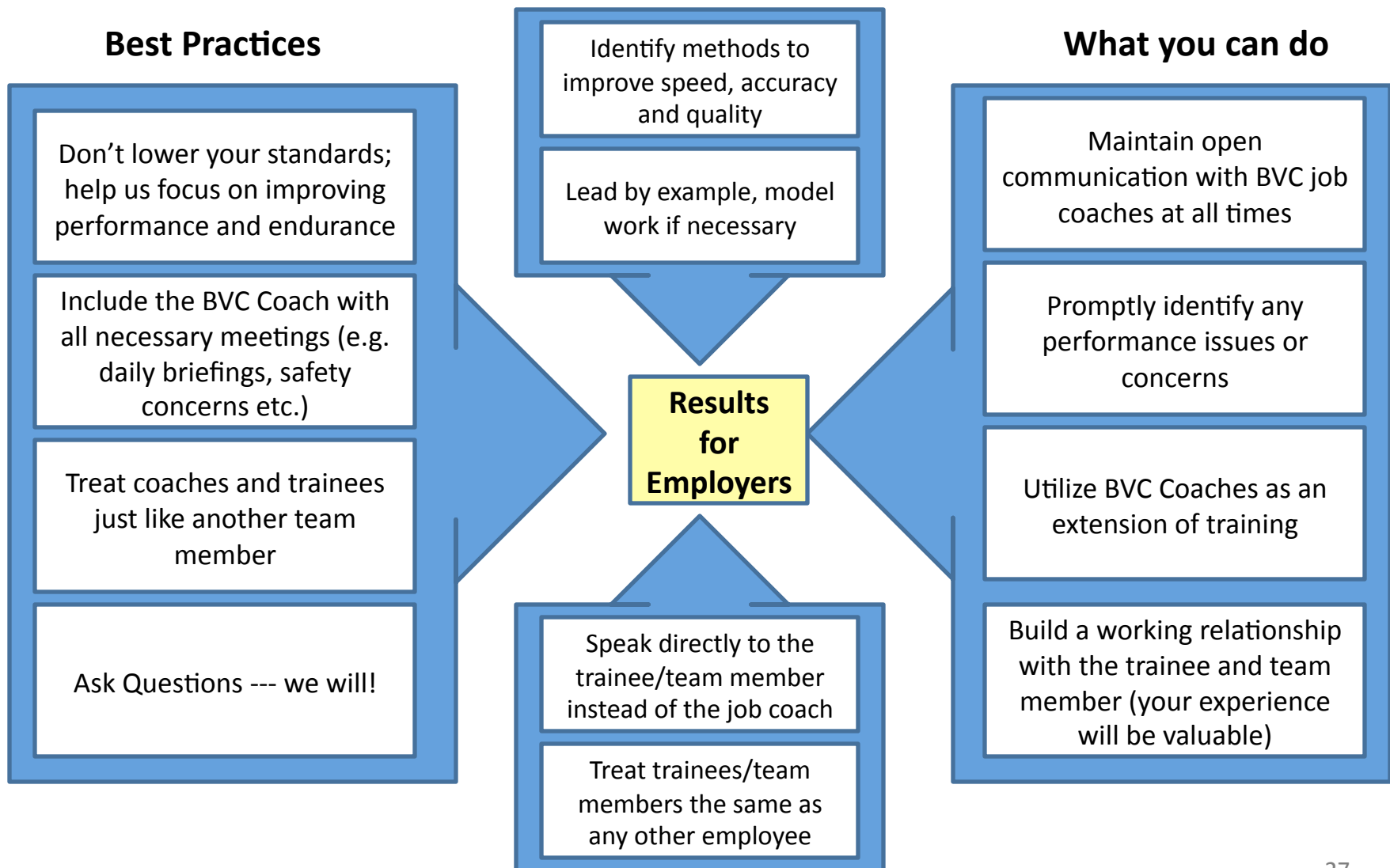
- ▶ Learn job requirements and responsibilities, develop a task analysis to meet the job requirements
- ▶ Work side-by-side with trainee teaching specific job skills, job safety, and appropriate work behaviors for success
- ▶ Orient trainee to the job site (i.e., time cards, break area, restrooms, rules, duties, common job terms, and expectations)
- ▶ Assist trainee to understand and correctly assume the responsibilities of the job and to work with and communicate appropriately with co-workers
- ▶ Modify and/or adapt job to accommodate trainee’s needs with supervisor’s approval
- ▶ Identify actual or potential problems, Work with the trainee and others to resolve problems and teach self-advocacy

## Employer Benefits

### Employers will benefit from:

- ▶ Additional trainers who are able to expertly convey information in a format that is appropriate to the new employee
- ▶ Assistance in helping the new employee becoming acclimated to the job, work environment and culture
- ▶ Problem recognition and problem solving for individual employees (e.g. Assistive technology, cheat sheets etc.

# BVC Coaches are committed to maintaining the same performance and safety standards as all other employees



# Lessons Learned & Applications for the Future

## *Building Relationships with the SSA's*

- Community Employment physically located close to SSA's rather than in sheltered workshop setting
- Community Employment connects and communicates with SSA's as they identify individuals who may be interested in community employment



# Lessons Learned & Applications for the Future

## *Building Relationships with the SSA's continued*

- Community Employment Manager actively & regularly shares community employment opportunities with SSA's
- Community Employment Manager always informs SSA's of individual progress and issues
- Community Employment Manager assists SSA's to help individuals who are not successful to find other opportunities

# Lessons Learned and Applications for the Future

## *Building Relationships with Individuals and Families*

- Community Employment Manager actively involved in ISP meeting
- Community Employment Manager provides tours for individuals and families
- Community Employment Manager coaches individuals and families
- Community Employment Manager always informs individuals and families of progress and issues

# Lessons Learned and Applications for the Future

## *Building Relationships with Individuals and Families continued*

- Community Employment Manager focuses on individual strengths but is aware of needs and seeks other opportunities if original opportunity is not successful
- Train one or more staff to conduct a “benefits analysis” to help individual and families deal with fiscal concerns

# Lessons Learned and Future Applications

## *Building Relationship with Business Partners*

- Replicate successful Lowe's model with all business partners including:
  - Training staff initially to build awareness of the individuals we serve
  - Insuring Job Coaches are trained to the highest standards and provide strong, positive coaching for the individuals they serve; support Job Coaches on an ongoing basis to insure they train individuals to meet Business Partner's standards
  - Communicating with Business Partners' Senior Management and First Line Supervisors on an ongoing basis

# Lessons Learned and Future Applications

## *Building Relationship with Business Partners continued*

- Replicate successful Lowe's model with all business partners including:
  - Maintain awareness of and sensitivity to business cycles and issues
  - Always meeting Business Partners' business standards, e.g. attendance, quality, quality, safety, etc. This means this is not a social service focus but rather a business focus.
  - Exhibiting integrity in all cases to build and maintain trust

# Lessons Learned and Future Applications

## *Building Relationship with Rehabilitation Services Commission and other funders including county boards*

- Understand RSC's eligibility process and helping SSA's meet these requirements.
- Plan ahead so information is submitted prior to community employment
- Provide regular, specific reports on individuals' progress
- Provide regular, specific reports on progress in meeting RSC grant goals
- Meet regularly with RSC Supervisors to discuss progress and address issues

# Lessons Learned and Future Applications

## *Building Relationship with Rehabilitation Services Commission and other funders including county boards continued*

- Understand your county board and other county board's eligibility requirements and ISP requirements; assist SSA's in meeting ISP goals
- Meet with SSA's and SSA Directors to answer questions, discuss individual progress and address concerns
- Reach out to other neighboring county boards who may have someone interested in community employment

# Lessons Learned and Future Applications

## *County board must:*

- Establish community employment as a strategic goal for the county board
- Set specific, measurable goals and objectives for community employment
- Arrange for funding including RSC and waiver funding and demonstrate the cost and benefits
- Regularly communicate progress to Board and the community
- Build relationships with a variety of business to apply the model in new and different business settings
- Celebrate successes!

# A Message from Lowe's about Community Employment

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Videos



Rehabilitation Services  
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# QUESTIONS?

## *CONTACT INFORMATION:*



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