



## **A SUMMARY OF THE 2005-2009 STRATEGIC PLAN**

### **INTRODUCTION**

In 2005, Unity House embarked on a strategic planning process that revised the mission and vision statements of the agency as well as the strategic priorities. Approximately 100 internal and external stakeholders participated in an 8-hour planning session. The first part of the day focused on the mission/vision of the agency and the afternoon explored priorities and focus areas.

Over the course of the five-year plan, implementation of the priorities was accomplished through committees comprised of directors and managers. The direct care staff was invited to participate but due to programming needs, it was often difficult for them to attend meetings. Directors typically participated on more than one committee.

### **LESSONS LEARNED**

As with any process, it is important to look back on the process itself in an attempt to find opportunities for improvement. Listed below are a few areas which, based on participant feedback, can be improved upon during our next strategic planning process:

- Create a strategic plan that allows for focused attention
- Fewer participants to facilitate consensus and productivity
- Spread planning out over several sessions to avoid information overload
- Clearly define each focus area and create an action plan to support it
- Committee structure and reporting needs to be redefined and streamlined

### **ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

Agency-wide, a great deal of hard work took place, resulting in the realization of many of the plan's goals. These achievements have strengthened the agency's foundation and better positioned us to weather the current economic crisis. For example, at the end of 2008, the agency's budget had increased \$2,114,605 from the start of this strategic plan. Payroll was completely automated, and 95% of the programs/services now utilize an Internet-based software program which greatly improves efficiency and service documentation.

As the agency reflects back on what was achieved, we celebrate the significant strides that were gained within each of the six priority areas. It is important to note that the plan itself was lofty from the outset as there were a minimum of three focus areas within each priority.

## **Below is a brief assessment of the 2005 – 2009 Strategic Plan:**

### **Priority 1 FISCAL GROWTH**

- **Take advantage of program expansion opportunities to better serve our stakeholders.**
  1. Agency budget in 2005 \$10,888,931
  2. Agency budget in 2008 \$13,003,536 an increase of over 19%
  3. Expanded service capacity in mental health independent housing services, day habilitation, and MRDD residential opportunities (see also Priority #5 - Consumer Services and Advocacy)
- **Improve communication and advocacy efforts with untapped funding sources.**

With the creation of a marketing and development position, the agency was able to orchestrate more focused efforts on establishing relationships with local and state government officials as well as regional foundations. The efforts yielded positive results for the agency:

  1. Stardust Foundation and Schwartz Family Foundation awarded funds to purchase medical and IT training equipment needs for nursing.
  2. Allyn Foundation awarded funds to get the necessary infrastructure in place to support HR Online and Time Labor Online (TLO).
  3. Friends of the Tompkins County Library made a grant to implement a library literacy project in day hab.
  4. Assemblywoman Barbara Lifton secured funds for a DVD relationship training series.
  5. Assemblyman Gary Finch provided funds to purchase a Hoyer lift.
  6. Grant application approved by the Department of Transportation for two wheelchair-accessible vans.
- **Work with regulatory agencies to obtain adequate and consistent funding for all required program services.**
  1. Rate adjustments were made for the NYS Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD)-certified programs based on data received via the Consolidated Fiscal Report.
  2. Supported apartment beds were converted to IRAs so that they could receive trends and COLAs.
- **Seek and secure funding to offer better wages and benefits to employees.**
  1. Pursued Health Care Enhancement Funding (HCE I, II and III) from OMRDD. Funds were used to offset employee health insurance premium increases for OMRDD program employees.
  2. Adopted a Paid Time Off (PTO) policy in 2006, enhancing employee work/life balance.
  3. Established Healthcare Reimbursement Accounts (HRA) in 2009.

## Priority 2 STAFFING

- **Implement processes for job development.**  
Efforts towards creating opportunities for skill/job development were realized with the creation of several positions—Director of Marketing and Development, Floating Residence Counselor, Evening Floating Manager, Team Leader.
- **Implement a Website job application process.**  
Employment application went live on Website in 2005.
- **Broaden the scope of employment advertising.**  
Advertising occurs across multiple media with an increase in use of the Internet.
- **Provide additional training and resources to meet the needs of a more difficult client base.**
  1. Created/implemented revised training protocol for direct care staff.
  2. Mental Health (MH) residential programs redesigned staff meetings to include clinical-based education.
  3. MH residential programs and Unity Employment Services (UES) entered into agreements with local clinicians to provide quarterly clinical trainings pertaining to psychiatric disabilities.
- **Improve turnover rate.**  
Agency attrition decreased from 34% in 2007 to 32% in 2008.
- **Provide options to improve life balance and reduce stress.**  
Paid Time Off (PTO) was adopted by Unity House in 2006 with implementation in 2007. This online system permits staff to use time as it is accrued.

## Priority 3 AGENCY INFRASTRUCTURE

- **Create a shared and meaningful corporate culture that employs agency strengths and embraces opportunities for change in order to meet the needs of all stakeholders.**
  1. Restructured Human Resources to include an HR manager position.
  2. Conducted self evaluations of key internal systems and revised: centralized prescreening process with human resources; historical files; the delivery of MRDD new employee training and annual recertifications; introduced an intra-agency mail system.
- **Address staff and spatial shortages in both program and support departments.**
  1. Corporate headquarters moved from 108 South Street to 34 Wright Ave, 2009
  2. IPRT and UES moves to Corporate Drive.
  3. Pine Tree IRA moved to new Hector Street IRA.
  4. Sheffield IRA established (formerly Nelson Road IRA).
  5. Auburn day hab and program support staff move from 55 Market Street to 31 Market Street.
  6. Nursing offices transition to residential programs.
  7. Sold 408 E. State Street, Ithaca and relocated Ithaca office and day hab spaces to Catherwood Road.

- **Seek ways to take advantage of technological and external resources.** (see Priority # 6 - Technology)
- **Seek solutions to the issue of staff turnover and burnout.**  
Adopted Planned Time Off (PTO) Policy in 2006 with implementation in 2007.
- **Determine how financial and external limitations affect the agency's ability to attract and retain qualified employees.**  
Ongoing self evaluation at an administrative level and through employee satisfaction surveys identifies the following factors that impact the agency's ability to attract qualified employees:
  - a. Regulatory mandates create an underlying source of stress for employees as they struggle to meet the needs/wants of the consumers, insure health and safety precautions are adhered to, and comply with agency policies.
  - b. Compensation; entry level positions are not making a living wage.
  - c. Health insurance is cost prohibitive for families.

#### **Priority 4      COMMUNITY EDUCATION**

- **Address issues of employee apathy.**
- **Increase the agency's presence within the community through event participation, collaboration and networking.**  
Created the Director of Marketing and Development position, 2006. This position allows a more focused effort on participating in community events. The 2008 Year End Report submitted by the new director identifies 86 media contacts, 19 educational opportunities, and 25 government contacts (not inclusive of OMH, OASAS and OMRDD). Also improved the appearance of the agency Website.
- **Reduce stigmas within the community through education, collaborative opportunities, advocacy and the media.** Incorporated into the agency's general overview.

#### **Priority 5      CONSUMER SERVICES AND ADVOCACY**

- **Reduce stigmas through community and family involvement.**
- **Maximize funding opportunities by better understanding state and federal bureaucracies including Medicaid and Social Security Systems.** (see Priority #1 - Fiscal Growth)
- **Seek additional sources of transportation funding.**
  1. Department of Transportation awarded grant in 2009 to purchase two new wheelchair-accessible vans.
  2. In 2007, the agency explored creating an internal transportation department. Funding to support the necessary staff was not available; unrealized goal.
- **Explore opportunities to provide new and innovative consumer services.**
  1. Opportunities for People Through Services (OPTS): received approval to open two OPTS programs. Prospect Pointe supervised IRA opened in 2007 and the Recreation Center opened its doors in 2008.
  2. Intensive Psychiatric Rehabilitation Treatment (IPRT) – in 2006, designed a discreet tract that serves individuals with mental illness and intellectual

disabilities and received approval to add family consultation services to the menu of services provided.

3. In 2008, received approval from OMH to offer Wellness Self Management as a service; grant received from Verizon in December 2009.
4. In 2006, Wayne County awards to Unity House eight additional beds for dually-diagnosed consumers with mental illness and substance addiction.

## **Priority 6      TECHNOLOGY**

- **Facilitate the formation of a technology department to:**
  1. Provide training
  2. Ensure availability of technology is consistent throughout the agency
  3. Maximize use of current technology
  4. Keep current in regard to future trends and technological advances
  5. Increase technology funding through available sources to include grants
- **A dedicated technology department was not realized; however, significant strides were made:**
  - All staff have access to computers and to the Internet.
  - Utilization of AWARDS/Foothold technology, an Internet-based software system. Between 2005-2008, the agency transitioned 100% of the MH residential services as well as 100% of the MRDD certified/non-certified services to this system.
  - Videoconferencing capability was added in 2006, linking Auburn and Ithaca offices.
  - Time Labor Online (TLO) and HR Online implemented; an Internet-based software that manages timesheets, leave requests, personnel policies, agency forms, etc.

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