

State of WDA 8,

Welcome to WDA 8 and the city of Eau Claire.

WDA 8 is Nine counties in west central Wisconsin. Farming, manufacturing, tourism, 3 state universities and 2 state tech colleges. Biggest city is Eau Claire 66,000 and St Croix county percentage wise is one of the fastest growing in the state

We have three teams (Team 1, NoName and Survivors) and work out of three offices, Rice Lake, Eau Claire and Menomonie. The Teams make it all work. contest which team could collect the most food to donate to food shelter.....one team collected 105 lbs of canned goods. They also donated clothes, personal products, bedding, some kitchen appliances.

WDA 8 currently provides services to over 1,100 people with disabilities who want to work. 15 vocational rehabilitation counselors and 5 CCC, supervisor & myself.

Getting Jobs – over 95% of our goal. 226 people who came to DVR had a vocational dream got a job. This includes entry level, various skill levels jobs, administrative positions, and profession jobs. Since October 2011, WDA 8 staff have provided rehab services 11 farmers who successful rehabs as they can continue farming. In Addition we assisted 15 consumers to start their own small business. DVR helped them make their idea make money.

Some high lights

Project SEARCH, partnering of a vendor, two CESA, 3 schools, Wal-Mart Distribution center, and DVR. 9 High school kids with DVR spent the year there in an unpaid educational training for work. Graduation celebration, 100 WalMart co-workers came, this kids worked in every area at distribution, even had driving forklift. Jim Swanson Gave the kids SwanBucks to be cashed in at the cafeteria. Hot dog, didn't treat these kids as being special. 3 actually got hired by Wal-Mart a \$18 hr.

(IPS) Individual Placement and Support projects in 5 counties Providing services to people with severe and persistent mental illness. Idea is to get them job when they say want to work, have about 5 people working now from Eau Claire, Chippewa, Barron and Dunn Counties.

Eau Claire County Mental Health Court, mental illness and chemical dependency. active with DVR, 2 successful rehabs and 4 more currently working. This is the only one in the state.

Liaison - Stanley prison & Chippewa AODA prison, explain DVR services

We added two new job developers this year, we have quarterly mtg and teams meet separately with them on regular basis.

Involved with the national Agricultural Assistive Technology Training program that is being developed and offered to VR counselor. Hugely based on what Wisconsin has been doing with farmers for the last decade or more.

Team meetings at businesses in the community, get a tour and linking staff to employment.

Job center partners do job fairs, people losing jobs and work with veterans group.

Usually have two master level vocational rehabilitation interns per year. Can hit the job running. Staff step up to provide the hands on training needed. We do presentations at the universities on DVR

Challenges

Finding and hiring good people. UW Stout reports that universities that offer VR counselor training can not graduate enough people with master degrees to fill vacancies by retirements in the next 5 years

Managed Care organizations perception of employment for people that needs long term supports. Trying to get our consumer choice to match their provision of services.

Supplementary grants to providers, takes their focus away from what we need from them.

In Summary

Could not accomplish all the good stuff we do and face the challenges without some really great staff. Having the best people working me is complimented by having great people in senior management!!