

## FY21 Accessibility Plan Progress Report

The following report addresses accessibility barriers that exist within EPI and/or the surrounding community. Members of the Accessibility Committee and the EPI Senior Leadership Team were involved in the creation of the plan and subsequent report.

A barrier to accessibility is anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully taking a part in society because of their disability. To determine the level at which EPI influences a barrier-free environment, both within and outside the organization, the following methods are used:

- Frequent and ongoing internal program and policy review
- Regularly scheduled surveys/program review from external agencies, such as:
  - Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
  - Department of Inspections and Appeals (DIA)
  - Department of Human Services (DHS)
  - Fire Marshall
  - Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF)
- Solicitation of input from persons served and stakeholders through surveys, planning meetings, informal conversations and involvement in various agency committees.
- Education of persons to report barriers they experience within their homes and community within agency program handbooks, printed brochures, agency website and fliers.
- Availability of Accessibility Barrier Forms on agency intranet with training on form use annually. These forms are used to help identify barriers within the organization and community.

The following plan provides a mechanism for tracking progress toward the removal of identified accessibility barriers in the lives of persons served by EPI, as well as its employees and other stakeholders. It should be noted the plan does not necessarily include all barriers but does identify trends, patterns, information, and data which support the presence of a particular barrier. This plan highlights the barriers addressed during this extended fiscal year (October 1-November 30). Progress and results are analyzed annually and considered during the annual budget planning process.

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## Architectural

Architectural or “physical” barriers refer to barriers that impede physical access to an environment.

Barrier	Solution	Due Date
Current housing does not consistently meet changing needs of persons served. Accessible housing is especially important as people with disabilities work to become independent, productive members of their communities.	Maintenance and Property Department will make modifications to renovate homes of persons served as well as EPI facilities. Modifications will increase accessibility through reduction/elimination of physical barriers.	Continuous <i>(Terry)</i>
	Community Services Department will seek out and secure accessible housing for persons served to rent/lease within the community.	Continuous <i>(Melissa)</i>
Community members without access to health insurance who have medical needs are not able to remain or return to their own homes and are faced with moving to a more expensive or restrictive setting such as a nursing home.	Obtain durable healthcare equipment by donation and provide needed equipment to families without insurance. Equipment is loaned at no cost for the timeframe a person needs (months, years, or a lifetime)	Continuous <i>(Teresia)</i>
Sidewalks are not available to allow access to bus routes and other areas within the community.	EPI’s Accessibility Committee will develop a list of needed sidewalks and present it to members of the Waterloo Building Inspections Department, City Sidewalk Department, and the ADA Compliance Commission. This list will be presented annually to the City of Waterloo	June 2020 <i>(Nicole R)</i>

### Progress:

#### Modifications made by the Maintenance Department:

##### Exterior Modifications:

- Repaired/replaced concrete to prevent tripping hazards in 3 locations.
- Updates to ramps, steps and decks around several homes to improve safety for tenants, including:
  - Removed decking
  - Added a short ramp
  - Removed unneeded ramp and rebuilt at alternat home
- Installed handrail at exterior steps of one location

##### Interior Modifications:

- Installed trapeze to a bed to improve independent access in one home
- Installed alarm on toilet to reduce risk of falls in one home.
- Completed full bathroom update and full kitchen update in two separate homes
- Adjusted handrail to height consistent with ADA and Iowa Building Code in one home
- Trimmed weather stripping to ease opening of door at Deery Center office
- Adjusted door closure timing from 3 to 6 seconds at Ansborough office
- Installed magnetic shower heads (replaced hard mounts) in one home
- Installed grab bars to reduce risk of falls within the bathrooms of 4 locations
- Installed a larger shower chair in one home

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- Added handles to kitchen cabinets in one home
- Replaced regular tub/shower with walk in shower at one location
- Applied grip tape to a tub/shower in one home
- Repaired a lift chair in to improve transfer in one home
- Installed handrails at 3 locations
- Lowered bed and installed rail to accommodate independent access in one home
- Repaired the transition between rooms in a home to prevent tripping hazard
- Replaced carpet in a home to prevent tripping hazard

## Secure accessible housing:

EPI continues to develop new housing opportunities by establishing and cultivating relationships with external landlords who provide accessible housing. In this fiscal year, EPI focused heavily on transition to community integrated housing. Through the year, four (4) locations were opened, and an additional seven (7) sites closed. Closures were in response to site consolidation and due to moving to homes which better met the needs and desires of persons served.

## Durable healthcare equipment:

Durable healthcare equipment loans continue to allow persons to remain or return to their homes. This program loaned out 75 pieces of accessibility equipment of the following type:

- |                           |                            |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| • Wheelchair (14)         | • Grab bars (3)            |
| • Wheelchair cushion (2)  | • Gait belt (1)            |
| • Walker (18)             | • Commode (5)              |
| • Cane (2)                | • Elevated toilet seat (8) |
| • Crutches (3)            | • Bed rail (2)             |
| • Bath chair (14)         | • Shoe Horn (1)            |
| • Bath transfer bench (1) | • Grabber/Reacher (1)      |

## Sidewalk recommendations:

FY21 sidewalk recommendations focused on the same locations recommended in FY20. The committee continues to recommend sidewalk construction at East Ridgeway Avenue between Ansborough Avenue and Kimball Avenue and Progress Ave. between Greenhill Road and University Avenue.

## Environmental

Environmental barriers include any location or characteristic of a setting which compromises, impedes, or hinders service delivery and the benefits gained from service.

Barrier	Solution	Due Date
Current housing does not consistently provide a comfortable environment. This impacts quality of service for persons served and productivity of staff.	Maintenance and Property Department will make modifications to renovate homes of persons served as well as EPI facilities. Modifications will reduce/eliminate environmental barriers of the location.	Continuous  (Terry)

## **Progress:**

### Modifications made by the Maintenance Department:

#### Exterior Modifications:

- Additional cameras were installed at office locations to help with safety measures in parking lots



- Plan for maintenance of exits during winter months was developed to ensure safe exit in the event of an emergency for all residential locations

**Interior Modifications:**

- Installed flashing smoke detector for a person with hearing impairment
- Installed LED lighting in one home
- Added air purifiers in 4 offices
- Removed wasps and nests from one office location

## Attitudinal

Attitudinal barriers are behaviors or perceptions which prevent people from communicating properly. Persons with disabilities face attitudinal barriers related to misperceptions of their abilities. Often these attitudes patronize people with disabilities, usually relegating them to low-skill or child-like positions.

Barrier	Solution	Due Date
Misperceptions of abilities of persons served impact service quality and effectiveness	EPI staff training to promote the value and individual needs of each person served.	9/30/2020 <i>(Jaclyn)</i>
Misperceptions of the abilities of persons served impact overall community awareness and acceptance of persons with disabilities	Provide information to the community through training, speaking events, and development of community partnerships.	Continuous <i>(Nicole R, Madi &amp; Nicole E)</i>

### Progress:

Internal awareness and acceptance of persons with disabilities:

Throughout the year, specialty trainings were made available to staff:

- Accessibility and Med Procedures Review – December 2020
- EPI Rights, Responsibilities, & Restrictions – January 2021
- Medicaid Waste, Fraud and Abuse and Universal Precautions – March 2021
- People with Disabilities: Building Relationships and Community Membership – April 2021
- Cultural Competence – May 2021
- Emergency Management and Dependent Adult Abuse Reporting Review – June 2021
- Human Rights Committee: CS Supervisor’s Meeting – June 2021
- Pulse Oximeter Use at EPI – July 2021
- Personal Protective Equipment – July 2021
- Ethical Decision Making: The Basics – August 2021

Six employees were trained to conduct Personal Outcome Measures® (POMs) Interviews with persons served. POMs are a powerful tool to ensure supports and services are truly person-centered. In a POMs interview, 21 indicators are used to understand the presence, importance and achievement of outcomes, involving choice, health, safety, social capital, relationships, rights, goals, dreams, employment and more. The insight gained during a POMs interview is then used to inform the EPI Individual Service Plan.

Community awareness and acceptance of persons with disabilities:

EPI continues to work to raise internal and community awareness of persons with disabilities. Through quarterly newsletters, electronic communications (eNews), blogs, videos, social media, donor

stewardship mailings, speaking engagements, and 1:1 donor visits, information about what EPI does is getting out into the community. This year, a multitude of events focused on raising awareness within the community:

- 2020 Giving Tree (November-December 2020) – EPI partnered with Discerning Wealth, PDCM Insurance, CBE, Nazareth Evangelical Lutheran Church, Waterloo Police Protective Association, CN Railway, Harrison Truck Centers, and Veridian Fiscal Solutions to meet the needs of those who otherwise wouldn't have gifts to open for the holidays. Through the support of our community, we were able to fulfill needs for 83 persons served.
- Employees were involved in choosing the design for More Than You See 2021 used for media related to the event, with the message “All people. Live. Work. Grow.”
- Associate Program Director, Nicole Ericson and Development Specialist, Madi Rummel met with representatives from the Schoitz Foundation to discuss employment services on September 28.
- The Supported Employment team began working to develop a partnership with Bertch Cabinets in April 2021 to provide persons interested in community employment an opportunity to work within the factory. This facilitated an opportunity for Business Developer, Tom Engelbrecht and Employment Specialist, Shannon Henson to present information on EPI's Supported Employment services. The partnership has resulted in 8 persons obtaining employment at Bertch since April.
- Business partnerships – EPI's signature fundraising event, More Than You See, went virtual this year, but still brought in 10 sponsors. (May-July 2021). The virtual event showcased the story of 4 persons served with videos made available to the public. Each video includes the unique story of a person served including local businesses they connect with in the community.
- Business Developer, Tom Engelbrecht met with representatives from the Stuff, Etc. to provide education on employing people with disabilities.
- Job Coach, Cherie Pichone met with members of McDonald's at the corporate office to provide education on EPI Supported Employment services. This meeting resulted in several jobs carved specifically to meet McDonald's needs and promote the strengths of persons involved in the employment program.
- Service Outcomes Manager, Bethany Jura represented EPI at UNI on two occasions, presenting information regarding services available for persons with disabilities to the Special Education Teaching program.
- EPI was recognized by the WCF Courier as a five-time recipient of the Employer of Choice Award in September 2021.

## Financial

Financial barriers include lack of adequate county and state funding for services and the impact of limited income for persons living with disabilities.

Barrier	Solution	Due Date
Low reimbursement rates offer insufficient funding for services/supports.	Exploration of additional resources outside of major funding streams, including fundraising to assist in meeting the needs of persons served and maintaining financial health of the organization.	Continuous <i>(Madi)</i>
	Remain active at both the local and state levels in advocating for increased funding to cover the cost of services and provide regular wage increase for DSPs. Additional considerations in FY21 include impact of COVID-19 on agency resources and the work done to consider DSPs as essential workers like other types of healthcare.	Continuous <i>(Nicole R)</i>



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Limited incomes result in situations where individuals cannot meet monthly obligations, unusual expenses or one-time expenses	Use of the available funds to assist those who do not have the resources to meet these financial obligations. Consider items such as the following or similar: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Essential Needs Fund</i></li> <li>• <i>Move-in packages</i></li> <li>• <i>Waterloo Housing Trust Fund</i></li> <li>• <i>Cedar Falls Housing Trust Fund</i></li> </ul>	Continuous  (Madi)
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**Progress:**

Exploration of additional resources outside of major funding streams:

EPI continues to seek out options, including grant opportunities through foundations and organization to assist with quality service provision. The Development department completes an online and direct mail appeal annually.

Grant requests include (those funded are noted as well):

- Otto Schoitz Foundation – EPI awarded \$15,000 for employment services
- Waterloo Housing Trust Fund – EPI awarded \$10,000 for rent assistance for persons served
- Veridian Credit Union – EPI awarded \$1,250 to support greatest need
- Cedar Falls Community Development Block Grant – EPI awarded \$9,500 for rent assistance
- Farmers State Bank: EPI awarded \$21,500 for accessible housing renovations

The Exceptional Persons Foundation’s annual appeal has raised \$135,202 through 11/30/20. Funding supports FY21 budget gaps to support EPI’s greatest need.

Our 8<sup>th</sup> annual More Than You See dueling pianos fundraising event was cancelled again due to COVID-19. This fundraiser showcases and celebrates the value persons with disabilities contribute and serves as a major portion of our annual fundraising efforts. Instead of the typical in-person fundraiser, a virtual campaign raised \$18,942. This came in the form of business sponsorships and individual donations.

State/local activity advocating for increased funding for service:

EPI remains active at both the local and state levels in advocating for increased funding to cover the cost of services and provide regular increases to providers. Inherent in this request is the need to be able to pay adequate wages to both recruit and retain a quality workforce.

EPI joins the efforts of others and is part of a larger voice through its membership in the American Network of Community Options and Resources (ANCOR), a national, nonprofit trade association representing more than 1000 private community providers of services to people with disabilities, and the Iowa Association of Community Providers (IACP), our state association of providers supporting children and adults with disabilities. Top priorities for both entities include addressing workforce crisis and wage increase for direct care staff within all public policy work.

The COVID-19 pandemic again presented unique challenges and the need to expand advocacy efforts beyond those EPI characteristically is involved with each year. Chris Sparks, EPI’s Executive Director, work alongside Iowa providers in advocacy efforts to gain attention to the role of EPI staff as essential workers and obtain financial support from state and federal proved fruitful. DSPs were considered essential workers in healthcare and were provided access to vaccinations in early 2021 to help maintain workforce and protect the vulnerable population EPI serves. Additionally, a 3.55% rate increase occurred for HCBS funded services, effective July 1st. This increase also raised upper rate limits, annual and lifetime caps for services by the same percentage.

Deb Jungling, EPI’s Chief Financial Officer, is participating in workgroups within the state focused on cost reporting and on workforce shortage management.

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## Financial assistance:

Challenges to meet financial obligations continue to impact persons served. An internal site dedicated to fulfilling needs of persons served was launched with internal and external resources. This year, the Essential Needs Fund provided over \$4,500 in financial assistance. Funds used in the following capacity:

Category	# Funded
Personal Needs/ Milestones	6
Rent Assistance	6
Temporary Child Care Emergency	1
Home Furnishings	3
Stuff, Etc. Voucher	
Child Care Start Up/ Expansion	
Move In Packages	11
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>27</b>

## Employment

Employment barriers include those which inhibit people from obtaining or maintaining employment.

Barrier	Solution	Due Date
Turnover of trained, effective staff creates disruption in people's lives.	Target retention strategies to enhance the Direct Support Professional (DSP) position as a long-term profession.	Continuous <i>(Alissa)</i>
	Continued focus on staff appreciation/celebration to positively impact staff satisfaction and retention.	Continuous <i>(Brittney, Madi &amp; Alissa)</i>
	Provide front line supervisory staff with training regarding positive leadership practices	Continuous <i>(Alissa)</i>
The employment rate of working age (21-64) persons with disabilities is significantly lower than those without disabilities. In Iowa, this rate is 45.9%, compared to 88.5% for persons without disabilities. ( <a href="http://www.disabilitystatistics.org">www.disabilitystatistics.org</a> , 2018)	Increase opportunity to obtain and maintain community employment within Supported Employment Services through connection with community employers and use of accommodations such as job coaching and job search services.	Continuous <i>(Shannon &amp; Nicole E)</i>
Persons served do not have direct involvement with DSP candidates within the recruiting process; they are not able to provide input on those working with them until after hire.	Involve persons served in the hiring process for DSP.	9/30/2021 <i>(Alissa)</i>

## **Progress:**

Acute DSP shortage continues to be a major concern for EPI, as for similar provider agencies looking to hire staff to fill a caregiving role. In recognition of this shortage, EPI continues to take strides to improve the experience of new hires and current staff, with mindful focus on retention strategies and staff celebration. Ongoing efforts include:

### Target Retention Strategies:

The Career Advancement Program (CAP) was rolled out for DSPs. This voluntary program allows interested DSPs who meet certain criteria to complete a certification program offered by the National Association of Direct Support Professionals outside of work hours. For each certification earned, DSPs experience a promotion and additional \$1.00/hour wage increase. Two DSPs completed the first level of the CAP program and moved to DSP Registered, while an additional 4 are working to reach this milestone.

EPI Board of Directors and Senior Leadership implemented several adjustments to wages this year. Market based pay grade increases were implemented to ensure EPI remains competitive in the market and a 3% performance-based pay increase was approved for FY22. DSP specific pay increases included making the temporary pandemic pay of \$2 per hour for all hours worked in direct support permanent, increasing night attendant wages to \$9 per hour for staff working overnight in a sleep position, and reframing DSP positions by adjusting the starting wage for DSP-Daily Residential Specialists to \$14.50-\$17.00 per hour.

Efforts to keep staff and persons served safe during services continue. Staff and persons served were provided multiple opportunities to receive the COVID-19 vaccine at clinics held at EPI by Unity Point Health. Staff working directly with persons served or in buildings where services occur were provided new face shields that have shown to create less fogging. All staff working direct care were transitioned from cloth masks to surgical masks, as product availability increased.

### Staff appreciation/celebration:

#### October 2020

- All staff were offered an opportunity to express interest to become a part of a new agency Human Rights Committee with the focus to enable individuals to exercise and promote basic civil, human and legal rights.
- Office staff were invited to attend a virtual Halloween Spooktacular event to show off costumes, play a game and connect.
- Staff were invited to send in photos of themselves, their children or pets in costume, to be shared on social media. Voting for the best costume occurred via "most likes" on social media, with a prize and bragging rights .

#### November 2020

- Continuation of the 5 Star DSP of the month program within the Community Services department: three of the monthly winners were submitted to ANCOR for DSP of the year.
- EPI offered staff an opportunity to take part in the "Big Island Trek Challenge" where those involved recorded engagement in physical activity and recorded steps/activity each day to reach different milestones within a virtual trek of Big Island's captivating images. Those with the most steps/activity were eligible for prizes including a Yeti Camino carryall Tote, Yeti Lunch Set and Yeti Water Bottle.

#### December 2020

- Staff were invited to wear holiday sweaters (ugly or otherwise) to the December EPI update
- EPI update Leadership training for Lead Teachers at ALC Childcare Center
- Door/workspace decorating contest for staff. - extended to virtual office spaces
- Tree decorating contest for Persons Served.



- EPI Board of Directors approved a one-time additional compensation for the holidays of \$500, this was shared during a virtual holiday celebration, which replaced the traditional holiday meal.
- EPI staff were made aware of temporary benefits for frontline healthcare workers available in the community, including 50% off Northface items at Scheels and free coffee at Starbucks.
- CEO, Chris Sparks began offering grief and loss sessions the 3rd Wednesday of the month.
- Retirement education meetings were held to introduce a new 401K program administrator, The Standard, and share new features including a Roth 401k option, Mainspring Management Financial Tool, election change frequency, a rollover feature and hardship withdrawal options.

## January 2021

- Employees made aware of free counseling services through Pathways Behavioral Health Services through COVID Recovery Iowa. Online support is aimed to help people learn creative strategies for coping with the effects of the pandemic.
- EPI converted its retirement plan to The Standard. The change includes automatic enrollment (at 2% into a pre-tax deferral) for all new staff on the first of the month following their 6 month anniversary unless they choose to opt out. Current employees can make contribution election changes monthly via the website or app. Changes can include amount contributed to both pre-tax and after-tax options. EPI provides a dollar-for-dollar contribution match up to 6%, with employees getting full ownership of EPI's matching contribution at their 5 year anniversary.

## February 2021

- EPI staff were able to purchase office items via online auction.
- Results of the Employee engagement survey were shared at the EPI update. Staff were invited to provide additional input and generate ideas with their teams to seek solutions to areas with below average ratings where are important to employees.

## March 2021

- Benefits-eligible employees (those regularly scheduled 30+ hours per week) were invited to attend virtual Open Enrollment meetings to hear about the range of benefits available at EPI.

## June 2021

- EPI employees, family and friends were offered an opportunity to purchase diesel fuel from the underground tank at the Transportation garage for a reduced price.
- EPI service and support teams were invited to engage in team planning sessions to inform the FY22 agency Strategic Business Plan.
- Deb Jungling, EPI CFO, was honored for the impact she has had and continues to have on her family, friends, colleagues and community within the 8th edition of the Iowa Women's Foundation publication *Ovation: A Tribute to Iowa Women and Girls!*

## July 2021

- DSP Rae Vanarsdale was nominated for the Iowa Association of Community Providers DSP Award. IACP DSP Awards present an opportunity for IACP members to nominate DSPs who go beyond their call of duty and provide exemplary service in the profession.

## August 2021

- Office staff were made aware of an agency vehicle available for checkout. The vehicle is intended to be used for out-of-town meeting access for up to 4 employees, use while other EPI vehicles are in for repair, transportation of DIA/HUD/other surveyors, etc.

## September 2021

- Celebration of Direct Support Professionals Week (September 6-10), where EPI DSPs were invited to a virtual celebration. At this event, 12 DSPs were recognized for their exceptional services in the community and all DSPs were presented a thank you video from the agency, expressing appreciation for all they do for persons served.

- All staff were given a Bluetooth speaker and wireless phone charger as a “thank you” gift.
- Stefanie Duffy received Iowa APSE Professional award, which recognizes an IA APSE member for outstanding state-of-the-art practices and professional achievements in Employment First in her role as a Job Coach.
- Nicole Ericson received the Iowa APSE Chapter Board Member Award in September 2021 for her leadership and dedication to the IA APSE BOD and to the principles of Employment First. Nicole was also named the IA APSE Board President.
- An employee engagement survey was released to staff via AJB Research Services

## October 2021

- Staff were invited to send in photos of themselves, their children or pets in costume, to be shared on social media. Voting for the best costume occurred via most likes on social media, with a prize and bragging rights going to Dawn Myers.
- Staff, their families, and persons served were invited to participate in a Pumpkin Contest, where a prize was offered to Emily Dunlay for her pumpkin photo which received the most likes on social media.

## November 2021

- Staff were made aware of a \$500 one-time additional compensation for the holidays, to be paid in December.
- Reduced-cost tickets for the Black Hawks Hockey were made available to staff.
- Reframing of DSP positions to help attract and retain more professionals included a minimum \$1/hr wage increase for DSPs previously working in the DSP2 position in Daily Residential Services (now DSP – Daily Residential Specialists).
- EPI kicked off the annual "Maintain Don't Gain Holiday Challenge" Those who participate and maintain their weight within 2 pounds will be entered into a drawing for one of three prizes.

## Continuous benefits for all employees:

- Vehicle repair for all EPI employees and family members. With approval, repairs between \$100-\$750 may be paid over a 3-month period with no interest through payroll deduction with approval of the CFO.
- EPI staff have preferential access to Hawkeye Child Development center for childcare spots.
- Free Child Care Referrals through Child Care Resource and Referral
- Free car seat fittings
- College tuition discount for EPI employees, spouses and dependent children (under age 26) at Upper Iowa University
- Corporate discounts for local athletic clubs
  - River Plaza Athletic Club
  - Cedar Falls Recreation Center
  - Cedar Valley SportsPlex
  - Anytime Fitness
- Discounts to local businesses via the PDCM EMPOWER Discount Card
- Cell phone discount of 15% at US Cellular
- ANCOR Shared Resources Purchasing Network – as a long-time member of ANCOR (American Network of Community Options and Resources), EPI can extend discounts to a number of services to our employees, persons served, and family. Participating companies include, but are not limited to, Dell, Furniture Concepts, Sprint and more.
- Free access to the Freedom From Smoking program
- Access to 401k Retirement Plan.
- Access to the My25 online nutrition portal
- Employee Assistance Program – a 24-hour national call center provides confidential telephone consultation, convenient in-person counseling, legal, financial and eldercare consultation at no cost to employees.
- Nationwide pet insurance

- EPI points - employees need 5 EPI points to receive a \$25 gift card. Submit a point in each category (people, stewardship, creative cooperation, integrity, and years of service) and earn 2 gift cards.

**Continuous benefits for all Full-Time employees:**

- Wellmark BCBS Health Insurance and Blue365 discounts
- Delta dental and vision insurance
- Life Insurance
- Voluntary Supplemental Life and AD&D insurance
- Assurity accident, hospital, and critical illness plans
- Freshbenies - Teledoc
- Flexible Spending Plans
- Health Savings Account
- Supplemental Plans – accident, Critical illness, Hospital Plans

**Frontline Supervisor Training:**

Supervisors completed training on positive leadership practices focused on a summarized version of the 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, by Steven Covey and The 5 Levels of Leadership by John Maxwell. Ongoing professional development is centered around the agency Strategic Business Plan and includes hands on training and mentoring from Program Directors.

**Increase opportunities for integrated employment:**

Within Employment services, focus continues to be on increasing opportunities for community employment for persons with disabilities within individual community jobs. EPI Supported Employment Service's partnership with the American Dream Network as an EN provider has expanded to include virtual employment supports nationwide.

Partnership development with businesses throughout the Cedar Valley resulted in community employment for 73 persons served with the following employers:

- |                                   |                                      |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| ○ A&W (Cedar Falls)               | ○ Little Ceasars (University)        |
| ○ Bertch Cabinets (Jesup)         | ○ Lowe's (2)                         |
| ○ Bertch Cabinets (Waterloo) - 6  | ○ Mallard Point                      |
| ○ Brown Bottle (Cedar Falls)      | ○ Marcus Theater                     |
| ○ Buffalo Wild Wings - 3          | ○ McDonalds (1st Street Cedar Falls) |
| ○ Burger King (Donald St)         | ○ Montage – 2                        |
| ○ Burger King (LaPorte Road)      | ○ New Star                           |
| ○ Caseys (LaPorte City)           | ○ Noodles and Company                |
| ○ Cadillac Lanes                  | ○ Panchero's (Cedar Falls)           |
| ○ Carlos O'Kellys (CF)            | ○ Pizza Ranch                        |
| ○ Carlos O'Kelly's (Waterloo) – 3 | ○ Romantix                           |
| ○ Cedar Valley Landing            | ○ Suburban Extended Stay             |
| ○ Doughy Joey's (Waterloo) – 2    | ○ Stuff Etc                          |
| ○ Factory Direct Mattress         | ○ Sunnyside Country Club (2)         |
| ○ Firehouse Subs                  | ○ Target (Waterloo)                  |
| ○ Flowerama                       | ○ Target Distribution Center         |
| ○ Goodwill                        | ○ Texas Roadhouse (4)                |
| ○ Hampton Inn                     | ○ TJ Maxx                            |
| ○ Hilton Garden Inn (2)           | ○ Tommy's Car Wash -2                |
| ○ Hy-Vee (Ansborough)             | ○ Walmart (Waterloo) -7              |
| ○ Hy-Vee (Cedar Falls) - 4        | ○ Xpress Oil & Lube                  |
| ○ Insomnia Cookies                | ○ Your Pie                           |
| ○ Jimmy Johns (College Hill CF)   |                                      |
| ○ Kwik Star (Fletcher Avenue)     |                                      |



Involve persons served in the hiring process for DSP

Due to limits imposed on employers attending career fairs in relation to COVID-19 safety, opportunities for persons served to join in talent recruitment was limited to an Open-Air Career fair hosted by Iowa Works on in June.

## Communication

Communication barriers include the absence of materials needed to adequately communicate with all persons.

Barrier	Solution	Due Date
Ensuring messages to agency stakeholders are timely, consistent, and reach intended audience.	Expand and improve communication avenues to provide consistent, up-to-date information to all levels of agency staff in order for them to effectively do their jobs.	Continuous <i>(Melanie)</i>
Consider communication methods including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agency intranet (EPIcenter)</li> <li>• Agency Website</li> <li>• Mailings</li> <li>• Email</li> <li>• In-person/Verbal</li> <li>• Virtual</li> <li>• Social Media</li> </ul>	Expand and improve communication avenues to provide consistent, up-to-date information to external stakeholders (families, funders, donors, community members), especially as this relates to accurate email contact information.	Continuous <i>(Madi)</i>

### Progress:

Consistent communication with employees:

EPI communicates with employees on a regular basis via the EPIcenter. Items important to all employees such as Health Enrollment forms, Labor Laws for all states applicable to local and remote employees and Safety Data Sheets were made available on the EPIcenter this year.

Regular email updates and a dedicated site on the EPIcenter remain essential when communicating accurate and up to date information surrounding COVID-19. This dedicated site contains the most up-to-date information regarding expected response for employees and persons served when they present symptoms, are potentially exposed to COVID-19, if they obtain positive test results or are looking for vaccination resources.

This year, globally managed email distribution groups were created and implemented, establishing an automated process to provide employees access to the information they need to effectively do their jobs. Weekly communication emails and monthly agency updates remain available to all agency staff. Both HR and the IT teams provide regular tips on topics relevant to all staff via email, followed by an announcement on the EPIcenter.

A modification was made to BambooHR, which allows notes to be added to staff by persons who are not the direct supervisor. This new process alerts the direct supervisor and allows them to accept or deny the note to publish to the employee's record. Additionally, The EPIcenter includes step-by-step instruction to upload documents, such as COVID-19 vaccination cards to the BambooHR system.

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## Expand communication across agency departments:

Newsletters were sent out in the spring, summer, and fall. spring and fall's newsletters focused on agency updates. The summer newsletter also focused on agency updates, as well as giving an update of the end of the fiscal year and thanking all donors for their contributions over the last year.

The Intermittent and Day Habilitation teams shared team email accounts with stakeholders in July. This allows stakeholders to use one email address to reach many team members and helps prevent lag-time for response when supervisors are out of the office or do not have immediate access to their email.

A direct mail campaign letter went out to donors from the past 5 years and prospective donors, as well. This letter shared an update on how donations would be used to impact the lives of persons served.

EPI maintains presence on multiple social media platforms; a TikTok account was added this year. Social media accounts are updated as often as every day and the Communications Specialist ensures quick response to questions or comments from the public.

## Technology

Technology barriers occur when a technology can't be modified to support varied assistive devices.

Barrier	Solution	Due Date
Increase accessibility of agency internal communication mechanisms and technology	EPI will provide training to supervisors and staff as appropriate.	Continuous <i>(Jaclyn)</i>
	Continue to update agency technology to improve the experience of the end-user and positively impact the quality of service	Continuous <i>(Melissa)</i>
Lack of relevant assistive technology for persons served	Explore and implement use of assistive technologies to allow persons served to access information and improve quality of life and independence.	Continuous <i>(Melissa &amp; Dawn)</i>

## Progress:

### Training to Supervisors & Staff

Ongoing training related to updates for frequently used software, including PS Financials, Quantum and QuickMAR continued throughout FY21 for supervisors and direct support staff.

Supervisors were provided training focused on using BambooHR to manage email distribution groups and the EPIcenter to manage person served financials.

Technology and security tips were regularly provided to all staff via All Staff Communication emails. Topics included tech safety depending on season/weather, avoiding phone scans and phishing emails, and use of software such as Teams, Outlook, Micollab, and Adobe. Virtual Lunch and Learn trainings were made available to office staff to better understand functionality of Microsoft Teams and OneNote.

### Update Technology

Several technology updates were made this year specific to keeping agency data secure. An increase in ransomware activity/phishing attempts targeted to the healthcare industry required heightened awareness and caution. Security related changes include updating to Outlook Office 365, replacing a



previous version of Microsoft Outlook and the Barricuda email security system. Employees now receive an email from when suspicious emails are received and are in "quarantine" Employees can block the sender or review and release. Mobile Device Management was updated, which turns off EPI resources outside of managed applications and Access points now authenticate users in the network automatically, providing a higher level of security.

A large project related to agency forms is underway. This project is meant to consolidate forms and create electronic access to agency forms. Intake packets are now electronic.

Other updates were made to agency software and systems including:

- EPIcenter
  - Building an approval workflow into the purchasing request system to improve communication for purchase authorizations and allow any PPE request to be submitted through the system.
  - Electronic spenddown requests to track persons served who are close to asset limits
- Quantum
  - Expansion of position-specific dashboards which have key indicators and reports applicable to the service and position of the user
  - Adding a direct link to the QuickMAR medication administration software on staff dashboards
  - Revision of ISP Due 30 indicator to a goal outcome indicator for supervisors so they know when goals need to be reviewed
  - Update to Progress Notes 2 report, which now only pulls residential data and the creation of a separate report used to review day habilitation and employment documentation

### Assistive Technology:

This year person served have increased use of adaptive equipment such as Night Owl, shaking bed alarms, light/sound bed alarms, bed and chair sensors and removable hand rails. Easterseals launched an updated Iowa Assistive Technology website, with continued opportunity for assistive devices to be checked out and tested so people can determine what works best for their specific needs prior to making a purchase.

The IT team continues to allow web address access for on-line grocery shopping, zoom meetings and other events so that persons served are able to safely keep involved in their communities and keep in touch with friends and family.



## Transportation

Transportation barriers impact persons from participating in the full range of services or access activities in the community.

Barrier	Solution	Due Date
Inadequate public transportation for persons served limits opportunities to engage in community activity; persons served are unable to access community opportunities in which they are interested	EPI will explore available options for alternative transportation opportunities for persons with disabilities to access community environments.	Continuous <i>(Shannon)</i> Continuous

### Progress:

Increase opportunities for community integration through access to transportation:

EPI continues to work with internal and external stakeholders to both individually address transportation barriers and increase awareness about them in the community. Program Managers, the Employment Specialist and other members of person's served interdisciplinary teams work together to secure funding for transportation services, discover and assess different transportation resources, and collaboratively problem solve to most effectively meet needs of people with disabilities.

This year, as the transportation program officially discontinued all field trip and charter services, a fleet of vans was purchased to support with transporting persons served for use in both residential and day habilitation services.

## Community Integration

Community Integration barriers include those which keep persons served from fully participating within their community.

Barrier	Solution	Due Date
Persons served live within community but do not reach full potential of belonging to community	Encourage and assist persons served with accessing volunteering opportunities to build social capital within the community.	Continuous <i>(Melanie)</i>

### Progress:

Covid-19 related closures within the community were relaxed in response to increased vaccination availability. Due to this, day habilitation volunteer opportunities increased with careful consideration surrounding the health and safety impact of non-essential community access.

EPI's Day Habilitation program expanded to include weekends in August. Weekend services occur at least twice monthly, with times varying to accommodate community activities. While weekend activities are less volunteer focused, they do provide significant opportunity for community access for those who attend. Attendance is open to all day habilitation participants on a first-come-first served sign up basis. Activities have included attending UNI football games, the Waterloo Food Truck Festival, the Old Time Power Show, Octoberfest activities in Waverly, Heartland Acres Haunted House, Waterloo Blackhawk hockey games, and a tour of the Brucemore Mansion.

## Other Barriers

Barriers identified by EPI persons served, staff, or stakeholders within the community (identified through Accessibility Barrier Forms). While improvements have been made, the Waterloo/Cedar Falls metro area presents challenges to persons with disabilities which create potential safety concerns.

Barrier	Solution	Due Date
As identified through submission of Accessibility Barrier Forms	A representative from EPI's Accessibility Committee will address issues and concerns with business owners, the ADA Compliance Commission, and/or the city to seek improvement.	Continuous

Barrier	Solution	Completed
12/15/2020 Physical Barrier in community (River Plaza, Waterloo) – persons in close proximity to vehicles in lot  Drop off at EPI Day Habilitation occurs in a small parking lot where persons served with limited mobility are walking while vehicles are in motion. Visibility of persons in lot will be reduced as winter snow piles as a result of plowing the lot.	Drop off location at River Plaza location was changed to the side door of the building along the street to allow for persons served to safely enter the building.	12/22/202

Barrier	Solution	Completed
Physical Barrier in community (Waterloo) – ramps to access public transportation  Ramps allowing persons who use wheelchairs and walkers to access public transportation are not wide enough to accommodate wheelchairs wider than 33 inches, limiting access to medical appointments and community involvement.	Nicole Rand researched ADA/federal regulations for transportation accommodation for those with disabilities. Federal requirements for accessible ramps within the ADA Accessibility Specifications for Transportation Vehicles, ramps are required to be a minimum of 30 inches wide with barriers at the sides at least 2 inches high to prevent wheels from slipping off. Local transportation entities meet ADA requirements.  The staff reporting this barrier was provided details for the transportation requirements designated by the ADA as well as the mechanism for filing complaints with the Federal Transportation Administration Office of Civil Rights.	8/20/2021