



HORIZONS

OF OKALOOSA COUNTY, INC.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

PROJECT REPORT

May 1995

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Attachment - Roster of Participants

Preface

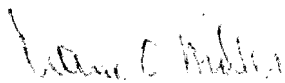
Horizons of Okaloosa County was created early in 1992 as the successor to the Association for Retarded Citizens of Okaloosa County. It is dedicated to providing a broad range of services to the developmentally disabled citizens of the county and nearby areas. The Horizons' Board of Directors manages a staff of 90 employees and derives its income (\$1.9 million in FY 1994) from state agencies, the federal government, mobile work crew contracts and private donations.

In the fall of 1994, Horizons approached the Okaloosa-Walton Community College's Institute for Senior Professionals (ISP) and requested assistance in developing a set of goals and objectives to guide it through the next few years.

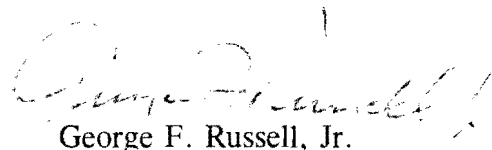
The ISP is a service organization of retired individuals who are interested in contributing their skills, talents, and expertise to the community in meaningful ways. The Institute has assisted the Okaloosa County Commission, the Okaloosa County School District, Eglin Air Force Base, and several local social service organizations.

This report reflects a collaborative effort by ISP and Horizons. The staff of Horizons prepared the background reports and developed the goals, objectives and action items which cover both program and management goals. ISP staff helped to structure the project and coached as the process was carried out.

We wish to express our appreciation to the staff, board members and volunteers of Horizons for their dedication to the organization and support for this project. Thanks also to the ISP team members and to the staff of the OWCC Foundation for assistance in preparing this report.



David O. Miller
Executive Director
Horizons of Okaloosa County, Inc.



George F. Russell, Jr.
ISP Team Leader

Executive Summary

History

From a baby-sitting service in the mid 1950's for a few families with children who were mentally or physically handicapped, Horizons has developed as we know it today.

Dedicated parents were responsible for creating the Association for Retarded Citizens of Okaloosa County, which grew to serve adults and children under the Department of Health and Rehabilitation Services, built the Silver Sands School and the School of Hope, established Shoal River Industries, opened group homes, organized work crews, and developed Independent Living and Supported Employment programs.

The ARC, with a \$2 million budget and 213 employees at its peak, was forced to close its doors on March 21, 1992.

Horizons of Okaloosa County, Inc., a private, not-for-profit corporation, began operation on April 1, 1992. It is governed by a Board of Directors made up of interested citizens. The name reflects a sense of direction, purpose and outlook which is positive and descriptive of newness.

Unfortunately, much of the negative publicity surrounding the financial problems and ultimate demise of the old ARC haunted the start-up function. Employing many ARC staff, starting operations in most of the same locations, and providing services to most of ARC's clients compounded the problems of trying to establish an identity. With start-up problems fading, the organization looks to refining delivery and growing as needed to provide quality services to the developmentally disabled of the area.

Finance

Through HRS and Medicaid, the State controls 68 percent of Horizons' funding base. Mobile work crew income and contract work generate 28 percent, while only 4 percent comes from donations and memberships.

Salaries and benefits comprise 77 percent of Horizons' expenses, with buildings and equipment accounting for 12 percent.

Early financial problems included lack of working capital, difficulty in obtaining credit and delays in payments caused by the cost-reimbursement contract system employed by HRS. Many local creditors and almost all local banks had been adversely affected by the ARC's financial problems. For Horizons to have survived this difficult period is a tribute to its dedicated, caring, and capable staff.

The financial picture is improving. A breakthrough in establishing a credit relationship was made when AmSouth Bank and Trust agreed to finance a group home. Compass Bank followed with vehicle financing. Although cash flow remains a problem, Horizons is able to direct-bill several of its programs. Direct electronic deposit of the large Med-waiver payments will improve cash flow. Horizons continues to make other improvements.

Two high priorities for Horizons are obtaining an established line of credit, and developing a capital fund.

Outside Forces

Every organization is subject to outside forces. For Horizons these include the client/family population, the state funding agencies, the Okaloosa County School System, Okaloosa Coordinated Transportation, United Way, competing organizations in Fort Walton Beach and Crestview, and the general public. Surveys were developed to gain information about three of these: families, schools, and the general public.

Surveys returned by clients' families revealed a need for family support groups and more regular communication between staff and facilities. Insufficient transportation, the poor condition of some facilities and too little day-program work were also identified as problem areas.

The school system is responsible for the developmentally disabled from age four through high school. Teachers who teach the Varying Exceptionalities, the Trainable Mentally Handicapped and Profoundly Mentally Handicapped Programs identified significant areas of post-secondary vocational and residential services needs. This information will help in preparing clients as they move out of the school system and seek support from organizations such as Horizons.

Issues raised in discussions with Support Coordinators (independent of HRS contractual workers who refer clients to organizations such as Horizons) included the need for close communications between the two groups and for informed client consent.

The surveys conducted by the Outside Forces team represent a beginning to what will be an ongoing effort to stay in closer touch with these important groups. All of the issues discussed above have been dealt with in the Action Plan.

Staff and Training

A survey of Horizons' employees revealed a well-educated, dedicated staff who are generally satisfied with their jobs, their supervisors, and with Horizons as an employer. Most of their stated concerns have been addressed in the Action Plan, including:

- ◆ More orientation and training for staff
- ◆ A fair compensation system
- ◆ More timely reimbursement
- ◆ A comprehensive policy manual

Horizons is seen as a place where staff work together and support each other. Even so, a majority would like to see more team-building activities and improved employee communications. Most employees would like to see Horizons be more successful in generating public support and raising funds. They would also like to see the Horizons' facilities improved. All of these concerns are addressed in the Action Plan.

Facilities and Equipment

The general condition of much of the Horizons' physical plant is fair to poor. Historically, upgrades and maintenance have been done by families working in exchange for services (the Children's Center), volunteers and staff. Until the Facilities Team report, no comprehensive list of requirements had been assembled.

The Action Plan addresses the need for a more systematic approach to facilities development and maintenance, including establishing a Facilities Committee responsible for determining priorities for the use of the limited funds, and for conducting a preventive maintenance program. The plan also addresses the need to create a capital fund.

(This summary is based on five comprehensive reports generated by the working teams described in the next section. The full texts were included in the "Interim Report, March 1995", and are available at Horizons' offices on Truxton Road.)

Project Organization and Methodology

The project began in October 1994. It was agreed at that time that the work would be done by as well as for Horizons. The role of ISP would be to organize, coach and facilitate. The product was to be a set of goals for Horizons, generated by Horizons' staff based on their experience and knowledge of the programs and the client's needs. The product would also include program-support and administrative goals, based on staff's first-hand knowledge of problems and needs in these areas.

The first phase involved the largest number of staff and was the most time consuming. Twenty-nine individuals * were assigned to five teams and tasked with preparing "existing conditions" reports in five areas:

- ◆ History and Mission
- ◆ Outside Forces
- ◆ Staffing and Training
- ◆ Facilities and Equipment
- ◆ Finances

The team members were drawn from Horizons staff, Board members and volunteers. Each team was assigned an ISP advisor. The leader of each team, the Executive Director, the Board President and the ISP team leader constituted the Executive Planning Committee (EPC). On February 16, 1995, the five reports were presented to the EPC in a half-day workshop.

Workshops over the next few weeks were devoted to discussion and restatement of the mission, determination of goals, development of objectives supporting the goals, and finally, the generation of specific action items.

There were several *by products* generated by this effort, for example:

- ◆ A number of issues were identified which will now be treated as Horizons-wide rather than program-specific issues (e.g. resource library).
- ◆ Several subjects were identified as appropriate for a standing committee to assist management in gathering data and setting priorities (e.g. facilities).
- ◆ Program directors were able to make their needs known to management in a format that allows comparison across the organization.
- ◆ Surveys were conducted (related agencies, families and clients, Horizons' staff) which will provide the basis for future data-gathering efforts.
- ◆ Organization tables and position descriptions were updated during the fact-finding phase of the project.

* See Attachment 1

Mission

It is the mission of Horizons to improve the quality of life for people with developmental disabilities through education and advocacy with the support of family, friends, and community.

Philosophy

- ◆ Horizons is dedicated to the philosophy of possibilities, opportunities, and choices toward the fulfillment of the lives of people with developmental disabilities.
- ◆ We believe in and subscribe to the dignity and worth of human life, and our role in improving individual lives. Persons with developmental disabilities have the same rights as all citizens, and should not be constrained.
- ◆ As advocates, all persons associated with Horizons will seek to expand the limit of opportunities, of exercising choice, of accepting levels of risk, or participating in and contributing to the general community, and, as appropriate, represent the interests of all persons with developmental disabilities.
- ◆ As staff members of Horizons, we value the concept of serving others over self, of loyalty to our clientele, of ethical professional behavior, and of being part of a moral force in the community.
- ◆ As an organization, Horizons values the individual and their families, and strives to find ways to improve the quality of their lives. Horizons values doing the right thing - not the expedient; what is convenient to and in the best interest of the client - not the staff member nor the organization; what makes sense - not what is arbitrary.

Horizons Today

In keeping with the fundamental changes nationally, Horizons has implemented changes in the way that services are provided to persons with disabilities and their families. Horizons has moved away from the "program model" where people are placed in available facilities to a "person centered" or "family centered" approach that supports people in the settings they have chosen.

Contract agencies (Developmental Services, Vocational-Rehabilitation, Children's Medical Services) no longer develop programs or "slots" and then fit people into them. The alternative process is to focus on the needs of the person first and design individualized supports that make sense for that person. The idea is to begin to look creatively at all the resources available to the person through family, community, and other personal associations, not just through the formal service system. The opportunity to receive supports should not limit a person's ability to choose where the person lives, works, and socializes. A person-centered service delivery system should contain natural settings, personal choice, and informal supports.

During the development of the organizational structure of Horizons, the person-centered service delivery system was the basis of Horizons' philosophy. Horizons started with five core services with a number of components within each core.

Horizons has three core services currently in operation. Intake and Assessments has been eliminated. Community Inclusion has been incorporated into all core areas. Horizons has also experienced tremendous growth and change within the past two years with changes continuing to occur.

Following is an outline of the core services Horizons currently offers and the changes that have evolved from the original five core services.

Adult Day Services

- ◆ Community Based Employment - has received CARF certification and recertification in September 1994 and continues to grow.
- ◆ Enclaves - Sandestin Beach Hilton and Shoney's are currently operating enclaves.
- ◆ Non-Residential Habilitation - has replaced what was commonly referred to as "sheltered workshops". Today's program consists of two hours of production and four hours of inclusion and/or other activities.

Residential Services

- ◆ Supported Living - currently at 22 consumers and is continually growing. SL is the desired placement for clients by Developmental Services.
- ◆ Bear Road Group Homes - in June 1994 down-sized from eight bedrooms and one respite to six bedrooms/each.
- ◆ Lula Belle Foster Home - therapeutic foster home established in February 1994 providing three residents with live-in foster parents; Horizons' owned.
- ◆ Cowrie Group Home - behavioral intervention and training to four residents providing a family living environment on a 24-hour basis; respite is available for emergencies; established in April 1994; Horizons owned.
- ◆ Bedford House - therapeutic foster home established in January 1995; serving three residents with live-in foster parents; foster parents own Bedford House.
- ◆ Behavioral Management Services - serving 40 consumers (adults and children) in the group homes, supported living, and family homes.

Family Support Services

- ◆ The Birth-to-Three Program provides services for children and families birth to three years of age. Public Law 99-457, Part H, of the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), provides federal funds to plan and carry out family-centered early intervention services. Transition programs have been offered for children turning three using the Children's Center in Fort Walton Beach, Okaloosa-Walton Community College Child Development Center in Niceville, and Friendly Woods Private Child Care in Crestview. In-house smaller centers are being developed in the Truxton and Crestview facilities. Horizons' Birth-to-Three is serving the birth-to-three population Walton County and is in the process of working more closely with Okaloosa Child Care Services to provide much needed services to the area.
- ◆ The Children's Center has added out-of-home respite for Part H eligible children. Private physical therapy, occupational and speech therapy are offered at the center on a regular basis. The program is currently working toward National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation. The program has been chosen to work with the school system as an additional site for their Pre-K At-Risk Program for three- and four-year olds. This is scheduled to begin with the 1995-96 school year.

Goals, Objectives and Strategies

Eight goals were established by the Executive Planning Committee. The first three goals parallel the major programs of Horizons and emphasize the basic mission. The remaining five goals are program support or management improvement goals.

- ◆ Provide residential services and training to people with developmental disabilities.
- ◆ Provide child care and early intervention services to qualified families.
- ◆ Provide education and opportunities for adults with developmental disabilities to promote inclusion in the community.
- ◆ Assure the availability of safe, reliable and affordable transportation to program participants.
- ◆ Develop community appreciation and support of organization accomplishments and needs.
- ◆ Provide the organization with qualified and motivated employees and volunteers.
- ◆ Provide the organization with appropriate (suitable and attractive) living and/or working environments.
- ◆ Provide the organization with net income and working capital equal to an average month's expenses.

For each of these goals a set of objectives was developed and each objective was further expanded into a set of strategies which we chose to call "action items". Finally, these action items were arranged in three categories:

- ◆ Program-specific
- ◆ Program-crosscutting
- ◆ Management Improvement

Next Steps

The action items total 97 at this time. The list will be dynamic, with items removed as they are completed, and new ones added as they are identified. Each item will be assigned to a Horizons' staff member with a target date or time-frame. Estimates of dollar amounts and

sources, staff and outside resources needed to accomplish the item will be made to assist in assigning priorities. Finally, a tracking and reporting system will be established to monitor progress and to keep the system current.

I. PROGRAM SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

A. Adult Services

1. Improve Communications
 - 1.1 Create monthly AS newsletter
 - 1.2 Hold Parent Days
 - 1.3 Hold potluck dinners in Fort Walton Beach
 - 1.4 Host activities to involve and inform families and guardians in Crestview
2. Promote Inclusion
 - 2.1 Organize speakers
 - 2.2 Obtain a second vehicle for FWB and a new vehicle for Crestview dedicated to inclusion activities.
 - 2.3 Hire a part-time instructor
 - 2.4 Increase production work
3. Diversity Programming
 - 3.1 Provide programming for other at-need populations
 - 3.2 Examine feasibility of services to the non-ambulatory

B. Family Services (B-3)

1. Improve Administration of Early Intervention Services
 - 1.1 Reduce caseloads
 - 1.2 Review and revise documentation
 - 1.3 Increase administrative/clerical support
 - 1.4 Establish professional development requirements
 - 1.5 Increase time spent to develop activities and experiences for families
 - 1.6 Coordinate PIP Program
2. Expand Services
 - 2.1 Establish north and south county locations
 - 2.2 Develop an in-house transition program
 - 2.3 Publish a monthly parent bulletin including a Q & A
 - 2.4 Develop play groups
 - 2.5 Develop workshops
 - 2.6 Develop Mothers-Day Out
 - 2.7 Conduct parent and support group training
 - 2.8 Provide expert assistance

3. Acquire Necessary Resources
- 3.1 386/IBM compatible computer
- 3.2 Library materials
- 3.3 Answering machine
- 3.4 Developmentally appropriate toys

Family Services (CC)

1. Improve Administration of Child Care Services
- 1.1 Obtain NAEYC accreditation
- 1.2 Review and revise documentation
- 1.3 Create program brochure and parent handbook

2. Expand Services
- 2.1 Create educational opportunities for parents
- 2.2 Develop P.O.P. Council
- 2.3 Offer parent seminars

3. Acquire Resources
- 3.1 386/IBM compatible computer
- 3.2 Developmentally appropriate toys

C. Residential Services

1. Operate Group Homes/Therapeutic Foster Homes
- 1.1 Provide training and therapy to foster independence

2. Acquire Necessary Resources
- 2.1 Computer
- 2.2 Recreational equipment
- 2.3 Landscaping
- 2.4 Home furnishings

3. Increase Supported Living Population
- 3.1 Train coaches
- 3.2 Create an emergency fund
- 3.3 Facilitate community-based training programs

4. Expand Program Facilities
- 4.1 Open a group home in Crestview
- 4.2 Open a medical model group home
- 4.3 Open a therapeutic foster home

II. PROGRAM-CROSSCUTTING OBJECTIVES

1. Improve Communications
 - 1.1 Hold monthly meetings of Horizons staff and support coordinators
 - 1.2 Hold meetings between Horizons departments
 - 1.3 Hold Exchange Days

2. Update the Horizons' Resource Library
 - 2.1 Expand periodical, monograph and video collection
 - 2.2 Establish a library resource committee

3. Expand Program-Related Training Opportunities
 - 3.1 Develop a schedule of in-services
 - 3.2 Develop a schedule of staff seminars
 - 3.3 Develop a tuition-assistance plan for work-related course work
 - 3.4 Support staff affiliation in appropriate associations

4. Establish an Active Volunteer Program
 - 4.1 Identify and train one or more volunteers, hire a new employee, or assign a current employee to serve as Volunteer Program Manager (VPM)
 - 4.2 Develop a system to keep track of specific tasks needing program or administrative volunteers
 - 4.3 Provide necessary space and equipment to operate the program
 - 4.4 Establish volunteer recognition awards
 - 4.5 Keep volunteers informed of Horizons progress

5. Health and Safety
 - 5.1 Offer health and safety training to all employees
 - 5.2 Conduct periodic safety tours of all facilities

III. MANAGEMENT IMPROVEMENTS

1. Improve Personnel Operations
 - 1.1 Establish a position for a Human Resources Officer
 - 1.2 Develop a comprehensive employee handbook
 - 1.3 Hire qualified personnel
 - 1.3.1 Use a team approach to selection
 - 1.3.2 Assess effectiveness of advertising
 - 1.3.3 Train directors to write effective personnel advertisements
 - 1.3.4 Provide relocation expenses when necessary
 - 1.3.5 Promote from within when possible
 - 1.4 Motivate employees
 - 1.4.1 Provide a competitive wage and benefits package
 - 1.4.2 Establish a system for timely reimbursements
 - 1.4.3 Investigate feasibility of an Employee Assistance Plan (EAP)
 - 1.5 Retain employees

- 1.5.1 Conduct annual wage and benefit surveys in the local area to keep Horizons' package competitive
- 1.5.2 Conduct exit interviews to identify problems

- 2. Improve Financial Operations
 - 2.1 Procure the most affordable and effective accounting system
 - 2.2 Obtain a revolving line of credit
 - 2.3 Create a capital fund

- 3. Improve Facilities Management
 - 3.1 Establish a position for a Horizons' Facilities Manager
 - 3.2 Establish a Facilities Committee
 - 3.3 Inventory current deficits, costs and priorities
 - 3.4 Identify future needs, costs and priorities
 - 3.5 Develop a preventive maintenance schedule
 - 3.6 Provide a schedule of volunteer needs to the VPM.

- 4. Improve Transportation
 - 4.1 Establish a Transportation Committee
 - 4.2 Establish a preventive maintenance schedule for all Horizons-owned vehicles
 - 4.3 Create a form to be kept in each vehicle to record problems
 - 4.4 Provide a schedule of volunteer needs to the VPM
 - 4.5 Negotiate for services and rates whenever possible

- 5. Improve Communications
 - 5.1 Investigate the feasibility of voice-mail
 - 5.2 Create a standard letterhead for stationery and logo for business cards

- 6. Improve Staff Training
 - 6.1 Conduct team-building exercises
 - 6.2 Conduct an annual training needs assessment for each employee
 - 6.3 Provide an orientation to Horizons for new employees

IV. PUBLIC AWARENESS AND FUND RAISING OBJECTIVES

(Pending completion and acceptance of a Development Plan for Horizons)

Attachment

Executive Planning Committee

Dave Miller, Chair
Pam Bauchwitz
Bob Dreyer
Dan Durrell
Donna Hollis
Penny Lester
Linda Walker
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Finance

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