

Workforce 2010 Launches Human Resource Strategy for the Community Rehabilitation Sector

The AARC, building on its Workforce 2010 initiative, has launched a comprehensive Human Resource Strategy for the community rehabilitation workforce in Alberta. The Strategy was developed with input from a diverse group of stakeholders who came together in Edmonton in October 2005.

All industries in the province of Alberta are facing a labour market crisis. Recognizing this, the Alberta Government has proposed a provincial labour market development strategy. It calls on all sectors to find solutions to their workforce challenges. In response, the community rehabilitation sector is leading the way with a comprehensive, long-range Human Resource Strategy. The sector recognizes that quality supports for individuals and families require a well-trained and stable workforce.

The Human Resource Strategy is a call to action and includes a role for every person involved in the community rehabilitation sector. Action Plans developed by sector stakeholders at a Forum in Calgary (December 2005) will be implemented in early 2006 at provincial, regional and agency levels.

The Human Resource Strategy rests on 4 pillars: Recruit, Develop, Engage and Retain. The same principles that guide supports to individuals and families – respect for individual dignity, responsible caring, integrity in relationships, social responsibility and best practices – must also guide our human resource practices. Increased and sustained investments in supporting, developing and engaging our workforce are critical in achieving excellence in service delivery.

The Human Resource Strategy is a building block of a redesigned service delivery system and redefined relationships with people receiving service and stakeholders. It is an opportunity to strengthen governance within the sector, calling on regional and agency boards to advocate for new investments in the sector's human resources. The sector must communicate clearly how it values people – both recipients of service and employees – and how it strengthens community. Developing and sustaining the sector's human resource capacity is critical for meeting the needs of individuals and families in future, as well as creating the kind of communities and quality of life that Albertans need and want.

At the core of the Strategy is a consistent, province wide Total Rewards Approach to human resource practices. This means promoting decent wages, quality of work life, a workforce that is valued and respected, opportunities for learning and development, and work that provides a sense of pride and accomplishment. The best case for decent compensation is service quality and

sector sustainability. High turnover and continuous recruitment and orientation cost more than increasing compensation levels.

The Strategy invites regions and agencies to take steps now to put the sector's workforce on a sustainable footing. Specifically, this is what needs to happen in early 2006:

- Identify 3 – 4 priorities from the Human Resource Strategy that make sense for your organization and link them to your mission statement. **Build them into your business plan** for 2005 – 2006 right through to 2009 – 2010.
- Use the Human Resource Strategy as a framework and **adapt** it to your local needs.
- **Communicate** with employees and stakeholders. Let them know what the goals are, why they are important, and convey your commitment to achieving them.
- Assign responsibility for **coordinating agency actions** with regional and provincial Human Resource Initiatives.
- **Engage** others in this work. "1001" leaders are needed! Engage employees at all levels, families, individuals, stakeholders. Go outside the field and engage and access community resources. (E.g. there are private sector companies in community with excellent leadership development and training programs. Some of these companies also have a strong interest and commitment to community investment.
- Commit to becoming an **Employer of Choice**. This is a journey, and AARC has provided tools to help agencies move in this direction.
- Forge partnerships – share human resources.

Actions are being launched, or are underway at the provincial and regional levels to implement the Strategy. These include:

- The Central Alberta Workforce Committee has developed an easy to use tool to **track turnover** and other critical information across the province. This will support the case for decent compensation and measure progress over time. Calgary is looking to pilot the tool in the Calgary region.
- Setting a **baseline for educational opportunities** so we can look back in a year and see what has changed. (Hours of training, # of employees)
- **Board Chair groups** are being set up in every region. Some regions have this in place already.
- **Naming or branding the field** and developing a communication and marketing strategy. The field needs a recognizable name and a common language to describe the work of agencies across the province.

- Launching a provincial **Human Resource Council** to help the field take the needed strategies and long term actions, and to guide the professionalization process that must take place.

Without effective branding and communication the objectives outlined in the Human Resource Strategy will be difficult to meet. The firm of Calder Bateman has been engaged by Workforce 2010 to provide this important piece. Consultations with key stakeholder groups are currently under way that will result in a name for the field, image and positioning statements that can be used consistently throughout the province. This will address the confusion and lack of understanding that currently exists.

On March 9, 2005 the Branding and Communication Recommendations for the field will be launched in Edmonton at the third and final Human Resource Forum.