



ACCESSIBILITY PLAN 2016-2017

MISSION STATEMENT

Waters & Sims Employment Services, Inc. was established in July 1996 as a for-profit “S” Corporation in the State of New Jersey. Waters & Sims specialize in developing jobs for people with little or no work history who need individual support to find, learn and keep their job. Waters & Sims was created out of a belief that there was a niche to be filled in providing quality Supported Employment services for adults with disabilities, transition students, participants of WFNJ and at-risk youth who are no longer enrolled in public school.

We have a strong commitment to our clients, where person centered planning guides every facet of career development and growth. The desired outcome for all clients of Waters & Sims is an improvement in the quality of their lives, in ways both tangible and intangible through employment.

STATEMENT OF ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

Accessibility to services and operations is a key factor in optimizing the benefit of services for persons served. Waters & Sims is dedicated to taking any steps possible to remove architectural, environmental, attitudinal, financial, communication, transportation and any other barriers that may be identified. This accessibility Plan will allow our agency to provide best practices services regarding:

- How people access our agency
- How our services are provided
- How we present information about the services we offer
- How we hire, retain and advance employees
- How we provide transportation to our clients

Waters & Sims accessibility plans policies include a commitment to:

- Identification of barriers reported

- Actions to be taken, If any.
- It is the owners' responsibility to establish realistic time frames for the removal of identified barriers. These time frames are dependent upon the severity of the barrier to be removed.
- Meet the needs of persons served in a timely manner
- Provide access to our services in a way that respects independence and dignity of people with disabilities
- Upon request, provide its publicly available information
- Notify all persons served about availability of accommodations for employment

FEEDBACK PROCESSES

Waters & Sims use the following tools to receive and respond to feedback about our services:

- Customer Satisfaction Questionnaires
- Referral Source tracker
- Employer Satisfaction Questionnaires
- SWOT Analysis (Staff feedback)

Copies of these documents are available to all clients and staff, upon request.

ATTITUDINAL BARRIERS

External

People with disabilities, as well as other populations we serve, encounter many different forms of attitudinal barriers within the community and in employment settings, such as:

Not allowing on site job coaching
 Employer's resistance to hiring people with disabilities for higher level jobs
 Ignorance
 Inferiority
 Pity
 The Spread Effect
 Stereotypes
 Fear
 Denial

Behaviors, perceptions and assumptions that discriminate against persons with disabilities often emerge from a lack of understanding, which leads to our clients being judged.

As Employment Specialists/Job Coaches, our staffs involvement with clients on their jobs and with their employers helps educate others and reduce the stigma often associated with our clients.

In addition, Waters & Sims staff participates in a number of events such as job fairs, open houses and community events in order to work on educating others and reducing these attitudinal barriers.

Internal

Our Cultural Competence Plan is included in all New Hire training. It addresses sensitivity to cultural differences with the various populations that we serve. Our promotional material is reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure that bias or offensive language is not present.

All clients are made aware of our grievance process at Intake and have access to the grievance forms. Clients also are asked to complete an anonymous satisfaction survey. These tools are utilized to help us address any identified attitudinal barriers.

ARCHITECTURAL/ PHYSICAL BARRIERS

Internal

Waters & Sims physical facilities meet with the American with Disabilities Act standards. Our services are generally provided in the community, in client's homes or at a mutually convenient, accessible location. Our offices are conveniently located and accessible to persons served, staff and the community. Our offices and restrooms are barrier free.

Our Red Bank offices offer on-street parking as well as Handicapped parking (near front door).

Our Toms River office offers ample lot parking with designated Handicapped spaces.

Our office space has designated classroom, staff and meeting room areas.

External

Architectural or physical barriers are elements of buildings or outdoor space that create barriers to persons with disabilities. These barriers relate to elements such as the design of a building's stairs or doorways, the layout of rooms or the width of halls and sidewalks.

As our staff job develops for their clients, their individual needs and accommodations are always our top priority.

ENVIRONMENTAL BARRIERS

As a Supported Employment Agency, we understand the need for environmental improvements in order to reduce social isolation and improve the quality of life for the clients in our programs.

The most common environmental barriers that clients with disabilities face are:

- 1) Restricted social activity due to a disability
- 2) Not knowing where to obtain disability resource information
- 3) Needing home modifications but not having them
- 4) Having difficulty accessing health-care providers

While our entire client based activities and interactions are restricted by the NJDVRS “allowable” billable hour requirements, our staff is trained to provide resources to clients in order to assist them with any environmental barrier concerns in the community or on the job.

COMMUNICATION BARRIERS

Waters & Sims is committed to making the best use of all available technology and innovation to improve the way we do business. This includes using all reasonable and cost-effective means to improve the way we communicate, reach out and interact with the different populations we serve. “Social Media” is the term commonly given to web-based tools which allow users to interact with each other in some way – by sharing information, opinions, knowledge and interests online. As the name implies, social media involves the building of online communities or networks to encourage participation and engagement. To avoid major mistakes which could result in operational, legal and ethical issues, and misuse/abuse of a well-functioning social media relationship, it is important that we manage any potential risks through a common-sense approach and framework as well as proactively monitoring the development of such applications.

All media relations and social media communications must be approved by the owners.

New in 2016, our intake packets are now partially done electronically. We are also working on adding an employer contact form to the website in order for employers to update us with their job openings, as well as additional proactive tools for clients.

We are continuing to utilize our Google drive and updating forms as they are modified. In an effort to be green and improve communication with staff, our Human Resource and training documents are kept on a Google drive and are able to be accessed by employees at any time.

Waters & Sims will meet the information and communication needs of people with disabilities by providing, upon request, information and communications materials in accessible formats or with communication supports. We have never had such a request yet.

HEARING IMPAIRED AND VISION IMPAIRED CLIENTS

Although Waters & Sims accept clients who have a diagnosed hearing impairment, NJDVRS has vendors who are specifically trained and staffed in ASL and therefore clients with the most profound of hearing impairments will be best served by a different agency. Clients that have minor hearing or vision impairments will be served within all programs of Waters & Sims. Clients with hearing or vision impairments will be assessed by their Employment Specialist of the need for reasonable accommodations on the job.

Reasonable accommodations will be made to assist these clients so that they are able to participate to the highest level possible.

LITERACY DEFICIENCIES

Clients that are non-literate and/or challenged will be assessed for services for programs of Waters & Sims. Our programs TABE requirements are posted on our website.

Reasonable accommodations will be made to assist these clients so that they are able to participate to the highest level possible.

LEADERSHIP ACCESSIBILITY

The owners of Waters & Sims actively encourage the involvement of staff, DVR Counselors and employers to ensure our services are following best practices. Yearly we provide our staff a SWOT analysis to complete anonymously. We also provide Employer, Referral Source and Client satisfaction questionnaires to further gain insight about our services and accessibility.

Staff is provided with our organizational chart upon hire. Staff is provided with Managements contact information (cell phone/email) for their use.

FINANCIAL BARRIERS

Internal

As owners, we are continually analyzing the financial strength of the company. We are in a time of limited grants, lower grant dollars and voucher restrictions. Because of this, we are constantly evaluating staff and other budgetary items in relation to our programs earnings.

We also continue to re-evaluate the company perks that we offer (PTO, cell phone reimbursement, mileage reimbursement etc.) and salaries to make sure that we competitive with other agencies like ourselves.

One of our challenging financial barriers has been the \$51.00 hourly rate are set by DVRS. The last time this rate was raised was in the year 2000. In 2016, the rate was finally increased to \$53.00 per hour.

The cost of our required audits and accounting services has been burdensome for us as a small business.

PERSONNEL/EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS

Our philosophy is to treat employees, volunteers and clients alike as customers who have a choice of who they want to serve them. We continue to seek out staff and management with creativity, vision and drive.

Upon hire, all employees are informed about our accessibility plan. This includes, but is not limited to, policies on providing job accommodations.

In additions to paid staff, we work with Monmouth University in recruitment of students that are interested in completing their internship hours with us.

We continue the challenge of keeping staff and minimizing job coach turnover, promoting long term opportunities and not just short-term employment.

Internal

Payroll expenses are our number one cost. As a small business, we are required to closely monitor these costs and re-evaluate as necessary. We are working on identifying the causes and finding solutions to minimize the employee turnover in our Ocean County office.

WFNJ

The continuous major reduction in WFNJ funding in Monmouth County has kept the staff to a level of 1, with assistance from Coordinator and Director. Ocean County has 2 Instructors, with assistance from Director.

YOUTH

Our Youth Program has 1 Instructor, with assistance from Coordinator.

DVR

As a fee for service program, we unfortunately do not have a consistent number of referrals we work with each year. The fluctuating ups and downs on the level of referrals for the year are at times frustrating. Every quarter, we analyze our referrals so that we can respond to the needs of persons served with appropriate staffing. We are currently awaiting approval to begin providing SE services to Somerset County.

Our current staff consists of:

Owners/Directors: 2

Coordinator: 1 (Red Bank) 1 (Toms River)

DVR: 7 F/T 1 P/T Employment Specialists/Job Coaches (Red Bank) 4 Employment Specialists/Job Coaches (Toms River)

WFNJ: 1 Instructor (Red Bank) 1 Instructor (Toms River)

YOUTH: 1 Instructor

TRANSPORTATION

Both of our offices are on easily accessible public transportation routes. We have bus and train routes and schedules displayed in both offices for clients.

For clients that drive to our office and for staff: Toms River office has ample lot parking. Red Bank has 2 hour on-street parking and a few marked spots for staff.

Public transportation is limited and challenging for our Ocean County clients. Our staff works with each client to try and identify accessible employment opportunities.

We work with Easy-Ride Transportation Services in arranging transportation to work for our DVR clients. We became an Access Link Evaluation Agency in 2017.

OWNERS ANALYSIS

The optimal outcome for our clients is an improvement in the quality of their lives, in ways both tangible and intangible: through increased financial security as well as increased self-esteem and standards of living. We encourage clients to participate as fully as possible in developing their employment goals and monitoring their progress towards reaching those goals. They are encouraged to value work as an integral part of their lives and to use employment as a springboard to fuller participation in the life of the larger community.

The optimal outcome for the company is to remain financially successful and ethically sound with a deep social conscience, be attentive to the diverse needs of its staff and clients and be attuned to the employment needs of Monmouth and Ocean counties.

As owners we, of course, have a broader perspective of the company's strengths and weaknesses, as well as the opportunities and barriers in our field. We have an obligation to our staff and customers to listen and respond to their concerns. We also have an obligation to lead the company in a way that continues to reflect our own vision of what this company and this field could and should be.

We move forward into a new year, identifying outcomes based on all data we have collected. We believe that the outcomes we expect to achieve are comprehensive and will enhance the quality of services we provide.

See attached Accessibility Analysis Chart which outlines barriers for period 7/1/16–6/30/17.