

Summary of Beaver County IM4Q Program – Fiscal Year 2021-2022

During Fiscal Year 2021-2022, Chatham University provided IM4Q local program services to Beaver County and completed all 69 IM4Q interviews. Because of the continuing pandemic and requirements established by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Chatham University completed all interviews via Zoom. There were advantages and challenges associated with conducting interviews via Zoom. The three biggest advantages were (a) being able to conduct interviews without having to travel, (b) increasing technological competence and access to technology, and (c) providing opportunities for participation for those who might discourage in-person interviews in their home. There were several challenges and disadvantages, however, to conducting interviews virtually. Some disadvantages and challenges included: (a) reliance on technology inhibited some potential interviewees from participating (we had two such individuals this past year), (b) it is easier for participants to not show for or cancel interviews conducted remotely as opposed to in-person (fortunately, there were only three such instances of that this past year for Beaver County.), and (c) diminished ability to utilize a full array of senses during the interview (e.g., only able to see and hear on Zoom what is available through the Zoom window). Another major challenge associated with Zoom interviews is maintaining confidentiality of information obtained. Beaver County Behavioral Health takes that responsibility very seriously. We implemented several safeguards to help in this area; these safeguards included: (a) utilizing HIPAA-compliant Zoom, writing information only on erasable paper such that it is never stored at a person's home, and securely storing information only on Dropbox (Dropbox has signed a HIPAA Business Associate Agreement ensuring confidentiality of information). In addition to challenges associated with Zoom technology, there were the typical challenges of scheduling and completing interviews. There were six people who refused to participate in interviews, two people on our list who were deceased, two people unable to participate because of hospitalization or incarceration, and 13 individuals who we were unable to contact. Despite all of these challenges, Chatham University completed all 69 interviews expected/required.

As part of the interview process, interviewers ask what would improve an individual's quality of life (i.e., things they would like). Interviewers, significant others (e.g., family and friends), and program staff can also provide information that they believe would improve an individual's quality of life. If an individual participant agrees, we submit those requests, called considerations, into the HCSIS system. Examples of considerations include wanting to work or change work, take a college course in computers, attend religious services more often, or have increased frequency of visits with family. Once submitted into HCSIS, supports coordinators then have 45 days to respond to those considerations. Once a supports coordinator responds, Beaver County (Administrative Entity) and the local IM4Q program (Chatham University) review each consideration. Either the Administrative Entity or local IM4Q program can send those considerations back to the supports coordinator as unacceptable or needing additional information. This process occurs until all three entities (supports coordinator, administrative entity, Chatham University IM4Q Program) all agree that the response is acceptable and addresses that participant's request. In the past fiscal year (2021-2022), there were 87 such considerations. In addition to considerations, there is the possibility that a health and safety issue might emerge. These issues, called major concerns, fall into five categories: 1. Physical dangers within a residential site/home, or place of community activity (e.g., broken stairs, plaster falling from ceiling, fire damage), 2. Significant hazardous and/or sanitation problems (e.g., plumbing problem, improper wiring, no heat/too hot, no

running water, filthy/unsanitary or hoarding environment, visible animal or bug problems, rodent infestation, fecal or urine smell or grossly inadequate housing), 3. Evidence of physical and/or sexual abuse, neglect and self-neglect, 4. Evidence of psychological abuse (e.g. staff yelling at an individual, seclusion), and 5. Evidence of human rights violation (e.g. stealing of individual's funds or property, exploitation). The Beaver County Administrative Entity and Chatham University IM4Q program staff are mandated reporters. As such, these major concerns are reported within a 24-hour period. There were no major concerns reported for Beaver County in 2021-22.

Each year, we receive a report that provides a summary of information from the previous year. This summary compares responses and information from Beaver County to the region as a whole and to the entire Commonwealth. These reports typically get sent to us towards the end of the next monitoring/fiscal year. Our 2020-2021 year-end report provided information that is helpful to understand how participants in Beaver County view their quality of life. Data from that report contains information on 68 people with intellectual disabilities. In general, the majority (94%) of participants interviewed reported being happy in life; this is consistent with responses across the region and Commonwealth. There was also general consistency between Beaver County and the region and Commonwealth with regards to Satisfaction, Fear, Choice and Control, Inclusion, and Family Satisfaction. Overall, Beaver County exhibited a strength with regards to people feeling like others treat them with Dignity and Respect; the Dignity, Rights, and Respect score for Beaver County was 95.50 compared to 82.61 for the region and 83.33 for the Commonwealth.

Also, in addition to our Inclusion score (29.01) being somewhat lower than the score from the region (32.26) and Commonwealth (36.27), all three scores are very low. This likely represents problems due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Information from the COVID supplement is consistent with this, with significant reductions in inclusive activities as a result of COVID: 47.1% reported they stopped going in-person to day program, or community activity; 89.7% reported they saw family/friends who don't live with them less often or stopped seeing them in-person; and 92.6% of individuals reported going into the community less often or stopped going into the community.

Despite the low Inclusion scores across the Commonwealth, Beaver County exhibited a strength in daily activity related to work, with 30% of Beaver County participants reporting their daily activity as including work compared to 18% for the region and 22% for the Commonwealth. This is important because of the value that working brings to individuals overall and seems to reflect positively on Beaver County implementing practices that support and are consistent with Pennsylvania being an Employment First Commonwealth.