

# Promise Newsletter October 2014

## Promise Success Stories

### **A youth and their parent enrolled in Promise....**

The youth had never worked but expressed an interest in obtaining a work experience. The counselor arranged with a vendor to establish a work experience and the youth is excited to begin looking for work. The youth will begin by doing some job shadows. The parent was working at a labor type of position and had an opportunity to obtain employment at a management level at another company. The counselor was able to assist the parent in accepting this new employment by helping with initial transportation costs, since it involved a greater commute. The counselor has also been providing encouragement and support to both the youth and parent in their work.

### **A counselor worked with another Promise youth...**

This youth had never worked and the parent believed they would never be able to work. The youth started a work experience and succeeded at work! The parent was grateful and the supervisor indicated that the youth had proven to be a good worker and was doing an excellent job.

## September Wisconsin Promise Partnership Meeting

Wisconsin Promise Partners had a Community Conversation with Mental Health Providers in September. Participants were given an overview of Wisconsin Promise and then engaged in community conversations about:

1. How can Wisconsin Promise best collaborate with mental health providers?
2. How can we encourage families to take advantage of employment resources once they enroll?

Mental Health Providers gave a wonderful perspective of how to work with youth and families who have mental illness and how to best engage with these participants and work with a variety of family dynamics. Overall themes of the conversations included:

1. Networking and spreading the word about Wisconsin Promise
2. Importance of communication and early involvement with mental health providers
3. Working with existing resource teams
4. Need to recognize fear and the importance of trust
5. Working with youth and families in crisis
6. How mental health concerns interface with life and work
7. Transition and guardianship challenges
8. How to support the family in need of services, including mental health services

9. Using peer to peer support
10. Making trainings accessible and feasible for families (child care, transportation, etc.)

### **Promise Soft Skills Training**

Wisconsin Promise families and youth participants are provided opportunities and access to training and education. The Skills to Pay the Bills Soft Skills Training will provide teen participants with practical, hands-on techniques to help with every day communications such as when talking to someone, working with someone, making a decision, and more. Referrals of participants for training can begin in late November or early December. To learn more about this training, visit our [website](#).

### **Facebook Learning Communities**

Promise's in-person training participants will have the opportunity to continue their learning and develop connections in a confidential Facebook learning community. The first community which began early in October, is a continuation of the "My Child Can Work" in-person training that took place on September 26. Both the face-to-face training and ongoing learning community is facilitated by Molly Cooney from the Waisman Center and Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities.

### **Community Events**

#### **Oconto County Community of Transitions (CCOT)**

Amy Ten Haken, DVR-Promise Grant Counselor, attended the CCOT meeting at the Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) in Oconto Falls. The meeting included partners from the ADRC, Forward Services Corporation case manager for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA); Cooperative Educational Service Agencies 8 (CESA), Wisconsin Statewide Parent Educator Initiative (WSPE), local Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) teachers, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) and the Northeast Wisconsin Technical College. Each agency provided updates and discussed the upcoming Spring Transition Fair. Amy provided an overview of Promise Services, which led to a discussion (and reminder) of the importance of collaborating with partners and providing youth with the best opportunities for success.

#### **Promise Connects with Lutheran Social Services**

As the Promise grant continues to move forward with enrollment, we are continuing our outreach efforts. This month the Fox Valley area has given us a couple opportunities to do just that. On Friday, September 19th, Promise attended the Lutheran Social Services

(LSS) team meeting in Appleton. After a view of Promise programing, LSS is excited to be a partner with Promise to assist with 'spreading the word,' being part of resource teams for needed consumers, and being a vender of options for youth and families who need mental health services in the area. The LSS team expressed much excitement about the opportunities with Promise.

### **Poverty Matters! Conference**

DWD counselor Tania Hanford and WWBIC Financial Specialist Kevin Smith dazzled an audience of around 20-25 attendees during their "Addressing Poverty in Families with Disabilities" on September 25<sup>th</sup>. Their break out session provided attendees with a thorough review of Promise's goal, direction, services, and financial literacy training. Attendees provided positive feedback about their hopes of Promise and its usefulness to their current work. We will all work together to continue moving the Promise grant forward!

### **Milwaukee Sign Language School's Open House**

Joshua Johnson, Business Services Consultant with DVR, attended the Milwaukee Sign Language School's (MSLS) open house recently. MSLS provides education to approximately 550 deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing students in grades K3 through eighth grades. They are one of only a handful of schools throughout the United States that has implemented a bilingual, bi-cultural program and philosophy.

### **The Governor's Committee for People with Disabilities (GCPD) Serves as the Advisory Committee for Wisconsin Promise**

[Governor's Committee for People with Disabilities \(GCPD\)](#) started in 1948 with one goal "to improve employment opportunities for people with disabilities". The mission has since broadened, but their role in helping to improve employment opportunities for people with disabilities has not diminished. GCPD represents different disability groups including [alcohol and other drug abuse](#), [blindness and visual impairment](#), [deaf and hard of hearing](#), [developmental disabilities](#), [mental health](#), and [physical disabilities](#). One of the main roles of GCPD is to advise the Governor and state agencies on problems faced by people with disabilities. In addition to their other work, GCPD also serves as the advisory committee for Wisconsin Promise. The Wisconsin Promise Project Manager, Ellie Hartman, updates GCPD on Wisconsin Promise during quarterly meetings. At these meetings, GCPD provides advice on how to best serve Wisconsin Promise participants who have different types of disabilities. Last meeting GCPD provided advice on how to improve the effectiveness of services provided to Promise participants. GCPD wanted to make sure that Wisconsin Promise participants received [Work Incentive Benefits Counseling](#) (WIBC) as an ongoing basis, rather than as a one-time service. This has been a big focus of Wisconsin Promise, so it was good to have

this conversation with GCPD to reiterate the importance of WIBC for individuals with disabilities who want to work and have social security benefits. GCPD also discussed the importance of having sufficient assistive technology (AT) resources available to Wisconsin Promise participants. In addition, GCPD talked about different valuable work experiences for Wisconsin Promise participants. GCPD's advice on how to ensure an inclusive supportive approach will help improve Wisconsin Promise services for both youth and their families.

### **PROMISE Intake Coordinators (PIC) Update**

As of September 24th, 137 youth have worked with a PROMISE Intake Coordinator (PIC) to navigate the enrollment process or receive their gift cards. If you know of a family who would like to work with a PROMISE Intake Coordinator to complete enrollment, please have them call Erin at 855-480-5618.

Three new Intake Coordinators are coming on board in the Milwaukee area to help meet the demand of assignments in that region. Tasha, Denise, and Mary Clare should be ready to hit the ground running shortly!

### **Steering Member Committee Profile: Jessica Thompson Smith**

Jess is the Employment and Transition Outreach Specialist for UW-Whitewater at the Department of Health Services on the Employment Initiatives team. In this role, she is responsible for developing and disseminating transition best practices and resources for youth in Children's Long-Term Supports. This included recently launching a Youth in Transition website for DHS. Jess travels around the state providing outreach and technical assistance to county waiver agencies and other partners to encourage early transition planning and career development activities. Jess's work also focuses on creating connections with transition partners within DHS and outside of the Department to increase opportunities for youth to access post-secondary education, integrated employment, and community living throughout Wisconsin.

Jess is excited to be part of Promise and to have the opportunity to use her social work skills to engage underserved, diverse populations to improve the economic well-being of youth who receive SSI and their families. Jess co-leads two workgroups: Recruitment and Enrollment and Connections.

Jess is a life-long Badger, having grown up in Menomonie and then attending UW-Madison. She earned her bachelor's in Human Development and Family Studies and master's in Social Work – Health, Aging, and Disability Policy. Jess lives in Sun Prairie with her husband Kevan and cat Stella. In her free time, she enjoys hiking, gardening,

being outdoors, reading, and during the winter months, binge-watching Netflix original series.

**Include Us in Your Newsletter!**

Do you connect with youth and their families through a newsletter, or know of an agency that does? Let us know if you'd like information about Promise to include in your newsletter - we'll gladly provide a brief article and graphics. Simply contact us at <http://promisewi.com/contact/> or 1-855-480-5618.

**Enrollment Update**

Program	Usual Services	Total	%of target achieved
176	180	356	18%

**October Calendar of Events**

[Click Here for Calendar](#)

**PROMISE Grant Acknowledgement**

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