

Trotha teaches the course.

"I was one of the first people to go through the credentialing process 11 years ago, and it's really cool for me to be an instructor for it now, so many years later." She says over time the program has become more formalized, but the skill standards taught are, at their core, the same as what she learned as a student. "What we are doing here is the same as what people are doing up North, so it's all the same across the state of Ohio. It's been standardized."



2016 DSPaths Credential Participants include Carol Barker, David Carstairs, Tannezha Cotton, Anngerlek Fountain, Gwen Gaddis, Tamela Holland, Ebony Johnson, Vicki Johnson, Sonya Jordan, Shari Ward and Shanda White

The CIP Program includes 60 hours of classroom education, 40 hours of related instruction at seminars of the student's choosing, and a portfolio to showcase their best work in the field based around the skills learned. Starting in October students will begin working with skill mentors from within OVRS to deepen their knowledge and receive encouragement throughout the process of creating their portfolio.



"The hope is that by providing more opportunity for professional and self growth, providers will advance in their career and capacity to "encourage and support people with disabilities to live self-directed lives." von Trotha expands, "It's a nice step-up program for someone who does want to rise in the ranks, and it is required of the DSP II position to go through this program." She says a good DSP II needs both strong management skills and experience in home care, so this program is an especially good fit for people who need some more experience to round out their home care training.

- And just a few months after the start of the program, students are already seeing results in their careers -

von Trotha is very excited that OVRS is investing in DSPs in this fashion; the free course allows DSPs to hone their skills both in and outside the classroom, and gain new perspective on the importance of their work.

"Students get a deeper understand of where the individuals who we support have come from. Learning their history, where

some of our people have been institutionalized, where they came from, it's teaching [our providers] greater compassion for the people we work with. Some of [the residents'] behaviors are a direct result of some of the things that they've dealt with in the past. It really creates an awareness of the little things that we sometimes take for granted, that these individuals have really had to fight for over the years."



All students complete the Communication and the Community Living Skills and Supports modules as these are so integral to their work. Those modules focus on various communication strategies to establish a collaborative relationship with residents, and the importance of friends, family and community relationships when matching supports and interventions to a person's unique needs.

Beyond that, the options for growth within DSPaths are custom-tailored to each provider's interests. Two of their remaining portfolio focus areas are self-selected from the remaining 13 Community Support Skills Standards on which they are educated in class: Participant Empowerment; Community & Service Networking; Assessment; Facilitation of Services; Education, Training and Self Development; Advocacy; Vocational, Educational and Career Support; Crisis Intervention and Prevention; Organizational Participation; Documentation; Building and Maintaining Friendships and Relationships; Person Directed Supports; and Supporting Health and Wellness.

And just a few months after the start of the program, students are already seeing results in their careers; one person currently enrolled in the program was promoted to DSP II, partially due to their involvement in this course.

"If you're a social worker, you have a degree, if you're a doctor, you have a degree, so that's part of what this credentialing program is about-- making Direct Care a true Profession with a capital P." In addition to the professional benefits associated with the DSPaths program, this investment in DSP training directly translates to even better care for individuals living in OVRs homes. von Trotha says, "We're going to provide better support to the individuals that we serve, and that's what's most important."

OVRs will begin another round of DSPaths training in early 2017. This class is free to OVRs employees and will include all the coursework from the OADSP Basic Certification and CIP programs. Direct Service Providers who are interested in learning more should contact Dawna von Trotha at dawna.vontrotha@ovrs.org.



LOOK

OVRs's next E-Newsletter will be out in December and will feature more information on our new Direct Care Professional's Advisory Council called **Direct Connect!** Direct input into agency policies and procedures from our wonderful DSP's!

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