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PROMISING PRACTICES



Transparency made apparent

For more than four decades, [CO-OP](#) in southeastern Massachusetts has been proud of the reputation the organization has earned as a values-based service provider committed to supporting and benefitting persons with intellectual disabilities. The “bottom line” of all of the organization’s work—from direct support staff to executive staff—is to meet the needs and interests of the persons whom CO-OP supports.

CO-OP continually evaluates itself in an effort to grow and improve its service quality. In an evaluation several years ago, CO-OP staff members discovered that the organization’s philosophy and values were not apparent to all of the stakeholders. Many of the persons served were not receiving key information about the organization because the information was not presented to them in an understandable format.

In particular, CO-OP’s *Annual Management Report*, which contains outcomes data, had been written and presented in a style that many persons served could not grasp.

With the guidance of [CARF](#) standards and additional consultation provided by CARF surveyors, CO-OP created an alternative version of the report, which enabled sharing of information to a broader audience of stakeholders.

Using pictures, symbols, and direct language in the alternative version, the organization was able to convey

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About the ECS Promising Practices newsletter series

An organization receiving exemplary recognition in its CARF survey report stands out because of its professional and strategic response to a service or business need. CARF presents these ECS Promising Practices articles to encourage dialogue among service providers and to offer examples of creative solutions for improving service quality.

Find current and past issues of ECS Promising Practices at:

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Issues are categorized by topic: Business Practices, Community Services, and Employment Services.

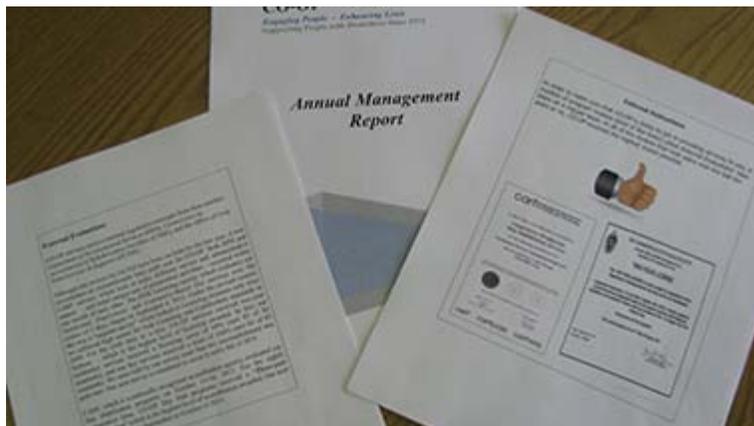
information about satisfaction survey results, agency demographics, service and strategic goals, business operations, and external survey outcomes.

A recent CARF survey report noted, "CO-OP has taken its annual management report and simplified it with pictures and language that the persons served will understand. By doing this, the organization clearly wants the persons served to understand and share in its success."

Since the introduction of the alternative version, more individuals have an opportunity to understand CO-OP's operations and goals as well as share in the organization's accomplishments. Some persons served in a day program were surprised to learn, for example, the scope of residential services that CO-OP provides. The new report style has also prompted conversations about what individuals like about their service, and many have expressed a sense of pride in being part of CO-OP. One said simply, "CO-OP is awesome."

The alternative format allows for greater transparency where it counts the most—for the individuals whom CO-OP supports. The CARF survey report concluded, "Not many organizations have taken this extra step to ensure that persons with severe and limiting disabilities really acknowledge the organization's goals and accomplishments. CO-OP's effort is commendable and demonstrates its commitment to be transparent to its most important customer, the person served. This simple and effective strategy provides the persons served with an opportunity to better understand and express interest in learning about the business of the organization that directly affects their lives."

Below: The document excerpt at left illustrates the dense format of CO-OP's former Annual Management Report. The page on the right shows the same information presented in the easier-to-understand alternative version.



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For more information, contact Joyce Faria, senior vice-president and chief operating officer, CO-OP, at jfaria@co-op.cc or (508) 824-1717, extension 222. CO-OP's website is at www.co-op.cc.

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