



The Bridges Program

History

The Bridges program was created in 2005 to serve individuals with developmental disabilities who pose significant risks to themselves or the community. Bridges is licensed as a Center for Developmental Disabilities, and it is administered by a Program Manager and overseen by the leadership of the Beatrice State Developmental Center. The program was initiated on the Hastings Regional Center (HRC) campus, with many of the staff being prior mental health security specialists from HRC programs. Due to its placement on the HRC campus and various other program issues, Bridges has never been eligible for federal matching and has instead been funded solely with state funds.

Federal Community Integration Requirements

Federal *Olmstead* mandates and our agreement with the U.S. Department of Justice require all individuals with developmental disabilities to be served in the least restrictive setting possible, including the individuals we support at Bridges. Many of the individuals at Bridges suffer from psychiatric disorders in addition to their developmental disabilities; these conditions require careful ongoing assessment and consistent qualified staffing supports to ensure the safety of the individuals and those in the surrounding community.

While the current physical location and facilities of the Bridges program were likely the best available alternatives at the time of the program's creation, they do not meet the existing community integration requirements. Apart from its location, significant improvements to Bridges' vocational and habilitation programs have been accomplished within the past two years. This ensures that the program is prepared to be fully compliant with regulatory requirements once the program is relocated. These improvements are detailed in the Vocational and Habilitation Program Development section herein.

Bridges Program Relocation

During the fall of 2010, the Division of Developmental Disabilities developed a proposal for the relocation of Bridges off the HRC campus. The proposal included construction of three 4-bedroom homes to be built in rural Hastings. The homes are designed to be residential in character to address community inclusion requirements; they also conform to the requirements necessary to receive Medicaid matching funds for program operations. The Legislature approved this \$1.5 million project in 2011.

The Division coordinated with Hastings community leaders, the Nebraska State Patrol, the Department of Administrative Services, and the designated architects throughout the process. In July 2011, the Division met with the Hastings mayor and other community leaders and identified a site that appeared to address the concerns of all representatives present. An overview of the site and a prior survey record of the site are included herein.



This is a picture of the site this fall, in the earlier phases of construction.



This is a recent picture of one of the homes near completion.

Construction is nearing completion and is anticipated to be complete within the next month. The additional staff needed to support the program have been hired and trained over the past six months. Upon completion of construction, it will take four to six weeks to adequately furnish equip the homes and to ensure all security measures are properly implemented. It is anticipated that relocation will be accomplished in the Spring of 2013, which will allow the program to apply for certification and begin receiving federal funding for the 2013-14 fiscal year.

Vocational and Habilitation Program Development

Federally-funded developmental disability services are required to include vocational and habilitation programs targeted at equipping people to live integrated lives in their communities. The Bridges program is staffed with dedicated quality employees who have performed commendable

work towards addressing the safety and behavioral challenges of the individuals they support at Bridges. However, many changes to the Bridges program were required to fully develop the required person-centered vocational and habilitation services.

During the past two years, despite the restrictive nature of the existing Bridges facility, staff have worked diligently to prepare participants in the program for community-style living. Similar to our efforts at BSDC, individuals at Bridges now do their own laundry, assist with cleaning and mowing at the facility, participate in limited grocery shopping and dining in their living unit, and have been equipped to personalize their bedroom décor. On an individualized basis, the people living at Bridges have also participated in supervised community activities such as shopping, bowling, attending local sporting events, visiting area museums, attending concerts, going to the movies and out to dinner.

The individuals supported by the Bridges program now participate during weekdays in vocational training in Grand Island through a partnership between Bridges and Integrated Life Choices. They have a variety of paid work opportunities, including: detailing cars, janitorial work, producing items for sale, lawn maintenance services, and growing vegetables for sale at local farmer's markets. They have also begun participating in volunteer activities in the community, such as: assisting with meal preparation and serving for the homeless, commodity preparation/deliver, sorting of donations of clothing, pet/animal care, and assisting with recreation/leisure activities for the elderly living in an assisted living center. This Thanksgiving and Christmas Day, the men served special community meals for the homeless at the Crossroads Center. The Bridges residents are learning and utilizing their skills to contribute meaningfully to their community, and they are seeing great personal benefit through this process.

These activities on site and in the community have contributed to the self-images of the individuals supported by the program and driven many of them to a better understanding of their responsible roles in society and encouraged them to set goals for themselves to gain further independence. It is clear that with proper training and oversight, these individuals can lead fulfilling lives within the Bridges program and others may be safely equipped to move to more inclusive programs.

The following program revisions have been made, or are in process, to equip the Bridges program to obtain full certification subsequent to relocation:

- Six Shift Supervisor positions were added to ensure that adequate managerial oversight exists on every shift ;
- An additional 10 full-time-equivalent Developmental Disability Habilitation and Security Specialists positions were added to supplement the existing staff. As the residents are moved from one congregate setting to three separate homes, additional staffing is required to address the habilitation and safety needs of the program and to consistently ensure regulatory compliance.
- Training in activities of daily living (such as meal planning, cooking, sanitation, money management, medication administration, social skills, etc.) have been and will continue to be

provided to the individuals living at Bridges. Other vocational skills programming will be explored as well.

- Enhanced training has been provided to the staff at Bridges in areas such as: functional behavioral assessments, positive behavioral supports, recognition of behavioral triggers and de-escalation techniques, and outcomes-based vocational and habilitation planning.
- An electronic case management system (Therap) has been implemented for incident reporting and for data collection and analysis. This system is in the process of being expanded to include medical records and habilitation programming.
- Program policies and procedures will be revised to reflect regulatory requirements required to meet certification standards.
- Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement processes will be evaluated to determine whether changes need to be implemented to ensure long-term regulatory compliance.

Training and Security

Individuals served by the Bridges program require special supervision and supports to ensure their safety within the program and in the community. Each individual is fully evaluated by a licensed psychologist. A functional assessment is completed that helps determine behavioral needs and strategies, and the psychologist writes a Behavioral Support Plan which outlines positive teaching and interventions for maladaptive behaviors. Individuals in the program have a specific Safety Plan which outlines required staff supervision in all environments and contingency plans for various potential crisis situations. Staff members receive extensive training on each person's Behavioral Support Plan and Safety Plan so they can support and teach the person with maximum effectiveness. Additionally, all staff receive training in Tact II, which emphasizes verbal de-escalation techniques but also teach physical interventions. The new homes will have digital video cameras in common areas and covering exits, and appropriate alarm systems are used for security purposes. As individual in the Bridges program increase their quality of live and become true participants in their community, individualized strategies, safeguards, and security measures exist to maintain safety.

The Goal

The ultimate goal for the Bridges program is for it to be located in a residential-style setting that provides adequate security. The program's location and services will be fully compliant with federal certification standards. Bridges has enjoyed a long partnership with the Hastings community, and it is excited to continue in this successful partnership to provide quality services to individuals with developmental disabilities with specialized needs.

Attachments:

- Attachment A: Bridges Aerial Map
- Attachment B: Bridges Survey Record
- Attachment C: Bridges Floor Plans