

Preferred Employment & Living Supports

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# Annual Report

FY 2022

## OPERATING HIGHLIGHTS

In 2022, Preferred made continued efforts to better its business practices and navigate the post pandemic economic climate. PELS focused efforts on lowering turnover rates among staff by offering sign on bonuses, an increase in referral bonuses for current staff and added benefits of vision and medical advocacy from AFLAC as well as participating in the new statewide Tri-Share program for assisting staff with paying for their child care. The state offered a DCW wage pass through of \$2.35 per billable hour for many of our services. Overall, there was a small reduction in the turnover of staff.

In 2022, two of Preferred's ownership team had left. Deb Tober retired as of January 1 and Dave Betlujewski resigned from his position to pursue another business opportunity in September. After their departures, Preferred was able to promote from within for four of our leadership staff including the roles of Finance Specialist, Muskegon Service Manager, Human Resources Manager and Supported Employment Manager.

Over the course of the year, Preferred participated in many community events and membership programs including the Health and Wellness Recovery Picnic and community employer recognition. We remained active in two of the community gardens and with the Muskegon Area Chamber of Commerce. New to Preferred this year was Rotary membership for Samantha Scott and participation in Livability Lab 3.0 assisting with connecting retirees into the school systems to assist with reading skills. Preferred also continued working with the Small Business Development Center in efforts to continue to create and utilize best business practices and facilitate strategic planning within the organization. Continued efforts were made to increase our volunteer sites for our group programs as we attempted to return to normal after the pandemic. Preferred participated in the consortium meetings and supported employment subgroups to work with other area agencies on viable service solutions. Preferred continues to actively participate in Incompass Michigan.

Growth was seen in career exploration and supported employment services. Lawncare services were expanded to begin working for a home of individuals with disabilities as well as expanded programming for individual community living supports in Ottawa county.

Strategic Planning goals and outcomes for Preferred included obtaining success stories from our clients and staff to utilize in our social media marketing efforts. Website optimization was completed, a consumer advisory board was created with 2 individuals from Ottawa county participating. Preferred became active on the board at the Macatawa Resource Center in Holland. QR codes were created to be utilized for quick access to our website and online application. PELS began development of a tiered system for staff to create fairness across staff pay rate. A paperless initiative was initiated to include utilization of the Generations app for datasheets and communication, which reduced the time field staff had to travel and spend at the office. This also increased leadership staff's ability to process data in a timely manner and have access to information remotely while decreasing physical copies of paper. Preferred began working towards

paperless onboarding through MyApplicants with plans to be completely utilizing this program by Q1 of 2023. Also as part of the strategic planning, cyber security was increased by adding coverage from WatchDog Securities to attempt to prevent a security attack.

Preferred continues to receive positive feedback from stakeholders on our services and obtained a 97% satisfactory rating in its January quality assurance survey of consumers. The results from the annual financial audit were exemplary.



# OUTCOMES

## Community Living Supports (CLS)

The Empowerment Program in Ottawa county continued to increase in volume following the pandemic. 49 individuals were served throughout the course of the year and began increasing participation in the community as volunteer sites allowed. Preferred increased services for individual CLS programming and served a total of 19 individuals in 2022.

The Empowerment Program in Muskegon county was slow to grow, with 8 individuals served and 71 individuals served through individual CLS and 3 individuals through respite services.

## Skill Building

Skill building serviced 10 individuals throughout the year. A new program for Preferred this summer was skillbuilding for students, which we called Fast Track to Employment. 3 individuals were serviced over this 12 week program. It was determined that Preferred likely will not pursue this program as it is laid out next year and it will be part of 2023 strategic planning to reorganize and refocus this program towards a needed service.

## Employment Services

Preferred's Supported Employment program was a success for 88 individuals served across Muskegon and Ottawa counties. Within those 88, 20 individuals were placed through placement services, 8 made 30 day retention, 10 made 60 day and 18 made 90 day retention. We had 13 individuals in our career exploration program, 12 in long term follow along, 10 in job development and 15 in our coaching program with some individuals utilizing multiple programs. The Customized Employment service was not provided in 2022. Preferred discontinued the work crew at the Hope College site and added a work crew and skillbuilding site at Almond Products. Preferred was negatively impacted by the rate restructure set in place across the state by Michigan Rehabilitation Services and will be advocating for these rates to be reconsidered to prevent closure of any programs in the future.