

Integrated Community Project

October 6, 2021

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Goal:

Increase the capacity of people with disabilities and barriers to become fully engaged in their communities



Supportive Housing Association
of New Jersey

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This initiative was funded by an Inclusive Healthy Communities Grant from the Division of Disability Services, New Jersey Department of Human Services



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Bergen, Camden and Ocean County ICP Focus Groups

In June and July 2021,

- We held six focus groups with individuals with lived experience;
- The focus groups were attended by a total of 44 individuals living in the three counties; and
- Individuals had a variety of disabilities and/or face different barriers including: physical, intellectual and developmental disabilities, mental health and substance abuse disorders, experienced homelessness and/or are aging.



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Bergen, Camden and Ocean County ICP Focus Groups

Additionally,

In June 2021, we held a focus group for family members of people that was attended by three individuals.



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Sample ICP Focus Group Questions

- In what way(s) do you feel involved in the activities in your community when you are not at work or with your family and friends?
- What could your town or city be doing differently to involve everyone in the community?
- What activities of life in your community do you notice other people being involved in that you are not able to participate in? Would you like to participate in that activity?
- Tell us one word about how you feel about your experience of not being involved in activities in your community?



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Here is what we heard!

Individuals facing with a variety of disabilities and barriers*:

1. Would like better options and access to transportation to activities in their communities
2. Seek improved and accessible communications channels through which they can learn about activities occurring within their communities
3. Enjoy activities that typically fall in the category of hobbies



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Here is what we heard! (cont.)

4. Participate in services, fellowship and other activities through their houses of worship

5. Both enjoy and desire purpose driven experiences which include social justice activities, advocacy movements, and leadership programs and opportunities

6. Want to give back to their community and “pay it forward”



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Here is what we heard! (cont.)

7. Seek opportunities to join in physical activities beyond solitary exercising including organizing groups

8. Attend a variety of local and county government meetings

9 . Seek opportunities to both enrich their own lives with music, other entertainment, culture and continuing education opportunities and also share their own talents with others

** Please note that the common themes are ranked by the frequency which we heard them mentioned by focus group participants.*



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Here's what we heard “in one word”

Focus group participants told us about the experience of not being involved in activities in their community. They feel:

- Disappointed
- Upset - “If I do not have transportation to an activity that I am interested in participating in or if I do not have someone who can accompany me to the activity.”
- Frustrated (said multiple times)
- Unvalued
- Isolated
- A little sad



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Here's what we heard in one word

Focus group participants told us about the experience of not being involved in activities in their community. They feel: (cont.)

- Helpless - “I want to help but do not know how to do so.”
- Disappointed in myself - “I know I could be more active.”
- Get nervous in big groups
- Anxious
- Desperation



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Here's what we heard in one word

Focus group participants told us “in one word” about the experience of being involved in activities in their community. They feel:

- Ecstatic
- Overjoyed
- Involved
- Alive
- Have a sense of purpose
- Happy to be contributing to community
- Feel good about myself



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Quotes from Focus Group Participants

“The community is missing out on lessons that it could learn from individuals with severe disabilities.”

“One person who cares about individuals with disabilities can make a difference.”

“Having communication in all arenas is very important.”

“I would like a clear invitation to participate.”

“I can be doing a lot more.”

“I’d like to be a little more involved. Its rewarding.”

“People’s voices about a lot of topics aren’t heard enough.”



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Next Phase of ICP

Select municipalities to work with in Bergen, Camden and Ocean Counties

Develop self assessment to:

- Encourage municipalities to grow and expand their community integration
- Increase and raise their consciousness around community integration
- Help them know what questions to ask around community integration
- Connect municipalities with the various groups and/or umbrellas of groups serving people with a variety of disabilities and barriers

Develop and share toolkit and resources with municipalities



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For more information,

Contact Kate Kelly, Integrated Community
Project Manager at kate.Kelly@shanj.org