



Integrated Community Project (ICP) Summary

11/15/21

The goal of the Integrated Community Project is to increase the capacity of people with disabilities to become completely engaged in their communities.

In order to do this, we are working in our three selected counties, Bergen, Camden, and Ocean Counties, and assessing communities' current successes and opportunities to grow their community integration, involvement and engagement. Individuals with disabilities have been integral in developing a system that allows communities to both celebrate their successes and self-assess their opportunity for growth around integration. Communities will ultimately receive the tools and resources that they need to fully engage people with disabilities in every aspect of community life.

Over 18 months, SHA is working with our two project partners, the New Jersey Coalition to End Homelessness (NJCEH) and the New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities (NJCDD), to develop a system for self-assessing communities' progress around community integration and involvement. We expect the project to impact a combined 300,000 individuals who live with disabilities such as physical, intellectual and developmental, mental health and substance abuse disabilities and who experience homelessness and/or who are aging.

People with a full range of disabilities lead the work towards equity and reducing the stereotypes that people with lived experience often face day-to-day, decreasing prejudice against and stigma affecting the population and providing leadership opportunities to people living with disabilities. Over the summer of 2021, forty-four people with lived experience participated in six focus groups in our three selected counties and through the focus groups, we learned how community integration is working and where there is room to improve community involvement. Upon finishing the focus group process, we invited 15 focus group participants to join the Integrated Community Project (ICP) focus groups in our three selected counties. We are defining community integration, involvement and engagement and fully defining community integration and exemplifying where community involvement works. The leadership teams advised us in the selection of the initial 3 municipalities in each county to ask to participate in the initial self-assessment.

With leadership from individuals with disabilities and those who work to support them, communities can continue to make decisions to move toward full inclusivity of and understanding of the potential of people of all abilities. We are working towards a future in which people with lived experience with disabilities and barriers will be employed in meaningful work, access community facilities, and live in affordable and supportive housing. Individuals will vote, inform policymakers, make recommendations and advocate to local officials, elected officials at all other levels about their needs and hold elected office themselves.

In the phase(s) of work to come after the 18-month long Integrated Community Project, more and more individuals with disabilities will use the developed self-assessment tools to assist their communities.



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