



**A review
of
The Sunrise Adult Training Centre**



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Cayman Islands Schools' Inspectorate

Working in partnership for high quality education for all students

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Background Information

The Ministry of Education asked the Schools' Inspectorate to undertake a review of the Sunrise Adult Training Centre. The purpose of the review was to provide some baseline data about the Centre and to identify what is working well and what needs to improve.

The review

The review took place mainly on January 22 and 23, 2007 and involved two members of the Schools' Inspectorate. During the two-day visit, the team toured the compound and observed lessons, therapy sessions, times of devotion and recreation.

The team also

- Gathered information about clients, their welfare and support
- Assessed how the Centre is organized and managed
- Examined the training programmes and evaluated their effectiveness
- Gathered information about staffing, professional development, accommodation and resources
- Talked with staff about their roles, links with the community and other agencies
- Analysed questionnaires and talked with some parents, clients and carers
- Visited clients on job placements

The review evaluated the progress that clients make both at the Centre and on job placements. It also looked at the kinds of opportunities that the Centre provides for the clients' training, personal development and independence.

Characteristics of the Centre

The Sunrise Adult Training Centre (SATC) is the only facility of its kind in the Cayman Islands that provides training and support services for adults with disabilities. The Centre is located on Powery Road, West Bay, which is some distance from the health centre, fire service and police station. In the event of an emergency, it would take some time before help could reach them. The location does not readily support the teaching and learning of specific independent living skills such as taking the bus and shopping, since it is so far away from the town. The Centre is also very far from clients' homes and it takes a long time for persons who live in the Eastern districts to get there.

The mission of the Centre is to *“provide training, support and services for the empowerment, employment and independence of adults with disabilities through a team of dedicated, caring staff. Sunrise Adult Training Centre advocates for the rights of and promotes public acceptance of adults with disabilities as contributing members of society.”* The Centre seeks to achieve this through the life-skills courses, pre-vocational training, supervised job placements, craft production and sales, academics and computer assisted learning. It also provides support in occupational therapy and physiotherapy, functional skills development, recreation and outreach programmes.

The clients

The staff at the Centre refer to the individuals they train as 'clients', and those on job placements as 'workers'. The Centre currently serves clients between the ages of 16

and 51, many of whom were past students of the Lighthouse School. They have a very wide range of complex physical, mental, social, emotional and educational needs.

The number of clients has risen over the past few years to 46. There are 26 men and 20 women, including those on job placements. All but two clients are Caymanian. An additional 20 clients are on a waiting list, as the Centre is filled to capacity. Clients are brought in each day by parents or caregivers, or are collected by bus. They come from across the island; some from as far as East End. The buses also transport those who are on job placements.

Main findings of the review

What the Centre does well

- The therapist and the volunteer in the occupational therapy area offer appropriate exercises, and have a good understanding of clients' needs. They are encouraging and supportive and this helps clients to try hard and gain confidence.
- Relationships among clients and between clients and staff are generally good.
- Clients demonstrate responsible behaviour, for example, clearing up after a bingo game before lunch.
- Adults with disabilities can come together and work in a non-threatening environment.
- The job placement programme is very effective.
- Some sections of the craft production workshop are effective.

What needs to improve

- The way the Centre is led and managed
- Systems for monitoring and evaluating the work of the Centre
- Communication within the Centre
- The life-skills programme, so that it caters to the needs of individual clients
- Systems for assessing and documenting clients' progress
- The use of computer assisted programmes and the planning and provision of academic support
- The quality and quantity of resources

Commentary

The way that the Centre is led and managed

The Centre is led by a director, a deputy director and three senior staff members. The director manages most of the overall operation of the Centre, including the budget. Both the director and the deputy are strong advocates for the clients. They promote the Centre well when they attend meetings, such as of the Sunrise Caring Association, or with parents or the Ministry. The Centre receives donations from various sources, and discussions are now underway for improving provision by possibly relocating the facility or having an additional site to accommodate all the clients.

The director has ideas about how the Centre should be run, but at present, there is no clear direction. There are no systems or structures for monitoring or evaluating the work that is done by staff or clients. Neither the staff nor clients are clear about daily routines. This has adversely affected the day-to-day running of the Centre and the quality of training and development that clients receive. Much time is wasted each morning in getting clients started on their programmes. Individual schedules are posted on the wall, but these are not always followed, and staff are not always aware of what they should be doing. The development and progress of clients are not clearly documented.

The deputy director does not have a job description, so there is no clear line of responsibility. However, she does what she sees is necessary and has focused on the accounts, medical and transportation issues and the daily care of the facility. She also works with individual clients, when time allows. Her background in nursing allows her to deal with minor medical issues and she offers one-to-one counselling when appropriate. For example, she dealt effectively with a client who was very disturbed and uncooperative, by sitting him comfortably in her office, where she could keep an eye on him and offer assistance as needed.

Staff are not well managed and this has led to inconsistencies in their performance and a lack of focus. The senior staff are unsure of their roles. They have limited knowledge and understanding about how to plan, organize and work effectively with the clients. The untrained staff have not received enough professional development to equip them with the skills and knowledge necessary to do their work well. This has created huge gaps in the life-skills, academic and computer-assisted-learning programmes. Staff that are trained are not effectively deployed to support clients outside of their assigned area. At present, some staff do not see themselves as accountable to anyone and are not performing as well as they should.

Communication is not well developed at any level, and this affects relationships among staff. For example, when a member of staff was absent, no plans were made for her clients; some staff refused to share the responsibility and others felt they had too much to do. There are some planned occasions when all the staff meet, but not enough time is given to discussing issues pertaining to the training programme, the curriculum, and methods for teaching and training clients in prevocational programmes and preparing them for work placements.

The programmes

There is no written documentation about the programmes or curriculum that the Centre follows. However, the job placement coordinator has developed a useful information booklet that highlights basic information about the Centre and about the job placement programme.

Job placements

The job placement programme is an area of strength. It is well organized, and is monitored and evaluated. Its aim is to get clients into full-time employment. Companies are given an employment information booklet that informs them of the mission of the Centre, the nature and needs of the clients and gives other basic useful information. The Job coach initially visits placements for at least six weeks, meeting with supervisors and the workers and discussing the Trainee Evaluation Form. After this time, visits are not as frequent, but he maintains contact with the trainees and supervisors.

The coach is now developing an electronic data base of information about clients with a view to making it available to all staff. Clients are selected for job placements on the basis of their performance on the Microcomputer Evaluation of Career programme and their assessment by staff. There are some concerns about this programme because it does not assess some basic skills. However, at present there is no other system of identifying and assessing clients' needs, and although there is a list of their areas of difficulties, not all staff understand and know what each client can actually do. The coach is working on a different system that might be more effective in identifying needs so that they can be prepared for job placement through pre-vocational and structured life-skills programmes.

There are a few clients at the Centre who have not been selected for job placements. They follow the routine of the Centre but get very little pre-vocational work. The job coach and life-skills staff need to collaborate more in order to prepare the clients properly.

Eleven clients are in job placements. They work in areas such as the Ritz Carlton laundry and warehouse, cleaning tables at Kentucky Fried Chicken, potting plants at the West Indian Nursery, and carrying out maintenance duties at Polar Bear air conditioning. Some of the clients work part-time, starting their day at the Centre and then leaving for work. Those who work full-time are transported by the Centre's bus, by parents or they take public transport. The job coach has established very good relationships with clients, co-workers and employers.

Supervisors and bosses treat the workers the same as other staff. The workers understand that they have to perform well and abide by company regulations, or they could be dismissed. Supervisors and co-workers have stated that the workers perform well on the job. Many of them commend them for their dedication, hard work, respectful manner and their willingness to learn. One worker received the award for 'worker of the month' for his outstanding performance. There is a very close link between the coach and the employers and they know they can call him whenever any issues may arise.

Occupational therapy

Occupational therapy is another area of strength. The therapist assesses the clients and develops individual programmes for them. He works with caregivers who look after clients with severe physical and mental disabilities, showing them how to continue exercise sessions outside of Centre time. He also carries out occasional home visits. He takes the clients to the gym at Kings Sports Centre for additional physical exercises and is involved in the swimming programme.

The occupational therapy programme is well organized and clients respond positively. The therapist offers appropriate challenges in both the therapy room and the gym, encouraging and motivating clients to work. He keeps records of assessment and progress from therapy sessions and these are readily accessible. A volunteer who is a trained occupational therapist also helps out in the therapy room and he and the therapist work very well together.

Life-skills

The life-skills programme provides clients with experiences in laundry work, home economics, craft work and general household cleaning. However, clients have not been properly assessed to determine their capabilities and there is no set curriculum or programme of study. This has led to much inconsistency in both the content and quality of the training and what the clients learn. The programme is not monitored and the course is taught by untrained staff who are given very little support. Some staff use their own previous work experiences to plan activities for lessons, but there is no proper structure for this. Clients are therefore not always being taught the skills that would help them to develop the level of independence of which they are capable. In some cases their skills do not improve beyond what they acquired at the Lighthouse School.

Computer assisted learning

The computer assisted sessions are helpful to some clients in that they keep them on task for a while and enable them to have fun playing games. However, the work is not challenging or helpful and they easily become bored. They are not taught basic skills and staff are unaware of their individual needs. The software is very limited and not age appropriate. It does not offer clients any help for their development. For example, one client stopped working on a picture identification and matching activity because she said that she had already done it. Another remarked that the work was 'simple and stupid' because he was asked to colour pictures that had the beginning sound of the letters shown; it was an alphabet recognition activity for kindergarten-age children. Basic components of computer programmes and activities such as Microsoft Word are not taught even when clients are capable of learning such skills.

Craft production workshop

The craft production workshop has some positive features. Clients have the opportunity to work on projects which they can then sell; the idea is a very good one.

The work is done in a converted-garage and staff have a schedule for the clients. The craft work is taught by a specialist and an aide, but some other staff members also teach aspects of the course. Because there is no structure to the programme and it is not well

monitored, there is some confusion over who should be working with which clients and what exactly should they be doing. Much time is wasted and production is therefore slow.

There were quite a number of finished products on display, but most of the work has been done by the staff rather than clients, because of safety reasons, for example, the cutting of wood with specialized saws. The staff do give more able clients an opportunity to handle some tools, but there are few resources or purpose-built machines to help them develop independence. Sometimes less able clients are paired with more able ones, which slows the training and production of both groups.

Staffing

There are fourteen members of staff. The director is the only trained educator. All senior staff and one other staff member are trained professionals in other areas such as nursing, occupational therapy and counselling. Other members of staff have at least a high school education and one is currently working on her General Equivalency Diploma.

Most of the staff have been at the Centre for less than five years, and others for more than 10 years. The untrained staff have only received training on the job, and in many cases are just left to get on with their work. Roles and responsibilities are not clearly defined and staff are not being held accountable. On some occasions conflicts and confusion develop and this situation has a negative impact on what the Centre is providing. For example, in the academics programme, clients are not necessarily building on the skills they acquired at the Lighthouse school, but are engaged in lots of colouring, joining dots to sequence numbers and playing matching picture games on computers. They are not being helped to develop independent skills for daily living.

Accommodation

The Centre is accommodated in a regular house that has been re-arranged to provide a gym, therapy room, life skills area and two kitchens. Some staff use the kitchens to prepare and distribute meals or for teaching cookery as part of the life skills programme. This accommodation is too small and hinders the types of activities that are needed for the clients' personal development and training. There is no space big enough to accommodate clients comfortably for an activity. The rooms are very small and limit the number of clients that therapists can work with at any given time. The garage has been converted into a workshop for the art and craft production. The bathrooms have rails that are particularly helpful for the clients with physical handicaps. They are kept clean by the clients under the supervision of a member of staff. There is a small open area that is used for most group activities such as recreational games, assemblies and lunch. There is also a small living room, which is used as a waiting area, for music sessions or for watching television. The outdoor area is unkempt and is rarely used. The general appearance and lack of cleanliness of the Centre do nothing to contribute to a positive image. Parents and carers were all unhappy with the standard of the physical facility.

Resources

The Centre is not well equipped for exercise or physical therapy, although the gym does provide opportunities for clients to build muscle strength. There are no resources for teaching speech and language skills. All staff have computers or have access to them,

but these are not used enough for the benefit and training of clients. The lack of proper resources limits the progress that clients can make.

Clients' welfare

Some staff take special care of the clients to ensure that they are clean and well fed. The Centre ensures that clients get their medication and are provided with healthy meals. The morning devotional time provides a positive start to the day. Staff have very good relationships with the clients particularly the ones they teach directly.

In some cases, clients are not being treated as adults and many opportunities for learning are missed. For example, in the mornings, they sit and listen for their names during registration instead of having to check in as they would have to do in the workplace. They spend a great deal of time playing games or colouring and not doing meaningful work or developing specific skills. Some sessions are taught like regular school, with clients sitting down at tables with worksheets that mean very little to them and are not helpful to their level of development.

There is no training in communication skills for the hearing impaired, the blind or visually impaired or those with autism. The programmes do not allow for proper integration and inclusion. The environment is safe, however, and staff are vigilant and some offer support when they see the need, for example, helping a client with personal care or hygiene.

Recommendations

In order to improve the work of the Centre the management needs to:

- Provide clear direction for the work of the Centre
- Clearly define all roles and devise a system that will hold all staff accountable
- Regularly monitor and evaluate the work of the staff and document this
- Develop systems and structures that will ensure that clients receive effective, worthwhile, individual training and support
- Ensure that each client receives a baseline evaluation
- Develop individualized programmes for clients so that the skills being taught enable them to become increasingly independent
- Devise a way of carefully monitoring and documenting the progress of each client
- Develop better systems of communication at all levels within the Centre
- Expand the range of exercise and therapy resources
- Improve the appearance of the facility and make more use of the outside areas