

**ALBANY GUARDIAN SOCIETY
2010 Great Ideas in Aging Contest**

Schenectady County Chapter, NYSARC, Inc.

Sponsoring Agency

Schenectady County Chapter, NYSARC, Inc. (Schenectady ARC) is a not-for-profit organization proudly dedicated to helping over 1,200 children and adults with developmental disabilities achieve healthy, rewarding lives as members of their community. As one of Schenectady County’s largest employers, our workforce of over 600 professional and direct care staff proudly provide a comprehensive array of residential, day, vocational and clinical services to those diagnosed with either mental retardation, autism, cerebral palsy, epilepsy or neurological impairment. Founded in 1952, our membership-based agency has twice been named “Non-Profit Organization of the Year” by the Chamber of Schenectady County, Inc. and a “Great Place to Work” by the Capital Region Business Review.

Initial Problem to be Addressed

Over the past decade, Schenectady ARC has witnessed a progressive increase in its demographic of aging participants. A 2008 agency-wide survey found over 81% to be between 30 to 60 years of age with over 90 individuals diagnosed with Down syndrome; the latter being of particular significance given that “Alzheimer-type neuropathology is evident in virtually 100% of adults with Down syndrome who die over the age of 40 years” (Heller, Seltzer and Hogg, 1995) and that the average life expectancy of a person with this diagnosis is now 60 years of age (National Down Syndrome Society, 2010). It became immediately evident that this rapidly aging participant population required a new paradigm of services, supports and approaches to satisfy their unique and ever-changing needs. A 2006 report issued by the agency’s then newly created aging committee cited a series of recommendations, foremost amongst which was the need for specialized in-house curriculum that would better prepare direct care employees to address the multi-faceted needs of our aging population. Properly training direct support professionals, it was felt, would enable participants in our residential programs to remain in a “least restrictive” community-based setting rather than face lifelong institutionalization in a skilled nursing environment.

Brief Program Description

In response, Schenectady ARC social worker Tammie Morley, LCSW-R authored an employee inservice training manual entitled “Aging with a Developmental Disability”. A core component of our monthly employee orientation program, caregiver support group and ongoing staff training curriculum, this 3.5 hour PowerPoint-based training, summarized in the chart below, is exclusively designed to familiarize direct care staff with (a) the unique needs and issues facing aging developmentally disabled individuals and (b) time-tested and highly effective intervention strategies for immediate application. Each employee receives a PowerPoint presentation handout based on a corresponding training manual.

Section	Topic	Description
1	Basic Aging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definitions of aging and development disability • Physiological changes associated with aging • Falls and their prevention • Elder abuse
2	Developmental Disability and Dementia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definitions of dementia • Dementia and Down syndrome • Stages of dementia and its physiological effects • Diagnosing dementia • Principles of caring for individuals with dementia • Communication challenges and strategies • Effective therapeutic activities • Memory aids • Behavioral issues and management • Staff coping strategies
3	Environmental Modifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategies for moving into a new setting • Over-stimulating environments • Kitchen, bathroom, staircase, lighting, color, hearing and general

Section	Topic	Description
		environmental modifications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lifting and transferring techniques • Ambulation with the aging population • Boarding and exiting buses
4	Grief and Loss	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definition and stages of grief • Grief and loss in developmentally disabled persons • The mourning process • Strategies for grief support • Support environments • Grief counseling • Compulsivity, aggression and somatization • What to do when a peer is dying • Staff self-awareness

How does the Program Help?

- Equipped with the knowledge and skills of this specialized training curriculum, direct support professionals can:
 - proficiently and expeditiously respond to the aging and dementia-related needs of individuals with developmental disabilities,
 - facilitate a quality lifestyle in a community-based, fully integrated setting, and
 - develop a sense of confidence in the effectiveness and quality of care that they provide.
- Community-based retention in day habilitation and residential programs inarguably avoids the prohibitive costs associated with institutional skilled nursing or intermediate care placement.
- Accordingly, this training corresponds perfectly with Schenectady ARC’s mission to help people in the Capital Region enjoy healthy, rewarding lives as members of the community.
- Furthermore, this in-house training resource precludes the needs for costly commercial, conference-based alternatives.

Total Program Cost and Major Income Sources

The following chart delineates the expenses necessary for an organization to replicate this presentation:

Item	Per Unit Cost	Total
Personnel expense of presenter	Assumes \$19 per hour @ 3.5 hours	\$66.50
Training manual and CD-ROM containing PowerPoint handout	\$200	\$200.00
TOTAL APPROXIMATE COST	-	\$266.50

Special Characteristics

Flexibility is the hallmark of this four-part training curriculum which can be presented either in its 3.5 hour entirety or in 45-minute sections to accommodate staff availability and need. As well, it can easily accommodate audiences of up to 50 employees or can be electronically reproduced and transmitted via a web-based training format. It is also completely appropriate for other diverse audiences such as family members, caregivers and advocates. Finally, participating organizations are free to tailor the presentation to satisfy the needs and characteristics of their respective organization.

For Further Information Contact/Website

Tammie C. Morley, LCSW-R
 Schenectady ARC
 Address: 214 State Street, P.O. Box 2236, Schenectady, New York 12301-2236
 Phone: (518) 688-8629 or (518) 372-8178
 Fax: (518) 688-9629
 E-Mail: tammiem@arcschenectady.org
 Agency Website: www.arcschenectady.org