



Transforming Lives, Transforming Clubhouses: The Power of Accreditation!

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Hello everyone! I'm Andrew Borntrager from Elkhart County Clubhouse in Goshen, Indiana. We opened in May of 2012 after a four year working group period. From the very beginning, our working group set out to ensure that our Clubhouse could be as faithful to the Clubhouse standards as possible.

Less than three months after opening, we obtained our first TE position with a local health food store. We quickly obtained several SE positions, spoke at numerous places in the community to spread the word about our Clubhouse, and formed a tight-knit Clubhouse community that was both dedicated to the model and proud of its accomplishments. We studied a standard at every meeting to ensure that our membership were informed and aware. By the time we were four or five months old, we decided that we were ready to apply for accreditation.

In November of 2012, we had our site visit with Sally Basada and Mike Wnuk from Greenville, South Carolina. The results were incredibly positive, and we received great advice about how to tweak our Clubhouse in preparation for the coming accreditation visit. The site visit gave us a solid idea of what to expect from an accreditation team.

In the following months, we worked hard on our CPQ and self-study, trying to be as all-inclusive as possible. Every afternoon for several weeks, we sat down with whoever was willing to participate and reviewed as much of the self-study as we could. By the time we were ready to submit it, we had nearly fifteen drafts, and I'm sure most of us were glad to see it go! Regardless, the hours of reflection on our Clubhouse's performance were incredibly valuable not only to prepare us for accreditation, but also to help us run a better Clubhouse.

Our accreditation team was Harry Cook from Crossroads in Tulsa, and Andy Ulrich from Club Cadillac in Michigan. By the time they arrived, we were already well aware of our shortcomings and our strengths. This didn't necessarily make the process any less nerve-racking, but we remained confident. The high stress level was certainly indicative of a strong sense of ownership felt by our members and staff.

After a few long, tense days of evaluation, the team was finally ready to deliver their report. We invited our entire membership, and saw such a large turnout that our Clubhouse could barely accommodate it. We received a few recommendations and suggestions, but overall their report was positive and affirming. We had no idea just how impressive our employment program was (per member) and it was great to hear that we were above par!

One of the more frustrating parts of the process was simply waiting for the results, since the team itself doesn't have the final say in what kind of accreditation we were getting. We were invited to speak at a Clubhouse conference in Michigan, and it was there that it was announced that we had received a three-year unconditional accreditation by the time of our first anniversary.

We're all incredibly proud of how far we came in such a short time frame. Really, we don't owe that success to taking the try-hard approach to accreditation. We owe it to a large group of folks who are passionate about Clubhouse, the standards, and the outcomes the Clubhouse model has to offer. Our accreditation was merely a byproduct of attempting to be the best Clubhouse we can possibly be, following the standards to the best of our abilities.