



Fact Sheet: Phase Out of Prevocational Services, May 16, 2019

ASPIRO will phase out its Prevocational Services on or before December 31, 2020 at its Stiles Road and Dousman Street facilities. This decision was not made in haste and was based on the combining effect of the following factors:

- ✓ ASPIRO's workforce has decreased in size from 422 five years ago to about 245 today.
- ✓ The Federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 will no longer permit individuals with disabilities less than 25 years of age to work at ASPIRO's two facilities.
- ✓ Our current workforce is aging. One-third are 50 years of age or older. Some are experiencing declines in their cognitive ability, stamina and productivity. Others are retiring or enrolling in ASPIRO's Adult Day Services.
- ✓ By law, ASPIRO's workers must receive annual "career counseling" from a third party that is designed to encourage them to find jobs outside our facilities.
- ✓ Some workers are actively engaged with the State of Wisconsin Division of Vocational Rehabilitation to obtain jobs outside our facilities. ASPIRO encourages this practice for those who make the informed choice to seek work elsewhere.
- ✓ The Federal government designed prevocational services to be for a "defined period" of time. In other words, workers would receive the necessary training and experience they needed to lead them to jobs outside our facilities.
- ✓ The phase out of subminimum wage practices and an increase to the minimum wage as proposed in the Federal Raise the Wage Act of 2019 would significantly impact ASPIRO's ability to continue to provide Prevocational Services.

Certain advocates and public policy makers in Wisconsin and across America are critical of employment settings like ASPIRO. They perceive that these work settings segregate and isolate workers with disabilities from the general workforce. For nearly a decade, ASPIRO has been a leader in advocating that individuals with disabilities should have the right to choose the employment setting that best meets their individual needs. After all, one size does not fit all.

As Prevocational Services phase out over a nineteen month period we anticipate growth in two of ASPIRO's other services. They are Employment Services and Adult Day Services. Through this transition ASPIRO will encourage workers to enroll in one or both of these services, and we will assist them and their parents, family members and guardians in doing so.

ASPIRO's Employment Services assists workers in obtaining and retaining jobs outside our facilities. We have placed more than 500 individuals, in collaboration with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, with businesses and industries since 1988. ASPIRO's Adult Day Services are offered at our Dousman Street facility and other community settings. These services include a wide-variety of classroom instruction, social activities, recreational and leisure-time activities, personal cares, volunteering, community outings, Senior Services and much, much more.

Over time, ASPIRO has been forced to this shift in direction. However, our purpose is the same and through an in-depth planning process, ASPIRO will roll out additional growth opportunities during this nineteen month period. ASPIRO will continue to offer its clients meaningful, high quality services that aim to enrich and enhance their lives and the life of the community.