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Christine J. Clifford

University of Massachusetts Medical School

Et al.

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Pathways to Friendship-Building Friendships One Person at a Time

An innovative two-year project to expand and improve the inclusion of people with IDD

Christine J. Clifford¹, MHP; Jim Ross², BA



Background

For people with Intellectual and Developmental Disability (IDD), making friends and participating in the community can be a challenge. *Pathways to Friendship (Pathways)*, is a collaboration between The Arc of Massachusetts (The Arc) and the Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services (DDS) with an evaluation component provided by The Center for Developmental Disabilities Evaluation and Research (CDDER).

Pathways includes training and consultation to disability service organizations on approaches to improve community inclusion and establish friendships between people with and without IDD.

Baseline

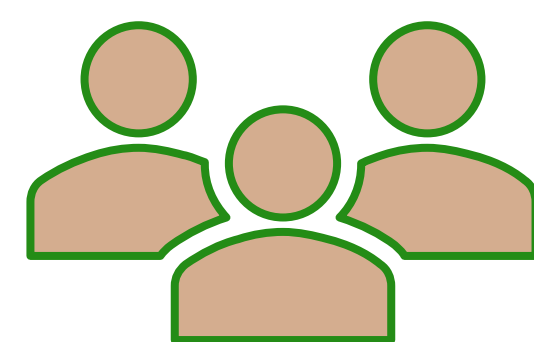
While most organizations indicated that social inclusion was a priority, at baseline, 41% of organizations *had not* engaged participants in interest exploration or relationship mapping. Time in the community included activities such as going to the grocery store, out to eat/coffee and to the bank, not ideal activities for meeting people and developing friendships. Majority of involvement in the community was done through disability-specific organizations, such as self advocacy groups.

June 2017: Baseline	% of Participants
No Friends	41%
1 or More Friends	34%
Did Not Know if Had Friends	25%

Definition

For the purposes of this project, a **friend** is a person who is unrelated to the participant, not paid to spend time with the participant and not receiving services.

Framework



108
Participants
with IDD

Training to Staff

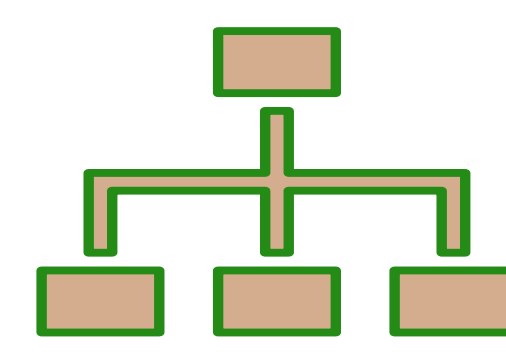
- Introduction to Friends
- Social Role Valorization
- Quarterly Statewide Meetings



101
Residences

Consultation

- Targeted support for Participant
- Monthly Provider Organization Meetings
- Organizational Change



13
Organizations

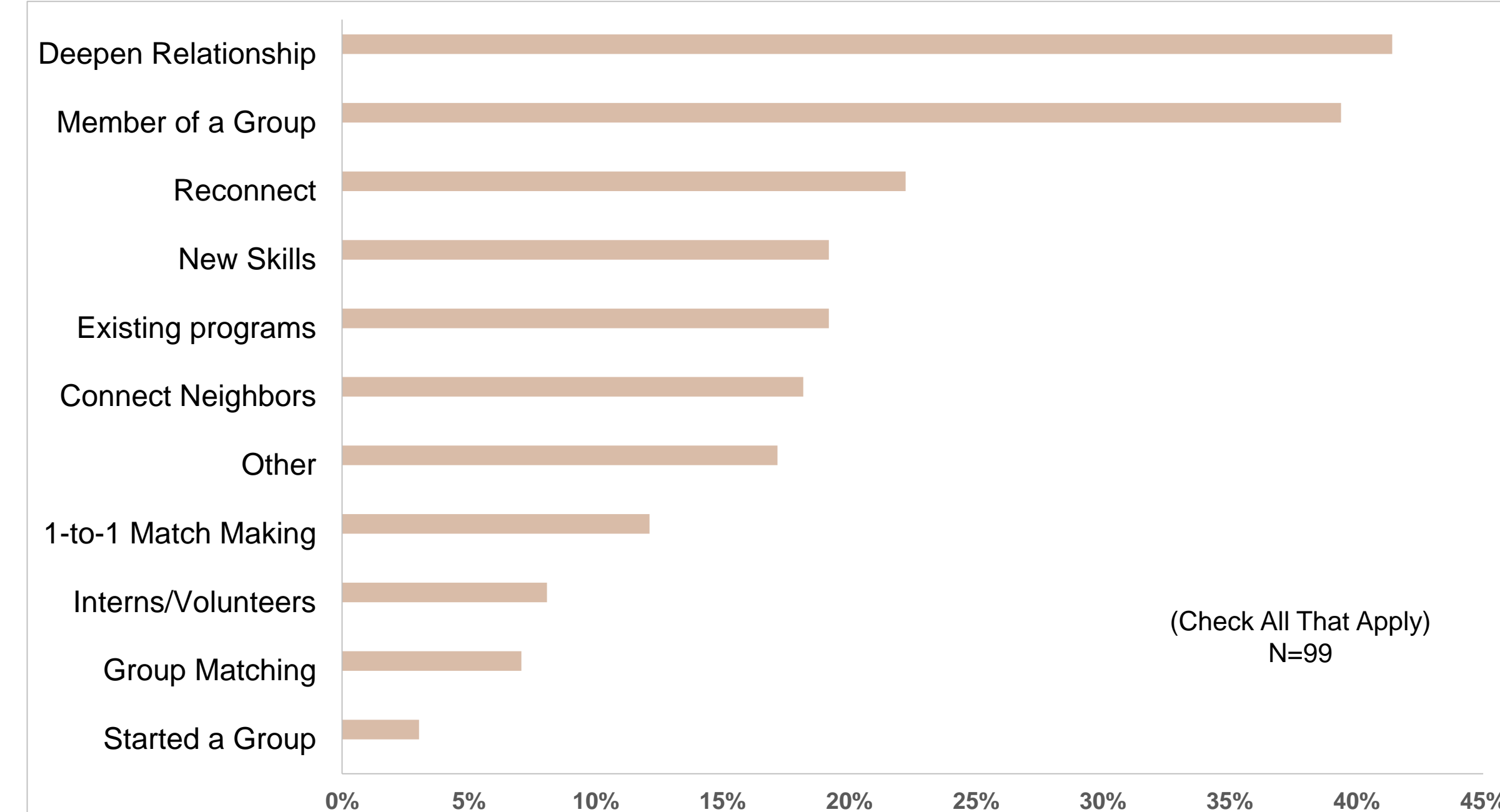
Evaluation

- Participant
- Residence
- Executive Staff

Participant Demographics

- Majority of Participants are white females, between the ages of 50-59.
- Most with Mild IDD; Mental/Physical Co-Morbidities
- 26% Work (3% full time, 4% Enclave)
- 50% in CBDS, DayHab
- 72% Group Home, 14% Shared Living, 9% Individual Supports
- 54% live in Suburban Areas

Strategies Used to Explore Friendship



What Works

- Social Inclusion a Priority for Organization, Executive Support
- Staff Commitment, Time, Training
- Staff is Engaged, Friendly, Supportive
- Consistency: Repetition, Routine, Trial Runs
- Encouragement, Coaching, Role Model
- Participant Willingness: Social, Friendly, Not Shy
- Doing What the Participant Likes to Do
- Positive Behavioral Supports
- Going Out More
- Never Hurts to Ask!

Challenges

- Participant Anxiety, Behavior, Refusal
- Participant Physical Health
- Communication: Non-verbal or Difficult to Understand
- Cultural Differences: Staff & Participant, Staff & Community
- Staff Turnover
- Risk Averse
- Scheduling
- Money
- Transportation
- Accessibility to Community
- Lack of Community Interest

January 2018: Six Months Post Baseline	% of Participants
New Acquaintance/Friendship	27%
Introduced to a 1-1 Relationship	9%

“Several people have formed friendships because we are now intentionally looking at this and saying, ‘It is important!’”

¹ Center for Developmental Disabilities Evaluation and Research, Shriver Center, UMass Medical School. Contact: christinej.clifford@umassmed.edu; ²The Arc of Massachusetts