



*Lydia Alston-Murphy, Program Manager of Bridges to Success at Action for a Better Community (ABC), has managed the program since December 2016. Prior to that, Lydia was a Navigator with the Health Profession Opportunity Grant (HPOG). Lydia developed several policies for Bridges to Success and as part of the Bridges Core team developed the Program Infrastructure. Lydia has a Bachelor's in Social Work from Keuka College and has worked in human services for over 15 years.*

# LYDIA ALSTON-MURPHY

## What are your responsibilities with LEO research studies?

I see my responsibility to LEO research studies as trying to assist in acquiring the data they need to obtain useful outcomes for the Bridges to Success study. I share information from LEO with Bridges to Success staff to ensure that they understand and are aware of the necessity to support LEO, the purpose of the study, and its connection to future program efforts and funding.

## How did you become interested in serving low-income adults through holistic case management?

I am a product of a low-income family; I have been in a service profession for over half of my life. It is hard to explain how or why serving low-income families through holistic case management became of interest to me. I can say that all the pieces fit, and that I love my job and am grateful that I have found an occupation that gives me purpose in life.

## How do you anticipate LEO's research will improve Bridges to Success?

LEO's development of a survey designed to collect Bridges to Success' participant information during their two year commitment to the program is an essential component for measuring progress over the two-year period participants are engaged. Once the study is completed and the data is compiled, we will learn if the mentor approach is the best approach to reduce poverty in our area.

## In your opinion, what role does research play in reducing poverty?

Poverty is caused by many variables; research can give us a glimpse into what those variables are and what causes them. Research can help us determine which approach is the best practice for reducing poverty. In my opinion, research is an invaluable tool that allows researchers to measure the progress made in eliminating poverty.

## What have you gained from working on a LEO research project?

I have gained more respect for research working with LEO. I appreciate all of the work LEO has put into Bridges to Success to make sure they collect the data necessary to measure the work the mentors and participants are doing to reach economic self-sufficiency.

## What aspect of Bridges to Success do you believe could improve economic opportunities for participants in Rochester?

I believe Bridges to Success could improve economic opportunities for participants in Rochester through the mentor/participant relationship. This relationship is one of the most important aspects of Bridges to Success. In this relationship the mentor establishes trust, support, and positive reaffirmation, and provides knowledge of resources, reliability, and dependability for the participant over time. If those characteristics are apparent in the relationship, I believe that participants will identify and achieve more goals on their path to economic opportunities and self-sufficiency.