

06

Adult Transition

HIGH SCHOOL TRANSITION SERVICES

LOUISIANA REHABILITATION SERVICES

TRANSITION AND ADULT RESOURCES IN THE CAPITAL REGION

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION SUPPORT SERVICES IN THE CAPITAL REGION

FUNDING FOR POST-SECONDARY PROGRAMS

PROGRESSIVE EMPLOYER EXAMPLES

A COMPREHENSIVE TRANSITION SERVICES MODEL





The Adult Transition component of this community assessment project is focused on understanding the resources available to individuals with an ASD diagnosis who are transitioning out of the secondary school setting. Specific topics addressed include: transition services provided through public school systems, post-secondary education and workforce training opportunities, employment, housing/living arrangements, independent living skills, adult support services, and social and community participation.

EARLY DIAGNOSIS

- Referral to physician specialist
- Referral to other medical specialists for comorbidity evaluations (if applicable)
- Referral to early intervention programs

EARLY INTERVENTION

- Intensive therapeutic intervention, including ABA therapy and other evidence-based interventions
- Application/referral to state waiver programs (if applicable)

PRE-K-12 EDUCATION

- Individual Educational Plan (IEP)
- Continued supplemental intervention and therapy
- Individual Transition Plan (ITP) in high school

ADULT TRANSITION

- Post-Secondary education
- Career training
- Independent and supported living



As mentioned earlier in this report, ASD is a lifelong condition without any known cure that studies indicate does not significantly shorten an individual's life span. ASD is also sometimes associated with intellectual disability, motor coordination difficulties, and attention and physical health challenges (for example, sleep and gastrointestinal problems). Given the complexity of ASD, the transition from a secondary school environment to the "adult world" is a critical juncture in the lives of young adults on the spectrum.

Drexel University produced a report in 2015 entitled *National Autism Indicators Report: Transition into Young Adulthood* that analyzed key outcomes after high school, including education, employment, living arrangements, and social and community participation. The report is primarily based on analyses of data from the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), a national study that captured the experiences of youth who received special education from the time they were in high school into adulthood.

Young adults with autism have a difficult time following high school for almost any outcome you choose – working, continuing school, living independently, socializing and participating in the community, and staying healthy and safe. To complicate matters, many of these youth begin their journey into adulthood by stepping off a services cliff. Access to needed supports and services drops off dramatically after high school – with too many having no help at all.

- from the executive summary of the
*National Autism Indicators Report:
Transition into Young Adulthood*¹²⁶

126

Roux, Anne M., Shattuck, Paul T., Rast, Jessica E., Rava, Julianna A., and Anderson, Kristy, A., "National Autism Indicators Report: Transition into Young Adulthood," Philadelphia, PA: Life Course Outcomes Research Program, A.J. Drexel Autism Institute, Drexel University, 2015.

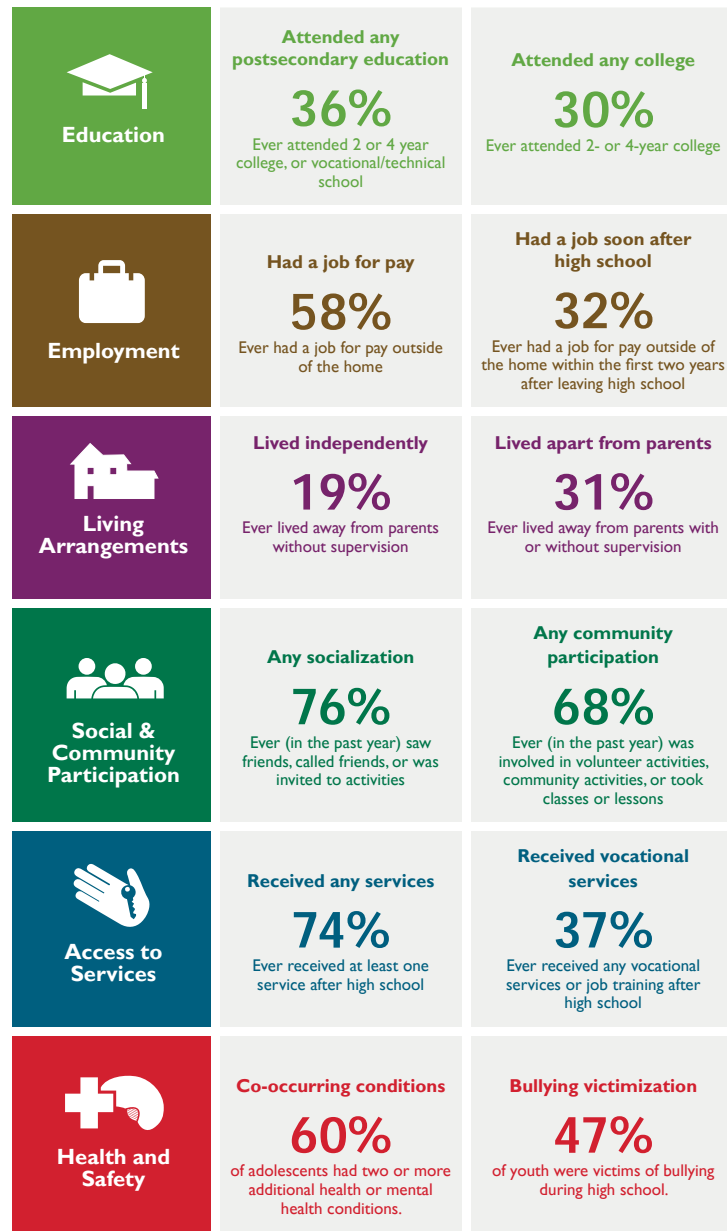


The following data points depicted in **Figure 11** from the *National Autism Indicators Report: Transition into Young Adulthood* clearly show

“ . . . we are not succeeding as a nation in helping autistic adults to thrive to the best of their abilities and attain a high quality of life.”¹²⁷

11 What Happened After High School Across Key Outcomes?¹²⁸

What happened after high school across key outcomes?



National Autism Indicators Report: Transition into Young Adulthood 2015 | drexel.edu/autisminstitute/LCC

127
128

ibid
ibid



HIGH SCHOOL TRANSITION SERVICES

As mentioned in the [Pre-K-12 Education](#) section of this report, school systems are required to begin including transition services in a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) beginning at age 16. Stakeholders interviewed as part of this assessment project commonly expressed dissatisfaction with at least one or more components of the high school transition and/or adult services available in the Capital Region – a sentiment that appears consistent with available national outcomes research results for the transition to the young adulthood period.

This dissatisfaction is also consistent with the shock families across the U.S. commonly experience when the special education support services provided through high school abruptly come to an end due to the lack of an intellectual disability – a basic requirement to qualify for many adult special support services.





LOUISIANA REHABILITATION SERVICES

Louisiana Rehabilitation Services (LRS) is a state office of the Louisiana Workforce Commission that “assists persons with disabilities in their desire to obtain or maintain employment and/or achieve independence in their communities by providing rehabilitation services and working cooperatively with businesses and other community resources.”¹²⁹ Programs offered by LRS include independent living support, vocational rehabilitation services, and employer placement services.

INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAM

The Independent Living program “allows individuals to have the option to choose to live or remain in their home or community setting, with emphasis on community based supports and services. This includes such services as information and referral sources, independent living skills training, peer support, system and individual advocacy, and other independent living services.”¹³⁰

To be eligible for this program, individuals:

- Must have a significant physical, mental, cognitive or sensory impairment that impedes or substantially limits their ability to function independently in the family or the community;¹³¹ and
- Must be able to benefit from independent living services by improving their ability to function, continue functioning, or move toward functioning independently within the family or the community.¹³²

In Baton Rouge, the LRS Independent Living Center is located at 3233 South Sherwood Forest Blvd., Suite 101A ((225) 753-4772). Applications for Independent Living services must be submitted through this office. Determinations regarding Independent Living benefits are made by the Independent Living Center's Independent Living Specialist. Medical documentation is helpful, but applicants do not need documentation in hand to apply for benefits. The Independent Living Center works with all types of disabilities, including Autism. The type of benefits and services provided are individualized depending on the individual's need for services.

LRS administers support services for independent living through a 90% federal-10% state match program. The 10% state match funds do not necessarily have to come from the State. In fact, local tax dollars, donations from a nonprofit organization, or other types of funding can also serve as the state match. Each year, Louisiana receives a notice of the State's Independent Living program grant award from the federal Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) based on a formula that takes into account population and per capita income. The amount of the grant is based on a formula determined by DHHS. Louisiana is currently drawing down the maximum amount of Independent Living funds available. During the 2014-15 Fiscal Year, 4,783 individuals received Independent Living services, which include the five core services.

More information about LRS' Independent Living Program can be found at http://www.laworks.net/WorkforceDev/LRS/LRS_Living.asp.

¹²⁹ Louisiana Workforce Commission website, http://www.laworks.net/workforcedev/LRS/LRS_Main.asp.

¹³⁰ *ibid*

¹³¹ When a plan for Independent Living services is completed on an individual, a medical diagnosis from the attending doctor is obtained. That diagnosis forms the basis for this determination.

¹³² Louisiana Workforce Commission, Louisiana Rehabilitative Services, Independent Living Program available online at www.laworks.net/WorkforceDev/LRS/LRS_Living.asp.



VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES

Vocational Rehabilitation Services “provides comprehensive rehabilitation services that go far beyond those found in routine job training programs. This frequently includes work evaluation and job readiness services; assessment for and provision of assistive technology, such as customized computer interfaces for persons with physical or sensory disabilities; job counseling services, and medical and therapeutic services.”¹³³

Applications are accepted at the time an individual with a disability reaches or nears the minimum age of legal employability. To be eligible for this program, the individual must:

- Have a physical or mental disability which for the individual constitutes or results in a substantial impediment to employment; and
- Be able to benefit from vocational rehabilitation services in terms of employment; and
- Require vocational rehabilitation services to prepare for, enter, engage in, or retain gainful employment.¹³⁴

Since 1988, this program has been administered by Order of Selection – meaning that priority for services must be given to citizens in Louisiana with the most significant disabilities.¹³⁵

Funding for Vocational Rehabilitation services requires an approximately 20% state match in order to draw down federal funds. Because the Louisiana Workforce Commission has been unable to provide adequate state matching funds during the past several fiscal years, the agency has been forced to leave significant federal dollars for vocational rehabilitation services on the table. For any given year, if Louisiana fails to draw down a portion of the total amount awarded to the state by the federal government, those dollars are re-allocated and lost to Louisiana forever; they cannot be carried over to the following year.

The following is an excerpt from the Louisiana Legislative Auditors’ report on LRS issued in March 2015.

Funding

The Vocational Rehabilitation Program is funded with 78.7% federal funds. The state provides 21.3% of funds through the state General Fund, local government funds from school districts that contract with LRS to provide vocational rehabilitation services, and funds from other entities such as nonprofits that contract with LRS to provide vocational rehabilitation services. Total federal funding available for Louisiana in federal fiscal year 2014 was \$53.1 million. However, since LRS contributed only \$8.1 million as the state share, it only received approximately \$35.5 million of federal contributions. According to LRS, since the state did not appropriate more funding for the state’s share, LRS was not able to draw down the remaining \$17.6 million available in federal contributions. LRS has been unable to use all allocated federal funds each year for the past four fiscal years.¹³⁶

¹³³ Louisiana Workforce Commission, Louisiana Rehabilitative Services, Vocational Rehabilitative Services Program website, available online at www.laworks.net/workforceDev/LRS/LRS_Rehabilitation.asp.

¹³⁴ *ibid*

¹³⁵ *ibid*

¹³⁶ Louisiana Legislative Auditor, “Oversight of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program Louisiana Rehabilitation Services – Louisiana Workforce Commission,” March 4, 2015, available online at [www.app.lla.state.la.us/PublicReports.nsf/f766E2722D094883386257DFF006FBC15/\\$FILE/000061E1.pdf](http://www.app.lla.state.la.us/PublicReports.nsf/f766E2722D094883386257DFF006FBC15/$FILE/000061E1.pdf).



In Fiscal Year 2014-15, the situation worsened. Louisiana failed to draw down approximately \$19.1 million in additional federal funds due to a lack of state match funds. As of November 30, 2014, there were 12,672 individuals receiving vocational rehabilitation services and 137 individuals on the waiting list to receive services. The situation is not projected to improve for 2016. Out of a total state award of \$55.2 million, LRS officials report that Louisiana will likely draw down approximately \$32 million, leaving over \$21 million on the table.

The Louisiana Workforce Commission administers the federal regulations of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), which places a new emphasis on high school transition services for special education and Section 504 students. For several years, LRS has been entering into third-party agreements with parish school systems (for example, Grant Parish) to hire transition program coordinators. Federal WIOA funds pay 80% of the transition coordinator cost and the parish school system provides the 20% funding match. However, no school systems in the Capital Region are currently utilizing this resource. Leadership from LRS reported that several years ago, contact was made with the Special Education Director of the East Baton Rouge (EBR) Parish Public School System regarding the opportunity for this type of third-party cooperative agreement for transition services. However, the EBR Parish Public School System did not pursue the opportunity. LRS is still actively pursuing opportunities to provide pre-employment transition services (PETS) to students in public high schools, including those in EBR Parish, through cooperative arrangements with fee-for-service providers or by placing LRS counselors in the schools.

As evident by the numbers described above, LRS administrators interviewed as part of this assessment project confirmed that Louisiana does not draw down the full amount of available federal funding for Louisiana Rehabilitation Services programs due to lack of state match dollars.

As of November 30, 2014, there were **12,672** individuals receiving vocational rehabilitation services and **137** individuals on the waiting list to receive services... leaving over **\$21 million** on the table.



EMPLOYER SERVICES

Employer Services “offer[s] a cost-effective alternative to advertising for job candidates and can save employers time and money. LRS offers placement services for job ready individuals to help employers achieve their goals.”¹³⁷ This program matches qualified vocational rehabilitation program participants with employers.

The LRS services offered to businesses include:

Employment Services

Personnel Assistance

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prescreening of applicants based on essential job requirements• On-site job trainer and support services• Job restructuring/work site adjustment• Accessibility survey of complete work site• Assistive technology; devices and specialized equipment to assist in job success• Follow-up services | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recruiting• Affirmative action planning• Work force diversity consultation• Reasonable accommodation support• Employee assistance and/or advisory program |
|---|---|

Financial Incentives

- **Job Retention** - Minimize the cost of training new employees by maintaining valued workers who have become disabled through work-related injuries.
- **Business Tax Incentives** - If you own or operate a business, you should be aware of two tax incentives for hiring workers with disabilities:
- **Deduction for Removal of Barriers** - You may be eligible to deduct expenses for making a facility or vehicle used in your business more accessible to persons with disabilities.
- **Accessibility Credit** - An eligible small business which pays or incurs expenses for providing access to persons with disabilities is allowed a tax credit.¹³⁸

¹³⁷ ibid
¹³⁸ Louisiana Workforce Commission, Louisiana Rehabilitative Services, Employer Services webpage available online at www.laworks.net/WorkforceDev/LRS/LRS_EmployerServices.asp.

SPOTLIGHT: **PROGRAM FOR SUCCESSFUL EMPLOYMENT**

The Program for Successful Employment (PSE) at Bossier Parish Community College was started in January of 2014. PSE is a two-year vocational program for adults with cognitive disabilities and/or ASD. The program combines academic and job skills training on BPCC's campus and in regional businesses. By the end of the program, students find paid employment in a job focused on their interests and strengths.

The program's operations are funded through LRS via a school-sponsored local match (~23%) with federal funding (~78%). Additionally, PSE received funding from A Kid's Choice Foundation to offer a specialized vocational literacy class to PSE students to increase their reading levels and better prepare them for the workplace. PSE is based on standards and benchmarks outlined at thinkcollege.net.

First-year students participate in job sampling with employers in the area and soft skills training. After completing the first year, students accept a full-time job, take courses for credit at the community college, or continue on with support from the program. All students leave the program with a certificate and, if applicable, an industry specific certificate (i.e., culinary arts). Classes are currently limited to 10-15 students and application requirements are outlined on their website. More information can be found at www.bpcc.edu/pse.



TRANSITION AND ADULT RESOURCES IN THE CAPITAL REGION

The following is a sampling of resources available in the Capital Region for adults and those transitioning from high school to the adult world. More information about each of the organizations can be found in the **Key Providers and Organizations in the Capital Region** section of this report.

- Capital Area Human Services District
- Community Opportunities – The Arc of East Ascension
- Gateway Transition Center, Inc.
- Port City Enterprises
- The Arc of Baton Rouge
- Volunteers of America Greater Baton Rouge





POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION SUPPORT SERVICES IN THE CAPITAL REGION

The following is a list of support services available at Capital Region institutions of post-secondary education.



LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY

LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY OFFICE OF DISABILITY SERVICES

Louisiana State University Office of Disability Services (LSUODS) is a university office whose mission is to provide appropriate auxiliary aids, services, and support programs for students with disabilities in an effort to increase the quality of the learning and living environment, diversity, inclusiveness of the university, and effectiveness of programs and services that support student success.

LSUODS assists students in becoming self-advocating, high achieving, and productive members of society, works with LSU administration on the development and revision of policies and procedures relevant to students with disabilities, and serves as a resource for disability-related information for the campus community. Services provided by LSUODS include intake, assessment of needs on campus, and facilitation of auxiliary aids and services when appropriate.¹³⁹

¹³⁹ For more information, visit the LSUODS website at <http://students.lsu.edu/disability>.



SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY OFFICE OF DISABILITY SERVICES

Southern University Office of Disability Services (SUODS) is a university office that assists students in meeting their unique academic/educational, personal, vocational, and social needs that would otherwise prove to be an obstacle to educational pursuits. SUODS provides academic accommodations to students on the basis of documented disabilities including large print handouts, interpreters, extended time for examinations, scribes, academic counseling, audio taping, and note takers.¹⁴⁰

¹⁴⁰ For more information, visit the SUODS website at <http://www.subr.edu/index.cfm/page/13/n/29>.



OUR LADY OF THE LAKE COLLEGE OFFICE OF STUDENT SERVICES

Our Lady of the Lake College Office of Student Services (OLOLOSS) is a college office that is committed to providing a holistic approach to personal, academic, and career counseling for students. In addition, OLOLOSS is dedicated to promoting the self-advocacy of students and is committed to working with the College Administration in the development and revision of policies and procedures relevant to student life at the College. Services provided through OLOLOSS include counseling services, disability accommodations, career counseling, academic counseling and peer tutoring, and student development services.¹⁴¹

¹⁴¹ For more information, visit the OLOLOSS website at http://www.ololcollege.edu/catalog/Student_Support_Services.html.



BATON ROUGE COMMUNITY COLLEGE OFFICE OF DISABILITY SERVICES

Baton Rouge Community College Office of Disability Services (BRCCODS) is a college office that ensures equal access to all campus programs and activities and promotes full participation in campus life for individuals with disabilities. Services offered by BRCCODS are provided collaboratively to empower students to advocate for themselves and assume responsibility for their academic outcomes and personal goals. Accommodations provided include extended time for in-class assignments and examinations, consideration for absences, tape recorded lectures, readers, scribes, distraction reduced environments, test taking alternatives, note takers, and communication facilitators.¹⁴²

142 For more information, visit the BRCCODS website at http://www.mybrcc.edu/disability_services/.



RIVER PARISHES COMMUNITY COLLEGE OFFICE OF COUNSELING SERVICES (RPCCOCS)

River Parishes Community College Office of Counseling Services is a college office that coordinates academic accommodations for students with disabilities. RPCCOCS is dedicated to service excellence in the provision of comprehensive and flexible accommodation plans that contribute to the successful academic endeavors of qualified students who have disabilities. Accommodations are provided for students who document an evidence of a physical disability or systemic illness, deafness or hearing deficiency, blindness or visual impairment, psychological disability, Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, specific learning disability, or temporary medical condition.¹⁴³

143 For more information, visit the RPCCOCS website at <http://www.rpcc.edu/uploads/documentationGuidelines.pdf>.



These institution-centric support services, although valuable, must be successfully navigated, which can be difficult and/or intimidating for some students and their families. It is the responsibility of the student to ensure the accommodations are met, which includes having the appropriate paperwork outlining their specific needs. Additionally, students with an ASD diagnosis often need support above and beyond traditional post-secondary disability services. Anecdotally, parents and young adults with autism shared that the services provided at post-secondary institutions in the Capital Region are hard to access, often inadequate, and do not help students achieve their full potential.

Post-secondary institutions recognized for their support services for students with an ASD diagnosis were listed in a 2011 article, “10 Impressive Special College Programs for Students with Autism.” No Capital Region schools were included in this list.¹⁴⁴

144 Best Colleges Online, “10 Impressive Special College Programs for Students With Autism,” May 2011, <http://www.bestcollegesonline.com/blog/2011/05/25/10-impressive-special-college-programs-for-students-with-autism/>; see also <http://www.cbsnews.com/media/autism-awareness-college-programs-for-students-on-the-spectrum/>.

SPOTLIGHT: THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA, ASD COLLEGE TRANSITION AND SUPPORT PROGRAM (UA-ACTS)

“The UA-ACTS program provides individualized services to help students develop appropriate skills for self-advocacy, daily living, and social interactions that will contribute to their success as an independent adult. UA-ACTS seeks to provide support for the transition into a large, traditional university campus and to guide students towards achieving their goals for the future. Also, the program seeks to promote awareness and understanding of ASDs throughout the campus community through education, training, and collaborations with University programs, faculty, staff, and students.”¹⁴⁵ Additionally, the program interacts with other campus offices that offer supportive services, including Office of Disability Services (ODS), Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL), and Residential Life.

The UA-ACTS program was started in 2006 and today serves approximately 20 students during any given semester. Students must apply to be part of the program and are selected for enrollment after interviewing with UA-ACTS staff. Currently, the program, which is housed within the university’s Psychology Department, is run by 4-5 full-time staff members, including a program director who is a licensed clinical psychologist, an assistant program director with a PhD, two graduate clinical psychologist students, and 10-15 undergraduate volunteers. The program includes therapist-mentors who meet with each UA-ACTS student three times per week to provide services in academics, social skills, and daily living. Mentors also work throughout the students’ time in the program to help students identify career interests, write resumés, and prepare for interviews. Mentors also speak with students’ family member contact each week to update the family on any issues that might affect the student’s enrollment in the program or academic progress. The UA-ACTS program brochure lists the following specific activities for UA-ACTS students:

ACADEMICS

- One session per week focused on academics, including organization and planning of study time, using classroom attendance efficiently, prioritizing of assignments, preparation for exams, etc.
- Regular communication with instructors, including monthly progress reports and individual meetings as needed regarding student strengths and weaknesses in the classroom.
- Guidance to help students become self-advocates to ensure academic success, including requesting appropriate accommodations from ODS and using campus services, such as the CTL writing center and math lab.

SOCIAL AND DAILY LIVING SKILLS

- One session per week focusing on the social aspects of college life, including interacting with instructors and classmates, roommates, dating, etc.
- Regular communication with parents/caregivers regarding their student's progress and relevant concerns, including monthly update letters.
- Weekly "check ins" for daily living skills, including meeting in the dorm room and checking for cleanliness, etc.
- Assisting students with the skills needed to find jobs after college (e.g., finding work-related experiences while in college, interview skills, accessing campus resources related to job-finding).
- Regular contact with residential life personnel, including RAs, dorm director, etc. to give information about ASD, provide support and education, and obtain information about needs in the dorm setting.
- A representative from the program is on call in case of an emergency. This number is available to only parents and students.

EMOTIONAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

- Provision of counseling services as needed to identify appropriate coping strategies to manage symptoms of anxiety and/or depression.
- Consultation with psychiatrists on campus for students and families who would prefer that psychiatric medications be managed locally.¹⁴⁶

The UA-ACTS program does not receive any university or other state funding. It is funded solely by enrolled student fees. The current fee is \$3,600 per semester, excluding the summer semester, which costs slightly less.



FUNDING FOR POST-SECONDARY PROGRAMS

Students with intellectual disabilities, including autism, can receive federal grants to attend approved programs at colleges and universities throughout the United States. Students at these “Comprehensive Transition and Post-Secondary (CTP)” programs focus on academic, vocational and independent living skills. These programs are designed to support students with intellectual disabilities who want to continue academic, career, and independent living instruction to prepare for gainful employment. Students in the programs must participate, for at least half of the program, in regular enrollment courses with non-disabled students or participate in an internship or work-based training with non-disabled students.

Funding for these programs is directed through the Federal Pell Grants, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants, and Federal Work-Study programs. In order to qualify for one or more of these grant opportunities, an individual must:

- Be enrolled or accepted in an approved Comprehensive Transition and Post-Secondary Program for students with intellectual disabilities at an institution of higher education (a college or career school) that participates in the federal student aid programs;
- Maintain satisfactory academic progress; and
- Meet the basic federal student aid eligibility requirements, except that the student is not required to have a high school diploma or GED and is not required to be pursuing a degree or certificate.

Today, 39 colleges and universities across 16 states have schools that offer CTP programs.¹⁴⁷

Notably, not a single Louisiana college, university or vocational/career school offers a CTP program.

In fact, the closest states with a CTP program are Georgia (Kennesaw State University in Kennesaw, GA) and Florida (Southeastern University in Lakeland, FL and Florida Panhandle Technical College in Chipley, FL). The U.S. Department of Education has issued guidance to assist colleges and universities with launching a CTP.¹⁴⁸

147 A full description of CTP programs, including a list of existing programs, is available online at <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/eligibility/intellectual-disabilities#ctp-programs>.
148 <http://www.thinkcollege.net/topics/becoming-a-comprehensive-transition-program>.

SPOTLIGHT: UNIVERSITY OF LOUISIANA AT LAFAYETTE LEARNING IS FOR EVERYONE (UL LIFE) PROGRAM

The UL LIFE program is a highly personalized program for young adults with intellectual disabilities. By combining academic, social, and career development skills at the college level, young adults with intellectual disabilities can become thriving members of the community.

The UL Life program offers a two year Basic program that incorporates functional academics, independent daily living skills, employment, social/leisure skills, and health/wellness skills in a public university setting with the goal of producing self-sufficient young adults. In addition, the UL LIFE program offers a four year Advanced program for students who have demonstrated the ability to safely navigate certain areas on campus independently, sustain employment, and socially integrate during the Basic program. The Advanced program progresses with an emphasis on workplace experience, community integration, and independent academic time with transitionally reduced support. Students who successfully complete the Basic or Advanced program receive a corresponding certificate of post-secondary completion.

The UL LIFE program has three major components: academic growth, career development, and community involvement.

ACADEMIC GROWTH

LIFE students participate in functional academic classes within the LIFE program as well as audit general university courses in their area of interest. Students audit at least two university courses per semester.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT

All LIFE students receive career instruction throughout their time in the program. Students begin their first semester by taking a career exploration course taught by LIFE staff. All LIFE students will begin an on-campus internship their fourth semester accompanied by a job coach.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

LIFE students are required to spend a certain amount of time each month outside of school volunteering, taking classes, or participating in community events.

Acceptance to the UL Life program is based on an individual's academic, social, communication, and career needs. The program accepts four students per year.

The program is currently working to become a CTP program. For more information, visit: <http://academicaffairs.louisiana.edu/initiatives/ul-life-program>.



SPOTLIGHT: UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA, CAROLINALIFE PROGRAM

The University of South Carolina's CarolinaLIFE program is a college-based, inclusive, certificate program for students with diverse learning needs. The goal of the program is to "support[] students in reaching their personal goals and prepare[] them to become productive community members by providing inclusive and individualized experiences in academics, employment, independent living, and community involvement." Students enrolled in the program receive experiences in four main areas: academics, employment, independent living, and community life. Students live in university housing and participate in all aspects of student life in order to better prepare them for adult life within the community.

Academics

Students take 15 credit hours of coursework each semester, which includes auditing regular university classes as well as taking CarolinaLIFE classes that provide small-group instruction on subjects like personal finance and career exploration. Students must also participate in at least three hours of individual academic lab sessions each week with an academic coach.

Employment

Students take classes in career exploration and skill development, and starting sophomore year, are required to either work or intern at a jobsite with support from a job coach, if needed.

Independent Living

Students live on campus in apartment-style housing with other university students. CarolinaLIFE resident mentors work throughout the week to help students with independent living skills and provide assistance with transportation, laundry, budgeting, shopping, and cooking.

Community Involvement

Students are encouraged to participate in university student organizations and social events. Social mentors are available to students who want additional support accessing the campus and community.

Students applying to the CarolinaLIFE program do not need a regular high-school diploma. A non-academic track diploma (certificate of achievement) or certificate of attendance is sufficient. The student must be 18 to 23 years old (or in the last year of a public school program), have a cognitive assessment with documented intellectual disability, and demonstrate interest and desire in pursuing educational, employment, and life experiences through post-secondary education. The cost of the CarolinaLIFE program, including housing, is approximately \$16,000 per semester for a non-South Carolina resident. However, because the program has been approved as a CTP program, a number of financial assistance options are available for students, including South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation (up to \$1,850/semester); Federal Pell Grant, Work-Study and Federal Supplemental Education Opportunity Grants (up to \$5,500/year), and College Transition Connection SC Need-Based Grants (up to eight semesters of funding).

SPOTLIGHT: THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY TRANSITION OPTIONS IN POSTSECONDARY SETTINGS (TOPS) PROGRAM

The TOPS Program at The Ohio State University is a certified Comprehensive Transition and Post-secondary (CTP) program that offers individuals ages 18 and older with both an intellectual¹⁴⁹ and developmental disability a unique opportunity to engage in Ohio State academic coursework and work experiences while developing independent living skills and participating in campus and community organizations, social activities, and events. The program offers two tracks – a 2-year or 4-year certificate program – that focus on four basic transition areas: Academics, Employment, Independent Living, and Self-Determination & Student Development. The TOPS program is not a degree granting program but rather a catalyst for employment and/or a bridge to degree granting programs.

The 2-Year Certificate of Completion Track is a 60-hour program for students who seek to obtain basic transition skills in preparation for enrolling in a degree program, or for students who want to focus primarily on professional employment skills. Over the course of the program, students construct an electronic portfolio – a multi-media presentation that is eventually given to employers to assist students in marketing their skills in a specific job cluster. The portfolio contains elements that depict the knowledge and skills of each student. The 4-Year Generalized Studies Certificate Track is a 120-hour program for students who wish to gain general knowledge of and professional employment skills in a specific career cluster.

- The **Academics** program of each of the two tracks focuses on academic access and lifelong learning through auditing Ohio State inclusive courses and program Student Learning Communities that support students' personal and career goals. Students may also choose to enroll in credit-bearing courses at Columbus State Community College (CSCC). Each student can enroll in up to two inclusive courses (or four credit hours) per semester. Students are supported by: (1) a full-time TOPS Educational Advisor, who coordinates with university faculty and academic advisors, assists students with course selection and sequencing, and evaluates/monitors student performance on a weekly basis, and (2) TOPS Educational Coaches, trained OSU interns whose responsibilities include providing students with support and accommodations as necessary. TOPS students can also take advantage of the TOPS Academic Center for study and goal-planning needs.
- The **Employment** program area focuses on career development and job readiness through unpaid and paid internships using a Project SEARCH model, with the goal of obtaining and sustaining competitive, permanent employment. Students participate regularly in job fairs, job shadows, informational interviews, and job search classes. Employment experiences are aligned with student interests, skills and goals as closely as possible; initial placements place a stronger focus on learning/enhancing soft skills. TOPS students typically engage in internships that are 3-15 weeks long, and 8-15 hours per week. Students are supported by: (1) a Disability Career Specialists, whose responsibilities include job development, on-the-job training and supports, training for job sites and stakeholders, and reporting, and (2) TOPS Job Coaches, who provide on-the-job training and supports to students.

- The **Independent Living** program area focuses on activities in which students learn and practice skills required to live independently, make healthy choices, and socialize successfully. The program area also focuses on campus membership and support for participation in campus and community organizations, activities and events. Some TOPS students choose to commute, while others live in off-campus university apartments. The program is currently working to secure on-campus dormitory housing for TOPS students. Students are supported by: (1) a TOPS Residential Coordinator, whose responsibilities include facilitating social activities for TOPS students, teaching independent living skills, and engaging in active recruitment, and (2) TOPS Social Coaches, trained OSU interns who provide support during TOPS social activities.
- The **Self-Determination & Student Development** program area focuses on advocacy and community service through student-directed, person-centered planning, mentoring, and volunteering. Students are in charge of scheduling and running their Person-Centered Planning (PCP) Meetings, where they meet with various stakeholders to review progress, develop goals and actions steps, as well as identify necessary supports. Students also develop Self-Advocacy Plans in preparation for their PCP meetings, which serves as a summary of their personal characteristics, program experiences, and transition goals.

The TOPS program currently serves 12 students, but can and hopes to grow to 50 students in the near future. Approximately half of those 12 students have a diagnosis of ASD. Tuition for the program is approximately \$15,000/year. However, because the program has been credentialed by the U.S. Department of Education as a CTP, students eligible for financial aid such as Pell grants or Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity grants can use those funds to offset tuition costs.

With no CTP Program located in Louisiana or any of the surrounding states, universities and community colleges in the Capital Region have a unique opportunity to launch this type of program and attract students with various types of intellectual and developmental disabilities from a wide geographic area. Robust coordination between each university's disability/student services offices, admissions offices, and student-aid offices will be necessary to design and launch a CTP program. There should also be open communication and coordination among institutions since one can envision a CTP program that includes both community and technical college courses and services, as well as university courses and services.

With federal grant dollars available to help students access these valuable CTP programs to better prepare them for independent living and employment, Capital Region post-secondary institutions should respond with opportunities.

For more information, visit <http://nisonger.osu.edu/specialed-transition/tops>.



PROGRESSIVE EMPLOYER EXAMPLES

Gaining reasonable access to appropriate internships, jobs and careers is a challenge for many adults on the spectrum. Even with a completed credential (high school, college, or vocational training), individuals with an ASD diagnosis often have difficulty obtaining and maintaining employment. Part of this difficulty stems from a fear of employers that an individual with an ASD diagnosis may be an imposition or a safety hazard. Often, employers are not aware of the benefits of hiring an individual with an ASD diagnosis such as the ability to maintain extreme focus in the workplace, a perfectionist attitude towards their work, and a diversity in problem-solving that can support innovation.

The federal government has made efforts to address this situation by creating both mandates and incentives to hiring disabled employees. In 2013, the Department of Labor updated regulations to Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 to require that federal contractors set a goal of having people with disabilities make up at least 7% of their workforce.¹⁵⁰ In addition, the Internal Revenue Service offers a Work Opportunity Credit that provides eligible employers with a tax credit of up to 40% of the first \$6,000 of first-year wages provided that an employee has been certified as disabled.¹⁵¹

The following are a few examples of large companies that have chosen to embrace the workforce potential that individuals with ASD offer.

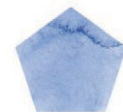
- Walgreens**
 Walgreens, one of the largest drugstore chains in the United States, has introduced an innovative program that hires people with disabilities, including individuals with an ASD diagnosis, and allows them to work as equals with people without disabilities and enjoy the same benefits and opportunities for advancement. At the Walgreens distribution center in Anderson, South Carolina, 42% of the 275 employees have a disclosed disability. Walgreens managers have worked to improve workstation designs to make jobs easier for both disabled and non-disabled workers. As a result, the company has experienced an overall 20% higher rate of efficiency across the site.¹⁵²
- The Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corporation (Freddie Mac)**
 The Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corporation (Freddie Mac), the government-sponsored mortgage loan company, partners with The Autistic Self Advocacy Network to hire interns and college graduates for jobs in IT, Finance, and Investments & Capital Markets. Freddie Mac has also adopted a policy stating, "Harnessing the unique skills of people on the autism spectrum has the potential to strengthen our business and make us more competitive."¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰ Associated Press, "Labor Department rules to increase hiring of veterans, disabled workers," August 28, 2013, https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/dc-politics/labor-department-rules-to-increase-hiring-of-veterans-disabled-workers/2013/08/28/80556e2a-1010-11e3-8cdd-bcdc09410972_story.html.

¹⁵¹ <https://www.irs.gov/Businesses/Small-Businesses-%26-Self-Employed/Tax-Benefits-for-Businesses-Who-Have-Employees-with-Disabilities>; see also United States Department of Labor, Work Opportunity Tax Credit, www.doleta.gov/business/incentives/opptax/benefits.cfm.

¹⁵² "Walgreens: A Prescription for Opportunity," <http://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20070614005098/en/Walgreens-Celebrates-Opening-12th-Full-Service-Distribution-Center>.

¹⁵³ Griswold, Alison, March 28, 2014, "Companies are Hiring Autistic Workers to Boost the Bottom Line," http://www.slate.com/blogs/moneybox/2014/03/28/autism_at_work_companies_like_sap_and_freddie_mac_are_hiring_people_with.html.



- **SAP**

SAP, the multi-national software corporation, has partnered with Specialisterne, a Denmark based company that helps people with ASD find employment, to create a hiring program called Autism at Work. Autism at Work participants have been found to excel at innovating and creating new products and improving the quality of existing products. SAP has a goal of having 1% of its entire workforce comprised of employees with an ASD diagnosis.¹⁵⁴

- **Microsoft**

Microsoft, a multi-national technology company, has also partnered with Specialisterne to start a pilot program to hire people with autism in full-time positions in their corporate headquarters. The program launched in May of 2015 and began with 10 full-time positions. The company is invested in increasing the diversity of its workforce and intends to expand the program in the future.

While these large employers should be commended for their efforts, smaller, local businesses can also successfully employ people with an ASD diagnosis. In Parkland, Florida, a father and son co-founded a car wash dedicated to the empowerment of individuals with autism. The car wash has been wildly successful with 100% customer satisfaction and impressive efficiency. The company washes 500 cars per day (equating to 150,000 per year) and has 92 associates with an autism spectrum disorder diagnosis. The car wash is scalable and has been replicated in communities around the country. For more information, visit: www.risingtidecarwash.com.

¹⁵⁴ Harvey, Sarah, "How Autism in the Workplace Transcends Charity," April 14, 2015, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/sap/2015/04/14/how-autism-in-the-workplace-transcends-charity/>.

In Princeton, New Jersey, the Hyatt Regency Princeton joined with Eden Autism Services, a local nonprofit engaged in educating individuals with autism and training family members, professionals, and educators in best practices, to place Eden's participants at the hotel, working under the supervision of job coaches. The hotel's General Manager, was amazed at how the experience served not only the employees with autism, but engaged all of the hotel's employees and enriched the entire work culture: "There's a certain pride of ownership that happens - a pride in seeing the development in these individuals. The growth is clearly evident and it makes everyone feel good... People with disabilities, including autism, can be very dependable employees. They've never been given a chance, and when they are, they're very loyal."¹⁵⁵

And in Marysville, Ohio, UCO Industries, a 501c3 providing employment services to people with developmental disabilities, partnered with Honda to become a Tier 1 Supplier for Honda vehicle owner manual kits.¹⁵⁶ The organization's approximately 125 employees, 70-80 of whom have a developmental disability, assemble the owner manuals and provide them to all of Honda's plants in North America for distribution. In 2015, employees at UCO produced nearly 1.5 million manuals for distribution. Employees with developmental disabilities are provided with additional support as needed, including counselors and therapists.

¹⁵⁵ Belott, Shannon, "Can Disability Help Your Bottom Line? Corporate America Is Waking Up to the Benefits of Employees with Autism and Developmental Disabilities," http://www.huffingtonpost.com/shanna-belott/can-disability-help-your-_b_6974476.html

¹⁵⁶ <http://www.ucoindustries.com/>



A COMPREHENSIVE TRANSITION SERVICES MODEL

Having invested much time and resources into ensuring their child receives the most effective and appropriate education in high school, many parents unfortunately find themselves back at square one when their young adult turns 18 and/or completes high school. In Baton Rouge, as in many other small and medium-sized towns throughout the U.S., there are very few support services available to help young adults on the spectrum and their families navigate the challenges of post-secondary education, career development and job placement, and/or independent living.

Employers across the country, large and small, have proven that young adults on the autism spectrum bring unique skills and talents to the workplace that can add tremendous value not only to an employer's business culture, but also to its bottom line. However, today in Baton Rouge, these young adults are often forced to move back in with their parents, navigate post-secondary education programs on their own or not at all, and miss out on valuable opportunities to utilize their unique skills in the workplace.

COLLEGE LIVING EXPERIENCE (CLE)

In February of 2015, staff from the Baton Rouge Area Foundation travelled to Denver, Colorado to meet with leadership and students from College Living Experience (CLE).¹⁵⁷ CLE is a for-profit organization that has been providing post-secondary supports to students with autism, Asperger's Syndrome, ADHD, and other varying exceptionalities since 1989. Today, CLE operates at six locations throughout the country (Denver, Colorado; Austin, Texas; Costa Mesa and Monterey, California; Washington, D.C.; and Fort Lauderdale, Florida).

Most students who enroll at CLE have received a high school diploma or certificate, are interested in pursuing some type of 2- or 4-year academic or vocational degree and/or job training program, and have the capability – with support – to live and work independently. The CLE team at each location offers services to students in four primary areas: academics, independent living, social skills, and career development. Students, and their families, are supported by a full-service support team that tailors the array of services to each student's unique needs and capabilities.

Academics

Through partnerships with numerous local community colleges, 2- and 4-year colleges, and technical/vocational programs, students at CLE, with guidance from CLE staff, are able to enroll in a program that best suits their educational needs. CLE pulls together the needed resources:

- Individual and group content-specific tutoring by trained professional staff
- Instruction across environments, including on campus, community, and CLE's quiet tutoring and study hall rooms
- Coaching in self-advocacy
- Support in executive functions that impact learning including time management, organization, planning, and prioritizing.
- Anonymity for students wanting to avoid peers knowing their disability
- Regular parent communication to keep abreast of updates and challenges that cannot be accessed through direct campus communication

¹⁵⁷ For more information about College Living Experience, visit www.experiencecle.com.



Career Development

Through partnerships with local employers, CLE is able to place students in internships and part-time or full-time jobs that fits the student's interests and skills. An individualized employment path is developed for each student, and CLE's services include everything from job coaching to soft and hard skill instruction, support at building a resume, job searching, and education on community awareness. The CLE career development team works closely with students and community employment partners to provide appropriate opportunities, including:

- Volunteer placement
- Job shadowing
- Paid or unpaid internships
- Part-time and full-time employment

Independent Living

Students at CLE also master the skills required to live independently during their college transition program. More importantly, they acquire the judgment to make sound decisions about daily life, including budgeting, keeping their apartment in order, and shopping for themselves. In Denver, students live in an apartment building located adjacent to the CLE office and local community college campus in downtown. Students live with a roommate, and an RA on each floor checks in on students as needed. CLE staff also work with each student one-on-one as needed to ensure they develop the skills of financial management, personal hygiene, health and wellness, and navigating public transportation. From grocery shopping to managing a bank account, CLE students are guided through each step of their transition to independence.

Social Skills

Finally, CLE's support team provides opportunities for students to be comfortable in and even thrive in social situations so that students can develop appropriate, fulfilling relationships with peers and adults and apply these skills to experience success in academic, independent living, and career development settings. CLE staff facilitate a variety of social activities every week that are geared toward developing specific social skills, in a real world setting, while having fun at the same time. Activities range from cultural performances, local entertainment and attractions, to just eating out or seeing a movie.



12 Summary Description of the CLE program in Denver, Colorado

AT A GLANCE: CLE DENVER, COLORADO PROGRAM

Location

Downtown Denver, centrally located three blocks from University of Colorado at Denver, Denver Community College, and Metropolitan College of Denver, and one block from CLE independent living apartment complex and multiple public transportation options

Student Body

Approximately 40 students from throughout the United States and the world

Admissions

Rolling admissions process; nine of ten students who apply are accepted

Average Duration of Program

Three to four years

Partner Institutions

Community College of Denver, Metropolitan College of Denver, University of Colorado at Denver, University of Denver, Regis University, Colorado Christian University, Art Institute of Colorado, Emily Griffith Opportunity School, Community College of Aurora, Arapahoe Community College

Staff

Approximately 10-15 part-time and full-time staff members, including Director Sharon Heller and Coordinators for each of the four service areas (Academics, Career Development, Independent Living, Social Skills)

Cost

\$43,500/year for residential CLE services and \$32,500 for non-residential services. This cost does not include costs of approximately \$1,800/month for housing, money for social and extracurricular activities, or cost of tuition for academic or vocational programs. With these expenses, the total cost could reach up to \$55-60,000/year. New students require a \$75 application fee and a one-time new student fee of \$1,500. CLE does not receive insurance or Medicaid reimbursement for services, but some families do receive financial assistance through state vocational rehabilitation programs.



CLE SUMMER PROGRAM

In addition to the year-round, full-time CLE program, CLE also offers pre-college programs during the summer months for high school students. Various programs and camps, ranging from a few days to several weeks, are offered at CLE campuses throughout the country. In Austin, Texas, for example, CLE offers a 5-day Game Design Camp designed to give students an opportunity to participate in the exciting production of their own video game while developing personal and team participation skills. The cost of the program is \$1,500 and space is limited to 15 students. CLE also offers 2-week summer career exploration camps at several locations. These programs are designed to help students prepare for future employment and gain real world work experience. Students are placed in a number of volunteer positions and receive job coaching while having fun with their peers.

More information about CLE's summer programs is available at <http://experiencecle.com/enrichment-programs-for-teens/>.

INDEPENDENT LIVING EXPERIENCE (ILE)

The Independent Living Experience (ILE), currently operating in seven states, is a sister company of CLE whose main goal is to aid young adults in developing skills needed to find and maintain employment, live independently, and create social networks. ILE helps clients develop skills to secure and maintain housing, manage money and finances, search for and apply for jobs, prepare for interviews, and make and maintain personal relationships. In addition, ILE works with local employers to develop strategies to hire, train, evaluate, accommodate, and maintain employees with disabilities. Typically, ILE programs can be implemented when as few as three to five individuals in a region request the service. The cost for ILE is \$6,000 for a contract that includes 100 hours of supports and services. The supports are meant to be flexible and serve the client according to their current needs. In some cases, clients will go through hours very quickly due to a change in life such as a new living space, changing/getting a job, or some type of personal crisis. ILE staff will incorporate virtual supports for clients who may not have an immediate social network in order to expose them to the opportunity to develop friendships.

More information about ILE is available at www.independentlivingexperience.com.



A CLE/ILE-TYPE COMPREHENSIVE TRANSITION SERVICES MODEL IN SOUTH LOUISIANA?

Baton Rouge Area Foundation staff has discussed with CLE leadership the possibility of bringing CLE and ILE to South Louisiana. Ongoing conversations suggest that CLE leadership is very interested in bringing its programs to South Louisiana. During these preliminary conversations, CLE staff has highlighted three critical areas in evaluating whether a geographic area could support a CLE program:

1. Strong post-secondary institutions such as community colleges, 2 and 4-year colleges and technical colleges who are willing to partner with CLE and collaborate to serve CLE students;
2. Sufficient housing facilities to accommodate CLE students, preferably located close to a community college or other academic institution; and
3. Well-established and efficient transportation options.

CLE in South Louisiana may take a different form than their other programs around the country given unique characteristics in our community. For example, CLE may first pursue a multi-week summer program where students could experience college life before enrolling in post-secondary institutions. Conversations with CLE are ongoing.

Louisiana State University and the Baton Rouge Community College have expressed support for and interest in bringing the type of services that CLE offers to their campuses. In Denver, CLE programs tap into technical training programs for their students, such as automotive technician certification programs. Partnerships between the public and private sectors and academic institutions designed to serve students in unique ways and better equip them for today's workforce needs are already underway in Baton Rouge. For example, several months ago, construction began on the new Baton

Rouge Community College's Center of Excellence for Transportation Technology. The Automotive Training Center – a partnership between the State, East Baton Rouge Parish Public School System, and BRCC – will train college and high school students to work as automotive technicians and give them a chance to develop these high-demand skills while simultaneously pursuing a traditional high school or post-secondary degree. Leveraging partnerships such as these and facilitating new partnerships not just with post-secondary and technical colleges, but also with the leadership in the business community, will be necessary to support a robust transition program such as CLE in South Louisiana.

While CLE would be a great asset to our community, not all families will be able to afford their services nor could CLE meet the capacity demands of our entire community. Further, not every young adult will pursue post-secondary education. Programs like Gateway Transition Center (described in the [Key Providers and Organizations in the Capital Region](#) section of this report) are working to incorporate the principals of organizations like CLE into programs based here and designed to meet the needs experienced by Baton Rouge families. Having organizations like Gateway working in our community is a major step forward since we have not had many available resources in terms of transition, independent living, and post-secondary services. Multiple, different providers will be needed to address all the needs in our community.

SPOTLIGHT: **ST. ANDREW'S VILLAGE**

St. Andrew's Village will be a faith-based, mixed-use community in Abita Springs, Louisiana, where adults with all degrees of developmental disabilities and non-disabled individuals can live, work, worship, and socialize. Saint Andrew's Village will initially offer adult day services only for the developmentally disabled anticipated to open in 2017. The program will have capacity to serve 20-40 individuals in its initial year. Fundraising efforts and donations are intended to cover the majority of program expenses. Funding for the facility is in place and construction is expected to begin in 2016.

The facility design includes several large classrooms for post-secondary education, life skills training, vocational training and a job placement program. A basketball/volleyball court, fitness area for individual exercise and classes, art studio and stage for performances are also part of the building plan. The Villagers of Saint Andrew's will experience an array of activities, opportunities in business enterprise, and social events. The long-term vision for St. Andrew's also includes adding housing so that individuals in the program can live independently at the campus.

For more information about St. Andrew's Village, visit their website at www.standrewsvillage.org.



ATTRIBUTES OF AN IDEAL ADULT TRANSITION SUPPORT SERVICES INFRASTRUCTURE

Across the country, young adults with ASD who are leaving the high school environment and entering a post-secondary education environment and/or the larger adult world must face the well-documented and much dreaded “services cliff” – the loss of many of the services and supports available to high school students. It is an unnecessarily perilous and often bewildering time for these young adults and their parents. Parents, service providers, and advocates interviewed as part of this assessment project were almost unanimous in identifying this transition period as the weakest link in the Capital Region’s ASD supports infrastructure. The two most common complaints were (1) a real deficit of needed resources and (2) the fragmentation of available resources.

The establishment of a comprehensive transition support services enterprise in Baton Rouge for young adults with ASD (and related disorders) would add supports not currently available in the Capital Region and facilitate a more effective utilization of existing adult support resources. Additionally, some support services could be provided on a regional basis such that all of South Louisiana benefits from their implementation. The following is a list of attributes of an “ideal” adult transition support services infrastructure to best serve individuals with an ASD diagnosis and their families. This list was developed from research conducted throughout this assessment, including interviews with education professionals, advocates, and other stakeholders.



**INTERFACE WITH PRE-K-12 SCHOOL SYSTEMS,
POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS, EMPLOYERS,
AND ASD STAKEHOLDER ORGANIZATIONS**



**ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE RESOURCES
(OCDD AND CAHSD PROGRAMS AND BENEFITS)**



INDEPENDENT LIVING SKILLS



POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION CONSULTING SUPPORT



WORK READY SKILLS



JOB TRAINING AND PLACEMENT



WIDE ARRAY OF HOUSING ISSUES



TRANSPORTATION



SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT



LEGAL ASSISTANCE



06

RECOMMENDATIONS

ADULT TRANSITION



Individuals with an ASD diagnosis (in the Capital Region and around the nation) face perhaps the greatest deficit in needed services and other infrastructure support when they transition out of the secondary education environment and into the adult world. The following recommendations are designed to fundamentally improve the availability of vital services and infrastructure in the Capital Region.

1. Local school systems, post-secondary institutions, and the state should access the full amount of federal funding for transition, vocational rehabilitation, and employment services by providing the required local or state match. In light of the current state budget constraints, the Louisiana Workforce Commission, Louisiana Rehabilitation Services (LRS), local school systems, the Louisiana Community and Technical College System, and other Capital Region post-secondary institutions should form a working group to explore and pursue alternative sources of matching funds to support LRS programs and make recommendations to the Governor and State Legislature.
2. Post-secondary institutions in the Capital Region should invest resources in designing and implementing a comprehensive, inclusive program to support students with diverse learning needs and intellectual disabilities. The program should include not only academic components to help students achieve a certificate or degree, but also employment, independent living, and community involvement support to assist students learn how to live independently and gain employment. The Disability Services offices should work closely with Financial Aid offices within these institutions to have the program approved as a Comprehensive Transition and Post-Secondary (CTP) program so that students eligible for federal assistance such as Pell Grants and Work-Study programs can deploy these funding options.
3. A working group that includes community leaders, business organizations, local and state education, health care and workforce officials, among others, should be established to govern a project dedicated to the establishment of a sustainable enterprise in the Capital Region that offers comprehensive transition support services to young adults with ASD and related disorders. Dimensions of this service hub model should include:
 - a. Interface with Pre-K-12 school systems, post-secondary institutions, employers, and ASD stakeholder organizations
 - b. Access to health care resources (OCDD and CAHSD programs and benefits)
 - c. Support for developing independent living skills
 - d. Post-secondary education support, including interfacing with post-secondary disability services offices and facilitating partnerships between private-sector support providers and post-secondary institutions
 - e. Programs for development of job-readiness skills
 - f. Job training and placement programs, including interface with Louisiana Rehabilitation Services and engagement with area employers and business organizations
 - g. Wide array of housing options
 - h. Transportation options
 - i. Social skills and activities
 - j. Legal assistance