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Transition Times

Success Through Transition™ with Aspire

Winter 2008

Transitioning to Adult Healthcare

Changing medical providers can be difficult for anyone. We all want a practice that helps us relax and genuinely shows they're interested in us as a person. Parents and caregivers of people with developmental disabilities have to "go the extra mile" when they are looking for a provider, particularly as their children are ready to transition from the pediatrician to an adult practitioner.

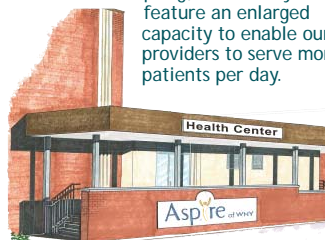
Aspire has been serving the unique needs of individuals with developmental disabilities for more than 60 years. In 1971, Aspire opened a health clinic. Today, it is located at 7 Community Drive in Cheektowaga and open to individuals with disabilities age 16 and older.

Aspire's medical staff provides coordinated healthcare created especially for each individual. The team members are experts in their respective fields who work together to provide top-of-the line, quality care.

As families come to Aspire's clinic, they often describe stories of past difficulty and frustration they experienced with providers who didn't understand their child's special

needs or treat them with compassion. Aspire has exceeded their expectations. Our providers follow all the standards of care needed to provide top-quality care. In addition, Aspire offers free and convenient parking, lifts, and professional staff on call 24-hours-a day.

Due to increased demand for such outstanding healthcare services, a major expansion for the center is underway. Expected to open in the spring, this facility will feature an enlarged capacity to enable our providers to serve more patients per day.



Aspire's clinic staff can arrange a free appointment for the perspective patient and their family to meet the staff and have their questions answered. If you would like more information, please call (716) 505-5634.

Aspire's Health Team is Comprised of:

- ☞ Internal medicine staff including a physician, two midlevel practitioners with over 20 years experience, a dually-boarded medical director and an award winning psychiatrist.
- ☞ A neurologist and a podiatrist, as the disabled suffer from seizures and foot abnormalities at a very high incidence.



- ☞ Physical and occupational therapists, speech language pathologists and certified social workers who provide mental health counseling. Five of Aspire's therapy supervisors have received the prestigious Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of America (RESNA) certification, granting them the designation of assistive technology practitioner (ATP). ●

Aspire of Western New York

Address: 2356 N. Forest Road
Getzville, NY 14068

Phone: 716.505.5000

Email: info@aspirewny.org

Web: www.aspirewny.org

Aspire's Mission:

Aspire's mission is to help children and adults with developmental disabilities, cerebral palsy, and conditions with similar personal and family effects live their lives to the fullest in keeping with their informed choices.

Aspire
OF WNY

Turning Disabilities
Into Capabilities

To learn more about Aspire's transition services, please contact Central Intake, 716.838.0047.

Central Intake: Your Linkage to Services

Aspire's Central Intake Department plays a vital role in helping you link to services within the Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD), or other services when appropriate. When Intake receives a referral for services to help a school-age child, the school plays an important part in the eligibility process as they provide proof of the child's developmental disability.

The Intake staff helps guide the family, advocate and/or individual through the process. There are two important pieces to receiving OMRDD services. First, it must be determined whether the student meets the criteria for OMRDD as being developmentally disabled through various assessments and documents gathered. Second, Medicaid is the form of payment for most services. If they are not already set up with Medicaid, Intake guides them through the process for their individual situation. We then link them to Medicaid Service Coordination or other appropriate services.

Interesting Facts

- Intake usually completes the initial meeting in the person's home or wherever it's most convenient.

- We bring many years of knowledge and experience to the meeting, allowing us to discuss possibilities beyond getting someone eligible for services.

- When someone is not eligible for OMRDD services, we make a point of looking into other possibilities.

- We've had great success with Aspire's Medicaid Service Coordinators (MSCs) collaborating with some schools to get students linked with needed services. Students begin the transition process while still in high school, making the transition to life after school much smoother.

To contact Aspire's Central Intake Department, call 838-0047 or email info@aspirewny.org. You can also visit www.aspirewny.org/contact.



MSC Opens the Door to Future Services for High Schoolers

When a student meets eligibility requirements, he/she is assigned a Medicaid Service Coordinator (MSC). The MSC connects people with disabilities to services and supports that can meet their individual needs and desires during all stages of their lives.

One way the MSC can support the student is through linkage provided during the transitional period from attending school regularly to available adult services and programs.

The Many Hats of the MSC

Such was the case of William. He was assigned a Medicaid Service Coordinator (MSC) while he was in high school. Together with the support of his family and Williams's school district, Will and his



MSC developed an Individualized Service Plan (ISP) that included his desire to attend college. Will's MSC began making referrals and linking services to make this dream a reality. He was accepted at Erie County Community College. During the transition planning

it was determined that transportation would be a problem for him. The MSC then began working with Will and his family to help Will obtain his driver's license.

MSC + Transition Team = SUCCESS

Through the work of the MSC and transition services, Will is currently attending ECC as a student in the Graphics Arts Program. He has obtained his driver's license and is looking for a car. His MSC will continue to provide necessary support and linkage to services as the needs arise.

Testimonial: Danielle's Success

Aspire was introduced to Danielle Lawson when she was a junior at Orchard Park High School. It was determined that Danielle would benefit from a non-traditional Vocational Assessment after she struggled at a previous traditional career program. Orchard Park requested that Aspire conduct a person-centered vocational assessment for Danielle, along with an individualized work experience with an onsite job coach. The assessment would also outline non-vocational transition requirements, and provide a transition timeline and action plan for the Lawson family.

The information pertinent to Danielle's assessment was provided through interviews with Danielle, her parents and school staff. All played a key role in the assessment process. Information gathered was rich in detail and enabled Aspire to get to know Danielle in a number of environments. These details would help identify a work environment that truly reflected Danielle's interests and strengths.

As the assessment unfolded it was evident that Danielle was very knowledgeable and interested in certain animals.

With confidence she could state a number of reptile biographical facts and animal care techniques. She expressed an interest in working at a pet

store. Aspire developed a work experience for Danielle at Petco, where she could utilize her strengths tending to different animals in her assigned work area. Danielle's job coach guided her using a number of techniques to ease her comfort level, while also enhancing her productivity and confidence. Her success at Petco had a positive spill over into other areas of her life. Danielle's mother states that Petco continues to be a big boost to her daughter's self-esteem.

Danielle's assessment also revealed her desire — and her fear — of attending college. To assist with this, Aspire coordinated with ECC South to develop an Education Coach service. Every other week, Danielle's job coach became her education coach, navigating ECC's campus with Danielle and familiarizing her with the different departments and student life. What was once intimidating and uncertain became familiar and exciting.

Danielle graduated from high school in June 2006 with a Regents diploma. This past June, Danielle completed her first year at ECC South with an excellent GPA.

Congratulations Danielle! We are proud to have been a part of your transition and to witness your extraordinary accomplishments. We wish you much success as you continue on your journey. ●

"Danielle's assessment also revealed her desire — and her fear — of attending college... Aspire helped."



Technology Helps Students Achieve Skills Needed for School, Work

Preparing students with disabilities for continuing education or the world of work has become an integral service provided by Aspire's Technology Today program. All of the students referred to Technology Today require assistive technology (AT) to achieve the fundamental skills necessary for success at school and/or work. Each student - as well as the student's environment and required tasks - must be evaluated to determine the appropriate AT solution for them. In most instances,

students use a combination of AT devices to meet their specific needs.

One software program that is often recommended for students is called Read&Write Gold. This

specialized software program is used in collaboration with other applications, such as Microsoft Office (Word, Excel and PowerPoint), Internet Explorer and e-mail. Read&Write Gold promotes literacy skill development for students with reading and writing disabilities. One of the features included in this program is Text to Speech, which enables students to listen to written work using high-quality male and female voices. With "Read the Web" and "PDFaloud," text is read using

double highlighting support. A student rolls his or her mouse over any text on the Web site or PDF document, and Read&Write Gold reads it out loud.

Read&Write Gold can also be used with a scanner to read textbooks out loud, highlighting words to make following along and tracking easier as the text is read. Read&Write Gold includes a talking dictionary that speaks both the word and definition. The word prediction feature in Read&Write Gold learns the student's individual style and predicts the word that is being typed and the word that comes next.

Read&Write Gold is an easy-to-use customizable toolbar that "floats" on the screen or docks to a locked position. All of the program's features can be accessed easily from the toolbar as the student works. For more information regarding this software program, contact TextHELP Systems, Ltd., at 888-248-0652 or on the Web at www.texthelp.com. ●



Team Develops New CO-OP Day Program

What's new and exciting in the world of person centered opportunities? Aspire's CO-OP. By definition, CO-OP means, "Owned collectively by members who share in its benefits."

So what does that mean to you? We at Aspire - along with individuals, families and advocates - have taken the concept of a "CO-OP" and created an innovative OPTS project that is driven, inspired and developed by its members. This is the premise for how the program will differ from others.

The CO-OP members, including individuals, families and a support team from Aspire, have worked together to create a daytime opportunity that will provide innovative choices and the supports to promote personal growth and independence.

The members will have the opportunity to create a personalized daily schedule based on the participant's interests and motivations. The program's three main components will include the arts, a wellness center, and the opportunity to be a part of the community. Opportunities within each component will always vary based on CO-OP members' interest.

Sample opportunities include:

- 👉 *learning how to cook healthy nutritious meals*
- 👉 *taking an exercise class at a local gym*
- 👉 *experiencing a pottery wheel for the first time*
- 👉 *participating in a college class on campus*



The choice is yours. We at Aspire want to be part of your success!

This daytime opportunity was designed to meet the needs and interests of individuals looking to grow and move forward with their lives. Whether you are a student looking for meaningful part-time opportunities or you're out of school and are looking for a full-time community based experience, the CO-OP has something for you. For a tour or more information regarding the CO-OP program, please call Amy Holdnack at 505-5640. ●

SAVE THE DATE

- 👉 *February 15 – DDAWNY Transition Committee Meeting. 9 am, Williamsville District School Offices, Casey Road, East Amherst*
- 👉 *March 14 – DDAWNY Transition Committee Meeting. 9 am, BOCES Conference Center, 4124 Saunders Settlement Road, Room 3*
- 👉 *April 15 – Last day to register with VESID for fall semester college supports*
- 👉 *April 27, 28 & 29 – Empire APSE Supported Employment Training Institute at Lake Placid*
- 👉 *May 22 – Developmental Disabilities Awareness Day*

Web Sites

for Transition Service Information

- 👉 *Paving the Way to Your Future: WNY Transition Committee. WNY Transition Coordination... making the transition. Provides an overview of programs, accommodations and services. www.parentnetworkwny.org/files/Transition07-08/TranspavingtheWay07-08.pdf*
- 👉 *Apply for Services at Buffalo District Office at New York State VESID: Employer Services. Handbook. Eligibility. Student Transition. News. Vendors... VESID Counselors provide service in local sites in all eight WNY Counties... www.vesid.nysed.gov/buffalo/apply.htm*
- 👉 *WNY Collegiate Consortium and Disability Advocates: Transition: Students with disabilities preparing for postsecondary... with screen reading, voice recognition or other adaptive software or hardware. www.ccdanet.org/ecp/resources/transition_postsec_edu.*