



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



TO: Michael Storz, Chief Administrator
Chapel Haven Schleifer Center

FROM: Dori Papa, Ed.D., Education Consultant
Bureau of Special Education *DP*

DATE: June 12, 2019

SUBJECT: PRELIMINARY EVALUATION REPORT
Approval Review of a Private Special Education Program

On May 16, 2019, an evaluation team visited the special education program Chapel Haven Schleifer Center (Chapel Haven) to conduct an on-site review for reapproval. The team consisted of:

- Dori Papa, Ed.D., Education Consultant, Bureau of Special Education (BSE);
- Linda Zunda, Director of Education, Elizabeth Ives School for Children; and
- Sarah Smalley, Director of Pupil Services, Regional School District 4.

During a previous on-site visit on May 2, 2019, Dori Papa reviewed the education files of students as well as personnel files. In addition, Dr. Papa has reviewed the application materials submitted to the BSE by Chapel Haven administration.

At the exit conference on May 16, 2019, the evaluation team shared its impressions and preliminary findings. The following areas of the special education program have been reviewed:

- governance;
- administration;
- fiscal management;
- admissions;
- individual student records;
- program requirements;
- evaluation of student progress and reporting responsibilities;
- student management techniques;
- qualifications and requirements for instructional, administrative, and support personnel;
- health and safety; and
- termination of enrollment.

Commendations:

- Leadership and staff are highly committed and motivated toward achieving the program's mission to "provide lifelong, individualized services for people with developmental and social disabilities, empowering them to live independent and self-determined lives."
- The observation team reported that "leadership has a very strong vision for the school, how it interacts with the surrounding communities, and is working hard to build an infrastructure aligned with the vision" as evidenced in the campus expansion.

- Staff views administration as highly supportive and equally committed to implementing individual programs that result in the highest level of benefit to each student from an academic, social/communication, and career exploration/employment standpoint.
- The program has a very low staff turnover rate and all staff interviewed reported that they “love working at the program.”
- The program has a culture of family engagement and holds many events including talent shows, art shows, and plays that are also open to community members. Teachers interviewed reported that “families are extremely happy about the program and the progress their children are making.”
- Students benefit from a full-time board certified behavior analyst skilled in behavioral interventions and pedagogy specific to young adults with autism; and how to implement strategies in applied settings, such as the workplace, independent living, and the community.
- The program maintains the consultation services of two autism spectrum specialists as consultants to enhance the program’s curriculum and assessment practices, and its ability to address the diverse needs of the students served as well as supporting teachers in the provision of effective instruction and assessment.
- Chapel Haven employs certified teachers who oversee all components of the student’s programming. Administration, teachers, and related service providers frequently collaborate to design and expand course election to meet the individual needs and interests of students, and to progress monitor student’s individualized education program (IEP) goals and objectives.
- The Residential Education at Chapel Haven (REACH) program has a two-year curriculum sequence, “Expectations for Independence,” that incorporates courses focused on social communication, math, health and safety, consumer education, career education, technology, leisure management, physical education, social studies, art, vocational skills, language arts, and science. The 24-month curriculum is designed to specifically provide students with the necessary skills to transition to independent living with a minimum of support services.
- Instruction is provided in the appropriate natural environment to the greatest extent possible.
- The Asperger Syndrome Adult Transition (ASAT) Program provides a comprehensive curriculum comprised of diverse courses for building student academic, social/communication, career exploration, technology (Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, website design, social networking, digital photography, and computer troubleshooting and maintenance) arts (poetry and drama), functional life skills, career exploration, health and safety, and leisure activities (chess, animation, gardening, backgammon, culinary exploration and cooking, drum circle, tie dye, sewing, and knitting/crocheting).
- The program uses the Connecticut System for Educator Evaluation and Development model and the Chapel Haven Professional Indicator List to conduct teacher evaluations.

- An annual compilation of the professional development (PD) activities in which each staff member has participated, is well documented and available in each staff file reviewed.
- The program has partnered with the Jewish Community Center of Greater New Haven to open up their facilities and programming to people of all abilities in the Greater New Haven community.
- Students have multiple opportunities for participating in less restrictive community settings with nondisabled individuals.
- Students enrolled benefit from a variety of highly individualized academic, enrichment, and vocational opportunities that are interest driven, community based, involve service learning, and provide a less restrictive community setting to practice learned social skills.
- In addition to the provision of the required 18 hours of PD, staff may participate in off-site or online PD and training activities of their individual interest with the approval of the director of education.
- The program has developed numerous community partnerships with work sites to provide students with vocation job site experience. The program is eager to develop new community partnerships to build upon individual student career interest opportunities.
- Classrooms are new, bright, spacious, and have state-of-the art technology to enable teachers to differentiate instructional delivery to accommodate individual preferential learning modalities.
- Classroom observations confirmed the implementation of highly individualized academic instruction and access to necessary accommodations.

Standard Deficiencies:

The following standard deficiencies must be rectified:

Standard B: Administration - A private facility shall have a written policy to assure that it complies with the provision of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, Public Law 108-446; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act 20 United States Code Section 1232g; 34 Code of Federal Regulations Part 99, Sections 10-76a to 10-76q, inclusive, of the Connecticut General Statutes (CGS) and the regulations adopted thereunder; Public Act (PA) 96-246 (reporting of child abuse); PA 11-232 – An Act Concerning the Strengthening of School Bullying Laws; PA 12-99 - An Act Concerning the Reporting of Children Placed in Seclusion; and all other relevant federal and state laws and regulations, and local requirements.

Issue: As required by CGS Section 10-222c, as amended by PA 16-67, each approved private special education program is required to obtain the information listed on the Connecticut State Department of Education(CSDE) Educational Employer Verification form from all current or former employer(s) of the applicants hired on or after July 1, 2016, if such employer was a local regional board of education, a governing council of a state or local charter school, an interdistrict magnet school operator or if the

employment caused the applicant to have contact with children. Applicants are required under the law to provide a prospective employer with the name, address, and telephone number of all current or former employers that meet the above criteria. Information may be collected either through a written communication or telephonically.

There was no evidence that a CSDE Employment Verification form was completed for two employees hired after July 1, 2016.

Corrective Action: Provide an attestation to the BSE that the CSDE Educational Employer Verification form will be obtained for each new employee and that upon obtaining completed forms, the program's chief administrator or director of education will make appropriate contact with previous or current employers.

Standard G: Evaluation of Student Progress and Reporting Responsibilities - The private facility shall provide in a timely manner and in accordance with required timelines, the following information to the CSDE and/or the responsible local education agency (LEA):

A copy of the current appropriate licensure to operate any residential component affiliated with the program.

Issue: The program's license to operate a residence for person(s) with intellectual disability and/or persons with autism spectrum disorder will expire on July 31, 2019.

Corrective Action: No later than July 31, 2019, provide the BSE with evidence of a license renewal to operate a residential program component.

Standard J: Health and Safety - A private facility shall conduct monthly emergency drills that shall include one crisis response drill other than a fire drill once every three months.

Issue: In reviewing emergency drill records, fire and emergency drills were not documented.

Corrective Action: On or before June 30, 2019, submit to BSE an attestation that the program will maintain emergency drill documentation evidencing that every third drill will be a crisis drill. Provide a copy of the documentation of the monthly drills conducted through December 31, 2019.

Recommendations:

The following recommendations are offered to Chapel Haven:

- Maintain the process of reviewing IEPs for appropriateness and accuracy and the notification to LEAs requesting corrections. For example, ensure that related services provided on an individual and small group are broken out/separated.
- Move forth with the plan to develop a climate of collaboration between the REACH and ASAT staff.
- Enhance collaboration opportunities to promote the carryover of skills learned during the school day to the residential setting after school hours. For example, enhance systems of communication for preparing weekend staff to reinforce social skills taught during school hours.

Within 15 working days from the date of this preliminary evaluation report, please indicate in writing to the BSE whether your program agrees with the report and accepts the delineated corrective action plan. Please be advised that a recommendation for continuous approval through June 30, 2024, will be submitted to the Commissioner of Education once written acceptance of the report in its entirety is received.

Upon such approval, the following will be applicable to Chapel Haven:

Approved Ages: 18–21 years old

Approved Grade: 12

Approved Capacity: 20 students

Approval Expiration Date: June 30, 2024

cc: Colleen Hayles, Education Consultant/Coordinator
Mary Acquarulo, Director of Education