

October 18, 2012

To Whom it May Concern:

During the 2010 - 2011 fiscal year, Family Service Association of Bucks County contracted with Chapel Haven to consult with us about our newly created AACES (Asperger's Awareness, Community Education, and Support) program.

Throughout the year, Chapel Haven assisted us in multiple ways that enriched our AACES community and improved our program outcomes. With the help of expert guidance from Chapel Haven, AACES has grown from a single service socialization program, serving approximately 25 individuals, to a comprehensive program with four additional components focused on employment, post-secondary education, parent support, and life skills instruction. We have also expanded our community to include younger transition aged youth and adults in their 30's. Last year our various program components served a total of 125 different individuals and caregivers. The work that Chapel Haven did consulting with us was instrumental to our expansion and success.

Chapel Haven's consulting team, including Michael Storz, President, and Virginia Hodge, Director of the Asperger's Syndrome Adult Transition Program, understands the intricate nature of Asperger's and the challenges young adults often face as they transition into adulthood. During staff trainings at Family Service, they generously shared their knowledge, experiences and strategies with us. Here are some remarks from one of our staff members about the Chapel Haven staff trainings:

*As an old timer in the field of mental health, but a newcomer to the Asperger's world, I found the support offered by the Chapel Haven team to be invaluable. The training sessions provide a foundation for understanding the major issues of Asperger's, including: theory of mind, emotional regulation, executive functioning, communication differences, and sensory integration. Questions were welcomed and examples were offered for illustration purposes. When our staff presented typical scenes from our work, Mike and Ginny would respond with information that filled in the gaps and helped us plan practical interventions. Ginny and Mike enriched me both professionally and personally and I am grateful for their efforts.*

The Chapel Haven team also met a few times with our newly formed Parent group. The AACES Parent group facilitator shared her experiences working with the Chapel Haven team:

**MEMBER:** The Alliance for Children & Families, Inc. – United Way of Bucks County    **ACCREDITED:** Council on Accreditation for Children & Family Services  
**LICENSED:** Drug and Alcohol Treatment Facility (Langhorne & Doylestown Offices)    **LICENSED:** Mental Health Treatment Facility (Langhorne & Doylestown Offices)

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*Chapel Haven staff did a wonderful job assisting us in creating a cohesive parent support group. By sharing their experiences with individuals with AS and their families, Chapel Haven staff affirmed the everyday challenges of raising an adult child with an often misunderstood diagnosis. While acknowledging those challenges, Chapel Haven was able to alter prevailing views as well as provide practical fixes for pervasive behaviors. As a parent and a professional, I continually find myself using language and the positive approaches presented by Chapel Haven staff. They teach families who find themselves in extraordinary circumstances how to become and feel more "ordinary."*

In addition to the "hands on" work that Chapel Haven did with our team, they also assisted Family Service with program development and implementation. Our new program components were influenced by their insights and thoughtful suggestions. Since receiving their consultation, we have become an approved vendor for the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, specializing in employment services for young adults with AS. We provide vocational assessments, workplace social skill seminars, and job coaching. AACES also operates a retail thrift store which we have transformed into a Service Learning Center, providing a place for job training and assessment for our young adults with limited work experience. The ideas that Chapel Haven provided were instrumental in our growth.

As we plan for the future of AACES, we will use many of the suggestions made by the Chapel Haven on strategies for long term financial sustainability for our programming. We benefited greatly from their knowledge of business and systems.

Toward the end of our consultation year, two AACES staff visited Chapel Haven. We had the opportunity to tour the campus and to sit in on some classes they offered for their students. The whole community had a very positive "vibe." We witnessed young adults in the process of learning the many skills they needed to become self-sufficient. As we drove home from Connecticut, we discussed our work at AACES and our growth over the past year. We agreed that the example that Chapel Haven provided through their experienced leadership and commitment to serving young adults with AS had influenced our own positive "vibe" at AACES.

We will always be grateful for their work and the time that we spent with them.

Sincerely,



Amy Conte, MS  
Program Coordinator, AACES

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