

Testimony for Public Hearing

Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee

February 27, 2015

Transitional Services for Youth and Young Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Good Afternoon – I am Amy Guay-Macfarlane, Vice President of Education for Ädelbrook Behavioral and Developmental Services. Ädelbrook is a multi-service agency dedicated to meeting the unique needs of families and individuals, of all ages, as they relate to intellectual/developmental disabilities and Autism Spectrum Disorder. We provide short-term, long-term and respite residential programming for children and young adults. The in-home and community-based services we provide are customized from, as little as two hours a week, to round the clock staffing. Additionally we provide an educational continuum for students ages 3 to 21 which includes a school in Manchester for students ages 3 – 10, a school in Cromwell for ages 9 – 21 and a school in East Hartford that opened this past Monday. Today I would specifically like to talk about our two Transitional Academies for students ages 18-21 in Middletown.

As mentioned in the report, given the broad spectrum of autism, there is a necessity to provide different services depending on the level of need of the individual. At Ädelbrook's Transitional Academies we work with students who are more severely affected with autism and are less likely to move on to post-secondary education, full time employment and/or independent living. Our students, who come from our Continuous Residential Support homes or from area school districts, focus on transitioning to real life with an emphasis on life skills and vocational exploration and opportunities.

The population we, and many others, serve are often faced with educational, social, behavioral and medical challenges and frequently require twenty-four hour one-to-one support. At our Transitional Academies the focus is on achieving successful part-time employment (when possible), activities of daily living and community participation in order to prepare students for functional adult life.

We created our two Transitional Academies to meet the varying needs of the students we serve. They both address the academic and functional skills of the students through individualized treatment and education plans. Transitional Academy I has a more intensive focus on vocational programming for students who are able to maintain a regular part time work schedule and who will, hopefully, join the workforce after leaving our program. Transitional Academy II works with individuals who require more intensive one-to-one job coaching and hands-on training for activities of daily living. We hope to see more funding to support young adults who may not be able to move to independent living, or be gainfully employed. These individuals still have the potential to increase their functional independence.

We would welcome the opportunity for our Representatives and/or members of the committee to come and see our Transitional Academy Programs and the students they serve. I think a visit to the program(s) would demonstrate the need for community based transitional programs that meet the different needs of individuals with ASD.

Sincerely,

Amy Guay-Macfarlane

Vice President of Education