

Mission Road Developmental Center

Agency Purpose, History, and the Nature & Extent of the Problem MRDC Will Address

FY2021

Mission Statement:

Mission Road Developmental Center is a community-based, church sponsored agency with a Call from God to minister to persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) by challenging them to achieve their full potential for independence, productivity, and inclusion in the community.

Statement of Purpose:

Persons with IDD can and should have the opportunity to be recognized for their potential, not their limitations while leading fulfilling lives within the community. Mission Road's purpose is to provide quality care to ensure that our clients reach their maximum potential for independence, productivity and inclusion in the community. Additionally, Unicorn Centers' purpose is to support adult individuals diagnosed with IDD to obtain and maintain stable employment by capitalizing on and developing each person's strengths, needs, and interests.

Agency History:

Clifford and Adele Bledsoe opened Mission Road Foundation and School (MRFS) in 1947 with three staff members to serve the needs of their son and two other children. In 1954, the state of Texas chartered MRFS as a non-profit rehabilitation center for children with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). The Foundation grew to include classrooms, a chapel, and a gymnasium. By 1970, enrollment had reached 110 children. In 1976, First Presbyterian Church of San Antonio began sponsorship of MRFS and changed the organization's name to Mission Road Developmental Center (MRDC). Today, MRDC provides residential and non-residential care for children and adults with IDD. Non-residential care includes day habilitation services, vocational training, and education for clients whose self-help capabilities preclude them from attending other programs. MRDC owns and operates, debt-free, 20 community homes, and six residential cottages on our 22-acre main campus in south San Antonio. Main campus features a programming and recreation center, an open-air covered pavilion and a sports court, playgrounds and walking paths, a medical clinic, laundry facility, commercial kitchen, and an ADA-accessible swimming pool.

In 2001, Unicorn Centers, Inc. merged with the Mission Road Ministries family of agencies. Founded in 1984, Unicorn Centers facilitate jobs and life-skills for adults with IDD. When possible, Unicorn Centers place individuals into community employment through partnerships with businesses with strong ties to San Antonio. In 2018, Unicorn Centers officially incorporated into MRDC allowing for better stewardship of funds and streamlined efficiency. With the integration of Unicorn Centers, MRDC serves over 800+ unduplicated children and adults daily (based on pre-COVID-19 attendance and enrollment). MRDC is one of four non-profit agencies under the board governance of Mission Road Ministries—itsself a non-profit, 501(c)(3) agency.

In 2016, MRDC, in partnership with the Kronkosky Foundation, agreed to take over management of a smaller, but greatly needed nonprofit called HandsOn. This organization serves adults with IDD who are also sight and hearing impaired. Through this partnership, HandsOn relinquished their 501(c)(3) status and came under the Mission Road Developmental Center umbrella. With the incorporation of HandsOn into MRDC we were able to ensure that these special clients receive around-the-clock, awake care, which is especially important for clients that also suffer from seizures or severe medical conditions.

MRDC is one of only two non-profit agencies in Texas that offer long-term residential care exclusively for children with IDD who have been removed from their home because of abuse, neglect, exploitation, or abandonment. These children have been removed from their family by Child Protective Services and are wards of the State, and as such, have no assets. Most of these particular children require the administration of multiple prescription medications twice daily. Sadly, many children arrive at MRDC with little more than the clothes they are wearing and do not have

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the self-help skills to perform daily hygiene routines, use the restroom, or calm themselves. For these reasons, most have been through many failed foster care placements. MRDC's patient and devoted direct care staff help these children learn to trust again, along with teaching them daily living skills that will help to make a successful future foster home placement or adoption a reality.

Nature and Extent of the Problem MRDC will Address:

All clients served by MRDC have an intellectual and/or developmental disability (IDD) diagnosis, which is defined by having an IQ of 70 or below. Intellectual disability is a term used when there are limits to a person's ability to learn at an expected level and function in daily life. Intellectual disability can be caused by a problem that starts any time before a child turns 18 years old or even before birth. It can be caused by injury, disease, or a problem in the brain. Developmental disabilities are a group of conditions that are due to an impairment in physical, learning, language, or behavior areas. These conditions begin during the developmental period, may impact day-to-day functioning, and usually last throughout a person's lifetime. Developmental disabilities begin anytime during the developmental period and most begin before birth. IDD includes Down syndrome, Fragile X, Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, Shaken Baby Syndrome, Cerebral Palsy, and hundreds of other unique diagnoses.

More than 90% of the people we serve at MRDC have secondary diagnoses and comorbidities, in addition to a primary diagnosis of IDD. Secondary and comorbidity diagnosis examples include severe vision impairments, chronic health conditions, autism, seizure disorders, and many others. Additionally, 60%+ of the people we serve are non-verbal. The population of people that MRDC cares for require specialized aid for the whole of their lifetime. The need that MRDC fills for the San Antonio IDD community is the provision of both residential and non-residential programs with reliable, affordable, high-quality care for children and adults who have been diagnosed with IDD and families caring for loved ones with IDD. The majority of our clients are people with a cognitive disability who require self-help care and cannot ever live entirely independently. We serve the most severely disabled people in the San Antonio community. IDD is a condition, not an illness. It is not currently curable. We are one of the few non-profits providing services to lower income families. While private pay options exist the true cost of care is unrealistic for most people or their families.

At MRDC, we work with our clients and their families to help them get their Social Security and State benefits, and then we provide high-quality services within their benefit parameters, so that all program participants and their families can access professional, therapeutic, and safe care. We designed our programs to help families at all income levels achieve and maintain the care needed for their loved one. Therefore, it is likely unsurprising that MRDC must annually raise \$2,000,000 from foundations, individuals, and businesses to maintain a balanced budget. Donated funds are the foundation of the high-quality, safe, loving, and therapeutic care provided to the people MRDC serves. Without donations MRDC is forced to choose between providing much-needed programs, diminishing the quality of care, or eliminating programs that are needed, but under-funded.

Our children's residential program has capacity for 40 children ages 3-17. These children have no assets and often arrive at Mission Road with little more than the clothes they are wearing. Most did not attend school regularly nor did they receive routine medical care. MRDC only serves children who are classified as Specialized or Intensive Service Level regarding the care required for each child per the State's Service Levels for Foster Care. MRDC's children come from very tragic situations and because of this most are very difficult, all require very high levels of care, and most have been repeatedly unsuccessful in foster care. Of the children currently in our care—56% are non-verbal, 35% are total care, 34% act out aggressively, and 25% are self-abusive.

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The children placed with us have severe IDD and present the highest levels of behavioral challenges. Our resident children are the State's absolute hardest to place, and MRDC is a placement of last resort. Failed placement at MRDC means a child's next placement will be the State school, so we try really, really hard to keep kids as long as we can in order to help them stabilize and gain some skills that they will benefit from going forward. The children come to us with so little, so in addition to providing them with basic needs like shelter, clothing, and food, MRDC endeavors to provide them with much more! We believe that these children deserve a loving home and opportunities for enrichment, just like their peers in the community at large.

One example of an enrichment program is S.O.A.R. & MORE. Summer Outreach And Recreation (S.O.A.R.) & MORE is a strategic engagement program created to keep children diagnosed with IDD engaged in academics, life skills, recreation, art, and community service, so that they do not regress on behavioral, academic, social, or physical progress they made during the school year or over holiday breaks. S.O.A.R. is the summer break component of the program. Monday through Friday for nine weeks during summer, S.O.A.R. serves up to 40 children who live at MRDC. S.O.A.R. proved to be so valuable, we added "& MORE"—our after-school and holiday break component. S.O.A.R. & MORE is considered an enrichment program by the State. As such, it is not funded by the State, so MRDC raises ALL of the funds necessary to run the program every year. It is vital for children who have an IDD diagnosis to continue learning and engaging over summer and breaks from school. Continuous engagement and staying on predictable schedules are proven ways to help children with IDD avoid regression before returning to school.

S.O.A.R. & MORE is open to MRDC's resident children as well as IDD-diagnosed children from the community who live at home with their loving families. We call these children our Koalas. Summer can be tough on children with special needs and their families, and sadly, Koalas and their families have few program and care options during the summer, over breaks and after school. This is a sorely underserved segment of the community. Our S.O.A.R. & MORE program offers these children and families a chance to maintain their progress or their child's progress from the preceding school year before heading into the new school year. Plus, it offers all of the kids an opportunity to enjoy a classic summer camp experience!

Without S.O.A.R. & MORE it is very unlikely that our resident children or Koalas would have the chance to attend a program of this kind. Usually, we have capacity for up to 26 Koalas, but we had to cancel S.O.A.R. & MORE for Koalas this past year/summer because of COVID-19. However, we were able to provide Koala families with daily activities and lessons, private daily videos on Mission Road's YouTube channel, and weekly deliveries of worksheets, books, and craft activities. We were also able to send Children's Program staff members to Koala homes once a week to do activities with each child in their front yard from a safe distance, which helped keep the kids engaged, active, and included! MRDC plans to bring a small number of Koalas back to S.O.A.R. for summer 2021 as long as it is safe to do so, but the pandemic is a challenge we still face on a daily basis.

Children with IDD have services available to them and their families through the public school system through age 21. However, what happens when they turn 22 and age out of public school? What services are available to keep that young person engaged in the community and progressing toward greater independence and contributing to the community in a productive way? MRDC's Unicorn Centers provide guidance to people diagnosed with IDD and their family members about programs, services, and funding options available for them or for their adult child who, intellectually and developmentally, will forever have an adolescent mindset though they are adult in age as well as physically an adult. At Unicorn Centers we help people through this critical transition and provide on-going, long-term programs and support. We offer program participants continuing education, job and life skills training, and community employment job supports, as appropriate.

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At MRDC's Unicorn Centers, we offer three distinct programs to help adults with IDD successfully enter the workforce or continue working on their education and life skills. The first of our three programs is the Day Activities Services program. In this program, busy adults work on life skills like personal hygiene, cleaning an apartment, riding the bus, and financial skills that help them to live as independently as possible. Through our Job & Life Skills Training program, we contract with area businesses so that our clients can train and work in our workshop and get paid for their efforts. Clients learn lessons of employment like specific job tasks, appropriate on-the-job behavior, and anticipating different work scenarios as they progress toward the ultimate goal of working in the community. This brings us to the third program offered by Unicorn Centers, the Community Employment & Job Coaching program. In this program, participants are assigned a Job Coach who helps them find, get, and keep a job with a community employer. Included among our 37 current employer partners are H-E-B, DPT Labs, Relief Enterprises, and many more.

Of the total population MRDC serves, approximately 76% of our adult, non-school aged clients have household incomes of less than \$5,000 per year. In 2020, only 20% of persons with a disability were employed, according to the *Case for Inclusion 2020*. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics recently reported even lower employment numbers for persons with a disability, stating that only 17.9% of persons with a disability were employed in 2020—down from 19.3% in 2019. Not only is the employment rate for disabled working-age people extremely low, but in Bexar County there exists a serious gap in non-profit alternatives for the IDD community regarding employment services.

Without proper funding, caring for a loved one with IDD, and often times multiple diagnoses, is an overwhelming financial burden on most families. Because this is the case, many families choose to care for their adult loved one with IDD at home full-time, which usually prevents at least one family member from working or attending school. This dynamic creates additional economic hardship and places success and financial independence further out of reach for that individual and their family. Furthermore, State funding for the people in our care and their families is a constant worry with an astoundingly long wait-list. As recently as 2018, there were over 153,000 Texans with disabilities waiting as long as 14 years for critical supports. The value and significance of the programs at Unicorn Centers is that our programs help adults with IDD find, get, and keep a job. Unicorn Centers also allow for the families of adults with IDD to continue to work full-time jobs, go to school, and take care of daily life and activities, etc., without having to worry about the safety, happiness, or progress of their loved one.

In FY2020, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Unicorn Centers served 383 unique individuals,

Monday-Friday, year-round, from 7:30am-4:30pm. Unicorn Centers suspended programs on March 17, 2020. Because many of the participants in our Community Employment program were employed by businesses affected by the pandemic and the City's subsequent Stay Home/Work Safe ordinance, roughly half of our participants were furloughed at some point. Although Unicorn Centers' in-person programs were suspended, we were able to keep all 45 of our staff members employed by re-assigning them to our residential homes. Staff members who were re-assigned from suspended programs to our houses received rave reviews from the residential staff for bringing new ideas and client insights to the homes. It was an unexpected, positive outcome that we are trying to find a way to incorporate into staffing moving forward.

We are working toward a Phase 1, May 1, 2021 re-opening at Unicorn Centers. Phase 1 includes a goal of 120 people total returning to the Day Activity Services program and Job & Life Skills program, and all Community Employment participants that have jobs to be back at work. By the time FY2022 starts on July 1, 2021, we hope to return more participants back to in-person programs, however, we are only bringing back people that have been vaccinated. At the time of this application, 15 program participants are back at work in the Job & Life Skills training workshop,

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52 Community Employment program participants are working, and another 28 people are employed, but on COVID-19 leave. Our Job Coaches continued working, though remotely, with Community Employment program participants throughout quarantine to maintain connections and support, and to keep communication lines open.