



The F.O.R.E.S.T. Program: Post-Transition Enrichment for Young Adults with Disabilities

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Background and Purpose

- Students with disabilities experience a significant decrease in community engagement after graduation from high school
 - 50% of adults with a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder show poor participation in work, education, friendship, and independent living skills (Blaskowitz et al., 2018)
- The Woodlands Foundation has identified a new programming opportunity targeting **transition to adulthood** and **independent living** for individuals 21+
- Occupational therapy professionals emphasize participation and skill building to facilitate meaningful engagement
- Objective:** initial F.O.R.E.S.T. (Facilitating Occupational Readiness and Engagement through Skills Training) **program development for The Woodlands** including (1) a needs assessment, (2) program objectives and outcomes, (3) program curriculum, (4) staff protocol, and (5) a projected program budget

Methods for Program Development

All five foundational components of this program utilized the following steps:

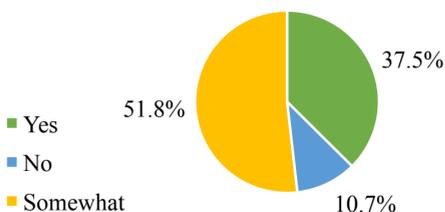


Needs Assessment

21 licensed adult training facilities were found in Allegheny County. Only 1 of these programs is located within 10 miles of The Woodlands.

84% of caregivers of participants in the age range who would be utilizing our program in 3+ years expressed interest.

Do you feel the programming your child attends addresses increasing independence for transition to adulthood?



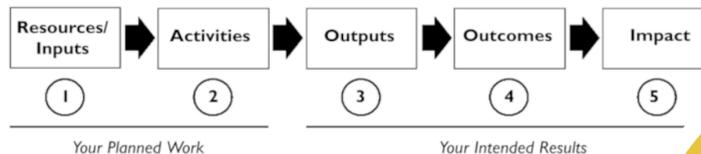
Several focus groups were conducted to discuss caregiver perspectives on transition and expectations of services. Recurring themes included uncertainty about the future, autonomy of children, employment outlook, and satisfaction with current services utilized.

“There’s definitely a need...so much of our path forward is totally uncharted”
-- Parent of 20-year-old participant

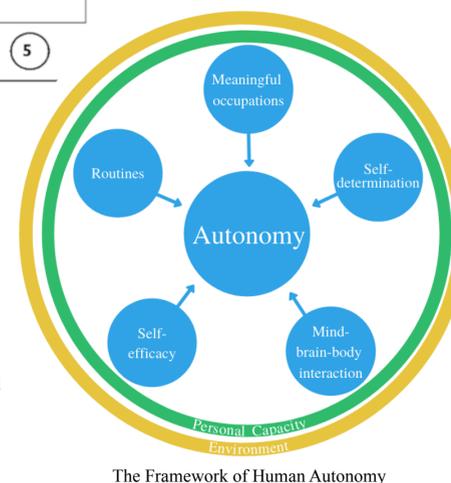
Statement	% Agreement from Caregivers (n=59)
There are enough opportunities in the community to increase independence for the individual I care for	12.1%
I would like the individual I care for to increase their time spent in the community	77.6%
With further training and support, the individual I care for would be able to live independently	27.6%

Program Objectives and Outcomes

- Define specific goals and skills** that will be focused on; assist in defining and measuring changes that occur vs. intended changes
- Informed the creation of objectives using a combination of occupational therapy models and frameworks to **create a framework** supporting program mission
- 94 objectives** created based on ability level and skill area targeted
- Used the W.K. Kellogg Foundation **Logic Model** to identify short-term, intermediate, and long-term outcomes

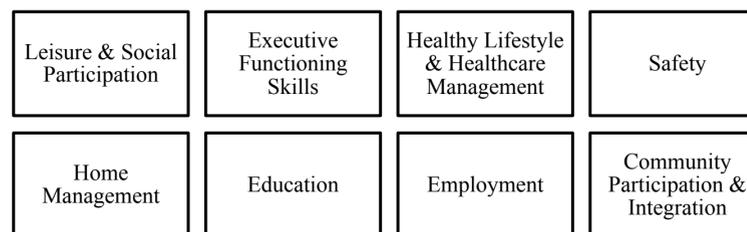


- Example objective for goal setting:**
Participants will identify self-selected goals in order to increase the likelihood of meeting personal aims. They will learn how to use activity scheduling to engage in meaningful activities and write short- and long-term goals using SMART goal methodology to achieve desired occupations.
- Example short-term outcome:**
To increase feasibility of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services final rule by making it a funded mandate.

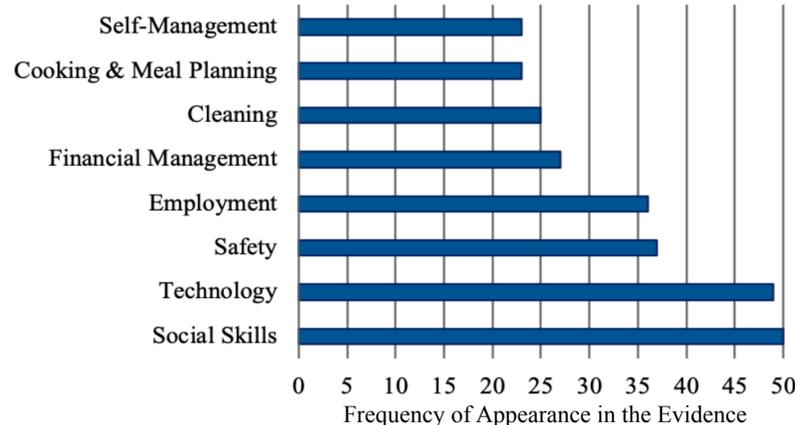


Program Curriculum

- Created an **evidence-based, needs-driven** curriculum that builds upon **8 themes**:
- 79 topics** addressed within the 8 themes

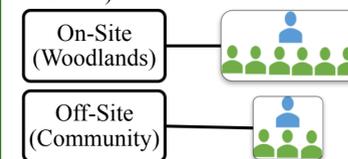


Curriculum Topics With the Strongest Support

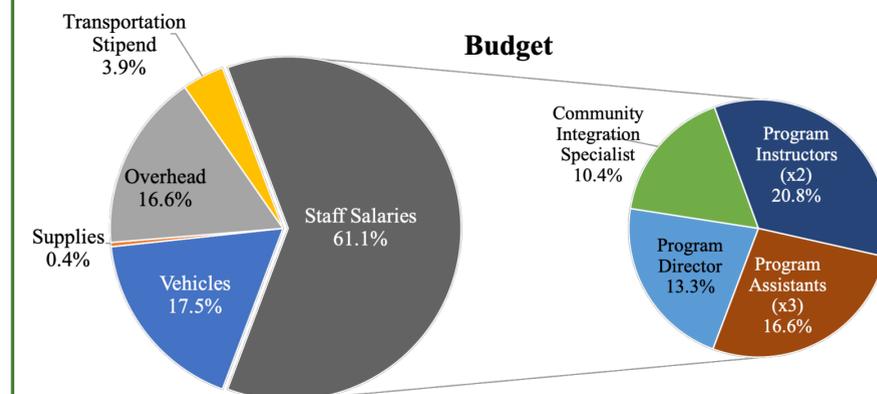


Program Staff and Budget

- Staff protocol includes:
- Job titles, descriptions and number of staff (*see right*)
 - Job requirements
 - Training checklist and resources
 - Schedules
 - Staff to participant ratios** (*see below*)



Staff Position	Position Summary	Amount of Staff
Program Director	Manages overall program	1
Community Integration Specialist	Organizes and manages community participation	1
Program Instructors	Implements and leads activities on-site	2
Program Assistants	Assists with activities or leads with direction both on- and off site	3
Total Staff		7



Discussion

Feedback was collected via online surveys from two separate stakeholder groups: Woodlands’ administration and caregivers of participants.

Survey results showed **complete agreement** from Woodland’s administration on the need for a program like this and that it would fit well with current programming. When rating satisfaction on a Likert scale, Woodlands’ administration was **very satisfied** with the comprehensiveness of materials.

85.7% of caregivers marked interest in sending their child to this program.

Each stakeholder group supported **marketing** and **funding** as necessary program components, both of which were previously identified during needs assessments as next steps for program development.

Acknowledgements and References

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