Mill Levy Advisory Council
Subcommittee Reports

Understanding the mill levy
Other opportunities for direct services
Cultural competence and sensitivity
Transition services resources

Presented 04/19/19
Understanding the Mill Levy
- Resources from providers
- Resources from DHS

1. Compile a one-page highlight, explaining what we are doing as a council to make funds available to the community from DHS.

2. Press release type of campaign/advertisement for more Mill Levy exposure.

3. The city ordinances are available online now—we recommend a one-page summary outlining what the ordinances are.

4. A feedback loop that would report on performance of subcontractors.

5. Assist individuals on the waiting list via an emergency response fund, knowledge of and referral to community resources.

6. Bring more partners/subcontractors to the Mill Levy to support the demand for resources.
Mill Levy Advisory Council
"Other Opportunities" Subcommittee
Recommendation 1

The Mill Levy Subcommittee on "Other Opportunities" in our meeting on 4/16, agreed upon the following recommendations:

1) DHS set up an independent volunteer Appeals Board to review and hear appeals from mill levy eligible individuals/families that wish to dispute their mill levy funding decisions.

2) The Appeals Board shall have the authority to change previous funding decisions and approve funding as appropriate.
   a) The appeals board would hear appeals from any mill levy eligible client, regardless of which DHS mill levy funded organization they had applied to for funding.

3) Any funding approved by the Appeals Board be drawn from the mill levy funds that DHS has not allocated to any mill levy funded organization.

The Mill Levy Advisory Council further recommends the following:

- The Appeals Board shall consist of citizen volunteers that would meet at least monthly to hear appeals (if necessary), with no fewer than three and no more than seven volunteer board members.

- The Appeals Board shall be seated as soon as possible in the summer/fall of 2019 and be independent of DHS and any mill levy funded organization.

- DHS as well as DHS mill levy funded organizations shall publicize the existence of the Appeals Board and ensure that mill levy eligible individuals/families are aware of their right to appeal mill levy funding decisions.

- If necessary, DHS will amend/write contracts that would allow unallocated DHS funds approved by the Appeals Board to be transferred from a DHS contracted agency to the client. Alternatively, DHS will work with the Denver City Council to amend the permitted uses of mill levy funds to include the Appeals Board and funding process.
Recommendation 2

1) A proposal of setting up a Respite service Fund to be disbursed to caregiving family members/guardians who have no other funding sources.

This targets all those who have need and includes those who may have been denied or not approved for lack of funding by any/all funding sources.

Recommendation 3

1) Create compilation of alternative resources available for home modification requests.

2) Specifically seek out non-profit providers as current and future options (i.e., RFP).
**Fellowship to Friendship**

**Summary:**
Through Home and Community Based supports and services, many people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) have supports and services to be physically in the community, but they are not experiencing community life the same way neurotypical individuals do. They have limited opportunities to belong to community life apart from their prescribed programs.

Denver has the opportunity to become a truly inclusive city by establishing a program that would encourage neurotypical residents to include individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) in their social groups and activities – everything from knitting groups to intramural basketball leagues to hiking clubs. These opportunities would be mutually beneficial, building a stronger network of support for individuals with IDD and enhancing the lives of neurotypical people through stronger, more diverse community involvement.

**Problem Statement:**
Only 1.5% of Americans have an IDD. Many students with IDD are segregated throughout their entire educational experience. Their educational life experience is not as 1.5% of the classroom – it is 100% of the classroom. Segregation continues into their adult community and work life. Segregation is not normal – and it prevents people with IDD from having the opportunity to develop authentic friendships with non-IDD people.

For people without IDD, there is no expectation your family and paid direct support personnel will take care of you and be your only access to community life throughout your adult life. Neurotypical people develop friendships through work and community life opportunities. These friendships become natural supports.

Loneliness is a terrible outcome of IDD segregation. Loneliness is an epidemic problem, creating serious health and safety problems.


“Loneliness in ‘epidemic proportions’ is producing a ‘loneliness literature’ of sociological and medical findings about the effect of loneliness on individuals’ brains and bodies, and on communities. Sasse says ‘there is a growing consensus’ that loneliness — not obesity, cancer or heart disease — is the nation’s ‘number one health crisis.’ ‘Persistent loneliness’ reduces average longevity more than twice as much as does heavy drinking and more than three times as much as obesity, which often is a consequence of loneliness. Research demonstrates that loneliness is as physically dangerous as smoking 15 cigarettes a day and contributes to cognitive decline, including more rapid advance of Alzheimer’s disease. Sasse says, ‘We’re literally dying of despair,’ of the failure ‘to fill the hole millions of Americans feel in their lives.’”

If we want lifelong friendships for people with IDD that lead to housing opportunities, employment, and other highly desirable and normal friendship support roles, we need to change what is currently occurring in Denver Public Schools and in our community life experiences. Change usually starts with awareness coupled with opportunity and complemented with both intrinsic and accompanying external rewards.

**Intrinsic Rewards**
Dr. Stephen Post, a professor of preventive medicine and bioethics at Stony Brook University School of Medicine, states:

“When the happiness, security and well-being of others become real to us, we come into our own. Creativity, meaning, resilience, health and even longevity can be enhanced as a surprising by-product of contributing to the lives of others. This is perennial wisdom, and science now says it is so.”
Fellowship to Friendship

Bruce DeBoskey, J.D., a philanthropic strategist, reports that the millions of older adults who volunteer their time express:

- An improved sense of well-being (89%)
- Lower stress levels (73%)
- Better physical health (68%)
- Enhanced emotional health (77%)
- Enriched sense of purpose in life (92%)
- Increased happiness (96%)

What is Friendship?
Angela Novak Amado, Ph.D., from the University of Minnesota, compiled a document called: “Friends, Connecting people with disabilities and community members”. She looks at categories of relationships:

Apart from family, there are five categories of relationships —

1. **Customer relationships** — some service people may be friendly toward an individual
2. **Acquaintances** — For example, someone you see on the street, at church or in a class, that you say hi to, or know their name
3. **Places of community** — being a regular at a community place
4. **Places of community membership and belonging** — having a sense of belonging, like a community organization or group
5. **Friends** — people you do things with, for fun, people from whom you get support

Concept Statement – Fellowship to Friendship:

Seven Strategies
Dr. Amado’s document includes a section: *Seven strategies to support relationships with community members*. Her document is a workbook for inclusion and implementation of those strategies.

Here’s a summary statement of her seven strategies:

**Strategy 1:** Identify who the person already knows and where the relationship can be strengthened and deepened
**Strategy 2:** Identify who would appreciate this person’s gifts
**Strategy 3:** Identify where you can find an interested person
**Strategy 4:** Identify associations and clubs
**Strategy 5:** Identify community places where people engage in one of this person’s interests
**Strategy 6:** Identify community places that are hospitable and welcoming
**Strategy 7:** Identify places where the person can fit in just the way they are

Committee Discussion
Our committee discussed dozens of potential opportunities for inclusion in clubs whose current members are all neurotypical:

- Activity and Hobby clubs: knitting, quilting, book clubs, gaming, gardening, hiking, walking, dog-walking, sports, photography, anime, fishing, fitness
- Service Clubs: food pantry, assisted living centers, hospitals, environmental, recycling, senior companionship
- Social Clubs: Sports bars to watch games, LGBTQ
- Special Interest clubs: movies, music, history, political, religion, robotics
Fellowship to Friendship

Examples of Outdoor, Crafts, Gaming Sports Clubs in Denver Metro:

- Denver RC Eagles is a model airplane club that meets and flies their planes at Cherry Creek State Park’s Sahuka Field: [http://www.denverrceagles.org/](http://www.denverrceagles.org/)
- Denver Sewing Collective: [https://www.meetup.com/denversewingcollective-com/](https://www.meetup.com/denversewingcollective-com/)
- Strangers to Friends Denver: [https://www.meetup.com/Strangers-To-Friends-Denver/](https://www.meetup.com/Strangers-To-Friends-Denver/)
- All Things Coloradan 20s and 30s: [https://www.meetup.com/All-Things-Coloradan-20-s-30-s/](https://www.meetup.com/All-Things-Coloradan-20-s-30-s/)
- Bike Denver: [https://bikedenver.org/](https://bikedenver.org/)
- Play Mile High: [http://playmilehigh.com/](http://playmilehigh.com/) (basketball, soccer, softball, kickball, volleyball, Cornhole, Yoga, Skeeball, Dodgeball, Bar Games, Bocce)
- Colorado LGBT Games and more group: [https://www.meetup.com/Denver-LGBT-Game-Group/](https://www.meetup.com/Denver-LGBT-Game-Group/)
- Retro Video Game: [https://www.meetup.com/RetroVideoGame/](https://www.meetup.com/RetroVideoGame/)
- The Imperial Order of Geeks: [https://www.meetup.com/The-Imperial-Order-of-Geeks/](https://www.meetup.com/The-Imperial-Order-of-Geeks/)

Story Examples:

- Early 30s woman with IDD who works at the Convention Center loves to talk about sports but has no friends to go with her to sports bars or watch sports on TV. Her parents know she is lonely.
- Late 30s man with IDD who works at a pizza parlor would like to have a beer with same-age friends at a nearby bar, but the only people who will sit with him are old men. His neurotypical friends are now married with kids. His father is worried about his loneliness.
- Young man who was a top graduate from School of Mines worked at a computer company in Longmont and became depressed because he has no friends. His parents are concerned about his mental health due to loneliness.

Starting Small and Learning from Experiences

This is an opportunity for experiential learning; a process of developing knowledge, skills, and values from direct experiences for both the groups and people with IDD.

The connection and vetting processes must start with small numbers. The group and the person with IDD will be surveyed about their experiences. The program will either grow or pivot direction based on the learnings from initial groups. Groups will be allowed to declare their lack of ability to include people with IDD and significant behavior concerns without repercussion. Expectations must be matched for both sides of the experience.

Not every attempt will be a perfect “fit.” Trial and error are a part of this learning experience.

Groups can request a trial experience followed by their own internal, private discussions about the experience to determine if they would like to continue with the program – as a group.
Fellowship to Friendship

Vetting Clubs
Denver is home to Spark the Change Colorado: https://www.sparkthechangecolorado.org/, an affiliate of the Points of Life, which include the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals: provide a unified approach to solving our most urgent problems and ask the world to focus their efforts toward building an inclusive, sustainable and resilient future for all: https://www.pointsoflight.org/.

Spark the Change, formerly Metro Volunteers, has developed methods to vet volunteers and does the vetting for the many nonprofits with which they are connected.

The Spark the Change Volunteer vetting/background checks are done by Verified Volunteers.

IDD Inclusion Training for Clubs
Spark the Change provides trainings. The Arc of Colorado could provide trainings. Score a Friend offers trainings for inclusion.

Trainings will include methods to achieve matching of expectations by all participants. For example, volunteers will express their expectations and hopes for their experience and will learn to find their match from people with IDD who have a passion or interest in the group’s focus and activities.

Extrinsic Rewards
The Committee discussed various ways to reward clubs and individuals to practice inclusion:

- Coffee cards, bus passes for travel to events, free invitations to events, zoo passes, day pass to Red Rocks, Recreation Center day passes, tour and lunch at DIA, Denver Art Museum day pass
- Posting bragging rights and success stories and videos to DHS website
- Annual award ceremony – by age of volunteer and age served, by type of group – Inclusion Awards, vetted by Mill Levy Advisory Council members
- Spark the Change Colorado has recognition awards

Conclusion
Our committee agreed that Denver could become the most welcoming and inclusive city in America. We agreed that change starts small and local. We agreed that volunteering and belonging are in the spirit of the Council Values: Courage, Loyalty, Sustainability and Empowerment. We agreed on sharing our thoughts on this approach with our fellow DHS Mill Levy Advisory Council members.

Attached
- Friends: Connecting people with disabilities and community members by Angela Novak Amado, Ph.D.

Submitted: Cultural Competence and Sensitivity Committee of the DHS Mill Levy Advisory Council, April 18, 2019
The Mill Levy Sub-committee on Transition Services, in our meeting on 4/17/2019, agreed upon the following recommendation(s). We ask the Mill Levy Advisory Council to consider formalizing these recommendations to DHS in our next council meeting:

In order to make information on various services available to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in the Denver area centralized and easier to navigate, we propose that DHS commission the creation of a centralized website-based directory of providers in the Denver area. This website would serve as a centralized place where individuals could view, learn about, and read reviews of providers in their area. Additionally, it will include features that will help them find services they were unaware of, but they have access to. Some of the key features we propose this website to have are:

- The website directory will be searchable, allowing users to find providers of different kinds that serve their location, age range, diagnosis, and specific needs. This would be similar to healthgrades.com but include features specific to the needs of the IDD community.
- Similar to yelp.com, it would be the responsibility and privilege of providers to create and maintain their listing on the directory, where possible. There will be some method for the moderator(s) to confirm providers and the accuracy of their information.
- The website directory would have ratings and reviews of providers, allowing users to find high-quality providers without having to rely solely on “trial and error”. These reviews and ratings would be provided by verified previous and current clients of the providers but would allow these clients to maintain their public confidentiality. The reviews and ratings would be moderated by the website to ensure accuracy and avoid abuse.
- To help users navigate the complex network of different services, there will be a feature similar to “you may also find interesting,” suggesting potentially unknown services they might also utilize based on their searches and what similar users have utilized. This would be similar to the “Frequently bought together” or “customers who bought this item also bought” feature on Amazon.com. This would allow users to diversify the services they use beyond what they have been informed about.
- The directory will include a variety of different services and categories, eventually becoming a “one-stop shop,” extensive directory for finding any service that might be of use to the IDD community or their families.

Respectfully submitted,

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