



Serving Tweens, Teens & Young Adults with Developmental Disabilities
A Program of PSL
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TOPS Program

Transition Outcomes Program for Students

STRIVE is pleased to present this program description to interested area school districts by offering services to students in their 13th and 14th year of public school. With over 15 years of experience in offering high quality programming for youth and young adults with disabilities and, specifically, over 10 years of providing post-secondary educational options for young adults, we are confident that we have developed and delivered an exemplary service to assist the young adults in participating school districts to gain skills in independent living, have experiences with accessing the community, and offer social and wellness opportunities.

Agency Background:

STRIVE's mission is to assist tweens, teens, and young adults with intellectual disabilities in utilizing resources within their communities so they can participate as viable members of the community. STRIVE provides social, educational, employment training, and post-secondary programs, all designed to provide maximum independence and opportunity.

In 1999, STRIVE was formed to provide recreational and social opportunities for teens and young adults with intellectual disabilities, with a focus on creating peer support and ownership of programming activities. Through the years, STRIVE has expanded its programs and offerings by responding to family and community needs. Currently STRIVE offers nine different programs, serving over 900 young people and continues to identify ways in which it can expand its program offerings.

The current offerings for STRIVE include the following:

- Weekly Friday Night Social Events** - Our first program, weekly social events attended by 100+ young people ages 15-25 every Friday night. Focused on building social networks, as well as providing skill building and more independence. Also allows for respite opportunities for parents.
- Weekly Friday Afternoon Tween Socials** - Opportunity for 11-14 year olds with developmental disabilities to add skills and build social connections.
- Wednesday Night Educational Series** - Educational courses provided in 8-12 week sessions on topics designed for our participants aged 15-25 to be successful in the community. Courses not typically taught to special education students in schools. Examples include cooking and menu planning.

-After-School Program - for high school students that are enrolled in Life Skills classes. The program is open daily after school, during early release days, and during conferences and finals.

-Summer/Vacation Day Camp - Camp STRIVE provides campers the opportunity to make friends and learn valuable skills in a safe, inclusive, environment. This program runs during all school vacations, as well as the entire summer.

-Next STEP - STRIVE's Transitional Education Program, was created to meet the unmet needs of young adults who have graduated or aged out of high school, and are on the State of Maine waiting list to receive services. This private pay program provides an opportunity for lifelong learning, education, and social, recreational and wellness activities. This is the only program of its kind in Maine, directly responding to the needs of families on the waiting list for services.

-STRIVE Bayside - This is a day program focused on teaching independent living skills. We have rented a 3 bedroom apartment which we use as a learning lab to teach all skills needed to gain independence. Participants all participate in career development courses and volunteer to gain employment skills.

-STRIVE U - STRIVE U provides post-secondary education and training to young adults with developmental disabilities in the realms of residential, employment, and community skills with the goal of enabling its graduates to live and work as full community members with maximum independence, productivity, and dignity.

-Home Supports - Support staff work with young people in their home or apartment to provide improved care and health and safety.

STRIVE and its parent agency, PSL Services, is based on the belief of responding to youth and adults with intellectual disabilities who need our assistance. Created in 1989, PSL quickly established a reputation for providing remarkable services to our state's most vulnerable residents, often leading the way in the methods in which services are delivered in our state.

STRIVE purchased its current building at 28 Foden Road in South Portland in November of 2014 and completed its renovations in the spring of 2016 which allows for significantly more program space thus positioning the organization well as a home base for this program. This building, which has been STRIVE's headquarters for twelve years, serves as both administrative and program space and is also conveniently located on a bus line for ease in access to the greater Portland community. Additionally, the recent building updates include state-of-the art technology in order for our participants to take full advantage of the many resources that can be utilized through technology to support independent living.

TOPS Program Design:

STRIVE offers a community-based program that meets the needs of the participating students and districts. STRIVE is able to be flexible in the amount of time students will attend, ranging from ½ day per week to a full school day and week for students (full day is 8:00-1:30 Monday - Friday). Additionally, STRIVE has several programs that are held during the evening and we are able to couple this program with either or both our Wednesday evening educational classes which operates from 6:00-8:00 p.m. or our Friday night social which operates from 6:00-9:00 p.m. STRIVE offers to families a private pay option for their student to stay at STRIVE with programming for either of these opportunities from the time that the p.m. session ends until when the STRIVE activity begins (roughly 2:00-6:00).

The TOPS curriculum for our collaborative program with school districts utilizes elements from our well established post-secondary curriculum which emphasizes independent living skill development, community access, employment preparation, volunteering, and leisure and wellness. The program offers both a classroom and community-based component with the classroom element being strongly tied to what the students experience while in the community. For example, the students may have a goal of accessing Portland's public transportation system, the Metro. The classroom time for this lesson is spent researching the public bus system and how to access it with the ultimate goal of putting that knowledge into practice by budgeting the money

necessary to ride the bus, determining the time and location to get on and off the bus and actually taking the bus to and from a pre-determined location.

Other relevant curriculum topics to incorporate include: money management, personal and emotional health, safety, household responsibilities, decision making, nutrition and advocacy. All of the curriculum topics are strongly linked to the experiences that the students have while out in the community as well as the goals within their Individual Education Plan. The curriculum has been developed by STRIVE and approved by those school districts that participated in the first year of the program.

Students are recommended for the TOPS program through the IEP process after a potential student has visited the program and an informal assessment has occurred. The overarching goal for students is to prepare them to be successful in an adult program once they have concluded their public education. Adult programming is typically a 1:3 staff to student ratio.

Program Outcomes:

- Participating students will be provided experiences with community access such as utilizing public transportation and community navigational skills in greater Portland.
- Participating students will expand their social interactions in new environments.
- Participating students will have related educational opportunities in order to expand their life skills to assist them in becoming as independent as possible.
- Participating students will be provided with opportunities to interact with other peers and professionals across district lines.
- Participating students will have an opportunity to gain new skills as well as generalize the skills they have acquired during their high school career to new people and situations.
- The program will provide a more seamless transition into the opportunities and support offered through adult services.

Staffing:

Those who staff the program will be PSL employees. There is one certified special education teacher who serves as the lead teacher and at least one Ed Tech III. Additional support staff will be hired as necessary. The lead teacher is hired upon signed contracts that ensure adequate student participation in order to sustain the program. Each district determines if additional staff support is needed for each student and provides it, if necessary, with the goal of fading school staff support for students in order to more accurately reflect what is typically available through adult services. Additionally, any related services (OT, PT, etc.) that are required for students will be provided by individual school districts.

Transportation:

Transportation to and from the proposed program is the responsibility of the participating school districts. Transportation during the program is arranged by PSL/STRIVE using public transportation whenever possible.

Program Oversight and Management:

Each participating school district will develop a contract with STRIVE that will identify the number of students and frequency of attendance (1/2 day, full day, number of times per week) in the program for the school year. Each school district will identify an administrator who will act as the key contact person for STRIVE. Betsy Morrison, Program Director for STRIVE, will serve as the PSL/STRIVE administrator for the program.

PSL/STRIVE hires and supervise the staff. PSL/STRIVE provides oversight for the program to ensure that the program meets the criteria set forth in the contracts developed with each school district. PSL provides financial management of the program and provides each participating school district with a monthly invoice for services delivered or as agreed upon in the contract.

Budget:

The budget is based on a combination of full and part-time students and includes one full-time, certified special education teacher and one full-time support staff. The budget has been developed based on the attendance of minimally 2 students participating for a full day 5 days a week and 11 students participating at least 1/2 day each for 5 days per week. Based on the aforementioned student participation level, the rate for half-day participation five days a week would be \$7,004 annually, per student, and the full-day rate would be \$12,364 annually, per student. STRIVE needs to a firm commitment from schools regarding minimum student participation, as identified through the special education directors for the districts, in order to hire qualified staff and move forward with program implementation.

Staffing will be adjusted depending on the commitment from the participating schools districts regarding the number of students who will attend with the possibility of adjusting the rate if more students participate collectively from the districts. As one of the goals of the program is to decrease the 1:1 support provided by the school district to certain students, the district may realize some cost savings as Ed Tech. staff could be reassigned to other students back at the sending school when the support at the TOPS program is no longer necessary.

Conclusion:

With the expertise and experience that STRIVE offers as well as the proven ability to develop and deliver high quality and nationally recognized programming, PSL/STRIVE is well qualified to work with area school districts to implement a program and services to meet the needs of students who will have been in their 13th or 14th years of public education. Because PSL also offers programs for adults, we have the ability to work with students in helping them to best prepare for whatever their post high school goals might be including post-secondary education, employment or participation in a community support program.

Respectfully submitted:

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