

**Supplemental Information for**  
**North Metro Community Services**  
**Application for Designation as a Community Centered Board**

**Summary of the agency's administrative or case management accomplishments:**

1. After hiring a new case management director we have restructured that entire department to make it more efficient and hopefully more user friendly for the people we support and their families. This has involved cross training so that individual case managers aren't strictly limited to providing case management for a specific waiver. This gives all of our case managers basic competency in all of the waivers, which gives them a broader perspective, makes coverage easier and prepares them for a future where we may be required to serve people on multiple waivers.
2. As part of our restructuring of case management our Associate Directors no longer carry permanent caseloads. This frees them up to do more supervision and to be more available to the people they supervise. It also makes them available to step in and do case management for an individual who may be in crisis or who is notoriously difficult to work with. We also created the position of lead case managers and have one of these on every team. These are more experienced case managers who can assist their co-workers with training and difficult cases.
3. A full-time trainer has been added to our case management department. This individual is tasked with training new case managers on all of the ins and outs of our system. This can cover anything from IT training to helping new case managers learn how to conduct productive meetings. The trainer we hired is a former case manager who is also trained to complete SIS evaluations. This practical experience has been critical to the success of the position.
4. Around January 1, 2018 we adopted policies which allow our case managers to work up to half of their time outside of the office via telecommuting. Our case managers have wanted this additional flexibility for some time and we are hopeful that by providing the opportunity to work half of their hours outside of the office it will help reduce our turnover.
5. Our Case Managers continue to enroll new people into the SLS waiver and have been revisiting people who have either turned down a resource in the past or failed to respond when a resource was offered. We want to insure that anyone in Adams County who needs services has them
6. Our Early Intervention Case Managers continue to deal with an astounding level of growth in that program.
7. North Metro implemented a new on-line training platform, Relias. This system is now used to provide the majority of training for our case managers, other staff and host home providers. This system is far more efficient than scheduling "live" classes that people may not be able to

attend. This system has also made it easier for us to track training by employee so that all training and refresher classes are completed in a timely fashion.

8. North Metro has become more involved in the Early Childhood Partnership of Adams County. One of our Department Directors is an officer with that group and another case management employee is on their board of directors. This involvement has helped us stay better connected to the needs of our community when it comes to early education and school readiness for all children including those with IDD.
9. Our Executive Director serves as the Chairman of the Government Relations Committee at Alliance, the state-wide organization that represents most Community Centered Boards and Program Approved Service Agencies that Offer services to people with IDD. This involvement helps keep our agency informed regarding developments at the State and National level and gives us an opportunity to be heard on these issues.
10. We've worked closely with local law enforcement and Adams County Adult Protective Services to make sure that all incidents involving the people we serve are investigated properly and referred to law enforcement and/or APS as appropriate. We have established quarterly meetings with APS to make sure we are coordinating our investigations and our investigator also attends monthly meetings with local law enforcement where he can check in with them on this issue. We have ended up playing a significant role in making sure that APS is informed of all law enforcement investigations since that loop was not always being closed.

#### **Summary of the needs of eligible persons in our area and a plan to address those needs:**

1. **Affordable housing** is a huge issue for the people we serve. The most glaring area of need is for affordable apartments. Denver area apartment rents have risen at rates that rival any other region of the nation. At this point is difficult to find a one-bedroom apartment in Adams County that rents for less than \$900 per month. When you consider that the people we serve receive less than \$700 a month for room and board it's obvious that most are priced out of the market. This is not only a problem for the people but also for staff and potential host home providers.

**Plan to address:** Affordable housing is an issue that no single action or community can address on its own. Regardless, we are taking a variety of steps to do what we can to help deal with this issue. We are working with individuals receiving services to make sure they are on the waitlist for section 8 housing vouchers if applicable. We are in discussions with our local housing authority to see if they are joint projects we can work on together. We have also reached out to developers of multi-family housing to see if there are partnership opportunities. North Metro owns an 8 acre parcel in Brighton, Colorado and is in discussions with a developer there regarding a joint venture where we put up land for an apartment development in return for rent-controlled units that could be rented by people in services or our employees. We are not going to make housing more affordable in our area but we may be able to create some affordable housing on our own.

2. **Providing more Community employment** for the people we serve is always both a priority and a problem. Though the job market is good the increasing minimum wage makes many employers

reluctant to hire the people we support. Ironically increasing wages also effectively limits the amount of hours the people we serve can work. This too can make them less desirable employees than those who can work more hours and overtime. We are also continuing to experience issues with DVR and helping people through their system to get the support they need to find employment and keep it.

**Plan to Address:** We are working on employment issues from a number of fronts. Our Day Services Director has become a member of Alliance's employment subcommittee. This committee is working with the CDOL and DVR to insure that their rules and regulations take into consideration the needs of the population we serve. Last year this committee worked successfully with the CDOL regarding rules concerning agency owned businesses that employ people with IDD. We are also trying to help service agencies in our area strengthen and expand their employment services. This past January we sold 2 vans to a PASA that is expanding their employment services at well below market price to help them get this effort started. Our own employment service agency is working to move away from agency supported employment to move more people into community employment.

3. **Low rates for some Supported Living Services** keep people from getting the services they need. This is especially true with Home Maker services and Community Connections. Though we have seen a lot of growth in the number of PASAs offering SLS services most of them do not respond when people are looking for services that are poorly funded. We see this more often when people have a SIS tier of level 3 or below. In many cases North Metro's own SLS agency will try to provide these services but our ability to do this is limited.

**Plan to Address:** The only real answer to this problem is to get rates increased to a level where they will make it feasible for PASAs to offer these services. We have been working hard in the current legislative session to increase rates for most IDD waivers. If that additional funding is approved it will allow PASAs to cover their staffing costs to provide these services. Since staff costs drive the cost of services this could make a significant difference in the availability of these services. Our Executive Director is the chair of the Alliance Government Relations Committee and is heavily involved in this effort.

4. **Lack of in-patient mental health facilities** is an issue that continues to plague the people we serve. This is a need for a very small number of people each year but when it is needed the need is critical. The lack of such facilities inhibits PASAs from being willing to serve individuals with a history of serious mental health issues. If PASAs know that they will have access to in-patient care when the people they serve need it they are much more likely to accept the challenge of serving someone with a serious mental illness. This reduces are ability to get some people out of institutions and back in the community.

**Plan to Address:** This is a problem that exists on a statewide basis and is consequently very difficult to tackle on a local level. We have appreciated the help of the teams from the Regional Centers who have consulted with us regarding people who have transitioned from that setting

and their help to avoid someone needing Regional Center placement. However sometimes people need a level of support that isn't available in the community and currently no one outside of the Regional Centers offer that help.

5. **Transportation continues to be an issue** for the people we serve. Much of our service area is on the outskirts of the more urban core of the Denver area. This means that RTD routes are sparse and do not serve all areas. Many of the people we serve rely on Access-a-Ride however Access-a-Ride pick up is limited to within a half mile of RTD routes so that service is also not universally available.

**Plan to Address:** We continue to work with RTD and lobby for new routes in our area that will allow the people we serve access to their community. This is not always easy because RTD can only justify routes as the population and demand warrant. We have also been involved in efforts sponsored by Adams County Government to look at how we can best meet the needs of all people who rely on public transportation.

#### **Summary of local area issues impacting the service area and a plan to address those issues.**

1. **Explosive Growth in the Early Intervention Program:** The demand for Early Intervention services in Adams County is currently growing at an annual rate of about 20% a year. This has made it difficult to keep up with enrollments and to meet the Federal Guidelines in terms of providing timely services. This comes at a bad time in that we have seen cuts in our EI funding and last year about \$100,000 was withheld from us for services that had been provided and paid for (it now looks like we may be paid for the services sometime after July 1, 2018, over a year late). It is very difficult to operate this program effectively when we cannot be certain that we will be paid for the services provided.

To keep up with the demand North Metro will have to add staff and will also have to lease additional space to accommodate them. We have already acquired additional space that is only a few doors away from our current EI offices. We will also be watching the evaluation studies that have been funded for next year. Originally we expected to be tasked with the responsibility for getting these evaluations completed but now the State is going to essentially be running two pilots with different approaches to see what makes the most sense for evaluations. The EI program is critical for Adams County and we are committed to making sure it works as efficiently as possible for our citizens.

2. **Closure of El Pueblo RCCF:** This past fall the State unexpectedly closed the El Pueblo RCCF that provided services to youth with severe behavioral needs. This decision was pushed forward without adequate planning and many of the former residents of that facility ended up in emergency rooms for the lack of anywhere else to go; two of these children ended up in ERs in Adams County. Our Case Management Director worked together with many of the people

involved in this situation and eventually the group was able to place one of the children whose was very close to 18 years of age in one of the Regional Centers. The other child was placed out of state at great cost to the Adams County Department of Human Services. After this incident we met with representatives of Adams County Human Services to discuss the possibility of opening a RCCF though we eventually determined that we didn't have the experience or funding to pursue this option.

North Metro has been in touch with our fellow CCB, Developmental Pathways, who is currently opening a RCCF in Arapahoe County. This facility is being funded in part through the large amount of mill levy funding that Developmental Pathways receives. We would like to see how this program works out for Developmental Pathways before we explore this option further. We will also be watching the RCCF pilots that were funded recently by the JBC to see if this offers any opportunities for North Metro and the area we serve.

3. The lack of Affordable Housing is becoming a problem at many levels. As referenced earlier the cost of rent has stymied the growth of our apartment program for people we serve. This is also a huge issue for our staff. North Metro's starting wage for Direct Service Professionals is currently \$13 an hour, which means that one of those employees takes home about \$1500 a month. With average one-bedroom rents over \$1000 a month you can see that it is pretty much impossible for someone to live on that wage alone. This is also becoming an issue for potential host home providers. Rents for houses are \$2000 a month and up and with the average price for a home nearing \$300,000 the cost of a down payment can be prohibitive. Steps that North Metro is taking in this regard are outlined above. We are also working at the State and County level to see what other opportunities exist to address this problem more globally.
4. Compliance with the new setting rules is a bit of a struggle for most of the Program Approved Service Agencies in our area. Our Case Management Department is trying to help PASAs navigate the new rules and make changes at many levels so that they can come into compliance. One of the things we have worked on and made available state-wide through Alliance is a lease template for both host homes and group homes. This effort was delayed last year because a statutory change was necessary before such leases could be effective in Colorado. We also worked on the bill that made that change and it was recently signed by the Governor so now we can get moving on leases again. Obviously there are still a lot of questions regarding the settings rules and we will continue to work through those with PASAs.
5. Conflict Free Case Management continues to be something of a puzzle. We currently plan to offer both services and CM but not to the same people. However the new Case Manager and Case Management Agency qualifications raise some serious questions about that approach. We are already experiencing significant turnover among our CMs and if the new CM qualifications aren't changed from the draft these positions are going to be even more difficult to fill. In addition the requirement that a CMA offer CM for all waivers raises a number of issues. We received support from our county commissioners from a mill levy assessed to help people with

developmental disabilities; how will we segregate that funding if people have mixed caseloads? All of this raises questions about the long-term viability of providing CM. Regardless we will provide CM for as long as people in Adams County need it and lack other viable options.

6. Growth in Adams County continues to present challenges for North Metro. Adams County is one of the fastest growing counties in the State if not the nation. This is putting pressure on us to insure that people who are eligible and in need of services are identified and enrolled as quickly as possible. There are also issues with finding PASAs willing to serve the less densely populated areas of the county like Bennet and Strasburg. We participate in annual resource fairs in that area and have helped people find individual supports within their community but so far we haven't successfully found PASAs that want to serve that area. Even though the area is growing it still lacks the "critical mass" of people needing services that would make it practical for a PASA to offer services there.

#### **Summary of How Public Input was obtained/sought for the update of the Annual Plan:**

We solicit input for our annual plan and updates through our annual meeting. At that meeting we make copies of the CCB Designation materials and the Annual Plan Update available and invite input at the meeting or by contacting us later. We offer opportunities for public comment at every board meeting and via our website. We reach out to various stakeholders such as the ARC of Adams County, the local school districts, Adams County Department of Human Services and the County Commissioners for their input as well.

It has been difficult in recent years to generate a lot of community participation in the annual plan/update process. The families that are more knowledgeable and involved are far more concerned about CFCM and what that will mean for them and their family members than they are the annual planning process. We are looking into other options to generate more participation including electronic town hall-style meetings.