

Home Service Directors Case Study - Emma Stokes

Working in the admissions office at The Center for Discovery, I receive a large volume of phone inquiries from families looking for placement for their loved ones. These families are often in crisis and it is a very emotional phone call for them to make. For school-age children, I can offer a clear path through the educational system. For parents of adult children, the course is not as easy, and the answer is often not what they want to hear. They are hoping we have the perfect opening for their child. To hear that they must go through a government agency, and we have no openings, is disheartening at best. They are quickly discovering that after school, there are no readily accessible guides to assist families in navigating the various OPWDD processes, and families are at a loss for how to proceed. They may have spoken to other agencies who painted a bleak picture about what services are available and the likelihood of their child being able to access them.

The Home Service Director position is invaluable to these families, calling for help, not knowing where to turn. Although our adult programs are always at capacity, the phone call never ends there. I ensure that the parent hangs up the phone feeling equipped with resources and bolstered with confidence that they can, and they are advocating for their child in the right way.

Pam was one such mom who called in December 2018 very much in crisis with her son Josh. Josh had completed 8 years of residential schooling and had been doing so well that mom brought him home. She believed that she was doing the right thing, only to find out, when his behavior and skills regressed at home, that it was almost impossible for a 21-year-old to return to the residential system. Schools wouldn't look at him because of his age, and as a child at home, he was lower on the priority list for adult agencies than he would have been if he had never left school. Pam was filled with remorse that she had made the wrong choices for Josh and that her whole family was suffering for it. Josh had acted out aggressively towards her and her daughter, and was unable to leave the house, severely restricting the activities of everyone in the family.



I'm still in contact with Pam and get regular updates on their progress. Pam said in a recent email: "Your encouragement has been a huge blessing. I honestly did not know how to address several key subjects Josh faces. I am a stronger advocate because of your assistance and download of experience".

Because of my guidance, they have gotten Josh on both the state and regional residential opportunities lists. They are now working with the hard to place unit and have gotten Josh out of the house to get the medical care he needed.

