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# **2017 Annual Report Intellectual and Developmental Disability Services Supported by Denver Mill Levy Funding**

*Working Together for Denver*

January 1, 2017 – December 31, 2017  
Amended March 5, 2018

# Introduction

Rocky Mountain Human Services (RMHS) is a non-profit human service organization that provides services to more than 4,500 individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities (I/DD) annually. We are known as a community centered board, which acts as a local hub and resource for individuals with I/DD and their families who need assistance in Denver. We serve the community through providing case management and direct services to individuals and families with Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities. Our staff conduct more than 13,000 visits in the Denver community annually, and ensures that individuals with I/DD have their needs met.

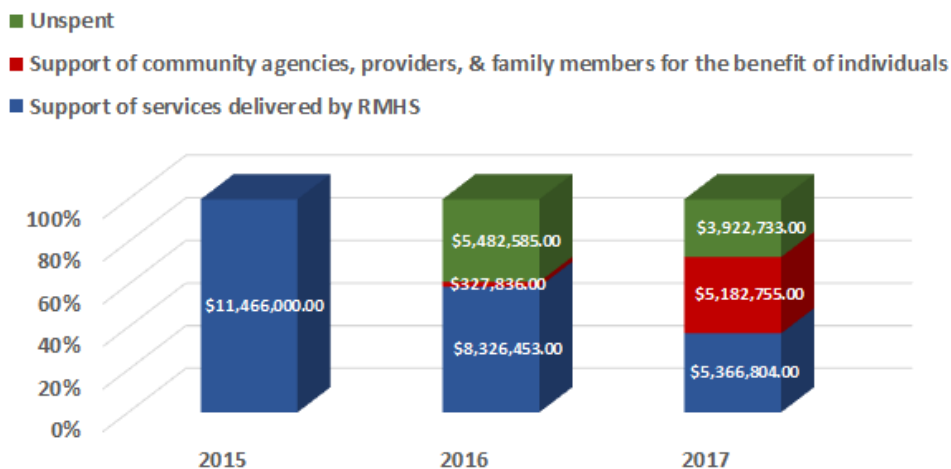
Through the generosity of Denver voters in 2003, a property tax was approved to benefit Denver residents with intellectual or developmental disabilities. Denver residents can access programs and services and receive funds to pay for individualized services and resources not available from Medicaid or other funding sources. 2017 has been a monumental year for RMHS in transforming how mill levy dollars are used to enhance services for people with intellectual or developmental disabilities. In all 2017 mill levy reports, RMHS is highlighting its efforts to design and implement an effective program to meet Denver residents' needs. We embarked upon this year with two primary goals:

1. **Increase access to services**
2. **Increase flexible service options to address individualized needs through a variety of providers**

## Goal 1: Increase access to services

Denver Department of Human Services administers oversight of the mill levy dollars and maintains a contract with RMHS for programs and services to support the community. Historically, mill levy funds had been utilized to support the community centered board operations. For the past two years RMHS has radically changed its mill levy program so that all individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities living in Denver have access to mill levy funded services. This resulted in increased funds going into the community to support individuals and family members, and to support existing providers and new program development. Evidence of this transformation is displayed in Graph 1 below.

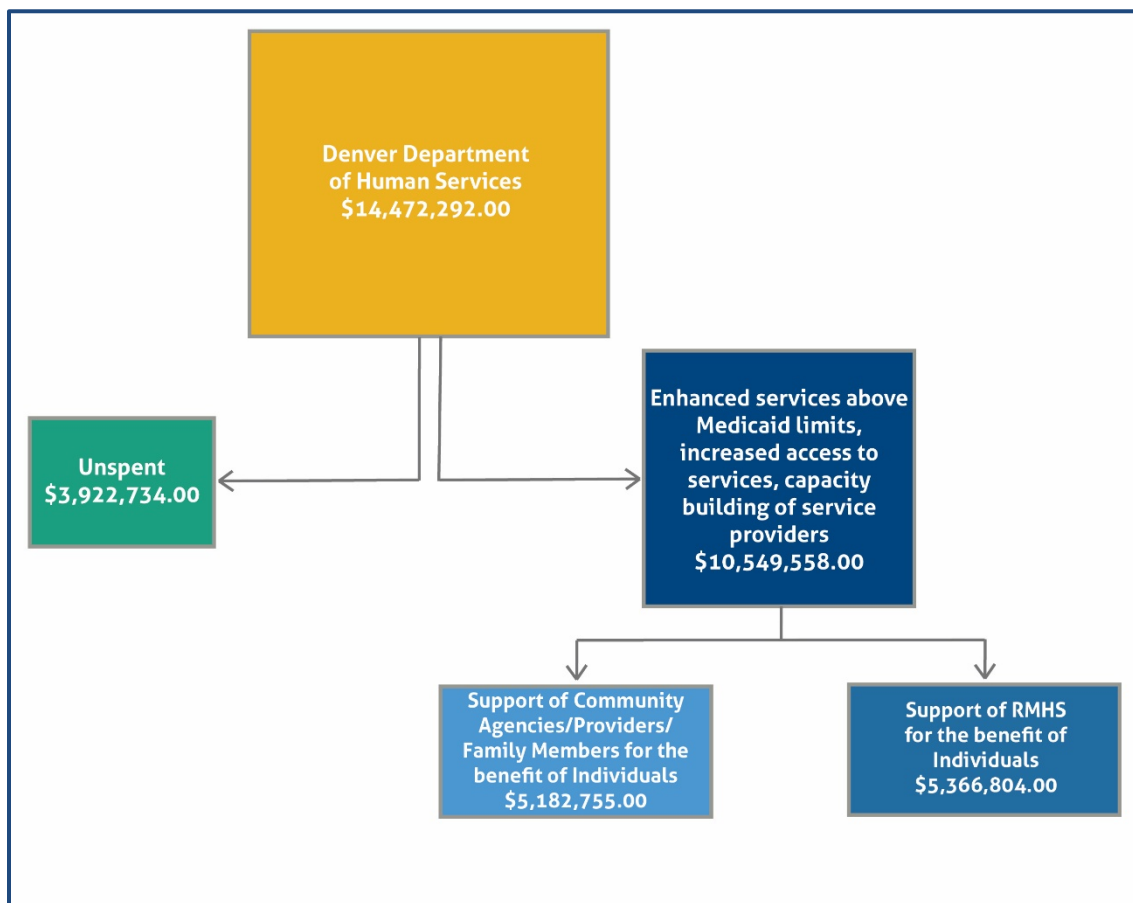
### Graph 1: Mill levy history



RMHS has achieved this transformation through a variety of means. First, we listened. We heard from stakeholders about needs in the community and oriented our efforts toward them. Second, we developed processes and infrastructure to simultaneously meet the needs of individuals and the provider community. Next, we conducted outreach and information sharing through our website, public meetings, and 1:1 meetings to get the word out about this resource. Through these efforts we provided enhanced services to 4,584 unduplicated Denver residents, while freeing funds that allow Denver Department of Human Services to further serve Denver residents with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

In 2017, the total mill levy contract value was approximately \$14,500,000. Of this amount, more than 73% was spent for enhanced services to the I/DD community, with 37% of funds supporting services delivered through RMHS, 36% of funds to community agencies, providers, and family members for the benefit of individuals, and nearly 27% remained unspent to be used by Denver Department of Human Services for future endeavors. Graph 2 provides a high-level summary of how mill levy dollars were utilized in 2017.

**Graph 2: 2017 Mill levy summary**



In 2017, \$10,549,556.00 in mill levy dollars was spent in the community for 4,584 unduplicated individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities. These dollars supported 1,080 agencies/providers/family members who provided services and supports benefitting individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities.

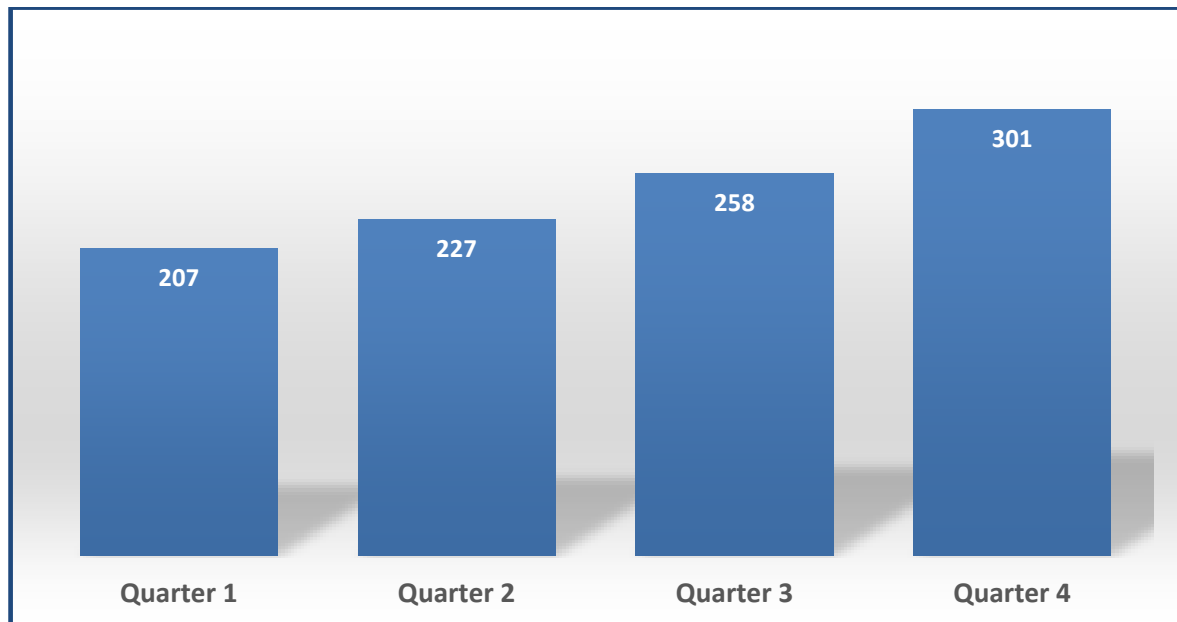
Denver mill levy dollars provide enhanced services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. These enhanced services are provided through community organizations and agencies. In this way, both individuals and the provider community supporting individuals with I/DD benefit from mill levy support. RMHS recognizes the importance of monitoring programmatic intent and outcomes for the success of the program's

development, and tracks mill levy dollars by how they were originally accessed: by an individual or by an agency. Ultimately, it is the individual with intellectual or developmental disability who benefits from enhanced services.

## Individual Requests

Residents of Denver with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities have two ways to access mill levy funds. They can either contact their RMHS Service Coordinator or submit a request directly through the RMHS website. **In 2017, RMHS received 2,985 individual requests for mill levy funding from 1,149 individuals. Approved requests totaled more than \$1.8 million dollars.** The average number of requests received per month increased more than 45% throughout the year as shown in Graph 3:

Graph 3: 2017 average numbers of individual requests per month



Individual requests have resulted in funding for diverse needs. Examples of these are:

- To pay a week's motel costs for a vulnerable adult who would otherwise be homeless, while enrolling in services
- To fund a literacy support camp for a teen struggling with reading comprehension
- To pay the portion of an adult's dental bill denied by Medicaid
- To install a needed walk-in tub when no additional funding was available
- To purchase sensory equipment recommended by a child's occupational therapist that was not covered by insurance

Individuals in Denver are eligible for mill levy services regardless of current case management agency. Those not currently served by RMHS can request access to mill levy-funded services and supports through our website at <https://www.rmhumanservices.org/ml>. On average, an RMHS Service Coordinator meets four times a year with individuals who utilize RMHS for their case management services. The Service Coordinator works with the client to identify her or his needs, which includes services or resources not available from Medicaid or other funding sources. These needs are documented on an individualized service plan, and mill levy funds are then utilized to pay for identified services other funding sources do not support. When an individual submits a

request directly through the RMHS website, staff reviews the request in accordance with the contract to ensure appropriateness to an individual's needs and lack of availability of other resources before the facilitation of any payment.

An overwhelming majority of requests were approved in 2017. Of the 2,985 requests received from individuals with I/DD, their families or providers, including requests received for Denver residents served by other community centered boards, 2,960 were approved and 25 were denied. The reasons for denial include:

- Sixteen requests (64%) were met with another funding source
- Six requests (24%) were for an unallowable expense (legal fees, capital purchase)
- Three individuals (12%) were not Denver residents

RMHS considers these denial decisions to be resolved. There were no disputes between RMHS and recipients of services. In all denials, RMHS provided explanation to the individual and/or their family the reason for the denial. In the majority (64%) of situations, RMHS staff could meet the individual's needs by accessing other funding sources. When requests were not approved due to mill levy contract prohibitions, RMHS provided information and referrals to other community resources, when appropriate. Individuals impacted by geographic boundaries were encouraged to contact county officials regarding mill levy availability in their county of residence.

## **Goal 2: Increase flexible service options to address individualized needs through a variety of providers**

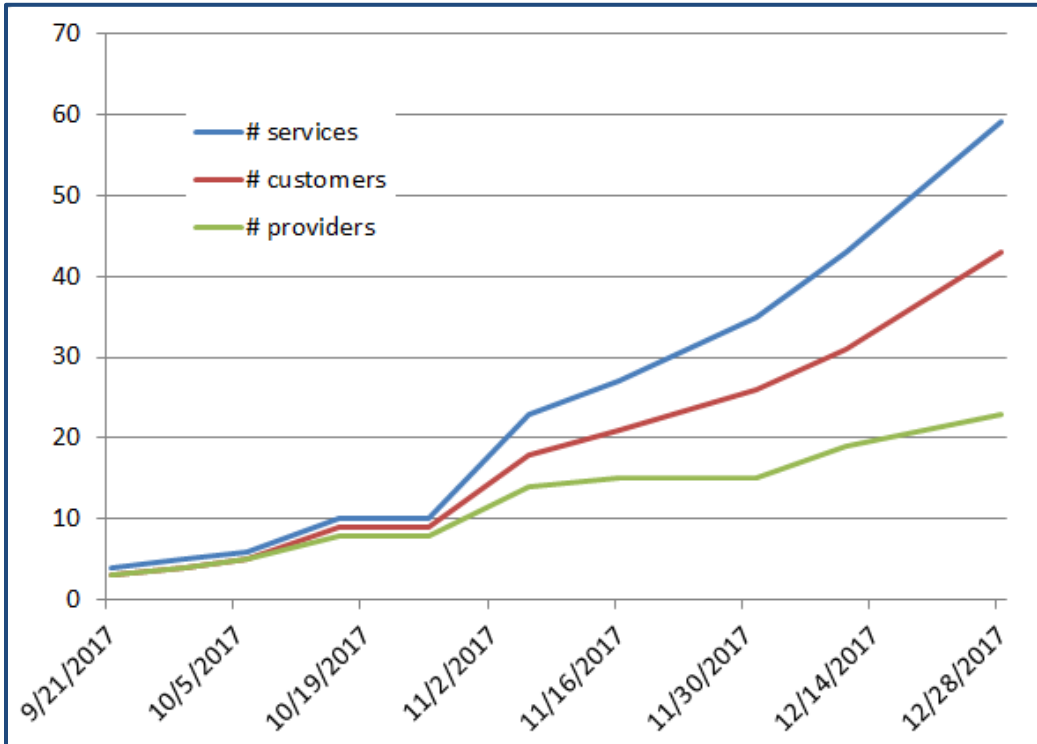
The individual requests component of mill levy funds will continue to expand significantly. As Service Coordinators meet with individuals to identify needs, individualized service plans are developed that access Medicaid and other funding sources, including mill levy funds. When appropriate, payment for ongoing services is enabled via a contract between RMHS and the individual's provider of choice. This enables RMHS to communicate to the provider the expectations for performance and accountability regarding the use of mill levy funds. Additionally, the service plan is used by RMHS service coordination staff to ensure the individual's needs are being met and that there is continued satisfaction with the content and quality of services provided.

As RMHS was redesigning its infrastructure and operations to transform to this person-centered approach in 2017, it began implementing the individualized mill levy service plan model in August of 2017. RMHS's goal is for every Denver resident enrolled in a Medicaid Waiver program<sup>1</sup> to have a mill levy service plan completed as those planning meetings occur over the course of the next year. Evidence of the growth of this program is highlighted in Graphs 4 and 5 below.

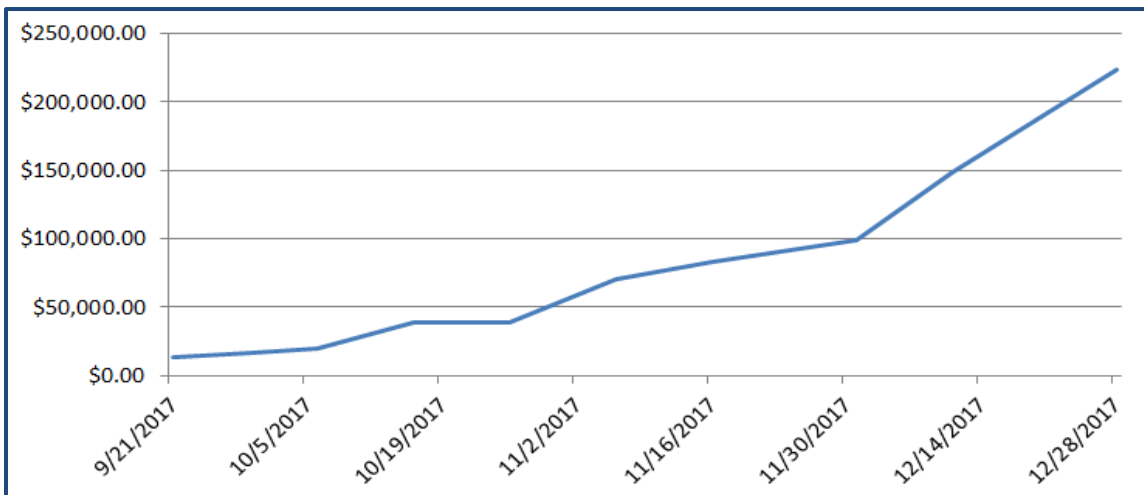
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<sup>1</sup> Individuals receiving services through Early Intervention will also have mill levy service plans developed beginning in early 2018. For more information, see page 20.

Graph 4: Implementation of mill levy-funded services as identified in individualized service plans (Sept – Dec 2017)



Graph 5: Authorized services on individualized service plans by dollar amount (Sept – Dec 2017)



# Community Agency Requests

Approximately 36% of 2017’s Denver mill levy funding supports community agencies in developing, implementing and managing new projects and services. **In 2017, RMHS received 30 proposals for mill levy funding**, 26 of which were approved (one denied and 3 under review as of 12/31/17) for a **total of more than \$2.8 million dollars**.

In addition to the proposals mentioned above, agencies were also invited to contract with RMHS to provide services through the individualized mill levy service plan process described on page 5. In total, RMHS established contracts with **63 community agencies** to increase capacity and access of services to Denver residents with I/DD.

Table 1: 2017 Implemented mill levy projects

Implemented Projects	Project Purpose & Service Types	Total 2017 Spending	Total Individuals Served	Average dollars per person
<b>Basic Needs/Environmental Supports</b>				
<b>Support Management dba Community Intersections</b>	<i>Provided Hoyer lifts and changing tables for the men’s and women’s restrooms in day program facility to enable agency to expand services to individuals who need this support</i>	\$5,373	8	\$672
<b>Homelessness Project (CFPD)</b>	<i>Outreach to homeless individuals who are diagnosed with or have indications of I/DD who need assistance connecting with I/DD services and other benefits</i>	\$145,627	35	\$4,161
<b>Behavioral/Mental Health</b>				
<b>ASPEN Program (Tennyson Center for Children)</b>	<i>Staff providing services to students in ASPEN program, behavioral supports for I/DD youth while providing educational services. Amount spent per student will decrease as enrollment increases</i>	\$118,695	2	\$59,348
<b>Laradon Expansion of Behavioral Services</b>	<i>Provision of behavioral services and supports beyond waiver defined services, including crisis support, customer-specific trainings, and consultation and training to external systems</i>	\$55,148	22	\$2,507

<b>Implemented Projects</b>	<b>Project Purpose &amp; Service Types</b>	<b>2017 Actual Spending</b>	<b>Total Individuals Served</b>	<b>Average dollars per person/service</b>
<i>Client Education/Increasing Independence</i>				
<b>Assistive Technology (AbleLink)</b>	<i>Supports long-term independence skill building for safe access to communities for work and recreation</i>	\$216,972	168	\$1,292
<b>Firefly Autism Scholarships</b>	<i>Facility school scholarships for youth with Autism, organizational web development</i>	\$34,758	8	\$4,345
<b>Guided by Humanity Yoga</b>	<i>Enhances the quality of life by providing inclusive, accessible yoga classes within the community</i>	\$23,701	110	\$215
<b>Resource Ability (Financial Health Institute)</b>	<i>Provides a social learning environment to strengthen financial health and advance quality of life for people with I/DD and their support systems</i>	\$279,992	439	\$638
<b>Self-Employment Education (Celebrate EDU)</b>	<i>Teaches the benefits of entrepreneurial education</i>	\$147,990	187	\$791
<b>T.A.C.T.</b>	<i>Provides trade and technical skills to children &amp; young adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder</i>	\$499,629	18	\$27,757
<b>Possibility Pool Collaborative Jobs Bank</b>	<i>Supported employment online jobs bank with mobile staff to engage clients and help them meet their employment goals</i>	\$329,004	194	\$1,696
<i>Social/Recreational</i>				
<b>Arts &amp; Community Exploration - ACE (Jewish Family Services)</b>	<i>Individuals enjoy vibrant and creative art projects, group and individual music therapy, cultural and holiday explorations and recreation</i>	\$36,126	42	\$860
<b>Community Events &amp; Adventures (Active Community Access)</b>	<i>Provides community integrated evening and Saturday activities</i>	\$60,352	33	\$1,829



<b>Implemented Projects</b>	<b>Project Purpose &amp; Service Types</b>	<b>2017 Actual Spending</b>	<b>Total # Individuals Served</b>	<b>Average dollars per person</b>
<b>Project World (Activity Options)</b>	<i>Community activities and overnight travel opportunities</i>	\$172,863	657	\$263
<b>Social Inclusion (Connect Us)</b>	<i>Provides opportunities for families and youth for social connections through after school social groups, inclusive recess facilitation, and parent support groups</i>	\$81,915	77	\$1,064
<b>StellarCare Vacations</b>	<i>Provides opportunity for travel to enhance personal growth, reunite family members and support social skill development</i>	\$118,513	12	\$9,876
<b>The Wayfaring Band</b>	<i>Multi-day trips that focus on getting participants off the beaten path to increase independence and foster community connections</i>	\$117,640	17	\$6,920

## *Training and Support*

<b>Laradon Early Intervention Family Navigator</b>	<i>1. EI Play &amp; Learn Group 2. EI Parent Support Group</i>	\$40,000	165	\$242
<b>ARC of Aurora, Special Olympics, El Grupo Vida</b>	<i>Funding was provided for multiple conferences and training opportunities for individuals with I/DD, families, and caregivers</i>	\$15,000	50	\$300

Community agencies can request access to mill levy funding by completing an application on the RMHS website at: <https://www.rmhumanservices.org/community-partners>, or can be identified through an individual's service planning process to provide services beyond what is available through Medicaid or other primary funders. Every community agency's proposal is evaluated by Mill Levy Management staff in accordance with the contract with DDHS before proposals are approved, contracts are signed, and any payment is made. There are multiple required components of a proposal for mill levy funds, including:

- Proposed program serves Denver residents with I/DD in a way that addresses a clear need in the community
- Proposed program's Need Statement is clear—the proposed program and its intent is fully understood
- Proposed program's goals align with one or more of the seven identified goal areas
- Proposal lists clear, realistic, measurable objectives that address an identified community need directly impacting Denver's Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities community
- Proposal describes implementation steps
- Proposal clearly identifies how the items in the budget will be used to further the project goals

- Proposal includes distinct means to evaluate the difference between outputs and outcomes, to measure and demonstrate the effectiveness of funded projects

In 2017 RMHS utilized a non-competitive process for approving community agency requests. Community agency proposals were approved once their program proposal adequately addressed the seven components identified above. Prior to contract execution, RMHS mill levy staff worked with each community agency on its proposal to a) ensure outcomes were defined, b) a proposal's model of service delivery was sound, c) contract amounts were appropriate, and d) deliverables were clearly defined. Mill levy staff also worked with each community agency on an ongoing basis to conduct outreach, resolve issues and ensure that information reporting was timely and accurate. In 2017 only one agency project proposal was denied because it did not describe how the project would directly benefit Denver residents with I/DD and did not articulate a clear implementation process.

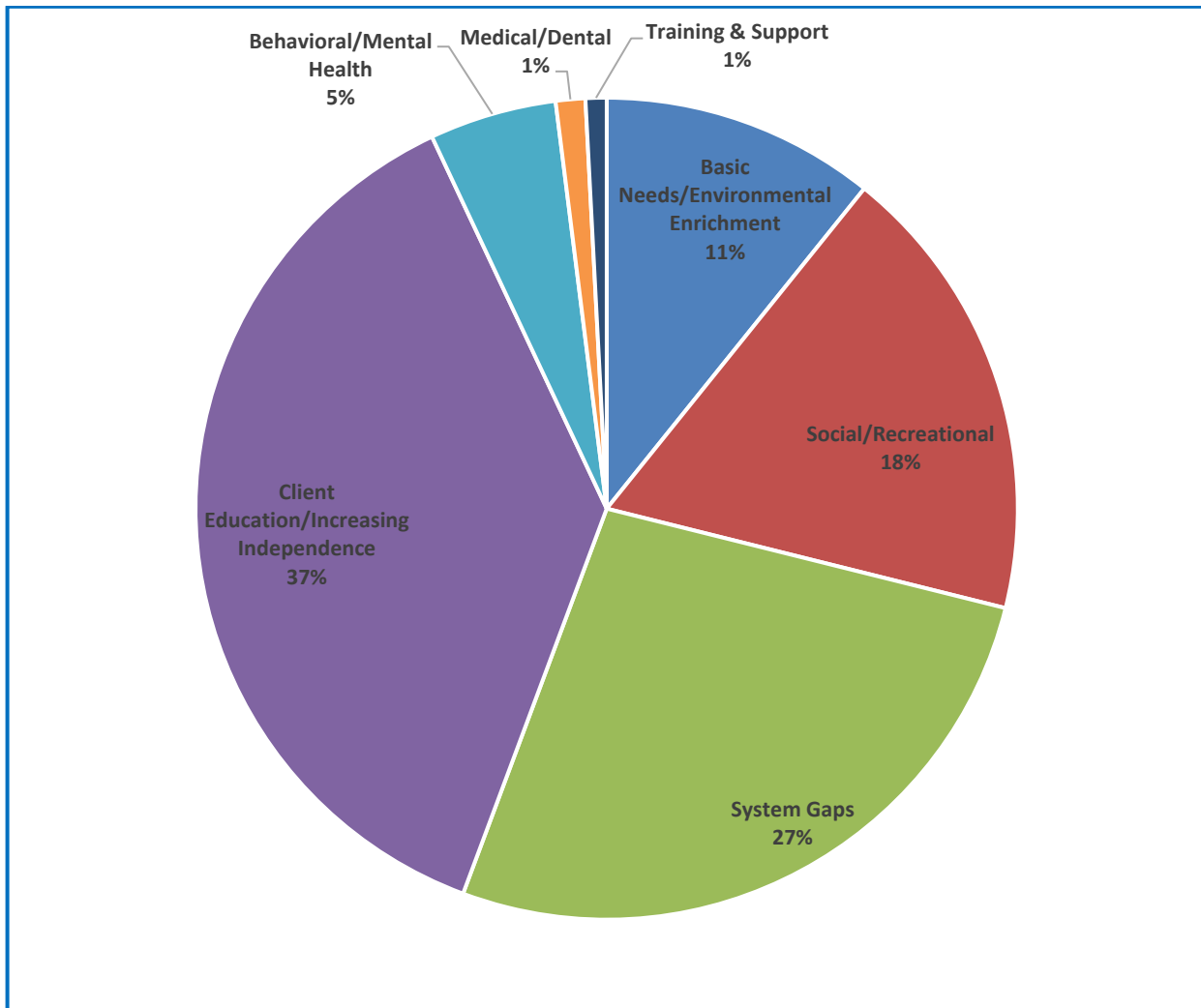
As a result of the mill levy funded new programs and services implemented in 2017, the services provided by community agencies are expanding to meet the holistic needs of Denver residents with I/DD. Mill levy funding has directly contributed to providing funding to established providers for enhanced services while also building the capacity of service agencies in Denver to meet this wide variety of needs.

## Services sought through mill levy

Our stakeholders and Community Advisory Council members facilitated RMHS' establishment of seven priority areas Mill levy funding is intended to address. As RMHS has approved mill levy funding to community agencies, providers, family members for the benefit of individuals with I/DD, 100% of approvals have met the definition of one or more of the following priority areas.

1. **Basic Needs/Environmental Supports:** Meeting individual's/family's needs such as housing, transportation, wheelchair accessibility, and furniture or clothing expenses.
2. **Behavioral/Mental health:** Improving individuals' access to quality supports.
3. **Client Education and Increasing Independence:** Providing opportunities for individuals to learn, grow and increase self-determination over their lives.
4. **Medical/Dental:** Addressing specialized needs.
5. **Social/Recreational:** Increasing opportunities and access.
6. **Training and Support:** Providing services to assist caregivers, providers, families, and the general public.
7. **System Gaps within the I/DD system and across other systems:** Addressing areas such as the transition out of foster care, provision of music therapy, testing for I/DD eligibility, and services beyond those covered by Medicaid or other funders. A primary service in this priority area is respite care.

Graph 6: 2017 mill levy distribution of funds to community by priority area percentage



2017 was a learning experience for RMHS with mill levy funding going into the community to address a wide variety of needs. Several priorities including medical/dental, behavioral and mental health and training and support needs turned out not to be as sought after as we had originally believed. One explanation is that a large percentage of individuals have Medicaid insurance coverage for these services.

Conversely, because Medicaid coverage inherently has limits on the amount of services available to support the community living needs of individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities, mill levy funds have proven an incredible resource to provide enhanced services and supports. Of the approximately \$5.2 million dollars spent in 2017, highlights include:

- 37% of funds spent on professional services such as scholarships to attend training program (client education/increasing independence)
- 27% of funds spent on providing respite services to families (system gaps)
- 18% of funds spent on recreational and other community integration opportunities (social/recreational)

Table 2 provides additional detail regarding the specific services and supports funded with mill levy.

Table 2: 2017 Mill levy distribution details by priority area

Priority Area	Number of providers/ family / organizations paid*	Transaction Amounts
<b>Basic Needs/Environmental Enrichment</b>	<b>369</b>	<b>\$ 489,602.86</b>
Assistive Technology	36	\$ 14,912.08
Rent/Housing Stability/Utilities	106	\$ 83,382.19
Other/Other Professional Services	22	\$ 174,789.81
Home/Vehicle Modifications	27	\$ 115,924.00
Medical Supplies/Equipment/Wheelchair	140	\$ 72,501.66
Transportation	38	\$ 28,093.12
<b>Social/Recreational</b>	<b>468</b>	<b>\$ 822,340.82</b>
Assistive Technology/Client Supplies	13	\$ 4,875.10
Other/Other Professional Services	49	\$ 55,563.00
Recreational Activities/Other Events	406	\$ 761,902.72
<b>System Gaps</b>	<b>1404</b>	<b>\$ 1,216,470.82</b>
Assistive Technology/Client Care Supplies	3	\$ 4,633.96
Hippotherapy/Other Professional Services	106	\$ 110,553.06
Day Habilitation	6	\$ 21,868.75
Music Therapy	6	\$ 5,453.00
Physical or Occupational Therapy	4	\$ 1,893.00
Respite	1274	\$ 1,066,064.05
Speech/Language Therapy	5	\$ 6,005.00
<b>Client Education/Increasing Independence</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>\$ 1,695,007.94</b>
Assistive Technology	18	\$ 213,392.07
Other/Other Professional Services	116	\$ 1,315,012.42
Vocational Services	14	\$ 158,437.16
Medical & Client Care Supplies	21	\$ 8,166.29
<b>Behavioral/Mental Health</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>\$ 227,062.64</b>
Behavioral Services (All)	14	\$ 47,936.32
Other/Other Professional Services	34	\$ 179,126.32
<b>Medical/Dental</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>\$ 52,742.43</b>
Dental/Vision Services	16	\$ 24,757.47
Medical Care	40	\$ 22,629.79
Medical Supplies/Equipment/Wheelchair	13	\$ 5,355.17
<b>Training &amp; Support</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>\$ 37,564.49</b>
Conference/Other Event Expense	4	\$ 7,310.00
Other/Other Professional Services	12	\$ 10,241.82
Medical & Client Care Supplies	10	\$ 4,157.85
Parent Ed/Support	31	\$ 15,854.82
<b>Project Management</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>\$ 333,824.00</b>
<b>Overhead on Distribution of Funds</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>\$ 308,136.00</b>

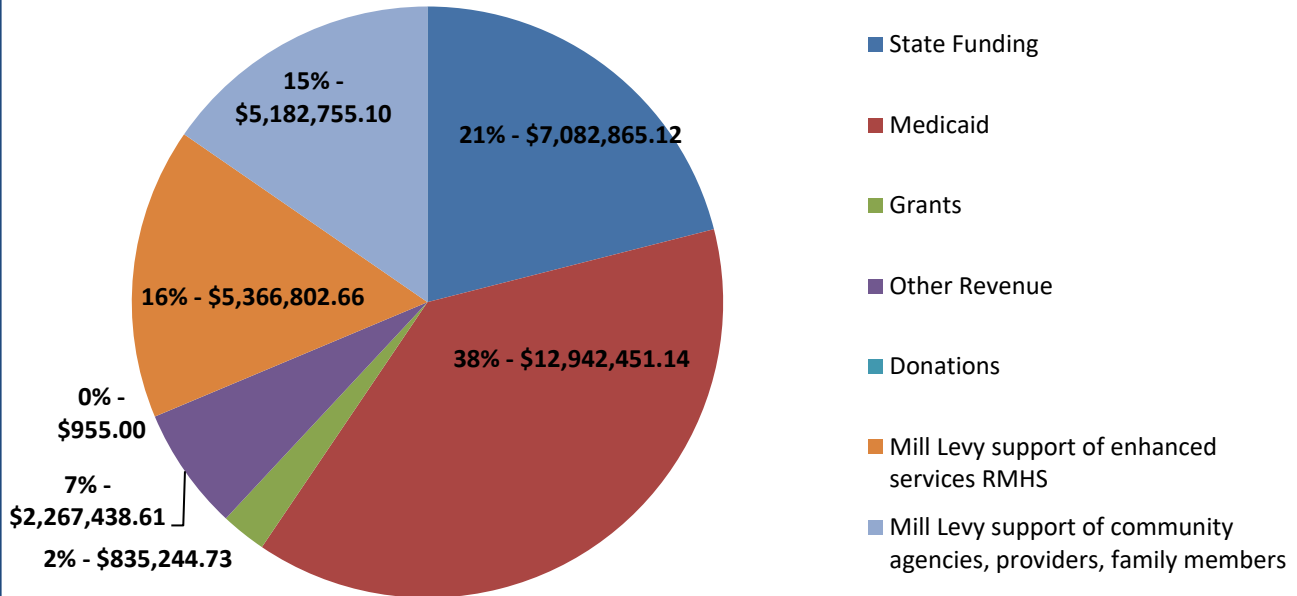
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>2584</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>5,182,752.00</b>
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\*Table 2 provides information regarding the total number of payments per category that were made to individuals or organizations outside of RMHS. The number of payments to providers/family/organizations identified in Table 2 is duplicative.

## Rocky Mountain Human Services

In 2017, RMHS provided services to individuals in Denver through a variety of programs and a variety of funding sources. A breakdown of the costs of services and supports including mill levy is detailed in graph 7.

**Graph 7: RMHS Total Costs of Services and Supports by Funding Source - 2017**



Approximately 37% of the total 2017 mill levy funding supports enhanced services provided by RMHS to 4,584 unduplicated individuals annually in Denver. In many cases, RMHS is the only provider of these services in Denver. The services are not otherwise reimbursable by other funding streams but are important for the individual's well-being. RMHS delivers services through multiple programs serving children and adults with I/DD in different capacities. Mill levy expenditures by department are detailed in Table 3 and described below.

Table 3: 2017 Mill levy expenditures supporting services delivered by RMHS

RMHS departments providing mill levy funded services	2017 mill levy funding
Early Intervention	\$ 762,427.00
Family Services and Support	\$ 687,904.00
Life Essentials Provider Network	\$ 566,924.00
Comprehensive Residential Services	\$ 238,558.00
Service Coordination	\$ 1,407,085.00
Assessment and Consultation Team	\$ 1,030,781.00
Behavioral Health	\$ 572,555.00
Community Outreach and Communications	\$ 100,570.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$5,366,804.00</b>

### Early Intervention (EI) Services

The Early Intervention program provides eligible infants and toddlers and their families with services and supports to enhance child development in the areas of cognition, speech, communication, physical development, motor development, vision, hearing, social or emotional development, and self-help skills. Early Intervention is a public health entitlement program and does not have a waitlist. However, in the 2017 legislative session and in prior years, funding shortfalls have been identified that are causing concern among State staff and EI providers about the current system’s ability to meet the program’s goals.

The two primary services that are performed for Early Intervention (EI) Services are case management and direct services, which includes clinical assessments as well as therapies to address identified needs. Funding for these services includes State funds, Medicaid, and private insurance. In the EI program for children with Medicaid, the reimbursement for case management is programmatically capped at 60 hours annually. Moreover, a community centered board is required to pay for any identified therapy needs of individuals in this program. In both instances, when an eligible infant and toddler needs more case management or therapies than is reimbursed through existing EI funding, mill levy funding is utilized to support that individuals’ needs. RMHS is the sole provider of EI case management in Denver. In 2017, a total of **2,266 Denver individuals<sup>2</sup>** were served in this program. Over 90% of the children served in Early Intervention receive additional case management services funded through the mill levy to ensure services are in place and to monitor children’s health and safety. Without mill levy funding, individual’s needs would not be met as comprehensively or as expeditiously as possible.

### Family Service and Supports Program (FSSP)

FSSP is a partnership between families and publicly funded supports. The individual's and family's circumstances and needs are utilized to determine the appropriate types of services or supports which can best assist a family with the least disruption to the family lifestyle. In the FSSP program, State funding covers direct services and case management activities, both of which are capped contractually to community centered boards. When an individual on FSSP needs more case management or direct services than is reimbursed through current funding programs, mill levy funding is utilized to supplement that individual’s needs. RMHS is the sole provider of FSSP services in Denver. In 2017, a total of **1,298 Denver individuals** were

<sup>2</sup> Some individuals receive services from more than one RMHS program during the year and are therefore included in each program’s count.

served in this program. Without mill levy funding, more than eight hundred individuals in FSSP would lose case management and direct services, and a waitlist would be enacted.

### Life Essentials Provider Network (LEPN)

The Life Essentials Provider Network Program provides direct service for adults and children with intellectual and developmental disabilities through Medicaid programs. RMHS oversees a service model that uses family members as subcontractors to provide services. This increases individual's choice and creates a mechanism to reimburse family members for the valuable services they provide. LEPN utilizes both nursing and quality assurance staff to enhance the quality of services delivered, enhancements that are neither required nor funded outside of mill levy. RMHS uses mill levy funding to offer State-mandated trainings, such as first aid, to LEPN providers at no cost. In 2017, a total of **232 Denver individuals** were served in this program. Mill levy funding was utilized to supplement the costs of an increased administrative burden of providing oversight to 376 contractors serving those individuals. Other CCB's in Colorado have ceased providing services in this model due to the higher administrative costs. Without mill levy funding RMHS would be unable to provide this option to Denver residents.

### Comprehensive Residential Services

RMHS' Residential Services Program provides services to adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. When an individual in Residential Services needs more care and support than is reimbursed through current funding programs, mill levy funding is utilized to support that individual's needs. In 2017, a total of **20 Denver individuals** were served in this program.

### Service Coordination

Service Coordination provides case management to children and adults receiving Medicaid-funded developmental disability services. Case management includes intake activities, eligibility determinations, enrollments into services, and locating, coordinating and monitoring services. Service Coordinators also assist individuals in securing other non-developmental disability-funded services and benefits, such as medical, social, educational and other services. Individuals in Denver seeking service coordination must have their intake and eligibility processes completed by RMHS. In 2017, a total of **1,020 Denver individuals** were served in this program.

Case management reimbursement for services is capped at 60 hours annually and some case management functions are not eligible for Medicaid reimbursement. When an individual receiving service coordination needs more case management beyond what is reimbursed through current funding programs, mill levy funding is accessed to support that individual's needs. Without mill levy funding RMHS service coordination caseloads would increase, reducing the organization's responsiveness to the community's needs.

### Assessment and Consultation Team (Children's Clinical Services)

The Assessment and Consultation Team provides comprehensive assessment, consultation and intervention services to infants, children and adolescents, birth to 18 years of age. As a community centered board, RMHS conducts developmental assessments and diagnostic evaluations for children including those with autism spectrum disorder. Additionally, RMHS provides and uses subcontractors for intervention services, including occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech language pathology, and psychology. The current funding for these assessments services does not provide reimbursement to meet all of an individual's needs, nor for the administrative oversight of sub-contractors. In 2017, a total of **805 Denver individuals** were served in this program. Approximately half of those individuals received assessment services only and half receive ongoing intervention services. Mill levy funding in this area is making a significant impact. RMHS is able to complete diagnostic evaluations in two months or less, while other entities in the community are taking six months or longer to complete.

## Behavioral Health

The Behavioral Health needs of individuals with I/DD are unique, and require complex coordination of care needs – a population for which there are limited resources in our Denver community. RMHS' behavioral health clinic is staffed with psychiatry, psychology, and licensed therapists, all with specialized expertise and extensive experience in working with individuals who are dually diagnosed with I/DD and mental health/behavioral issues. Because of the specialization of staff required to meet these needs, the cost of providing services is greater than the current funding reimbursement. Mill levy funding is utilized to support individuals' needs in these areas. In 2017, **115 Denver individuals** were served in this program.

## Community Outreach and Communications

Mill levy funds are used to support community outreach and communication activities regarding services and activities for Denver residents with I/DD, ensuring that their voices are heard and that the community is aware of how to access mill levy funds. RMHS 2017 outreach activities included:

- Bimonthly Community Advisory Council meetings (formerly the Mill Levy Advisory Committee)
- Targeted survey to individuals receiving respite services regarding respite's impact on their lives and well-being
- Community Forums for persons accepting services, family members and the community to provide input on their needs and priorities and to learn about RMHS' activities
- Public event for new agencies to present projects and services to the community, individuals accepting services and RMHS staff
- Online survey of needs
- Website redesign to:
  - Provide new information about valuable resources and programs
  - Make it easier for individuals and families to find the information they need
  - Increase accessibility for Spanish speakers through translation of all key program information
- Two monthly e-newsletters: one for providers and one for the broader community
- Over 150 meetings have been conducted with over 350 community agencies interested in accessing mill levy funding for their program ideas and services
- Outreach at public and private sector events, including neighborhood associations targeting individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families
- Development of new print materials in English and Spanish for distribution at community events
- Spanish translation of print and electronic materials
- Calendar of client and community events
- Coordination of quarterly meetings for service agencies working with I/DD individuals



## Demographics

Graph 8: Age ranges of Denver clients served by RMHS

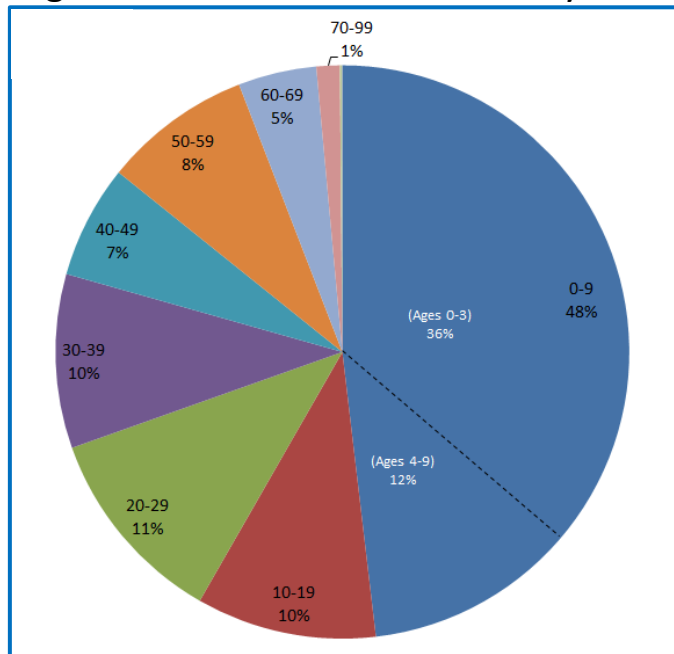


Table 4: Reported ethnicities of Denver clients served by RMHS

Ethnicity	%
Hispanic/Latino	30.65%
White/Caucasian	42.11%
African American or Black	12.69%
Unknown/Not reported	7.15%
Asian	2.11%
Hispanic/Latino, White/Caucasian	1.73%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	0.71%
African American or Black, Hispanic/Latino	0.30%
African American or Black, White/Caucasian	0.55%
Asian, White/Caucasian	0.58%
<5 reporting specific ethnicity	1.43%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Table 5: Primary languages of Denver clients served by RMHS

Primary Language	% of individuals
English	79.85%
Spanish	15.87%
Other	2.38%
Arabic	0.60%
ASL	0.30%
Amharic	0.19%
French	0.19%
Burmese	0.16%
Nepali	0.16%
Somali	0.14%
Vietnamese	0.14%
Grand Total	100.00%

## Program Outcomes

In 2017 RMHS implemented systems to provide mill levy funding directly to individuals, families, caregivers and agencies that support Denver residents. These services are as diverse and unique as possible to meet individual needs. RMHS is committed to meeting the unique individualized needs as requested by individuals, families, and others; additionally, RMHS is committed to enhancing the capacity of community agencies to develop programs and deliver services to support Denver residents with I/DD.

Quarter 4 of 2017 saw the return of many successful measures of the effectiveness of services funded through the mill levy. Whether new services were targeting an increase in individuals' independence; keeping individuals and families healthy, safe and in their homes; increasing caregivers' skills; or improving quality of life, the results we are seeing are remarkable. A summary of outcomes is provided in Appendix A. Below are some of the highlights:

- More than 130 individuals and families received support for **housing stability** and home modifications so that they can remain safely in their homes
- Nearly 800 individuals with I/DD were successfully supported to learn and increase independence
  - Learning **trade skills** toward gainful employment (18 individuals)
  - Increasing **cultural and artistic** exposure (24 individuals)
  - Using **assistive technology** (168 individuals)
  - Appropriately participating in **integrated yoga** classes (110 individuals)
  - Improving **financial health** (439 individuals)
  - Turning their interests into **entrepreneurial opportunities** (105 individuals)
- Over 90% of kindergarten children served through facilitated play improved in their **self-confidence, resiliency, and/or social skills**
- Individuals were supported to improve their **quality of life** through social and recreational opportunities
  - Nearly 300 individuals and caregivers can now access recreation centers throughout Denver
  - Over 700 individuals have participated with our community partners in a variety of community engagement opportunities, including local day trips and overnight trips

# Addressing additional needs

RMHS will continue with its current transformation of how mill levy dollars are used to enhance services for people with intellectual or developmental disabilities. With a transformation of this magnitude, RMHS has spent considerable time and resources ensuring that processes and infrastructure is in place to support Denver residents. There are several necessary considerations RMHS continues to address through our efforts.

1. **Conflict-free case management.** In the current community centered board model, RMHS is essentially the only choice case management option for individuals with I/DD. In the future, there will be additional choices available to Denver residents. RMHS is actively working with DHS to explore an enhanced rate methodology that can be applied to any case management agency operating in Denver that would like to provide these services.
2. **Waitlist.** Issues related to the waitlist can be separated into two different categories. The first is how the waiting list can be reduced or eliminated, which make have a longer timeframe to implement. The second is what can be done in the short term to provide services to individuals on the wait list.

- a. **Reducing or eliminating the number of individuals on the waitlist.**

The number of individuals receiving funding from Home and Community Based Services (HCBS-DD or “residential”) are managed by Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing (HCPF). A statewide waiting list exists because the number of eligible persons exceeds the appropriation determined by the Colorado General Assembly. HCPF has sole authority for determining who and when an individual can be removed from the waiting list and enrolled into HCBS-DD. There currently is no mechanism by which RMHS can enroll someone to the HCBS-DD waiver without authorization by HCPF.

Denver Department of Human Services, RMHS, and Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing (HCPF) have had multiple meetings to discuss the potential of using Mill Levy funds to draw down Federal matching funds to expand the number of individuals on the HCBS-DD Comprehensive Waiver in Denver, and thus reducing the waiting list. Using Mill Levy dollars to access additional federal funding is a very complicated process that will take a significant amount of time to coordinate efforts among Denver Department of Human Services, the Colorado Department of Healthcare Policy and Financing (HCPF), and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS).

- b. **Providing service to individuals on the wait list.**

Individuals on the waiting list are waiting for a residential placement. In most situations, these individuals are receiving services in their own home. While on one hand individuals on the waiting list do receive some services, it is not a direct match to their identified need. RMHS has analyzed the individuals in Denver who are waiting for services:

- 282\* individuals in Denver county with RMHS are on the waitlist for residential services
- 238 individuals in Denver county with RMHS on the waitlist receive services through programs other than residential services
- 28 individuals in Denver county with RMHS on the waitlist receive services through program administered by the Single Entry Point (SEP) system
- 16 individuals in Denver county with RMHS on the waitlist are receiving no services

\* Number of individuals on the waitlist are specific to Denver county residents with RMHS as their Community Centered Board (CCB). The total number of individuals on the waitlist in Denver county is likely higher with clients served by a different CCB, individuals who currently reside out of county but have indicated interest to moving to Denver County.

RMHS will be taking active steps to conduct outreach to these individuals to determine their need for enhanced services that mill levy fund can fund. In 2018, RMHS will dedicate a service coordinator position to assess and coordinate services for individuals on the waitlist who currently receive no services and who are receiving services through another organization. In 2017, we have already implemented approximately \$155,000 in enhanced mill levy services to a portion of individuals receiving services through other programs.

## Upcoming projects

RMHS is continually engaging with our community and stakeholders to ensure that we are accountable for addressing their needs and concerns. In addition to the continuation of all the projects described in this report, there are many new projects in active development. Below are examples of some of the projects being developed.

### Developmental Disabilities Network of Care Database

Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) is implementing an online database of service providers and resources connecting people to I/DD services and supports. This database will provide the Denver metropolitan area with a comprehensive and accessible resource on community programs. The current systems in Colorado are siloed between I/DD providers, aging providers, and disability providers. DRCOG and the Network of Care database is a major initiative to streamline multiple sources of information into one, and to create reportable information on the community's needs.

### RAMP Extension Program (Ability Connection Colorado)

RAMP is the only youth program associated with the nationally recognized Ready to Achieve Mentoring Program and high school High Tech Program in Colorado. It fills a critical gap in services needed in Colorado by serving a vulnerable, at-risk population: transitional age foster care youth. According to available statistics from the Institute for Educational Leadership, youth with disabilities are four times more likely to be adjudicated and only 30% receive high school degrees. SMART data reveals that in challenging fields of study and employment, (such as STEM), individuals with disabilities are the most underrepresented. Consequently, the demand to expand the program to serve more high risk youth is high. Services to be offered to 20 young people ages 14-24 include:

- Career-based mentoring
- Job resources/connections
- Development of soft skills critical for employment
- Job skills readiness (interview preparation, resume support)

### Autism Society of Colorado

Autism Society of Colorado provides public awareness and outreach through Autism 101 presentations and trainings to increase autism awareness and improve the quality of interactions with the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) community. Trainings will provide information to better identify, respond to, communicate, and interact with people with ASD. ASD does not discriminate to location and requests, and presentations come from everywhere. Trainings have included, but are not limited to: public libraries, schools, law firms, first responders, camp counselors, juvenile detention centers, entertainment venues, and non-profit workforce centers. Surveys will be conducted before and after trainings to track participants' level of awareness and skillset to support individuals with ASD. Surveys will verify if there is a correlation between ASD-specific

training, positive identification of an adult or child with ASD, and whether ASD site-specific training improves a given business or service provider's performance in responding to the needs of people with ASD.

## THRIVE Project Independence

THRIVE Project Independence will be providing information and skills through a parent and youth education and support program to underserved parents of infants, toddlers, and children with I/DD. The purpose is for parents to better understand the nature of their children's disabilities and that both parents and youth with I/DD will better understand their educational, developmental, and transitional needs. Methods to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of the parent advising and workshops are to be completed through collaborative work with the Center for Parent Information and Resource's (CPIR) annual data collection surveys. CPIR is an Office of Special Education Program's (OSEP) funded project that functions as a hub for the dissemination of information and products needed to support the work of Parent Centers in the education of parents of children with disabilities. This collaboration allows for quantitative data by which THRIVE will measure 3 goals using surveys at the end of each training. They are the following:

1. 85% of parent and youth participants report an increase in knowledge related to special education, post-secondary options and community resources.
2. 90% of products and services provided are deemed high quality, relevant and useful.
3. 90% of parents and youth that receive individual family support services report being satisfied to highly satisfied.

## Mill levy service plans – Early Intervention

Much like the mill levy service plan project initiated in August 2017 for individuals accepting waiver services, RMHS is in the final planning stages of implementing an Unmet Needs project for children in the Early Intervention program. The concept is to build into service plans needed services and resources not available through Early Intervention. EI uses a combination of public and private insurance, along with State General Fund dollars, to address the developmental needs of children birth to age three. Services to include in this project were identified through a variety of needs assessments being conducted on an ongoing basis including case managers' individual assessments of the child at the time of the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) meeting, individual requests received from families with children in this program, and other stakeholder feedback. Families will be offered the included services at the time of the child's six-month IFSP and will work with their primary providers to ensure services and supports address the developmental and basic needs of the child. Services to be available through the EI Unmet Needs project beginning in early 2018 include:

- Respite (based on the needs of the family)
- Infant massage (based on the needs of the child)
- Music therapy (based on the needs of the child)
- Environmental enrichment and home safety items (based on the needs of the family)
- Cribs or toddler beds (based on the needs of the family)

## Summary

RMHS provides case management and direct services to adults and children with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Denver and surrounding communities. As the designated CCB and single point of entry for individuals seeking assistance for all needs related to intellectual and developmental disabilities, RMHS is in the best position to meet this community's needs. RMHS has embraced the opportunity to create responsive and innovative programs to address the needs of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities with generous mill levy funding provided by the residents of Denver. In 2017, RMHS transformed the use of mill levy funding to maximize the impact of these dollars on the lives of Denver residents with intellectual and developmental disabilities. As discussed in this report, RMHS has used mill levy dollars to enhance the well-being of children and adults with I/DD in a multitude of ways, including the following:

- Funding individual requests from 1,149 individuals, such as covering one month's rent when a severely disabled child became ill and the guardian needed to take time away from work to care for the child; paying the cost of removing a foreign object from an adult's eye when Medicare didn't cover all charges; paying for a math class for an adult working on money management skills; and sending a teen to summer camp.
- Building into annual service plans much-needed programs and resources, such as respite care, that are unfunded or underfunded by Medicaid or other funders.
- Supporting innovative programs through other community agencies, including educational and supportive services for school-age children with autism and other needs; providing tailored financial health classes to persons accepting services and their families; and increasing independence through assistive technology designed for individuals with I/DD.
- Enhancing services provided by RMHS when adequate funding is not available from the State, Medicaid or other sources, such as additional case management; first aid training to family members providing care; and therapies for infants and toddlers.

We are excited about our accomplishments in 2017, and we look forward to continuing innovations, outreach and partnerships in 2018.

# Appendix: Program outcomes by priority area

## Priority: Basic Needs/Environmental Supports

Meeting basic needs and providing environmental supports for individuals/families includes addressing needs such as housing, transportation, wheelchair accessibility, and furniture or clothing. Approximately 11% of mill levy funding year-to-date has been utilized towards these needs.

### Client Assistance

This project provides a way for individuals to access to funds for emergencies and when appropriate for services not covered elsewhere. Requests are reviewed twice a week and typical time to process the request is less than 48 hours. 2960 individual requests were approved in 2017, including 23 requests for individuals on our waitlist. Requests have included temporary assistance with rent or utilities to ensure housing stability, clothing, beds, tutoring, adaptive equipment, trainings for family/caregivers, and co-pays for needed therapies.

### Homelessness Project (CFPD-Mission Supports)

Through collaboration with the Colorado Fund for People with Disabilities, Mission Supports

has created a new program to locate individuals with or suspected to have intellectual/developmental disabilities who are homeless. Their innovative program structure offers individuals one-to-one support to obtain services and secure housing and other environmental resources through a Peer

### Client Assistance Successes

- *Erik is in his 60's and had a foreign object lodged in his eye that needed to be removed. Medicare would not pay for all of the treatment and he does not have Medicaid. \$165 in Mill Levy funds was used to pay for the needed treatment.*
- *David is in his 30's and lives independently. He received an overpayment from Social Security and set up a repayment plan, but Social Security made an error and withheld his full check. As a result, he was unable to pay his rent or utilities that month. \$553 in Mill Levy funds was provided to cover those costs for one month.*
- *Lily is 4 years old and due to multiple medical complications is unable to regulate her own body temperature. In the extreme summer heat, Lily was extremely uncomfortable despite IV fluids and fans. Although an air conditioning unit for their tiny apartment cost less than \$600, it was beyond the family's means so Mill Levy funds were used to increase Lily's health and safety.*
- *Chad is 2 years old and his severe eczema interferes with his sleep, to be outdoors, even to move without pain and bleeding. After months of ineffective treatments, his family found eczema suits that provide relief. \$1,131 in Mill Levy funds were used to purchase suits for him, resulting in him sleeping longer and having less skin irritation. He can now even go with his family on neighborhood walks and to the park without severe discomfort.*

Advocate. In 2017, the team has served 35 individuals. About a third of the individuals they're serving are unsafe in shelters, having experienced things like abuse or exploitation, and mill levy dollars go toward providing safe temporary housing for those individuals while benefits are put in place. All individuals served were provided food, clothing and hygiene items as well as wrap around case management, some also needed assistance with accessing transportation. Three individuals were denied due to not being Denver residents or determining they were not I/DD. Click on the link below to hear one of the individuals served tell his story.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3wR-ctW8LS8>

### Priority: Client Education/Increasing Independence

Approximately 37% of 2017 mill levy funding was utilized to address these needs. The following are community project partners offering education to clients with a focus on increasing their independence, among other life skills:

#### The Assistive Technology Project

Provides tablet computers with applications designed for individuals with I/DD to increase independence with skills like cooking, budgeting, personal hygiene, safely navigating the community, and making a schedule.

- 163 tablets were distributed to adults with I/DD, 5 adults had their own tablets onto which the applications were added
- 168 individuals have been trained on how to use the assistive technology applications over 12 deployment sessions held in 2017
- RMHS Staff are working with AbleLink Technologies on their evaluation software to implement a survey instrument that will properly obtain that information as to how clients are utilizing and benefitting from the assistive technology applications
- Reactions from participants and accompanying caregivers have been overwhelmingly positive

#### Guided by Humanity Yoga Project

As a new project added during the third quarter, Guided by Humanity was created to provide inclusive and accessible yoga opportunities for the I/DD community in Denver. They have hosted classes four times a week and served over 100 individuals in 2017. They have also collaborated with other yoga studios to provide integrated yoga classes to support inclusivity of I/DD individuals, as well as partnered to host a panel discussing inclusivity in the yoga community. 100% of the participants had never had the opportunity to participate in a yoga class before and 82% of the students

#### Guided by Humanity Yoga

*Students are learning to set up their yoga mats, blankets, and bolsters in a specific arrangement and then cleaning mats and putting all items away after class. Students also understand what the yoga props are and why they are used. They are learning yoga etiquette, such as keeping voices low when another class is occurring. Leadership skills are encouraged as repeat students are demonstrating to others what the pose looks like, how to navigate the space by helping set up mats, blankets, bolsters, and blocks. They are building community by engaging more with the community members in the studio, introducing themselves and striking up conversations. They are also engaging with other students in the class and building rapport with one another.*

*-Mary S., Yoga Instructor*



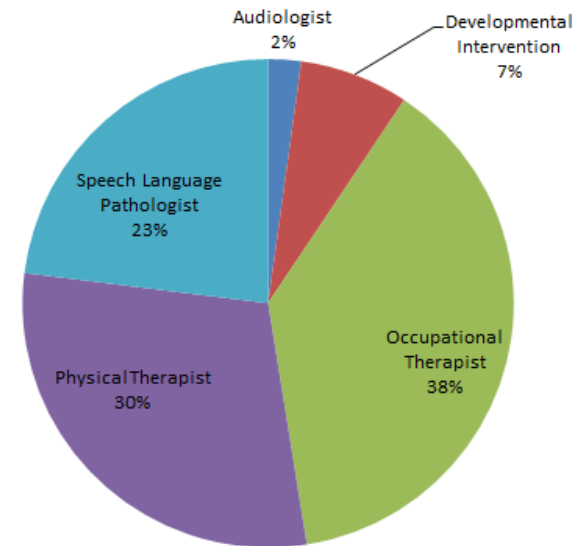
returned for multiple classes. Students are demonstrating increased rates of self-confidence and empowerment by navigating the community space, accountability, building an inclusive community, and growing leadership skills. This program is giving our students the tools to control their own well-being.

### Play & Learn Library

RMHS as an organization maintains an inventory of therapeutic equipment for therapists to borrow to support their therapy work with children. This enables therapists and families the opportunity to try equipment and ensure it works for individuals prior to making a commitment to purchase. In surveying the therapists who have been using the equipment, RMHS has received the following positive feedback:

- Over 140 items were loaned in 2017 by clinical therapists to trial with children and increase their skills
- On a scale of 1-5 (strongly disagree to strongly agree), therapists rated:
  - Did the item help improve the child’s skills? **Average score: 4.7**
  - Will you access the Play & Learn Library again in the future? **Average score: 4.9**

**Play & Learn Library use by discipline  
Jan - Dec 2017 (n=141 items)**



### Play & Learn Library

*I work with a little boy who initially did not want to engage with me at all. He always wandered and was not interested by any type of social interaction or play. I brought almost every toy in the home I could think of as well as engaging with his favorite toys! I was running out of ideas. As a last resort, I went to the Play & Learn Library and I borrowed a toy called a Globe Spinner. I brought it to the home, turned out all of the lights and kept pressing the button. My little kiddo loved it! I heard him laugh as his eyes lit up and he was finally interested in me and this toy simultaneously. Ever since then, we have had a ton of success. It was the toy that started it all!*

-Lynzie T., Speech Language Pathologist

### ResourceAbility Program (Financial Health Institute)

Financial Health Institute developed a new program to improve financial health throughout the Denver’s I/DD Community. FHI was able to develop relationships with a variety of I/DD community organizations and scheduled classes with four of them. Other organizations are planning to offer financial health classes in 2018. FHI has developed and tested a customer survey to gain direct feedback about the classes provided. Here are the results from their survey:

- 327 (89.8%) customers said they liked the classes.
- 37 (10.2%) customers did not like the classes or were unsure.
  
- 302 (83.4%) customers said the classes were helpful.
- 60 (16.6%) said the classes were not helpful or they were unsure.
  
- 291 (81.3%) customers said they would like to have more classes.
- 67 (18.7%) declined more classes or were unsure.

In order to obtain more data about how the customers responded to the classes, FHI developed an observational checklist that showed positive customer behaviors ranging from 72.9% - 94.1%, with an average of 85.5% positive observed behaviors.

Staff at host sites for the classes was also surveyed. Staff rated customers’ engagement in the classes on a scale of 1-5 (not at all engaged to engaged all the time). Average rating was 4.56 with 65.6% of staff rating “all of the time.” Staff rated customer learning an average of 3.87 on a scale of 1 (learned nothing) to 5 (learned all of the topics covered). Finally, staff rated whether the class material was relevant to the customers from 1 (not a good match) to 5 (very relevant) resulting in an overall average score of 4.40, with 53.1% of staff rating the lessons as “very relevant.”

### Firefly Autism

Firefly Autism serves individuals with specific developmental challenges and disabilities through a variety of unique programs and services. The scholarship program covers all program areas for which current requests received are from families served in their Early Childhood Intervention program (EI), School Age program (SA), Young Adult (YA) program, and Home-Based Services (HBS) program. Many families discover their health insurance plan does not cover Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) treatment (Firefly’s treatment protocol), covers the treatment but comes

#### Firefly Autism

*Thanks to the help of RMHS and the Mill Levy Program, eight Denver families were recently given the gift of renewed hope. Each family has a child with autism. All were told their child would need specialized treatment to develop skills that come naturally to the rest of us. Firefly was their best hope for success for their child. All eight discovered their health care provider covered only part of the cost of treatment. Their biggest fear was that their inability to pay the difference would prevent their child from getting the help they desperately needed. Because of the RMHS Mill Levy program, we were able to quell those fears and get those children enrolled in our programs. For each of those families, that’s their story of success.*

- David S., Firefly Staff

with a prohibitive deductible, or they have no insurance. By offering a scholarship program, Firefly can support covering costs Denver families are unable to finance, so that their children can receive the treatment they need. Firefly provided scholarships to 8 students in 2017, all children who were at risk of being denied services due to family financial hardships. Services are targeted at essential skill development, including verbal communication, socialization, improved functioning level, personal hygiene, health maintenance, and increasing awareness of self and community/society.

### Self-Employment Education Project (Celebrate EDU)

Celebrate EDU’s Self-Employment Education Project provides opportunities for client education and increasing independence by offering innovative entrepreneurial education for I/DD individuals ages 15-50. Individuals receive training to learn how to create a business plan, and explore their own business ideas that build on their interests and passions. Celebrate EDU is shifting perceptions of family members, service providers, and staff providers about the possibilities that entrepreneurship provides for people with I/DD. During this reporting period, 105 individuals with I/DD were served through 7 workshops held as a part of this project. Celebrate EDU also solidified a partnership with Denver Public Schools to host a workshop for their identified students at four different school locations. Student surveys from these workshops showed:

- 100% learned how to create a support network
- 85% say they know what it means to be an entrepreneur.
- Every Kindling Workshop participant was taught business etiquette
- More than 50% participated in business etiquette role-play.

Additionally, one individual with I/DD completed the Spark Program curriculum and finalized his Spark Canvas and work portfolio. His exit survey states that he learned how to develop a business idea, identify his personal strengths and interests and is more comfortable working with others.

Throughout 2017, over 180 family members, service providers, self-advocates, and partner organizations attended a Celebrate EDU Entrepreneur Education Information Session. Every person who attended an event has an increased awareness about entrepreneurship as a possibility for those with disabilities. Many of them reported a shift in perceptions about the capabilities of individuals with developmental disabilities, and all learned new information about entrepreneurial trends.

#### Celebrate EDU

*I had the privilege of being Joe’s instructor. He was motivated, enthusiastic, and had a positive attitude throughout the course. He actively participated in all meetings and conference calls. Joe started the program with a focus on his artwork, and wanting to look into an anime type of business. Upon further discussion, I realized that Joe also had an interest in fashion. This lead to a business idea: combining both his original artwork and his fashion interest to develop a t-shirt business. Joe enjoyed making plans for his business. He had great ideas about which drawings he would use for the shirts, and would always come to our meetings with fresh new designs. Joe should be commended for his dedication to himself, his dreams and his family.*

-Laura O., Celebrate EDU instructor

### T.A.C.T. – Teaching the Autism Community Trades

In 2017, TACT began for credit classes for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) ages 14-21. TACT also continues to provide night and weekend workshops for individuals with ASD aging 5-21. Workshop classes are varied and include trades such as photography, welding, electronics, fiber arts, graphic design, audio engineering, carpentry, auto mechanics and instrument making. In total, TACT served 18 Denver students across the offered programs. TACT's outcomes included improving students'



empowerment and independence; improving socialization, flexibility and problem-solving (and therefore an increase in the likelihood of gainful employment); and improving self-confidence. Here are the

results realized during the entire semester through pre- and post- assessment scores:

- 12 of 13 students (92.3%) showed improvements in empowerment and independence
- 11 of 12 students (91.6%) showed improvements in socialization
- 11 of 12 students (91.6%) showed improvements in flexibility/problem-solving

### TACT

*I was bored at home before TACT. I knew some parts of the car. I was excited to start at TACT. I really enjoyed taking off bolts and putting on bolts. I polished the top of the air filter with a rag and some elbow grease. I have learned how to use tools. I learned about a lot of the tools you use to fix cars like a socket wrench. I used chemicals which I was afraid of before. Over the summer I was ecstatic to go to TACT and I couldn't wait till I could start my class. Since we've been working on cars at TACT I've found a love for classic cars. I want to fix cars and I want my own classic car- a Chrysler 300g 1961. I wasn't able to do the trade skills at my other school. I felt ecstatic to learn about TACT. My favorite days are working in the garage when it is cool.*

*-J.K., 15, auto mechanics student*

*JK was the first student enrolled in our auto mechanics for credit class and he's currently in his second semester. What stands out is how full of life he is now. He came to us a hesitant teenager, anxious about school, social interaction, and making mistakes. JK found it difficult to express questions or concerns and would often resort to avoidance when he felt challenged or frustrated. Today, JK struts into the auto mechanics class with a sense of confidence that radiates from his smile. He asks questions with intention and has developed a real knack for problem solving. With his peers, he can frequently be heard making exceptionally witty jokes that are beyond his years.*

*For JK, school was once a place where he was bullied and struggled academically. Through T.A.C.T.'s curriculum he not only enjoys going to school, he is enlivened by the possibilities that he now sees for himself. The most obvious difference in JK is hope. Hope is not measurable, it is not something that is easy to see or put into words but it's something that JK has found within himself and for that we are so thankful. Without RMHS & Mill Levy, this may not have been possible.*

*-Amanda T., Special Ed Teacher*

In addition to their work with individual students, TACT is also working to build partnerships across the metro area. Click here for one such example recently illustrated in a local news story: <http://denver.cbslocal.com/2017/12/17/autism-dirt-coffee/>

### **The Possibility Pool Supported Employment Marketplace**

The Possibility Pool is a collaborative developed by community-based organizations to develop a new avenue of supported employment for Denver residents. Currently, supported employment is a service provided on a small scale by several government and private agencies. The Possibility Pool is designed to fill in the gaps in employment services in a more accessible and comprehensive way specific to the needs of individuals living in Denver. The collaborative has included three local organizations with a long history of serving individuals with I/DD in the supported employment field. In 2017, the project partners finalized evaluative tools for intakes and assessments designed to identify individuals' strengths and needs related to employment. Through hands-on curriculum, soft skills, and job readiness training, participants, families and caregivers gained confidence and independence that participants can gain the tools necessary for employment. Once placed into supported employment in the community, individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities will be able to participate in and actively contribute to the Denver community to the best of their ability and choosing. Below are the results of their work in 2017:

- Increased understanding and person-centered viewpoint of 73 individuals with I/DD and 83 family members and caregivers
- 77 individuals received an assessment
- 140 individuals were provided pre-vocational and job readiness training
- 161 meetings and presentations with community businesses and potential employment partners

### **Priority: Behavioral Health/Mental Health**

#### **Priority: Medical and Dental**

Medical, Dental, and Behavioral Health services includes a wide variety of health-related services to ensure the health and well-being of individuals with I/DD. Combined, approximately 6% of mill levy funding year-to-date has been utilized toward these two project areas. RMHS stakeholders cited these types of services as a significant need, yet the number of individual and agency requests to date has not shown the demand for these services expected based on stakeholder feedback. RMHS is continuing to work with the Community Advisory Council and other community stakeholders to refocus outreach efforts to ensure the community's needs are being met in this area.

#### **Laradon Expansion of Behavioral Services**

The intent of Laradon's Expansion of Behavioral Services project is to support clients with behavioral challenges beyond what is reimbursable through Medicaid, including crisis support, behavioral support training of staff, and involvement with the legal system. Project goals include decreasing inappropriate or problematic behavior of adult individuals and increase the average of length of placement in day, vocational, and residential settings. Positive behavioral supports were developed for all individuals served, increasing their quality of life and enabling greater inclusion in the Denver community. While project staff directly served 13 individuals in 2017, they estimate indirectly impacting at least 70 more by training day program and residential providers as well as family members.

### **Tennyson ASPEN Program**

This project started late in 2017 and has already served 2 of the projected 8 children Tennyson intends to reach. The goals of the project are to decrease maladaptive behaviors, increase social skills, and increase academic proficiency for the youth served. Measures are taken three months post-enrollment, after six months of programming, and after one full academic year. I/DD children at Tennyson come from every social, economic, and ethnic background across Colorado; however, almost all are from underserved, low-income families, qualifying for Free and Reduced Lunch and/or are traumatized from abuse, neglect, or struggle with behavioral issues.

### **Collaborative Positive Behavioral Support (CPBS)**

A statewide analysis of the gaps in services for individuals with dual diagnoses of I/DD and mental health/behavioral health disorders was reported in 2014. The analysis concluded that Colorado has a severely limited capacity to provide crisis intervention and stabilization services for this population, limited access to mental health providers with knowledge and skills to work with the population, and little to no follow-up post-crisis. The analysis provided recommendations to include people with I/DD in the vision of fully integrated systems of primary health care, specialty care, behavioral health, and dental care, with person-centered plans of care that include access to appropriate supports and care coordination. This model does not currently exist in Denver; most individuals with I/DD get their care in segmented systems, and continue to have limited access to providers with expertise in meeting their needs. This project aims to integrate all aspects of health into care plans for people with complex needs to help them improve their quality of life and reduce the burden on emergency care.

In 2017, RMHS commenced to identify gaps in services for this population specific to Denver. RMHS is actively involving a variety of providers in the community, including: psychologists, psychiatrists, physicians, nurses, social workers, speech therapists, occupational therapists, behavior analysts, case workers, staff from the Department of Human Services and Health Care Policy and Financing, as well as host home, day treatment, and residential treatment providers. Several common themes have emerged. These themes aligned closely with the findings of the dual diagnosis “gap analysis” of 2014. Based on our findings, five primary goals of the CPBS program were recognized, all with the underlying goal of ensuring access to quality and appropriate care for individuals with dual diagnoses. Project plans are now being developed for each of the five identified primary goals:

1. Intersystem care coordination
2. Crisis planning
3. Training and ongoing support
4. Integrated care
5. Functional behavior assessments

## Priority: Training and Support

### Laradon Family Infant and Toddler Program (FIT)

This project supports a Family Navigator to address gaps in early intervention supports for children 0-3 and their parents. The project has three primary areas of focus: connecting parents to resources in the community, implementing weekly play and learn groups, and assisting families in enrolling children in preschool. The weekly Play-and-Learn groups not only increase children's social-emotional development, but also create valuable social support for parents with others facing a similar challenge, as many of them are socially isolated. The Pyramid PIWI Model that is used in the Play-and-Learn groups includes evidence-based teaching practices and intervention approaches that promote children's social emotional development and are effective in addressing challenging behaviors. The model's group parenting programs promote positive social emotional outcomes by helping create supportive early childhood and home environments. FIT supported 165 children and parents in 2017 with the following results:

- an increase in parents' confidence in interacting with their children
- involvement of children in larger groups of children
- improved behavior in some children
- increased parental understanding of their role in communicating with their children

#### Laradon FIT

*A little boy and his mother attend the Thursday Play-and-Learn group. The mother is happy with her son's progress: he has improved his social skills and tolerance of being outside of their home. The first time they attended a group session, they had to leave after just a few minutes because he could not handle it – too many people and too noisy. Little by little they were able to stay longer and longer with just short breaks away from the playroom but now they are able to stay for the entire session no matter how busy it gets. Mom is glad this has helped because now her son has gained confidence in being around people and they are able to go out more to public places. She also likes the fact that her son has the opportunity to be around all kinds of kids and learn from them. She doesn't want to limit his options just because he is diagnosed with autism.*

-Barbara S., Laradon

### RMHS/DPS joint trainings

RMHS is collaborating with Denver Public Schools on a series of staff trainings to enhance services to infants and toddlers with developmental disabilities and delays. In addition to the value of the education provided, staffs from both organizations indicate a strong benefit from the opportunity to come together, share ideas and brainstorm about the challenges they face in their work with very young children. The first training, held November 2017, focused on 1) the intake and evaluation process and 2) ethical communication. A post-training survey indicated that both RMHS and DPS staff left with an increased understanding of the process, higher competence in these areas, and an expectation to use materials presented during the training in their work. Training on motivational interviewing is currently under development and will be held in 2018. Through motivational interviewing, we hope to have greater success in supporting families from referral to service entry.

### EI Provider Training Series

The early intervention program (EI) at RMHS serves children birth to 3 years of age who are experiencing delays in development and who reside in Denver. Children in EI services may have complex needs that require specialized knowledge and training from EI providers. EI providers frequently need to pay for specialized training out of pocket, which is a barrier to accessing additional or specialized trainings. Families also frequently need to pay out of pocket for specialized trainings related to the complex needs of their child, which is a barrier to accessing these trainings. RMHS can help to support EI providers and families with children in EI in accessing specialized trainings to better support the needs of the child. In 2017, two trainings were provided and two more are in the planning stages.

The first training was focused on infant feeding issues. Feeding is a critical part of development and an integral part of the parent-child relationship. Children with medical complications or infants who have spent time in the NICU frequently have feeding challenges that require support from a clinician with specialized training. Early Intervention providers who have this specialized training are in high demand and cannot meet the current need in the community. Prior to the training, less than 23% of active EI providers identified themselves as having specialized knowledge of feeding, yet there are approximately 15 referrals per month in which the infant's feeding is identified as a concern. Forty-three clinicians participated in the training earlier this year. Participants were surveyed immediately following the training and six months later. All participants reported the training increased their level of expertise with infant feeding challenges and over 97% reported feeling confident in treating infants with minimal to significant feeding challenges.

The second was a 2-day Parent Management Training (PMT) Workshop aimed at improving effective parenting skills in managing behavior problems, such as aggression and hyperactivity. PMT has been demonstrated to be effective in changing disruptive behaviors and in improving the mental health of parents. There were 30 attendees from organizations across Denver, each involved with providing services to children and families who experience intellectual and developmental disabilities. On a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), attendees gave an average rating of 4.7 to the usefulness of the information received in the training.

Two more trainings are currently under development for 2018: one targeting speech language pathologists to increase their skills in effectively serving children on the autism spectrum or having other social communication difficulties; the other focused on infant mental health.

### Priority: Social/Recreational

RMHS received overwhelming feedback to generate more social and recreational opportunities for individuals, an area not currently supported by Medicaid or other insurance programs. Individuals on Medicaid with limited income have little to no resources to pursue social opportunities without support from mill levy funding. According to a recent AAA survey, 35% of Americans were planning to take a vacation 50 miles or more away from home in 2016<sup>3</sup>. In contrast, a recent poll of I/DD providers indicates fewer than 5% of individuals accepting services can afford to travel, particularly given the additional expenses associated with supports for supervision and personal care necessary to travel safely. The benefits of projects in this area are in line with the benefits to anyone in being able to take a vacation: reduced stress, lowered anxiety, possible decrease in heart disease, improved mental health,

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<sup>3</sup> <http://newsroom.aaa.com/2016/04/aaa-one-third-americans-will-take-family-vacation-year/>



and better developed interpersonal relationships. The Journal of the American Medical Association published a study that concluded men who take frequent annual vacations were 32% less likely to die from heart disease than those who did not take frequent vacations<sup>4</sup>.

Stakeholder feedback to Rocky Mountain Human Services has indicated that there are gaps in current systems and our programs supporting people with I/DD related to recreational opportunities, health and fitness, and community integration. Approximately 18% of mill levy funding expended in 2017 has been utilized for social and recreational goals. There are several different programs that have provided social and recreational opportunities for individuals with I/DD in Denver, ranging from supporting individuals to attend summer camp, taking local day trips to regional points of interest, and taking trips with family members or to see family members out of state. RMHS also provides annual regional recreation center passes through Denver Parks & Recreation for individuals accepting services as well as an additional caregiver pass for children.

- 170 Denver Parks and Recreation Center Annual Regional Memberships passes have been distributed to individuals with I/DD as well as 118 caregivers of children under 18 years of age
- 719 social/recreational services for individuals have been provided by our community partners, which provide a variety of increased community engagement opportunities, including local day trips and overnight trips

#### Arts & Community Exploration – ACE Program (Jewish Family Services)

The ACE Program was developed to enhance cultural and artistic exposure for clients to participate in community offerings, while cultivating new skills and awareness in the process. In 2017, ACE benefitted 24 individuals in painting and pottery classes as well as paper making. ACE established a relationship with Very Special Arts (VSA) gallery in October which entailed artists going to VSA to work on collaborative art pieces in various mediums. This partnership took place once a week over a 6-week period. The staff at VSA thoroughly enjoyed working with the artists and ACE plans to collaborate again in early 2018. Each of the artists was able to bring art pieces home with them and received rave reviews from

#### Jewish Family Services – Arts & Community Program (ACE)

*Last September, Jack began attending the ACE program one time a week. Since coming to ACE, he has fully embraced his new environment and thoroughly enjoys working with various mediums of art, participating in exercises, nutrition classes and group discussions on current events. He is able to access the community through outings including going to the Denver Museum of Nature & Science, a nearby Denver rec center, VSA, and the Colorado History Museum.*

*Jack and his family have expressed how much joy he has experienced since starting with ACE. He comes home after spending the day in ACE and is very excited to share the fun activities he participated in that day. The family home resembles an art gallery with all of his art pieces being displayed. Jack said he “enjoyed learning more about Colorado” from his visit to the history museum. His family has told Heather, the ACE Program Manager, that Jack’s life has been enriched as a result of coming to ACE.*

-Sara L., Jewish Family Services

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jill-l-ferguson/health-benefits-of-taking-a-vacation\\_b\\_9384466.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jill-l-ferguson/health-benefits-of-taking-a-vacation_b_9384466.html)

families and providers. ACE researched several non-reading self-confidence and esteem scales and developed an assessment tool to capture true outcomes based on the cognitive level of the people served. The tool consists of questions like “I feel proud of the accomplishments I had in the ACE Program today” and “How did today’s art project make you feel?” The clients are presented with 3 emoji faces that reflect happiness, indifference and dislike and asked to circle which face best demonstrated how they felt about their experience in ACE. The results of the assessment tool showed that the majority of the clients felt positive and/or happy while participating the in the ACE Program activities.

### Community Events & Adventures (Active Community Access)

This project has a goal of improving the quality of life for Denver I/DD clients and their families by providing memorable, community integrated evening and weekend activities with peers. Active Community Access benefitted 33 individuals and their families in 2017 by engaging participants in local events and offerings available on Thursday evenings and on Saturdays. Responses from participants demonstrate 100% effectiveness in the following areas:

- Improved quality of life
- Making new friends, improving existing friendships or both
- Positive interactions with the public

Active Community Access intends to assess long-term impacts over the coming months.

### Project World (Activity Options)

The purpose of “Project World” is to facilitate access to community activities and overnight travel that will enable adults with IDD to experiences the world in the way that other people do in order to increase inclusion, independence, social skills and quality of life. Activity Options has observed a major increase in the social interaction among participants. Individuals are happy to connect and support each other during the group times as well as outside of the formal activities, and some of the more independent people have even visited each other’s homes. About 50% of the individuals served participate in an activity they had never previously experienced. Approximately 75% of the activities Activity Options provided in 2017 were in the general public, increasing individuals’ opportunity to fully integrate in their community; 20% of the activities occurred in a mix of public/private environments, and 5% occurred completely outside of the general population, such as a private event for the participants. A third outcome was related to individuals’ willingness and ability to navigate novel environments and experiences. Staff measured the individuals’ reactions to these settings and found 75% were willing, 15% were inflexible/unwilling, and 10% were avoidant or completely unable/unwilling.

#### Project World

*I am a single mother who moved to southeast Denver 6 months ago. My 35 year old son has lived with me his entire life. He participates in a day program but we have been unable to connect with after-hours activities that could help him learn his way around Denver and make independent friends. We found out about Activity Options Project World a few months ago. I really appreciate the door-to-door transportation and the variety of activities and social events available to him now. He has really fallen into a group that he loves and he is able to go because of the generous Mill Levy funding. He is even going on an overnight trip soon and seems more confident and happy with his new friends!*

-Mom of N.

### Social Inclusion Project (Connect Us)

The work of Connect Us provides a unique and powerful opportunity for families and youth to become more socially connected, particularly those with High Functioning Autism (HFA) and other developmental differences, both diagnosed and undiagnosed. The transition to kindergarten is one of the most

challenging times for children with developmental disabilities. The goal is to equip children in early childhood with the tools and support they need to develop friendships and be included with their peers. Because the Connect Us model is based on social skill building and creating inclusive settings for children with DD, our programs incorporate and serve typically developing children alongside children with developmental disabilities. This mix helps ensure an inclusive social environment in which children with developmental disabilities are not stigmatized and involves a variety of social aptitudes so children can learn positive relationship skills from one another guided by trained facilitators.

In 2017, Connect US served 76 Denver children with I/DD and 12 parents of children with I/DD in integrated settings including typically developing children and their parents. The assessments used identified an additional 77 children as socially at-risk, fitting many criteria for I/DD despite a formal diagnosis being disclosed. Primary areas of concern for parents included the ability to control anger, emotion, and impulses and rebounding quickly from disappointment or frustration. Teachers' primary areas of concern included lack of emergent leadership qualities and difficulty initiating social interactions with peers. In addition to their direct work with children, Connect Us staff was able to partner with school administrators in identifying potentially vulnerable children to ensure their social and emotional well-being are monitored and supported.

- Over 90% of children with I/DD/socially at-risk improved their assessment scores in one or more of the following areas: self-confidence, resiliency, and/or social skills.
- Over 70% moved up at least one full assessment category on the overall scale.
- Comparative analysis of pre- and post- assessments demonstrated over 80% of after-school group participants with social deficits showed improved self-confidence, adaptability and resiliency after the 8-week session.
- An initial 5-hour parent workshop on raising socially connected kids resulted in the following feedback from the 24 parents in attendance:
  - 50% found the workshop “extremely helpful” (5 on a scale of 1-5) and 42% “very helpful”
  - 100% learned strategies or techniques to try at home
  - 75% learned new communication strategies to incorporate into their daily practices with their children at home
  - 92% described the workshop as ‘informative, innovative, helpful, a great experience or evolutionary’
  - 75% are interested in future parent workshops

## StellarCare Vacations

StellarCare Vacations work to allow individuals with I/DD the experience of travel and community integration more often afforded to people without disabilities. This project prioritizes family reconnections while also enabling individuals to have new experiences, increase quality of life, and decrease overall stress. Family reunification is perhaps the most important benefit for the client when it is achieved. When this is provided the family is able to reconnect and become stronger natural supports as well as advocates for their family member who has I/DD. Our sense of value often comes from our connection to others. Healthy family connections are often a catalyst for how we perceive ourselves in a positive way. This in turn affects all aspects of living for the better. Of the 12 personalized and accompanied trips completed in 2017, StellarCare achieved all of the following outcomes for their I/DD clients:

- Visited new places they would not be able to without this service.
- Met new people or reconnected with family
- Experienced decrease in overall stress and anxiety, and an overall increase in happiness
- Increased awareness of the I/DD population among the general public
- Respite opportunity for caregiver and client



### StellarCare Vacations

*As soon as he heard about our family restorative trips, Mike's caregiver knew he had to connect us with him. Mike hadn't seen his sister Billie- Jean in 7 years or his much younger brother in 20 years. When we first met Mike and learned more about his needs we knew it would be challenging to travel with him. We also knew without a doubt it would be well worth it. Billy-Jean, who is Mike's guardian, called every week to make sure the trip was going to happen. She connected us with George, Mike's brother, who took time off work to meet us all in Tennessee. Even though Mike has limited verbal skills, he clearly communicated his excitement at seeing his family and spending time with them. During this restorative family trip, George decided he wanted to have a greater impact on Mike's life and wanted to help Billy-Jean, who has increasing difficulties managing her guardianship responsibilities. This short trip brought a family together again to create memories and support for a lifetime.*

-Robert H., StellarCare

## The Wayfaring Band

Expansion of The Wayfaring band programs to Denver individuals with I/DD offers emphasis on community-building, skill-development, and place-based adventures. Using a person-centered approach to foster a culture of mutual aid, The Wayfaring Band designs group travel that generates opportunities for all program participants to make meaningful contributions to the community. In addition, the model increases visibility of people with I/DD to the general public. In 2017, 17 Denver participants experiencing I/DD were served and the following outcomes were achieved:

- 100% of trip survey responses indicate they strongly agree they have increased daily living skills, including food preparation, cleaning, organizing, money management, time management, and healthy choices
- 100% of survey respondents agree or strongly agree that the itinerary was exciting and original
- 100% of survey respondents strongly agree they have noticed an increased sense of belonging. One respondent said: “Loved the photos posted during the trip. Love the sense of my son being part of a tremendous community with opportunity for real friendship.”
- 100% of survey respondents strongly agree they have noticed an increase in confidence
- 100% strongly agree they have noticed an increase in social skills.
- 86% of survey respondents strongly agree they have noticed an increase in health and wellbeing, including self-care and personal safety

## Priority: System Gaps

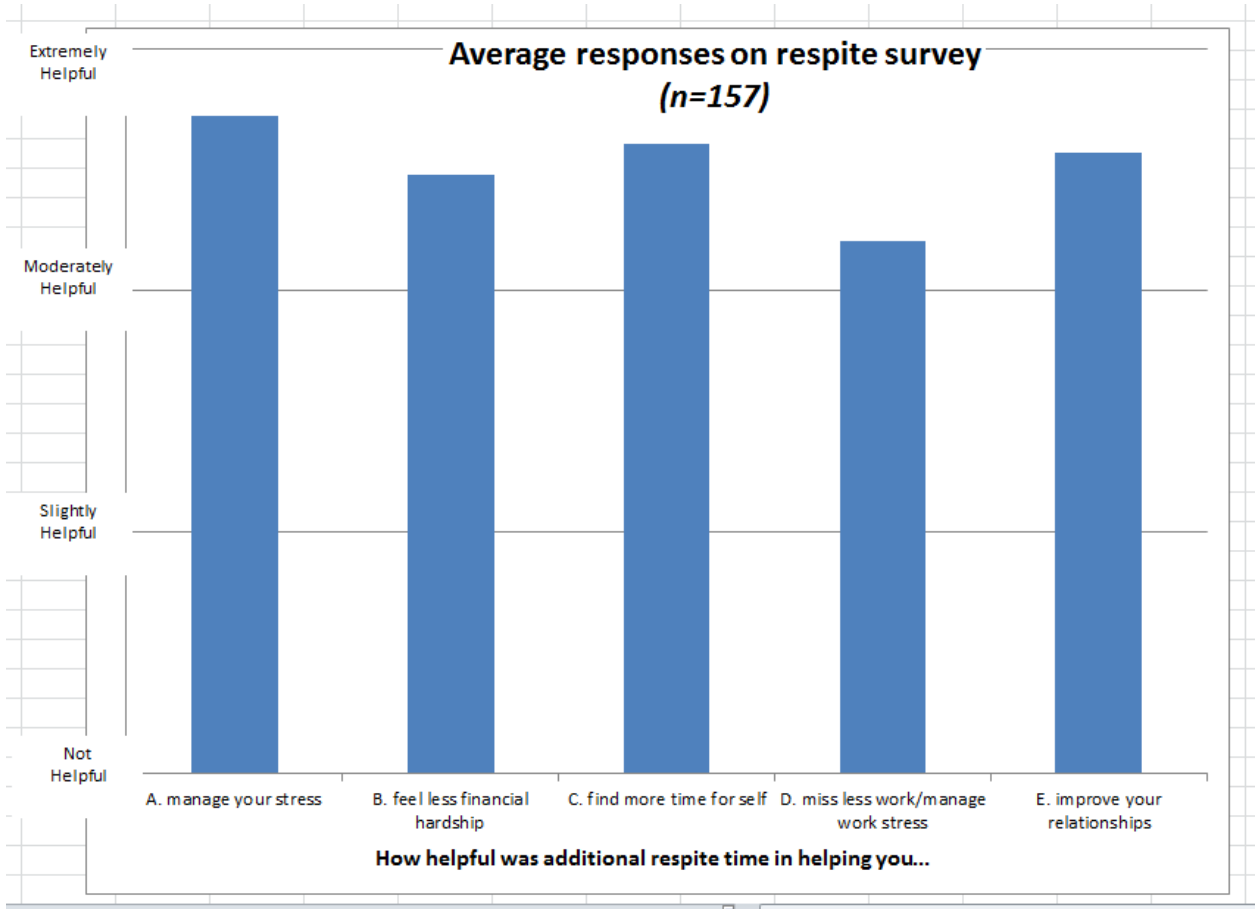
Mill levy funded services to address system gaps currently comprise 27% of the total Special Project expenses for this reporting period. When an individual needs more care and support than is reimbursed through current funding programs, mill levy funding is used to address system gaps and program service limitations of other funding sources, such as Medicaid and State-funded services. In some cases these gaps may be within the I/DD system; in other cases, the gaps are between this and other systems, such as mental health, foster care, and homelessness. By far the service deemed to be the most important from area stakeholders is respite care. In 2017, over \$1,066,000 in respite funds has been accessed.

There is significant literature available that demonstrates the positive effects that respite care brings to the life of a caregiver. Over time, without relief and assistance, caregiving can take a mental and physical toll. The Family Caregiver Alliance reports that 40 to 70 percent of caregivers show clinically significant symptoms of depression. The Center on Aging Society adds that 1 in 10 family caregivers report that their responsibilities have caused their physical health to worsen<sup>5</sup>.

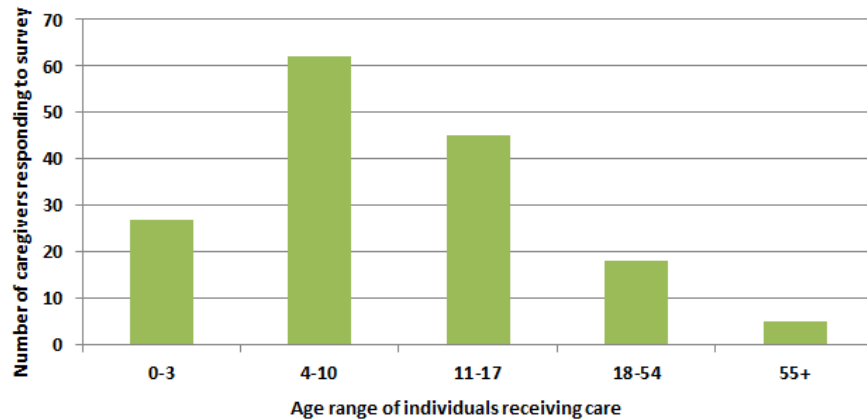
Beginning in quarter 3, RMHS sent out surveys to the caregivers who had received funds for respite. The response we continue to receive is significant. An astonishing over 50% of the anonymous surveys (more than 150) have been returned to date. Caregivers were asked to rate 5 items on a scale of 1-4:

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.comfortkeepers.com/home/info-center/respite-care/importance-of-respite-relief-for-family-caregivers>



**# of caregivers responding  
by age of individual in their care  
(n=157)**



### Mill levy service plans

Beginning in August 2017, adults accepting services who reside in Denver are able to access additional services through their RMHS Service Plan process. RMHS rolled out this option for customers in the following Waiver programs: HCBS-DD (Comp), Supported Living Services (SLS), and Children’s Extensive Services (CES). When State funds for Supported Living Services are exhausted, individuals in State SLS will also be able to access these additional services. Individuals are now able to add additional services with mill levy funding in the following categories:

- Behavioral Services
- Day Habilitation (specialized habilitation, supported community connections, community connector)
- Mentorship
- Respite Services
- Supported Employment

RMHS has invited all program approved service agencies (PASAs) providing one or more of the above services to Denver residents to contract with us to provide additional services with mill levy funds. Only one agency has declined after indicating none of the customers they serve are in need of additional services. To date, 118 PASAs have been contacted and contracts have been executed with 36 agencies so far. RMHS will continue to expand the services offered and PASAs contracted as the need for services expands.