

Empowering and Connecting families with children with disabilities.

A Celebration of Service

Our Vision . . .

Children bring their own sunshine into the world and each child deserves a bright future.

Visions with Hope 360° was created to help Latino children with developmental disabilities and their families achieve their dreams for the future. **It brings hope for children and their families.**

Visions with Hope 360° is a partnership between the Institute for Human Development at UMKC and the Mattie Rhodes Center. Visions with Hope 360° connects Latino families who have a child with a developmental disability or a special health care need with information, resources, and family support. These services are provided in both Spanish and English to families living in Jackson, Clay, Platte, and Cass counties in Missouri. The services are free of charge and there is no documentation required. The program offers a future filled with hope for Latino families.

Mattie Rhodes Center

John Fierro, Executive Director

Mattie Rhodes Center is proud to collaborate with the University of Missouri - Kansas City Institute for Human Development to provide the Visions with Hope 360° program. The program speaks to Mattie Rhodes Center's mission of bridging cultures and communities through arts, mental health and social services in a respectful and compassionate environment. For more than 113 years, Mattie Rhodes Center has provided services to help individuals and families reach their full potential in a healthy, safe and creative environment.

I'm proud of the growth in the Visions with Hope 360° program. The program has grown considerably in the past year, adding new staff and the new Visionaries program for young adults. Support groups, case management and advocacy services have expanded to fit the growing need of Latino families of children with developmental disabilities.

In the past year, Visions with Hope 360° has collaborated with other Mattie Rhodes Center programs, helping to integrate the arts and mental health services we provide. Young adults from the Visionaries program have participated in arts activities at our Art Center and have visited the Mattie Rhodes Art Gallery. In the coming year, as the program continues to grow and evolve, it is our hope that all parts of the organization will have the opportunity to interact with and support Visions with Hope 360°.

Institute for Human Development

Dr. Carl F. Calkins, Director

The UMKC Institute for Human Development, a University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities, Education, Research and Services is pleased to partner with Mattie Rhodes and Visions with Hope 360° staff. Our mission is to improve the quality of life for people across the entire age span by promoting community inclusion, community membership, independence, productivity and social participation. The Visions with Hope 360° Program is helping Latino families identify resources and develop a support network. Families are not only receiving help for their children with disabilities; they are developing skills and knowledge to improve the entire family's life and health.

Families continue to be the essence of the program and they have been involved in every aspect of the project. Serving diverse members of our community is a part of the Universities Urban Mission; Visions with Hope 360° gives the Institute for Human Development the opportunity to serve and learn from the Latino families in our community.

This partnership provides an excellent opportunity for us to enhance our own knowledge about the needs and strengths of our Latino neighbors and friends. We are proud to be a part of this exciting endeavor as we continue to strengthen our relationship with Mattie Rhodes and the Latino community.

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Visions with Hope 360°...

is completing its' third year of providing services to families that have children with disabilities. The staff at Visions with Hope 360° continues to create an environment that is open and comfortable for the families. Families have been included in the planning process since its inception and today the needs of the families continue to provide direction in the development of programs.

Since the development of our program, it has grown to respond to the needs of Latino families with children with disabilities. We have added new staff, improved our response to the needs of our youth, developed new partnerships, and strengthened the networks that were established early in our development. We are proud of the accomplishments and the growth that our families continue to demonstrate. Our network of families, partnerships and collaborations continue to increase as we build capacity within our organization. Several of the new partnerships and programs will be highlighted in this newsletter.

Although we celebrate the closing of our third year, we know that our work is not complete. Our families continue to struggle with issues related to navigating complex service systems, access to quality services, information about disabilities, and other quality of life issues. Visions with Hope 360° will continue to build bridges to close the gaps between service providers and Latino families, strive to create partnerships with state agencies and community based providers, and work to help families gain access to information and resources that improve the quality of life for all family members.

We hope you continue with us on this journey as we build our knowledge about the needs and strengths of our families. The partnership between families, universities, and community based organizations has provided an excellent foundation for growth for many years.

2006-07 Monthly Meeting Topics

Because the Center is focused on the specific needs of the families receiving service, it is important that the families are involved in planning and identifying topics to be discussed at the support group events. At each meeting, the families talk about the needs they have and their main issues of concern. Based on the needs identified, the Visions with Hope 360° staff find resources and professionals to attend the meetings on those specific topics.

During this past year, monthly meetings have presented the following topics:

October 19, 2006: **Special Education & Your Rights**, Georgia Mueller, MPACT and Fathers' Role In & Out of Home, Ken Howard, National Center for Fatherhood. We had 15 parents attend.

November 15, 2006: **Preparing for IEP's**, Sorayda Sierra and Annette Rossel, KCMO School District. 24 parents attended.

December 14, 2006: **Advocacy Training**, with 22 parents in attendance.

January 18, 2007: **Health Advocacy & Information**, Laura Bisellach, Samuel Rogers, Maria Ortiz, Healthcare USA. We had 20 parents attend.

February 15, 2007: **Sexuality in Youth and Adults with Special Needs**, Vianella Halsall, Planned Parenthood. 21 parents attended the meeting.

March 15, 2007: **Financial Stability & Buying a Home**, Patricia Perevra McCreary and Maria Aranda, El Centro. 17 parents attended.

April 2007: **What parents need to know about the Special Education System**. 27 parents attended.

May 2007: **Improving positive behaviors on our children**. 31 parents were in attendance.

June 2007: **Making a story with the positive rituals of our child with DD**. 24 parents attended.

July 2007: **People first language - A credo for support**. 26 parents attended.

August 2007: **The impact of the family on our children's behavior**. 30 parents were in attendance.



"Now I know that there is other people going through the same things I have gone through..."

~ a parent

Jewish Vocational Services (JVS) and Visions with Hope have partnered on a program that is focused on providing employment trainings, information and support to Latino families looking for employment opportunities. Through this collaborative effort, both JVS and Visions with Hope are able to assist Latino families with employment. This project has also expanded to working with the youth of the Visionaries program. The youth that have graduated from high school are connected to training and different learning opportunities in order to find employment. This partnership will continue to grow as both organizations work together to accomplish their mission of serving the Latino community.

National Sports Center for People with Disabilities: Over the past two years, Kansas City Parks and Recreation has begun to address barriers to inclusion of people with disabilities within its' programs. As a starting point, a partnership was formed with the National Sports Center for the Disabled (NSCD) to host a number of "ability camps" within the Kansas City area that provide an opportunity for people with disabilities to try out and experience a variety of recreation activities.

Ability camps have included a golf clinic, baseball camp with the Kansas City Royals, a football camp with the Kansas City Chiefs, and a soccer camp with the Kansas City Wizards with over 150 participants. Over the last year the program has grown to include Visions with Hope children and parents. Children from Visions with Hope participated in several of the summer ability camps.

The Kansas City Regional Center: The Kansas City Regional Center and Visions with Hope staff continue to meet and discuss the needs of the Latino families served by Visions and the Regional Center. The Regional Center identified two case managers to work specifically with Visions staff and the families that are referred from the Visions project. To date, 34 families have been referred to the regional center for services and are enrolled in programs offered by the regional center.

Most recently, Visions with Hope Parent Advocate Odily Rowland was selected to serve as the co-chair of the Parent Advisory Council for the Autism Project at the Regional Center. It is the goal of the Parent Advisory Council to include more families who are Spanish speaking over the next several years.



Missouri Parents Act (MPACT): Visions with

Hope has been working side-by-side with MPACT mentors and staff to ensure that all the families have the support they need to advocate for the services in the school district for their child. Visions with Hope staff have met with MPACT staff to design strategies of working together to support Spanish speaking families in the Kansas City school district. Several Visions with Hope staff and parents have received MPACT training to serve as certified MPACT mentors. MPACT continues to provide training to the families and staff on educational law changes, transitioning, bullying and other important educational topics.



"I feel very happy coming to the group, this is like my second family... I love the way we share things and how we respect each other..."

~ a parent



Missouri Developmental Disability Resource Center (MODDRC):

Visions with Hope 360° has been working with the MODDRC to build its capacity to provide Spanish resources on disability topics and information. The MODDRC is a statewide information and referral service located at the UMKC-Institute for Human Development. Services are provided free of charge to anyone who needs to learn more about a disability or wants to be connected to resources. This partnership has enabled the MODDRC to offer Information in Spanish over the phone, through the mail or on the internet.

Sharing Our Strengths: Over the last year, Visions with Hope staff and families have worked with Sharing Our Strengths (SOS) to develop parent to parent mentoring services to Spanish speaking families. SOS is now able to match Spanish speaking families to others who can provide emotional and informational support. The curriculum was developed and several parents have been trained to serve as mentors. One of the parents has already been matched to another parent in another part of Missouri to talk about their experience of raising a child with a disability. This is a valuable service that will support families across Missouri who feel isolated and alone.



Community Support Navigators:

Visions with Hope 360° has the pleasure of hosting an AmeriCorps member to serve the families and youth. This program is made possible because of an AmeriCorps grant from the Missouri Community Service Commission to the UMKC-Institute for Human Development in partnership with the Missouri Planning Council on Developmental Disabilities. Mattie Rhodes Center is one of eight host sites that provide opportunities for AmeriCorps members to mentor individuals with disabilities on meeting their needs, desires and dreams. This partnership began the foundation for the Visionaries youth program.



The Down Syndrome Guild of Kansas City and Visions with Hope 360° became aware of each others' services in 2005. Staff at Children's

Mercy Hospital facilitated the meeting between the two organizations and they have been partnering from that day forward. The Down Syndrome Guild supports and embraces all of the new babies and families in the Kansas City area that are dealing with issues related to Down Syndrome. When Down Syndrome Guild staff identify Latino families they contact staff at Visions with Hope to help provide support and information to the families. Visions with Hope staff have helped build capacity within the Down Syndrome Guild organization and they recently hired a Latino staff members as they continue to strive to reach the Latino community.



National Center for Fatherhood (NCF)

recognized that Visions with Hope could support fathers within their own setting. NCF provided Spanish copies of "Seven Secrets of Effective Fathers" by Ken R. Canfield to the Center. The fathers have been meeting to discuss the materials they have read and have also attended training on such topics as: Voices of an Effective Father, Skills of Being a Good Dad, and Applying the Seven Secrets. The fathers who have participated have found this to be very beneficial. Comments from fathers included: "Gosh, I have never talked about fatherhood with anybody;" "It was an honor for me to hear other dads' challenges and joys;" and "It was such an uplifting experience to witness a group of men sharing tears of common realities." We look forward to continuing partnership with the National Center for Fatherhood.

Services at a Glance

A total of seventy-one families have received services from the Visions with Hope project this reporting year. Each family served has unique abilities, characteristics and needs. The chart below identifies the number of individuals who have utilized our services and their different types of disabilities.

Type of Disability	# Individuals
Autism	22
Down Syndrome	16
Epilepsy	5
Cerebral Palsy	7
Mental Retardation	17
ADHD	5
Others	8

The interventions and referrals had a positive impact on the families and children with disabilities. Below are some of the ways in which Visions with Hope staff have assisted families:

- **Employment:** Connecting parents and youth to job opportunities, learning how to fill out a job application, improving interviewing skills.
- **Legal:** Identifying for attorneys to address legal issues, guardianship, divorce, work compensation, car accidents or traffic violations.
- **Health:** Communication between health systems and families, assistance in making doctor appointments, advocating for free medications or discounts; getting discounts or payment plans for medical bills.
- **Housing:** Information related to purchasing a home, solving situations related to City ordinances for housing issues, receiving information and advocating for their rights as tenants and/or owners, even in an

eviction case, and finding resources to fix their houses.

- **Education:** Advocating with families for services within school systems, provided information to help parents learn the rights of their children at school, preparing for IEP meetings, understanding their roles as co-educators and advocates for their children, making decisions about school placements and finding the right school for their children, worked with school counselors and administrators regarding cultural competency, increasing the awareness and facilitating the approach to the issues related to the culture differences.
- **Immigration support:** Supporting families through the immigration process.
- **Transportation:** Providing or educating families on transportation services by teaching how to use public transportation or connecting them to Christmas in October Program to acquire a car.

Below is a chart identifying the various types of assistance requested:

Specific Service	# of Families
Health Services	25
Benefits	30
Housing Assistance	12
Employment	16
Transportation	13
Legal Issues	19
Educational	46
Emergency Assistance	11

"I love that they are always there for me. I know I can count with you all... They always are happy and never get tired of me calling for help." ~ a parent

"Now I know that there is other people going through the same things I have gone through..."



Receiving Support to Get Informed

In October of 2006, a parent of a child with autism began attending the Visions with Hope 360° Autism Support Group meetings. At the beginning, she was quiet and very shy but she came to every meeting. She learned to use a computer and searched for Web sites on autism. When a doctor came to speak, this parent came out of her shell and encouraged parents to follow the information given.

A year later, the parent now encourages all Autism Support Group participants to learn more about children's disabilities and be more involved in the group. She has shared her ideas with other families in the group and calls other parents to motivate them.

Recently, the parent shared with Visions with Hope 360° staff all of the resources she found and ideas she has to share with the other families. She is now proficient in searching the internet for resources related to autism. The family advocate reports, "It is wonderful to see how she has grown and developed wonderful skills and her desire to share all this with other parents."



National Center for Down Syndrome Supports Families at Conference

Mattie Rhodes Center sent families to the National Down Syndrome Congress's 35th Annual Convention "Show Me the Possibilities" that was held in Kansas City August 3-5, 2007. Scholarship money from the Down Syndrome Guild of Kansas City and the National Center for Down Syndrome Congress allowed eighteen Visions with Hope families and three youth from the Center to attend and participate in the convention.

The National Down Syndrome Congress made efforts to reach out to the Spanish-speaking community for the convention. Thirty-four Latino parents and three Latino youth from Mattie Rhodes Center participated in the convention. One youth, Flor Fabiola Gonzales, 22, welcomed attendees to the convention in her native Spanish. Flor is very involved with the Visionaries program. Her interests also include fashion, makeup and helping others.



Youth Attend National Conference

Fernando is a bright young man currently attending school. He will be 20 in October and loves to dance and make others laugh. He presented at the National Down Syndrome Guild conference this year on a Youth and Adult Panel. He also played drums with his band during the talent show on Sunday, August 5.

Marcos Antonio ("Tony") Cardenas, 21, also attended the conference. Tony currently lives with his mother in Kansas City and loves dancing and spending time with friends. He always has a smile on his face and has a genuine concern for the people around him.



A Parent's Testament

Gerardo Martinez became involved with Mattie Rhodes through his son Mateo, who has a developmental disability. After Mateo joined the Visions for Hope 360° program, Martinez says,

"We could see in Mateo more light and passion in his own person." Now Mateo is part of the Visionaries program.



"He is excited and cannot wait to go the next week. He is learning to have fun again and enjoys being around kids of his age," says Martinez.

Reflecting on the Gifts of Others

Written by the Visions with Hope 360° AmeriCorps member:

One of the youth members loves to draw during group activities. One day, after she completed one of her masterpieces she gave it to me. I asked her why she gave it to me and she said, "Porque te quiero mucho (I love you so much)."

Over the course of my year of service with Visions, I have thought of this client and her response often as a motivation to continue and as a reminder of what I have accomplished.

When I first met this client, she was withdrawn. She rarely spoke and was content to have a piece of paper and a pen in front of her. As I began to spend more time with her, her attitude changed completely. She talks all the time now (much like myself) and is willing to try new things. She has grown so much this year and watching her success and growth has also helped me grow.

I first learned that it is important to recognize abilities instead of focusing on what we want someone to do or what we think they should be able to do. She is compassionate and a talented artist. She loves all of the creatures placed on this earth from man to the inhabitants of the sky. When most people are so focused on making their affections so extravagant or eloquent, she can express so much with just placing her head on your shoulder or taking your hand. She is an incredible artist and she uses her drawings as her means of communication with the world. At first, I was impatient because I couldn't understand this, but now I know that it is important to let everyone use their voice, no matter the manner in which they use it.

They say that even if you make a difference in one person's life, you have made a remarkable difference to the world. The cynical me, the me before AmeriCorps and Visions with Hope, used to think that this was just a cliché. Now I know that this is not a cliché but a reality. I recall several conversations with her mother, where she told me that she asks on a daily basis if I'm coming to see her or if we're going to go somewhere together. Knowing that I have made a difference in her life, even if it is a small one, gives me a sense of hope and is helping to erase the cynic in me.

The Visionaries Group

"This Program have made a difference on my son's life, now he is very excited about going out with the Visionaries, and doing different cool things" ...
 ~ a parent

Isolation and lack of opportunities to socialize and participate in meaningful activities are two of the biggest issues facing Latino youth with developmental disabilities. Visions with Hope felt it was important to expand its services to meet this need. This was made possible by participating as a host site for an AmeriCorps member through the Community Support Navigator, a program of the UMKC-Institute for Human Development (UCEDD) and the Missouri Planning Council on Developmental Disabilities.

The AmeriCorps member identified young adults being served by Visions with Hope and created a support group to begin addressing their needs. The AmeriCorps member also provided one-on-one mentoring to the youth to assist them in finding opportunities to participate in the community. The youth began to bond as a group and feel less isolated and more confident as individuals. The youth began to take ownership of the group and named it "The Visionaries." They are currently working on developing a logo for their group.

To further expand what the AmeriCorps member started, Visions with Hope was awarded funding from Jackson County Board of Services to officially develop a youth focus. This enabled the Visions with

Hope program to hire a coordinator to develop and implement strategies to help the youth become more independent. The coordinator is responsible for the identification of services and opportunities for the youth.



The youth program is currently serving 22 youth between the ages of 16 and 25. The program offers two group meetings a week, one focused on independent living skills and the other focused on empowerment and socialization. Individual youth also receive mentoring on goals that they have decided, such as assistance getting a drivers license or riding the bus or help getting a job. Participants volunteer in the community to enhance their social skills. They also attend educational classes such as art and English and participate in support groups.

"My daughter looks forward to seeing Rachel and the other friends every week. She asks me every day, is today Thursday?"
 ~ a parent

Visionaries Giving Back to Their Community

The Visionaries Group began volunteering for the Meals on Wheels program in July 2007. During this activity, the group focused on vocational skills by providing a service to senior citizens. Additionally, the members experienced social interaction with the senior citizens and within the group.

During one delivery, a senior citizen asked one of the Visionaries members to set the meal on the counter in her kitchen. The senior citizen explained that she was blind. She said, "I hope that you will never know what it's like to be blind." The member replied "I have been legally blind since the age of four." After hearing this, the senior approached the member and began to talk to her as a peer and someone who understood her.

Both the senior citizen and Visionary member found joy in the opportunity to make a new friend. A connection was made that day between two people through shared experience. Independent Living Specialist Daniel Guzman says, "It was a learning and humbling experience to witness how one person with a disability can offer so much to another person with a disability."

 *Expanding the Support Groups to Meet Families*

Family Support Day Group: In order to meet the needs of the families who are unable to attend the evening support group meeting, Visions with Hope developed a meeting during the day at which they share the information from the evening meeting. The family advocate presents the materials and information that was discussed during the evening meeting. If the presenter is able, he or she will attend both the evening and day meetings. Over the last year the number of parents who have attended ranged from five to twelve.


Fathering Support Group: The involvement of fathers continues to grow. Visions with Hope hosted several events for fathers to discuss the challenges

"Gosh! This is the first time that I have connected with other men about fathers' issues." ~ a father


and joys of raising a child with a disability. Four fathers attended a two day workshop hosted by National Center for Fatherhood on strategies of raising children and being a supportive husband. The Visions with Hope manager, who is a father of a child with a disability, hosted a "lunch and learn" where 6 fathers came to discuss fatherhood. Visions with Hope hosts quarterly events for the fathers to participate in.

Autism Support Group: Parents with children who have autism get the opportunity to discuss their experiences and learn more about autism. The new parent advocate for Visions with Hope, a mother who has a child with autism, is facilitating these meetings. The Autism Support Group began with only 2 or 3 families and has now grown to 15 families. The group began by learning about autism. They then moved on to sensory integration and different learning techniques including the use of PECS and picture books. Various speakers have presented before the group. A doctor recently spoke about gluten and casein free diets and a bilingual speech therapist explained the benefits and challenges of speech therapy.

Down Syndrome Support Group: The Down Syndrome Guild provides support to Visions with Hope staff as they host a support group specifically for families with children with Down Syndrome. The Support group is the only one in the area that specifically addresses issues related to the Latino culture and Down Syndrome. This year, with the help of the Down Syndrome Guild, Visions with Hope families had the opportunity to participate in the national Down Syndrome Congress, the buddy walk, a fundraising event to support families, and several conferences and training opportunities.



The Latino community now has a representative at Parents Advisory Council Board at Regional Center for the Autism Project, with Mrs. Rowland, our parent advocate at Visions with Hope 360°. The PAC have accepted to have the Latino families involved at the KCMO Regional Autism Conference and Mrs. Rowland has taken the lead for their special accommodations in terms of language barriers.



A mother of 6 year old child with Autism said: "I would like to help other parents to get more involved, to be more active on educating themselves and learn more about autism... Since I started coming to the group my interest has grown and I feel now that I really can do things for my daughter"... She has become a great advocate for her child and a great role model for other families...

Family Centered Planning Leads to Success!

Case managers work with families to create a family centered plan (FCP). The plan provides a sense of connecting the whole family together and seeking the well-being of each member with his or her own unique abilities. It brings all family members to a common ground.

As a case manager, Gerardo Martinez has had the opportunity to witness deep changes in the Visions with Hope 360° families. A Family Centered Plan can confirm a family's values as it gives tools to "get a little piece from everyone's minds and hearts."

One family in particular received help with their young son from Visions with Hope 360°. The mother was able to express her needs and feelings regarding her son. She told Visions staff with tears in her eyes, "I am not saying anything new, but I need everyone's help." This helped her husband to see that problems

had developed within the family as he ignored his wife and other children's concerns.

Visions staff helped him to realize that his emotional presence and involvement could bring more peace and security at home. As a group, the family and staff discussed the possibility of finding a respite service for the family to find some relief from the emotional and physical demands of caring for their son.

A Family Centered Plan is a journey rather than a destination. Families are constantly setting, reaching and reevaluating goals. Martinez looks forward to working with the families in the future: "I am excited to see how some of our families are being transformed and motivated to make changes in their lives!"



"By taking small steps together, families and friends can assist learning and experience positive outcomes, so that as adults, people with disabilities might be better prepared to take their places as contributing members of their communities."



"Exploring ideas about the future is important. It is a way to clarify what the person needs to do now, so that the future they desire is more likely to happen."

Maria is a single mother of a thirteen year old son who has a developmental disability and an eating disorder. Maria was under a tremendous amount of stress and was experiencing depression. She did not know where to get help.

Maria called Visions with Hope 360° and met with a case manager to get help and complete an assessment. During the assessment, it was discovered that her son had school related problems. He is very shy and displayed very low self-esteem and self-image. The case manager assisted Maria and her son during two I.E.P meetings. Maria asked the principal to provide a new school evaluation and new services. Over time, Maria gained confidence in advocating for services for her son who is now receiving speech and occupational therapy. He is also getting support with ESL classes. He is becoming much more confident in his abilities.

Transportation was also a major problem for Maria. Maria was referred to another agency for transportation assistance. She and her case manager were able to get a car donated to Maria. She was very happy to get transportation which has been a tremendous help with her daily responsibilities.

The case manager referred Maria to an agency to assist with her anxiety and depression. Maria would agree to seek help but did not attend the sessions. She was encouraged and challenged again to make an appointment to see a therapist. **She finally did!** After several sessions, Maria's confidence level grew and she was able to identify some of her problems. She felt like something was "healing" inside as she was able to talk, to trust and to shed tears for the first time in a very long time.

Today, she is celebrating new friendships and she has decided to move to another state with her son and start a new life on her own! Maria reports she will continue taking therapy sessions.



Ms. Meza has a son with autism who recently began having seizures. During one of his seizures, he was taken by ambulance to a hospital. While at the hospital, Ms. Meza spoke with a social worker who questioned Ms. Meza's ability to take care of her son. The number of emergency room visits caused concern for the

social worker. The social worker threatened to call DFS and file a report for neglect if the emergency room visits did not stop.

Ms. Meza mentioned that her son has autism and his behaviors are very hard to manage. She asked for assistance in giving his medications. The social worker did not provide assistance. The Visions with Hope parent advocate assisted Ms. Meza in getting an appointment with a neurologist. Ms. Meza was very nervous and did not know what to do. The Visions with Hope parent advocate discussed the case with the neurologist. The neurologist determined the child had not been not prescribed the right amount of medication which was causing the seizures. The doctor prescribed the proper amount and recommended that Ms. Meza get help by making an appointment to see a behavior specialist. Ms. Meza was very relieved to know that her son's behavior was not her fault and that she was doing her best to help her son.



"Parent advocates are important to the Center because of their knowledge of the different disabilities, understanding of family needs, and their ability to navigate systems of care."



"Early intervention and proper information helps prepare families to better address situations involving their children with disabilities. With the help of the parent advocates, families are growing stronger and are better able to manage life's challenges."

Advocacy Services

Visions with Hope 360° has expanded the advocacy services available to clients. This has impacted families' willingness and openness to learning about their children's disabilities.

Parents are recognizing the need to get more involved and educate themselves about their rights and the rights of their children. The program provides parents and children with individualized advocacy services from a family advocate.

Advocacy services often focus on school related issues. Parents have commented that they feel safer when they have someone by their side to advocate for their children. The school district knows that the parents have the necessary support and know their educational rights.

As parents learn more about the services available to their children, they are better able to advocate for improvements in the educational experiences of their children. Parents learn about Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and the importance of parent participation in the educational process.

Another result has been that fathers become more involved with their children through this process. As fathers learn more about the disability and the services available, they feel more supported, confident, and able to support their children. Parents learn through Visions with Hope 360° that they are part of a team.