



Quality of Life and Peace of Mind

LISTEN We listened to the mother of our 27 year-old client with Pervasive Developmental Disorder, NOS. When we began working with him, his family lived on the East Coast, but was worried about the increasing behavioral outbursts, insomnia, weight gain, and obsessive tendencies their son was experiencing at home in Washington. Though his basic day to day needs were being met by supported living home staff, he infrequently left the home and lived in a life of fantasy. His obsessive traits such as repetitive speech, and hand squeezing were leading to agitation, and occasional hitting and screaming. His mother received multiple daily phone calls at work regarding his behavior as his staff were concerned that his anxiety and restlessness were impacting all residents.

DREAM For a client who cannot read or comprehend the passing of time, finding a routine that supported his creative fantasy life while teaching important boundaries and appropriate behaviors was the challenge. We worked with the client and his support network to find his passion for music and love of activities in the outdoors to find what inspired him to connect with others and leave the home.

PLAN We reviewed the services provided by the supported living home, and discovered ways to augment our client's daily activities by inserting private activities with additional staff at key times throughout the week to build a fuller routine. By reviewing our client's eligibility for state benefits, we were able to locate state supported job coaches to assess his vocational training ability and enroll him in a job program. We consulted with the supported living home management to add Amazon Fresh food deliveries to the operation of the home which created opportunities for healthier meals for all residents thus freeing up staff to spend more one on one time with the residents on meaningful life skills.

CREATE We met frequently with agency management to discover ways to set goals using feedback from staff, and to fit within their job descriptions. We brainstormed 'outside the box' to find solutions to challenging behaviors. To reduce anxiety, we integrated hiking, biking, and physical fitness with a privately paid activity partner into his weekly schedule. For expression of emotion and to channel repetitive behaviors creatively, we enrolled him in private drum lessons and scheduled visits to the Experience Music Project into his monthly activities. Because anxiety and anticipation without a concept of time was a problem, we developed a personalized visual cue system that allows him to keep track of which activity comes "next on the list" in relation to meals and daylight. To keep him in contact with his social network, we set-up a Facebook page for staff to upload photos of his events to assist in engaging conversation on the telephone and Skype with his friends and family.

DELIVER Our client lives successfully in his supported living home with 24-hour state supported care, and weekly visits from his two private activity staff. His family is able to live out of state, without worries about his declining mental or physical status. Family receives a weekly email update and can access his online calendar and Facebook to know he has a life balance. He is working in the community two days a week and has developed the concept of working for money to spend it on his choices. He has learned to ask to walk away from anxiety triggers rather than act out, and his personal boundaries have improved. He receives regular exercise and participates meaningfully with the other residents of his program. He assists in choosing his calendar and now can better predict his days which are much fuller than sitting and talking to stuffed animals alone in his room.