

**Park Lawn
Outcome Measurement Report
Spring/Summer 2021**

The board of directors, in consultation with administration, develops the long term strategies of the organization. The administrative team is responsible for carrying out the strategic plan and addressing critical day to day issues. The administrative team, in turn, reports status of strategic and critical day to day issues back to the board. Neither works independently of the other. As a result, there is a collaborative effort between the board of directors and administration to ensure that residents and day program participants are receiving quality programming in a safe and healthy environment, while also focusing on longer term strategies to ensure programs remain relevant in the future.

Continuing on the groundwork that was laid in previous years, Park Lawn continues to offer a wide variety of day program options. All day program participants are given the opportunity to develop vocational skills and to pursue employment opportunities, with numerous individuals employed throughout the community. Thirty individuals attend the Choice program, in which participants choose programs and activities in the community based on their personal interest. One hundred individuals attend the workshop where they split their time between subcontract production and an enrichment program which is designed similarly to the Choice program. For those individuals who have reached retirement age or are no longer able to continue with employment, the Grace program affords an opportunity to participate in less vocationally based activities. Lastly, the Adult Developmental Training program provides community day programs for individuals with severe or profound intellectual and developmental disabilities. This was Park Lawn's array of day services – until COVID.

The COVID pandemic caused many disruptions to day program services. In person programs were shut down for months. Supported employment sites also shut down and then reopened with fewer employees. Park Lawn quickly adapted by providing virtual day programming to participants who live at home with their family or friends, and in-home & virtual day programming for Park Lawn residents. The programs were very creative and provided opportunities for programming and social interaction where otherwise none existed.

The Park Lawn leadership team had already made the commitment to phase out of sub-minimum wage subcontract work in response to growing pressures by advocacy groups and legislators at the federal, state, and local levels. The workshop facility is located within a TIF district which is slated for redevelopment, so the decision was made to phase out subcontract services upon relocation from that facility. The residential leadership team began meeting to plan programs for the future and the administrative team began evaluating space and facility requirements for new programming. When the pandemic occurred, subcontract projects that were in-process had to be completed by staff because state funded program participants were not able to return. Prospects for completing future subcontract work grew bleak as the pandemic showed little signs of slowing and there was reluctance of participants to return full time. The decision to end subcontract services had previously been put in motion, but the pandemic merely accelerated that transition. During closure of day programs, the residential team finalized the redevelopment of the Community Day Services ("CDS") model that will replace subcontract services. CDS will provide programming focused on independence, personal choice, self-advocacy and employment. The range of opportunities includes fast paced community driven experiences as well as

more relaxed introductory experiences geared to the interests and choices of the individuals. Community employment will be a focus providing job readiness, soft skills training, volunteerism and job search, placement and short term supports. The goal is to provide a well-rounded program which offers skill building to encourage growth and personal satisfaction.

In residential programs, Park Lawn continues to operate two ICFDDs and eight CILAs. Due to the financial challenges and lack of state support for larger ICFDDs, alternatives were considered for the forty bed ICFDD including downsizing, transition to CILA, sale of the program/facility to a for-profit provider, and closure. None of these options were determined to be appropriately suited for the residents. After a thorough review of all options and funding, Park Lawn secured a rate redetermination funding increase to more adequately match revenues with the cost of operating the facility. On the CILA side, there has been a focus on securing grant funds to update homes and modify them to better accommodate resident needs. Several grants have been secured including a nearly \$100,000 community development block grant.

Within the past year, Park Lawn submitted requests to the Illinois Department of Human Services to reduce the CILA site capacity down to four residents at three CILA locations. The site capacity reduction aligns with goals of the State to right size residential options for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and also improves the comfort for residents within the home. From the onset of the pandemic, the primary goal of all staff of the organization has been to ensure the health and safety of residents and staff. A large group of staff were focused on sourcing funds and procuring PPE, while many others were dedicated to establishing protocols that were aligned with CDS and the Illinois Department of Public Health guidelines. Park Lawn has always taken the most aggressive stance toward COVID protocols, even in times when federal and state guidance was lacking. These efforts ensured that residents and staff were as safe as reasonably possible given the extent of the pandemic.

A quality team of staff is essential for quality programming. Park Lawn has continued to be a member of the They Deserve More initiative which is focused on living wages for direct care personnel. The initiative is now supported by the Arc of Illinois, provider associations, and many leading providers throughout the State of Illinois. The efforts of this initiative have led to numerous program rate increases in recent years that have been passed on to employees in the form of wage increases. Wages of direct care staff have increased by nearly 50% since 2015. Unfortunately, direct care wage increases have come at the same time as state and local minimum wage increases so there has not been an incremental increase over prevailing minimum wages. Park Lawn will continue to participate in all budgetary and legislative actions aimed at improving wages for these important positions.

Through a collaborative grant funded by the Coleman Foundation, Park Lawn has committed to PHI training for managers. The PHI Coaching Approach focuses on helping organizational leaders and supervisors to develop core interpersonal communication and leadership skills with objectives that include active listening, self-management, self-reflection, clear, non-judgmental communication, collaborative problem solving, and participative leadership. PHI coaching aims to change the culture of the organization with the result contributing to stability in the workforce and improved quality of life through greater continuity and security in supports provided to individuals.

The PHI collaborative grant is one example of how collaborations and provider association memberships are an essential aspect of ensuring that Park Lawn is providing the highest quality programming. Park Lawn is an active member of the Institute on Public Policy for People with Disabilities, Intersect for

Abilities, and Community Service Partners. In addition to information sharing, these affiliations have led to collaborative grants which were the seed money for important programs such as Choice and Grace. These associations also proved to be most important throughout the pandemic. A variety of meetings were held weekly to discuss a wide range of COVID related issues including PPE, safety protocols, crisis staffing options, virtual day services, COVID funding options, state funding issues, phased reopening of CDS services, and numerous other topics. As a result of these important collaborations, Park Lawn was able to appropriately address many unprecedented issues and safely support residents and staff.

All of aforementioned activities reflect the fact that administration and the board of directors have been focused on both the critical day to day issues as well as longer term strategies. The strategic plan through 2018 was focused on the evaluation and transformation of day programs and day program facilities, the assessment of ICFDD services in light of the current environment, the improvement of CILA residential facilities for the benefit of residents, and the development of strategies to attract and retain a quality workforce. Many significant steps have been taken in each of these areas and are expected to yield improved quality of programming for residents and day program participants.

In mid-2018, the CEO of Park Lawn and the CEO of a peer organization began casual conversations about the potential positive impact on the community if the two organizations joined forces. Discussions between the CEOs eventually led to conversations at the board level. Although Park Lawn and the peer organization never entered formal merger negotiations, the possibility of merging led to the decision to hold on strategic initiatives that were not directly related to the quality of day and residential programming. After lengthy discussions, it was determined that a merge was not the best fit for Park Lawn or for the community served. Shortly thereafter, the pandemic caused the state wide shut-down of all CDS programs. With all the uncertainty of the future with COVID, all long term strategies remained on hold.

Lastly, Park Lawn continues to await the final State Transition Plan and new HCBS rule changes that will impact CDS and CILA programming. It is the preference of the leadership team to see the impact of rule changes before developing a new strategic plan. Although a formal strategic plan has not been in place since 2018, the board and administrative team have continued to address goals that were established in 2018. There continues to be progress on the transformation of day programs and day program facilities, the improvement of CILA residential facilities for the benefit of residents, and the continued development of strategies to attract and retain a quality workforce. An updated and more comprehensive strategic plan will be discussed & established by the board in the fall of 2021.