

Total Life Project

Fact Sheet

The Total Life Project is a model demonstration transition project developed by the University of Delaware's Center for Disabilities Studies for post-high school men and women with disabilities. *The mission of the project is to enhance the quality of life of individuals by promoting community inclusion, empowerment, choice, independence and pursuit of personal, vocational, residential and recreational goals.* Total Life will focus on all aspects related to transition – to living, working and participating in the community. The university campus, Total Life house and immediate community will act as a training ground – a classroom without walls - where young adults will gain experiences and develop skills needed to increase their independence and capacity for successful transition to adulthood as defined by the young adults and their families.

Participants

Students will be young adults who are residents of Delaware. To participate, individuals and their families must be dedicated to increasing their independence, must be willing to work and become involved in community activities. Families and members of the students' support network are expected to be actively involved in assisting the students to reach their goals. Individuals must have their own healthcare coverage and access to the personal assistance they require to participate in the program.

Program

The Total Life Project offers a unique post secondary educational experience. Through a process of collaboration, life coaches assist students to explore their individual employment, education and recreational interests while supporting the development of social, vocational, self-care, self-advocacy, leadership and independent living skills as identified in the person centered plan. Coaches play a unique role providing encouragement, instruction, information, and guidance to the students. They serve as resource developers and sounding boards, helping the student anticipate, plan for and react to life's challenges.

The Total Life house provides the environment for students interested in pursuing the comprehensive "living independently" curriculum. This option includes the development of a person centered plan with a 24 hours/7days a week focus providing the student practical experience in living independently. Located on South College Avenue near the main campus of the University of Delaware in Newark, the house consists of four two-room suites that can accommodate up to five participants.

Training and support will also be available to family and key network members to increase their capacity to respond to and align with the changing attitudes, abilities and independence of their Total Life student.

Staff

The Total Life Project staff includes a director, life coaches, volunteers, University of Delaware students completing externship and a graduate assistant. Faculty and staff from the University of Delaware and representatives from other organizations will also provide opportunities for inclusion, participation in University and community activities and events, and access to a broad array of services and supports.

Research

Because the Total Life Project is part of the University of Delaware Center for Disabilities Studies, research will be conducted throughout the Project. Research activities will include investigations about the types of supports and services necessary for people with disabilities to be independent, how people with disabilities define quality of life, and what types of recreation, employment and socialization activities persons disabilities prefer.

Pre-service and In-service Training

The Total Life Project will offer a unique setting for students at the University of Delaware and other schools to learn about adults with disabilities and the supports and services they need to be independent. Students from high school, undergraduate and graduate programs will work directly with the Total Life students and the professionals serving them. These practica and internship experiences will allow for real world training and the development of a qualified workforce to serve adults with disabilities.

**Thank you to Micki and Lanny Edelsohn and the Homes for Life Foundation for their generous donation of the house on South College Avenue.*

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Note: The Total Life Program will not provide skilled nursing care, group or individual therapy of any kind, chemical dependency treatment or therapeutic services for acute or severe mental illness. Arrangements may be made for those services through state agencies or private pay. Total Life staff will not be able to provide personal care for participants, however, participants are welcome to make arrangements for their own personal attendants.