



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



June 17, 2024

Michael Storz, Chief Administrator
Chapel Haven Schleifer Center
1040 Whalley Avenue
New Haven, CT 06515

Dear Chief Administrator Storz:

Attached is the preliminary evaluation report for Chapel Haven Schleifer Center based on the findings of a Bureau of Special Education (BSE) evaluation team. The report contains commendations, standard deficiencies, and recommendations.

Please indicate in writing whether your program agrees with the report. Send the response to Dr. Dori Papa, Education Consultant; Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE); Bureau of Special Education-APSEPs; P.O. Box 2219; Hartford, CT 06145-2219 or dori.papa@ct.gov. Upon receipt of written acceptance of the report in its entirety, the BSE will submit a recommendation for program approval through June 30, 2029, to the Commissioner of Education.

We thank you and your staff for the full support and cooperation extended to the Department's program review team. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact Dr. Papa by telephone at 860-713-6923 or by e-mail at dori.papa@ct.gov.

Sincerely,

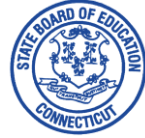
A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Bryan Klimkiewicz".

Bryan Klimkiewicz
Special Education Division Director

BK:dp
cc: Dr. Dori Papa, Education Consultant, CSDE
Mary Acquarulo, Education Director



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TO: Michael Storz, Chief Administrator
Chapel Haven Schleifer Center

FROM: Dr. Dori Papa, Education Consultant *DP*
Bureau of Special Education

DATE: June 17, 2024

SUBJECT: PRELIMINARY EVALUATION REPORT
Approval Review for a Private Special Education Program

On December 14, 2023, an evaluation team visited Chapel Haven Schleifer Center (Chapel Haven) to conduct a program reapproval review. The team consisted of:

- Dr. Dori Papa, Education Consultant, Bureau of Special Education (BSE);
- Mary Edo, Director of Special Education Services, Orange Public Schools; and
- Michelle Lestrud, Education Director, Gengras Center.

During a previous site visit on December 12, 2023, Dr. Papa reviewed the education files of students as well as personnel files. In addition, Dr. Papa has reviewed the application materials submitted to the BSE by your administration.

At the exit conference on December 14, 2023, the evaluation team shared its impressions and preliminary findings. The approval process included a review of the program's:

- governance;
- administration;
- fiscal management;
- admissions;
- individual student records;
- program requirements;
- evaluation of student progress and reporting responsibilities;
- student management techniques;
- qualifications and requirements for instructional, administrative, and support personnel;
- health and safety; and
- termination of enrollment.

Commendations:

The program's overall climate and culture were described as inviting, positive, harmonious, friendly, supportive, engaging, academically challenging, and structured. An observation team member shared that "the campus as a whole has a very comfortable feeling for promoting learning and acclimating students to adult living."

Staff interviewed shared the program's leadership, including the chief administrator and education director, is very passionate, dedicated, enthusiastic, knowledgeable about all aspects of the program, highly collaborative, organized, maintains an open-door policy, and supportive of the entire educational

team. Leadership and staff are highly committed and motivated toward achieving the program's mission to "provide lifelong, individualized services for people with developmental and social disabilities, empowering them to live independent and self-determined lives."

The program provides a learning environment that supports student independence in critical domains, including academics, communication, social and emotional development, adaptive living, health and safety, and vocational skills.

Students have multiple opportunities for participating in less restrictive community settings with nondisabled individuals, including the town's Recreation Department, trips (Disney, Crested Butte for skiing, New York City, Out to Art Class, and Yale Center for British Arts), Accessibility Accelerator Partnerships (hikes at Lake Wintergreen, Sleeping Giant State Park, Rockefeller State Park, Best Buddies with Southern Connecticut State University, Special Olympics—seven sports), and a trip where Chapel Haven Schleifer Center adults traveled to Israel.

Classrooms were described as spacious, clean, quiet, and organized with natural lighting.

The program offers a wide array of coursework through a curriculum that encompasses ten blended subject areas as well as continuing adult education classes and coursework taken on local college campuses. The curriculum is designed to specifically provide students with the necessary skills to transition to independent living within the community of their choice with minimum support services.

The observation team reported evidence of well-planned instruction aligned with Connecticut Core Standards, which appeared to be appropriate to the current level of performance for each student. Instruction is offered in the appropriate natural environment, as much as possible, within the community. The program has a day, student apartment for students to practice life skills and daily living skills with the goal of assisting students in developing individual social competencies across all settings.

The small class sizes promote student engagement and individualized academic support. Overall, the school provides a safe, intimate learning environment in which all staff are committed to high academic and behavioral expectations for students.

Family engagement is described as a program strength. Families attend many program events, including talent shows, art shows, and theater performances, which are also open to the public.

The program has a partnership with the Jewish Community Center (JCC) of Greater New Haven to access their facilities and programming offered to people of all abilities in the Greater New Haven community. All students are afforded memberships with the JCC.

Standard Deficiencies:

Chapel Haven must rectify the following standard deficiencies:

Standard I: Qualifications and Requirements for Instructional, Administrative, and Support

Personnel - The private facility shall maintain a permanent individual personnel file for each employee and shall ensure said file is held confidential. The private facility shall require that prior work references be on record for all applicants. Furthermore, applicants who will work directly with students shall submit to a Department of Children and Families Child Abuse and Neglect Registry records check before hire. The private facility shall obtain the information listed on the *State of Connecticut Educational Employer Verification* form from ALL the applicant's current or former employer(s) if such employer was a local or regional board of education, an approved private special education program, a governing council of a state or local charter school, an interdistrict magnet school operator, or if the employment caused the

applicant to have contact with children. In addition, a state and national criminal history records check (fingerprinting) must be submitted within 30 days of hire and on file within 60 days from the date of employment. Connecticut General Statutes (CGS) Section 10-221d.

Issue: In one (1) of five (5) personnel files reviewed, there was no evidence that a *State of Connecticut Educational Employer Verification* form was completed for an employee hired after July 1, 2016.

Corrective Action: On or before, June 30, 2024, submit to the BSE attestation that a *State of Connecticut Educational Employer Verification* form will be appropriately completed as required by CGS Section 10-222c, as amended by Public Act 16-67.

Develop and implement a process for maintaining the necessary documentation within the staff file that includes verification that the State of Connecticut Educational Employer Verification form was completed.

Submit a *State of Connecticut Educational Employer Verification* form to the BSE for all new staff hired during the 2024-25 school year.

Standard J: Health and Safety - - A private facility shall conduct monthly emergency drills that include one crisis response drill, other than a fire drill, once every three (3) months. The special education program, at least monthly, conducts emergency/crisis drills at each program location while school is in session and include actual evacuation of students to safe areas to:

- ensure that each staff member on each shift is trained to perform assigned tasks;
- assure that each staff member on each shift is familiar with the use of the firefighting equipment in each location of the special education program to which the staff member is assigned;
- evaluate the effectiveness of emergency plans and procedures; and
- ensure the program maintains a signed record of each emergency drill.

Issue(s): In reviewing emergency drill records, a fire and/or emergency crisis drill were not conducted in November of 2023.

Corrective Action: On or before June 30, 2024, submit to the BSE attestation that the program will conduct monthly emergency drills that will include one crisis response drill, other than a fire drill, once every three (3) months.

On or before June 30, 2024, submit to the BSE emergency drill records for the full 2023-24 academic year.

On or before June 30, 2025, submit to the BSE emergency drill records for the full 2024-25 academic year.

Recommendations:

The BSE offers the following recommendations to Chapel Haven:

Display visuals within the classrooms such as language-rich student work products and artwork. The observation team described classrooms as spacious, clean, and organized but had “somewhat of a sterile appearance.”

Implement a system to improve communication between staff and overall internal, cross-program communication. Staff interviewed shared there is a need to implement a system of communication to ensure cross-department collaboration.

Preliminary Evaluation Report: Chapel Haven Schleifer Center
Approval Review for a Private Special Education Program
June 17, 2024

Consider updating technology in the classroom to support teachers in their instruction and students in their learning. Teachers interviewed shared that they are “very frustrated that the technology in the classroom is slow and works inconsistently.”

Within 15 working days from the date of this preliminary evaluation report, please indicate in writing to the BSE whether your program agrees with the report and accepts the delineated corrective action plan. Upon receipt of Chapel Haven Schleifer Center’s written agreement and acceptance of the entire report, a recommendation for program approval through June 30, 2029, will be submitted to the Commissioner of Education.

Upon such approval, the following is applicable to Chapel Haven Schleifer Center:

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|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Approved Ages to Serve: | 18 through 22 years old |
| Approved Grades to Serve: | 12th |
| Approved Enrollment Capacity: | 20 students |
| Approval Expiration Date: | June 30, 2029 |

cc: Mary Acquarulo, Education Director