

Executive Summary

Early intervention therapies for children with autism and communication challenges have been proven to have solid results that lead to success later in life. Studies have demonstrated that therapies, when begun early in a child's life, are effective for improving IQ, language ability, and social interaction through increased normalized brain function. While costs for early intervention are higher than more traditional therapies on the front end, the savings over the lifetime of an individual are substantial, and the success rates for these individuals into adulthood increase. Furthermore, children who are provided these services in realistic environments are able to adapt more readily and transition to mainstream education. Enabling these children to become productive citizens has great returns for society as a whole.

The Emerge Center is the leader in early intervention therapies to children with autism and communication challenges in the Capital region. The Emerge model of coordinated and integrated therapies – Occupational, Speech, and Applied Behavior Analysis – under one roof to children in practical settings, driven by the belief that all children should have access to these vital services, is unparalleled in south Louisiana. Serving nearly 800 clients per month, the Center provides essential services to these children through its unique and unrivalled model of care.

The Emerge Center believes that every child should have the opportunity to reach their full potential. When the right support is provided early, children with autism and communication challenges can do just that. Originating as Baton Rouge Speech and Hearing Foundation, Emerge has been a pillar of the community, investing in children with special needs for decades.

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This Strategic Plan leverages this formidable history and track record to position the organization for sustainable growth, and expand its footprint as the leader in service provision to children with autism and communication challenges. By implementing this Strategic Plan, Emerge will initiate the build-out of the first charter school for children with autism in the state of Louisiana, and establish a foundation to ensure the financial sustainability of the Center and the new school. The three pillars that frame this plan are therefore focused on:

- Therapeutic Provision – as the core of Emerge and the basis of its strong results.
- Education – for children with autism who need therapeutic support.
- Access – believing that increased access to services for the children in its care increases Emerge's impact.

The provision of therapeutic services – the core of the Emerge model – will be led by the Emerge Center, in coordination with the School and the shared services bureau for research, which will continually perfect and ensure execution of the most impactful therapies. As the fundamental function of Emerge, collaboration and effective liaison with the other Emerge entities is central to the role of the Center.

Emerge expands into education with the establishment of the Emerge School for Autism. The school will serve children ages five to eleven, building on the success of the Bloom and Kindergarten programs, and giving families a solid results-driven option for supporting their child with autism in elementary school.

Increasing access to services for the children in our care is the chief objective of this plan. This will be achieved through strategies for increased contributed revenue, spearheaded by the Foundation.

This strategic plan will require the support of staff, the Board of Directors of the three entities, as well as support from partners, individuals, and philanthropy. It also relies extensively on the synergetic relationship between the three entities under Emerge – the Center, the School, and the Foundation. The resources required include earned income and increased contributed revenue, as well as optimized human resources for service provision and education.

The Emerge Center is excited to be embarking on this ambitious plan and this new trajectory to work towards catalyzing its vision of a world where all individuals are able to maximize their potential.