



Empowering People. Building Futures.

2019 ANNUAL REPORT





BIRCH FAMILY SERVICES EMPOWERS INDIVIDUALS WITH AUTISM AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES TO LEAD FULFILLING LIVES.

Imagine a world where individuals with autism and developmental disabilities are celebrated for their abilities, uniqueness, and potential.

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DEAR FRIENDS OF BIRCH FAMILY SERVICES



20,000+

people with autism and
developmental disabilities
and their families supported
since 1975

For 45 years, our individualized, person-centered services and programs have helped more than 20,000+ people with autism and developmental disabilities and their families navigate significant transitions across the lifetime. Throughout our history, we have demonstrated our ability to provide quality programs that support the individual needs of children, adolescents, and adults so that they can reach their full potential.

The field of autism and developmental disabilities continues to evolve significantly and is now preparing for a transition to managed care for programs and services supported by the New York State Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD), such as residential, community and day habilitation, employment, and family support programs. To begin the transition, a significant amount of time this year was spent preparing about 300 of our individuals and families for the closure of our Medicaid Service Coordination program to a more comprehensive, independent, integrated care management model through Care Coordination Organizations (CCOs). We were successful in transitioning these individuals and their family advocates to CCOs effective July 1, 2019. This is the first step to managed care. We will continue to pursue excellence, innovation, and engagement of all our stakeholders in our key areas of focus: education and community support services.

Public policy in education saw a shift in our priorities as well. As one of the largest early childhood providers in NYC, the positive expansion of Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) impacted our ability to recruit students for our Head Start program in Brooklyn and Queens for the fourth consecutive year. With the availability of UPK for all, we made the decision to close our Head Start program effective June 30, 2019.

It is my hope the following pages will confirm that your support has been applied in a fiscally responsible manner and has truly enhanced the lives of the people we endeavor to support. You will read about program highlights, success stories, and how we used our resources to successfully advance our mission of empowering individuals to lead fulfilling lives. For Birch, the next several years present exciting opportunities, while managing an everchanging environment in education, health care, and community supports. I am confident that our accomplishments and prudent planning in FY2018-19 has established a strong foundation on which to move forward. As always, thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matthew Sturiale". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Matthew Sturiale
Chief Executive Officer & President



OUR INSPIRATION AND WHO WE ARE TODAY

Inspired by her teacher and mentor, Herbert G. Birch, M.D., Phyllis Susser established the Herbert G. Birch School for Exceptional Children in 1975 with 28 students and 11 staff members. Over the next five decades what would become known as Birch Family Services grew from a single classroom in Fresh Meadows, Queens, into a provider of educational and long-term supports serving more than 2,000 individuals each year in 30 locations across Manhattan, Queens, Brooklyn, and the Bronx.

Today, Birch Family Services is recognized as a leading provider of early childhood and school-age education, residential, and community services for people with autism and developmental disabilities. Key to this success has been the strong clinical and administrative leadership under the stewardship of a highly motivated and engaged Board of Directors who understand the needs of the people we support.

VALUES

Our values reflect a commitment to:

- Quality services that are individualized, person-centered, and include:
 - › Education from early childhood through age 21;
 - › Customized employment, internships, job training, and placement;
 - › Life skills, community connections, family education, and support;
 - › Housing and residential options with 24-hour supervision;
 - › A strengths-based philosophy that recognizes the abilities and skills of the people we support;
- The engagement of individuals and families in a manner that facilitates choice;
- The promotion of community inclusion that ensures people have access and are able to participate in their communities; and
- The professional development of our workforce and providing training to other organizations and the public to assist individuals in achieving their fullest potential.



EDUCATION

Birch Family Services offers an array of education programs for children ages 3-21 based on their individual needs.

In FY2018-19, our Early Childhood programs included Pre-school Special Education (4410 school programs), Administration for Children's Services Early Learn, Head Start (HHS), and Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK). Our School-Age Special Education programs (853 schools) are designed to meet individual needs of students who are referred by the New York City Department of Education

Our Early Childhood Education programs are committed to providing education opportunities in the least restrictive environment (LRE) that enable a student to achieve their goals. Last year, 35% of pre-school graduates demonstrated enough progress to enroll in either general education or integrated kindergarten programs in regular school settings. In addition, 17% of pre-schoolers demonstrated progress that resulted in reduction of related services—physical, occupational and speech therapies, as well as counseling (See Figure 1).

Students and families participating in our School-Age program receive assistance with developing a transition plan for success in graduating from high school and obtaining lifelong occupational and vocational goals. Our Phyllis L. Susser School for Exceptional Children is an 853 designated school that provides a 12-month day program for students ages 10-21. Funded by students' local school districts, Birch education services are provided at no cost to families.

Responding to the need for school-age services, we later expanded our Washington Heights Education Center school program to provide school-age services to children ages 5-8. In Fall 2019, Birch was approved by NYC DOE and the New York State Education Department (NYSED) to expand the program by adding three 8:1:2 classrooms for students who are 5-11 years of age at our Springfield Gardens Education Center.

TABLE 1: Program Enrollment

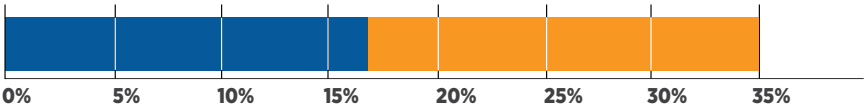
PROGRAMS	CAPACITY	ACTUAL	%
4410 (includes integrated special needs students)	848	841	99%
853 (school-age special needs students)	106	99	93%
Early Learn	87	83	95%
Universal Pre-Kindergarten	113	103	91%

(DOE) when school districts and District 75 special education schools cannot provide an appropriate education placement.

With the expansion of Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) across the city, there was no longer a need for Birch to offer a Head Start program. Given the near or at capacity enrollment in Birch's early childhood programs, we decided to close the Head Start program in June 2019 and expand pre-school special education programs to support the increased need for children with autism and developmental disabilities (See Table 1).

- Pre-schoolers demonstrating progress resulting in reduction of related services
- Pre-school graduates demonstrating progress to enroll in either General Education or Integrated classrooms

FIGURE 1: Early Childhood Education programs progress



MEET KAYDEN, A KID WHO IS FULL OF SURPRISES



Birch has empowered my child. I see him doing things I never thought he'd be doing. I would ask him, 'Kayden, how did you hear about that?' and he would say 'school' and probably mention one of his classmates. —Cynthia A., Kayden's Mother



When Cynthia Almonor first received her son's diagnosis, she didn't know what to think. "I was confused because I wasn't familiar with what it means to be on the autism spectrum or to have an IEP," said Ms. Almonor. "Really, my biggest concern at the time was how far delayed Kayden was from his milestone age, things like his speech and his motor skills."

But after two years of pre-school at Birch Family Services' Mill Basin Early Childhood Center in Brooklyn, Kayden has been talking a blue streak. Not that it was always an easy road. For instance, when he first came to Mill Basin in September 2017, Kayden presented with gross motor delays and had trouble focusing for any significant amount of time. This was in addition to his language challenges. However, working closely, Kayden's classroom staff and therapy team developed a course of attainable goals to overcome each challenge — and helped him meet them.

"Birch has empowered my child," said Ms. Almonor. "I see him doing things I never thought he'd be doing. I would ask him, 'Kayden, how did you hear about that?' and he would say 'school' and probably mention one of his classmates."



Nevertheless, Ms. Almonor was apprehensive with the thought of Kayden graduating from Mill Basin and moving up to kindergarten. She wasn't sure if he'd be ready to attend a general education class at a public school. But with support from Kayden's team, Cynthia got there right along with her son. "They have definitely made me feel at ease," she said. "Birch encouraged me to get him into general education even though Kayden has an IEP."

Today, Kayden is enrolled in a general education classroom at his local public school. More importantly, he is thriving.

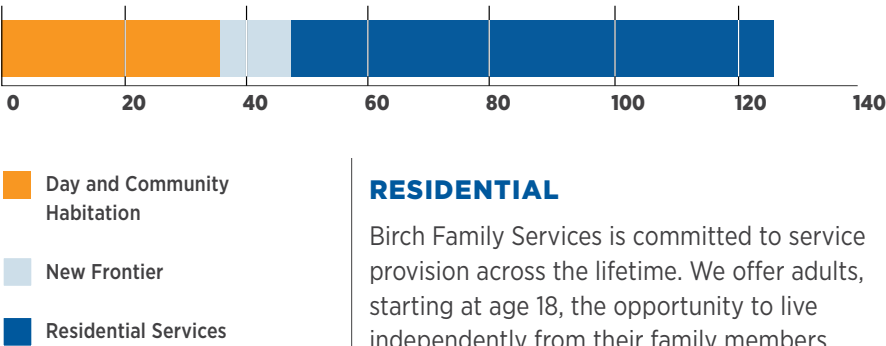
"It was our great pleasure to provide Kayden with the early foundations for a successful lifetime of learning," said Mill Basin principal Lori Vallejo. "Kayden and his parents will always be part of the Mill Basin extended family."



COMMUNITY SERVICES

Birch Family Services Community Services division provides services that empower individuals to live as independently as possible at home, at work, and in the community. These services comprise Residential Services, Day and Community Habilitation programs, and New Frontier (See Figure 2).

TABLE 2: Individuals Supported in Community Services Programs



- Day and Community Habilitation
- New Frontier
- Residential Services

Each of the
126
individuals living
in our residences has
an individualized plan
that outlines how they
will achieve their
personal goals.

RESIDENTIAL

Birch Family Services is committed to service provision across the lifetime. We offer adults, starting at age 18, the opportunity to live independently from their family members. At Birch residences, individuals receive 24-hour supervision in either Intermediate Care Facilities (ICFs) or Individual Residential Alternatives (IRAs).

Each of the 126 individuals living in our residences has an individualized plan that outlines how they will achieve their personal goals. Individual plans include developing independent living skills, becoming active members of the community, striving for optimal health, and identifying and actively pursuing their life goals while living in a safe and home-like environment.

Through our School-Age education program, Birch recognized the challenges some families experienced trying to care for children with complex needs in the home. To address this area of concern, we currently offer an all-inclusive school (Susser School) and residential model for children who fit these criteria. Our Children’s Residential Program (CRP) places school-age children (10-21), with such needs in

a highly structured and integrated educational and home environment in which to develop life skills.

In 2019, we were approved to expand residential opportunities. We are developing a 6-person IRA for children aging out of our CRP and a 8-person IRA for those in need of a barrier-free environment due to ambulation or health issues. Finally, we will also be developing a 4-person IRA for individuals with autism in Manhattan. We hope that these 18 opportunities will be moving forward over the next 12-18 months.

DAY AND COMMUNITY HABILITATION

At Birch Family Services, we are committed to supporting individuals at home and in the community to learn skills that facilitate independence. Through our various Life Skills and Family Support programs, we work with adolescents and adults as they develop the skills necessary to achieve greater independence. Our Day and Community Habilitation services provide individualized skills development to maximize an individual’s strengths and identify areas of need.

Our Day Habilitation program is committed to offering both site and community-based training options. Through participation in skill development and relationship building activities, individuals have the opportunity to become valued and contributing members of their community. Each person selects from

90%

of the individuals attending Day Services participated at volunteer sites, an increase of 40% from the previous year.

a variety of available community inclusion opportunities that are of greatest interest. Skills that encourage social and personal development and ensure full access to benefits within the community are actively promoted. Participants are involved in volunteer experiences at many not-for-profit community locations where opportunities for social interactions occur.

Our Community Habilitation program supports individuals who do not live in an Office of People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) certified or operated residence. These services are delivered at any non-certified location, including the individual's home. Community Habilitation (CH) Phase II services are for individuals living in an OPWDD-certified supervised Individualized Residential Alternative (IRA) or a supervised Community Residence (CR) settings, though not necessarily a Birch Family Services residence. The flexibility of CH Phase II allows individuals to have greater choice and flexibility in how they spend their day and where they receive their habilitation supports.

PREPARING FOR MANAGED CARE

In 2011, Governor Andrew Cuomo established the Medicaid Redesign Team (MRT) charged with developing a plan that ensures adequate health coverage for all New Yorkers while maintaining control of the costs. One of the recommendations was that all special needs populations be enrolled in Medicaid Managed Care plans to address primary medical and long-term care needs. The OPWDD is currently working with stakeholders to identify the standards that will define health, quality of life, and personal positive outcomes for people with developmental disabilities, and how these outcomes will be measured. Birch Family Services has been taking steps to position and prepare for this transformation of how individuals and families are supported and receive services. In 2017, the agency became more actively involved in the New York Integrated Network (NYIN), a provider collaborative committed to sharing best practices and preparing for managed care. In 2018, our CEO was appointed to the OPWDD's Commissioner's Workgroup to define the principles and transition Medicaid Service Coordination (MSC) to Care Coordination Organizations (CCOs). The agency partnered with Care Design New York (CDNY) to transition our MSC program effective July 1, 2019. This is only the first step to achieving managed care. Birch leadership will continue to engage in activities internally and collaboratively to ensure that we are positioned to influence policy and shape best practices.

NEW FRONTIER

New Frontier helps transition-age young adults learn how to maximize their strengths to achieve their personal goals through four areas of focus, including Employment Services, Health & Wellness, Community Living, and Social & Recreation. These services allow young adults to continue their educational journey while developing the skills to maintain long-term employment and increased independence.

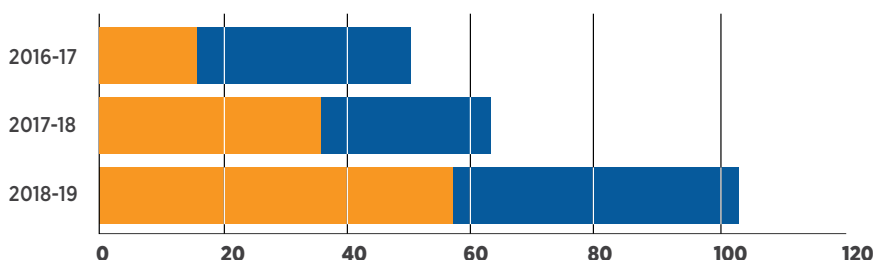


28%+

of adults with a developmental disability are living in poverty right now in the US.*

- Returning New Frontier participants supported
- Total number of New Frontier participants supported

FIGURE 3: Individuals Supported in Community Services Programs



Through the New York City Council’s Autism Awareness Initiative, the New Frontier program offered workshops, support groups, and recreational and educational workshops for young adults with autism. In FY2018-19, renewed funding allowed new workshops to be introduced to address the changing needs of young adults with autism. Yoga and mindfulness, friendships and dating, and nutrition were added to the weekly schedule in addition to social skills and social leisure club. Primarily, however, the program provided adults with autism and developmental disabilities with vocational preparation, job acquisition, customized employment, and ongoing support so they can thrive in both their job search and their chosen careers.

With support from the Taft Foundation, we:

- increased the number of people we support in employment;
- provided consultation services for staff to enhance their professional skills, including corporate mentoring;

- provided consultation services on the development of updated marketing materials; and
- developed curriculum for seminars/workshops to educate attendees on such topics as school-to-workplace transitions, neurodiversity in the workplace, and others geared towards employment and internships.

This year, New Frontier team members held a range of workshops related to the program’s four focus areas, including those geared towards employers who want to learn more about supporting people with autism and developmental disabilities in the workplace.

New Frontier participants benefit from partnerships established through our Corporate Advisory Network (CAN). Participants attended interview coaching and job skills training workshops at the offices of CAN partner Virtu Financial and participated in a job skills mentorship program with Lloyd’s Bank, a founding member of the network.

This year through New Frontier, 12 individuals participated in paid employment, six in paid internships/temporary employment opportunities, and four in unpaid internships. In addition, 103 individuals participated in one or more services or workshops provided through the program, including Employment Services, Health & Wellness, Community Living, and Social & Recreation.

*The U.S. unemployment rate for adults with developmental or intellectual disabilities is 82.2%. As a result, over 28% of adults with a developmental disability are living in poverty right now in the US. (Bureau of Labor Statistics, <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/disabl.nr0.htm>)

MEET JASON, WORKING RETAIL WITH AN EYE FOR DESIGN



Sometimes the job can be high intensity and a little overwhelming, but I have the tools to persevere. —Jason, New Frontier participant



Meet Jason, a 24-year-old student at the Borough of Manhattan Community College, where he studies Animation Graphics. Set to graduate and receive a Bachelor's degree in Arts Animation in 2020, he aspires to a career as a costume designer or animator in the arts or fashion industries. But first things first.

While he completes his degree, Jason, who is on the autism spectrum, works as a sales associate three to four days a week at Uniqlo in midtown Manhattan, a position he was able to acquire — and keep — with the support of his employment specialists at Birch Family Services New Frontier program.

With the help of New Frontier, which provided workplace readiness training and interview coaching, Jason was able to leave his job as an usher at AMC Movie theaters, a position that lacked opportunities for growth, and pursue his new gig at Uniqlo. A smart move, because since he started his position with the clothing

retailer in August 2018, he has already been promoted from a Sales Associate A1 position to Sales Associate A2, a boost that provides higher pay and increased responsibilities. Not only that, he enjoys the job and knows everything about every item in the men's section where he works.

According to Leo, his supervisor at Uniqlo, Jason takes initiative with keeping the floor stocked and staffed as needed, communicating needs to his colleagues over a Walkie Talkie. He also trusts Jason to handle markdowns, man the register, and work the floor on his own.

While Jason likes his day job, his aspirations toward the arts and the fashion worlds can't be suppressed. For instance, as a cosplay enthusiast and a regular attendee of Comicon and other anime events, he just can't help but give his opinion on all the graphic tees that Uniqlo sells. But that's okay, because between the job-readiness and career support skills he's developed with New Frontier and his own personal drive, he has what it takes to go pretty much anywhere he wants.



OUR PARTNERSHIPS

1_{in} 6

children in the U.S. faces a developmental disability or a disabling behavioral problem. Yet fewer than 50% of these children are identified before they start school.*

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Birch Family Services empowers and educates families by providing them with the resources they need to advocate, navigate, and access critical support services for their loved ones. We help people and families plan for the future by embracing a philosophy of partnership in which responsibility is shared, families are effective advocates for their children/loved ones, and individuals receiving services are supported to make informed choices. In so doing, individuals and their families are treated as partners in planning for the future and are encouraged and supported to direct the development of their life plan. By working with other parents and experienced staff, parents learn the tools to become fierce advocates and capable caregivers for their children in the present and future.

CORPORATE ADVISORY NETWORK

In 2018, Birch Family Services launched the Corporate Advisory Network (CAN) as an advisory body and strategic partner committed to sharing best practices, expertise, and opportunities to help facilitate employment and internship opportunities for individuals with autism and developmental disabilities. Over the next 12 months, CAN grew from 14 to 41 committed members and convened three breakfast meetings with partners from across the business community that shared our commitment to the principles of diversity and inclusion (D&I) in the workplace.

In FY2018-19, participants of our New Frontier program were invited by CAN founding member Virtu Financial for a mock-job interview workshop with the financial technology company's human resources staff at which they received



*Source: The Zero to Three publications – a nonpartisan, research-based resource for federal and state policy makers and advocates on the unique developmental needs of infants and toddlers. To learn more about this topic or the ZERO TO THREE Policy Center, please check their website at www.zerotothree.org.

“

The best lesson from the CAN morning session for me was the variety of interactions other firms are currently undertaking with Birch. By speaking with other corporate sponsors, I learned of other new and creative programs that have a track record of success. This should help us to explore new avenues with Birch as we seek to deepen our relationship.” —Keith Tamayo, Head of US Credit Sales, Lloyd’s Bank

”



advice and feedback to aid in their job search. Participants also participated in workshops and mentoring programs facilitated by CAN founding member, Lloyds Bank. Another annual highlight was when New Frontier staff members were invited by the Federal Reserve Bank of New York to participate on a panel that addressed the challenges faced by transition-age young adults with autism and developmental disabilities as they prepare to join the job market.

ADVOCACY

Advocacy and strategic alliances are why services for individuals with autism and developmental disabilities exist and adapt to the needs of individuals and families. Birch Family Services leadership is engaged with all internal and external stakeholders (i.e., families, self-advocates, government, other providers) which helps to shape advocacy and program priorities for the agency. In addition, our CEO is an active member of major trade associations working groups on critical topics in the developmental disabilities field, including Care Coordination, Managed Care Readiness, Public Policy, Residential Services, and Early Childhood Education. He also serves on the Boards of Directors for organizations that impact people with disabilities and the educators and Direct Service Professionals who support them.





SPECIAL EVENTS

225+

people participated in the 5K Run and together we raised over \$79,000 to support our mission.

Birch Family Services hosted two events during FY19 — Gala and 5K Run — allowing us to connect with our supporters and secure unrestricted funds necessary for program and operating expenses. Revenue from special events increased slightly from the previous year, raising \$420,000.

GALA

On May 9, 2019, over 230 people attended Birch's annual Gala at the Prince George Ballroom in Manhattan. Guests included the Birch Board of Directors, corporate sponsors, philanthropic supporters, Birch staff, individuals and families we support, and other members of the community. The event raised over \$340,000, a fundraising record for the event. During the evening, we honored Commissioner Victor Calise from the New York City Mayor's Office of People with Disabilities with the Vision of Hope Award. Former Board Members, Iris Fishman and Jay Fialkoff, were also recognized and awarded the Birch Legacy Award for their long-term, significant support.



5K RUN AND FAMILY DAY

The annual 5K Run was held in the Fall at Hudson River Park in Manhattan. The 5K Run is supported by Birch's vibrant community of athletes and donors, but the true focus of the day was on the 2,000 children and adults with autism and developmental disabilities we support. With help from Birch families, staff, Board Members, and corporate partners, more than 225 people participated in the 5K Run and together we raised over \$79,000 to support our mission. Thanks to the generosity of our corporate partners, attendees enjoyed awards, goodie bags, and activities for the entire family, such as face painting, balloon twisting, tattoos, and more. After the event, corporate sponsors and running teams were invited to a thank-you luncheon.



WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

1,000+

Birch Family Services staff and volunteers are committed to furthering our mission.

We rely on donations from dedicated donors like you to continue to support people with autism and developmental disabilities and their families.

There are a number of ways to make a charitable contribution:

GIVE ONLINE

Visit give.birchfamilyservices.org/donate to make a 100% tax-deductible donation.

TEXT-TO-GIVE

You may text the code "BIRCHFAMILY" to 44-321 to donate quickly and easily.

MAIL A CHECK

To donate by mail, please send a check to Birch Family Services, Inc. at:

Birch Family Services
104 West 29th Street, 3rd Floor
New York, NY 10001

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Development Team at (212) 616-1832 or donate@birchfamilyservices.org.





OTHER WAYS TO HELP

For more information about opportunities for your company to get involved please contact Samantha Nottingham, Chief Development Officer: Samantha.Nottingham@birchfamilyservices.org or (917) 623-1863.

EVENT SPONSORSHIP

Birch Family Services can maximize its critical work and impact through the generosity of individual and corporate sponsors. We offer a variety of sponsorship benefits, including exclusive opportunities to feature and promote your brand.

PLANNED GIVING

Planned gifts offer an opportunity to support Birch Family Services in a meaningful way without giving a large outright gift. Planned gifts offer substantial tax savings to donors especially on appreciated properties and securities. A planned gift can reduce income tax and avoid capital gains tax.

VOLUNTEER

Birch Family Services relies on a committed team of volunteers to run its events throughout the year. If you and your colleagues would like to donate your time, we welcome your participation.

ADOPT A PROGRAM FOR THE HOLIDAYS

The holidays can be a difficult time for people without families or with limited means. You can bring holiday cheer to an individual with a disability living in a group home by donating a holiday meal or age-appropriate gifts; or a school with students ranging from ages 3–21, by donating clothes, toys, puzzles, and books.

SPONSOR AN OUTING

For children and adults with disabilities, being an active, integrated member of their local community is critical. From a school field trip to a social leisure club outing, you can help make these formative life experiences more accessible for those in our programs.

READ TO CHILDREN

Birch Family Services supports over 1,000 children with and without disabilities. We welcome you to read to our children at one of our eight pre-schools and three school-age programs.

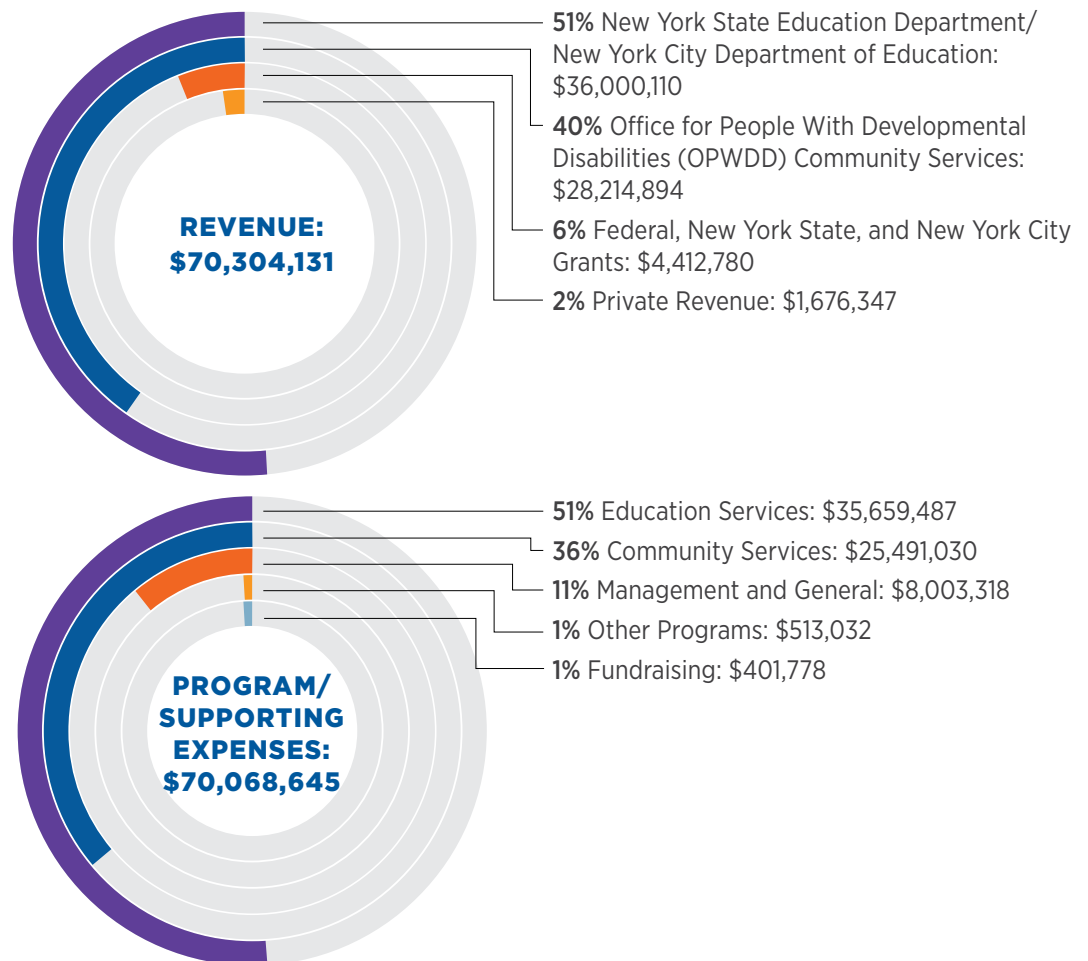
JOIN THE CORPORATE ADVISORY NETWORK

With a host of corporate partners, the network serves as an advisory body and strategic partner committed to the principles of diversity and inclusion in the workplace for people with disabilities. In addition to sharing best practices, expertise, CAN members provide valuable opportunities to help facilitate employment and internship opportunities for individuals with autism and developmental disabilities.



FINANCIALS

Birch Family Services empowers individuals with autism and developmental disabilities to lead fulfilling lives. Birch's leadership remains committed to responsible financial stewardship and strives to ensure fiscal sustainability and quality in the services we provide. This past year saw an increase in enrollment in our education programs and expansion of our residential and community services programs. Birch Family Services supports over 1,200 children, adolescents, and adults with autism and developmental disabilities.



The financial statements of Birch Family Services, Inc. for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2019, have been audited by Baker Tilly Virchow Krause, LLP. Audited financial statements are available upon request.



BIRCH FAMILY SERVICES GRATEFULLY THANKS OUR GENEROUS DONORS

DIAMOND **\$75,000+**

NYC City Council Autism
Awareness Initiative
The Taft Foundation

PLATINIUM **\$50,000 - \$74,999**

The Omer Foundation
The Edith Glick Shoolman
Children's Foundation

GOLD **\$15,000 - \$49,999**

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Gerald Ritter Foundation
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SILVER **\$5,000 - \$14,999**

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* New Board Members as of 2019.

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