Morrissey-Compton’s initiative to address the growing needs of students with weaknesses in executive function (EF) skills and general learning difficulties has positively impacted the clients, parents, and educational professionals within our community. We hope to continue this momentum and reach more people by offering targeted EF events in 2015.

EF skills consist of a set of mental processes that include working memory, cognitive flexibility, planning, organizing, prioritizing, and self-monitoring. Problems with EF often contribute to academic and life challenges. In order to meet and manage the demands of today’s world, students must engage in and develop their EF skills.

Our goals for our EF program in 2015 are to support parents, establish Morrissey-Compton’s expertise in the growing field of EF, and provide high-quality interventions for students with EF weaknesses. Our upcoming offerings include:

• February 28: EF Conference for Parents
• May 8 & 9: EF & Learning West Coast Conference for Education and Mental Health Professionals
• Dates TBD: EF Boot Camp for Middle- and High-School Students

Turn to pages 4-5 to learn more about each of these special events!
Dear Friends of Morrissey-Compton,

Welcome to another edition of our newsletter.

I look back on 2014 as a year of opportunity for Morrissey-Compton. We moved to our new offices in Redwood City, providing us with space to grow our programs, and we’ve seized the moment—expanding our Group Therapy (Social Skills) program, our Parent Education program, our psychotherapy and educational therapy services, and our executive function (EF) services.

Our comprehensive services in the field of EF are unique to the Bay Area. In 2015, we are planning our first EF Boot Camp for middle- and high-school students and our first annual EF and Learning Conference—also the first of its kind for mental health and education professionals on the West Coast! Experts from across North America will present the latest on current research and applied work in EF and learning differences. In addition, we are conducting a full-day workshop on EF for parents on February 28. Experts from our staff will present on a variety of topics related to EF skills in students, including learning, social-emotional regulation, and organization. So many parents were interested in this workshop that we sold out within a few days, but we are in the process of securing additional space to accommodate a larger group. Please check our website for updates. I hope to see you there!

We are also the proud recipient of a $100,000 grant to expand our services to Latino families. We have hired Spanish-speaking clinicians and are expanding our services in our Half Moon Bay location. Since its inception, Morrissey-Compton has committed itself to being a community-based organization to serve the needs of local families. In this issue of our newsletter, you can read about our dedication to coastal communities and how we are already implementing new programs with the help of this grant.

Your donations, along with financial opportunities made available through grants, allow us to fulfill our mission to help all families regardless of their ability to pay. As a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization, all of your contributions to Morrissey-Compton are tax deductible. Your contributions allow us to provide quality services to all families and promote the success of a new generation of students.

I wish you Happy Holidays and a happy, healthy, and successful 2015!

With Warm Regards,

John T. Brentar, Ph.D.
A Satellite Office with Community Atmosphere
by Denali St. Amand, Ph.D., Educational Specialist

When the whole community is involved in a child’s education, it gives the greatest power to learning. And Morrissey-Compton’s Half Moon Bay office is playing a significant role in education in our coastal communities.

Offering A Variety of Support
As a corporate sponsor for the Hatch Immersion School Jog-A-Thon on November 7, Morrissey-Compton helped the school raise funds that are critical to programs such as art, music, P.E., library, and classroom supplies. Jog-A-Thon co-chairs Rachel Hummel and Jodi Miller note, “Even though public school financial resources have been strained, Hatch continues to be rich in dedicated teachers, involved parents, and a supportive community.”

In November, Dr. Raymond Jones presented a Parent Education class, “Understanding ADD and Executive Functions,” at our office. The class was a big hit with parents from Pescadero, Montara, and Pacifica, as well as Half Moon Bay. In addition, at Pescadero High School, I recently participated in mock interviews for seniors to help them prepare for job interviews as they transition out of high school.

Special Focus on an Underserved Population
Morrissey-Compton recently received a $100,000 grant to support Spanish-speaking families (see page 7). We are already using this grant to provide services to students to strengthen reading comprehension and vocabulary and consulting with their parents and teachers on their ongoing progress to meet goals. Other referrals are already coming to the office, as well as requests for assessments.

The Half Moon Bay Library provides powerful collaborations toward shared goals. At the library’s program for “Parents and Kids” at Moonridge Computer Recreational Center, Morrissey-Compton Postdoctoral Fellow Will Martinez, Ph.D. provides regular, informal consultation services with Spanish-speaking parents regarding educational and emotional issues that they may be experiencing with their children. In December, Will also gave a presentation in Spanish at Cuhna Middle School on how to spot if your child might have a learning difference, as well as how to access local educational and psychological resources.

In collaboration with the library community liaison, our new tutor, Edwige Gamache, M.A., Ph.D. held our first Parent Education class in Spanish at the Half Moon Bay office in December. Called “Consejos para las Reuniones de Padres y Maestros” (“How to Achieve a Productive Parent-Teacher Meeting”), the class focused on navigating the school environment, including how to get the most out of a teacher conference. These types of classes will become a regular part of our offerings on the coast.

Morrissey-Compton’s unique set of services is making a real difference in Half Moon Bay and surrounding areas. We will continue to work towards creating collaborations that enhance education in the coastal communities from Pescadero to Pacifica.
Executive Function Program Offerings

Two-Day Conference for Education & Mental Health Professionals

On May 8 & 9, 2015, Morrissey-Compton will present “Executive Function & Learning,” the first conference of its kind held on the West Coast, at Santa Clara University’s School of Education and Counseling Psychology. Chaired by Morrissey-Compton’s Director of Research, Surina Basho, PhD, the conference will feature experts from across North America, who will present the latest on current research and applied work in executive function and learning differences. The conference is targeted toward behavioral health professionals, educational professionals, researchers, and medical professionals.

On May 8, the keynote address will be delivered by Dr. Lynn Meltzer, author of Promoting Executive Function in the Classroom and editor of Executive Function in Education: From Theory to Practice. The May 9 keynote speaker is Dr. Richard Guare, co-author of several books including Smart but Scattered: The Revolutionary “Executive Skills” Approach to Helping Kids Reach Their Potential and Executive Skills in Children and Adolescents.

Parents, please help us spread the word by passing this information on to your schools and teachers! For additional information, pricing, and to register, visit http://www.morrissey-compton.org/efri_professionals.php.

One-Day Conference for Parents

If your child struggles with executive function difficulties, please join us on February 28, 2015 for this one-day conference. Experts will present various talks on executive function and the role it plays in:

- Learning
- Socio-Emotional Regulation
- Organization in the Home
- And more!

Also, hear from a panel of students with executive function challenges as they share their journeys and the strategies they have used to cope.

This conference is recommended for parents of children 3rd grade to college level.

Space is limited, so reserve your spot today!

On February 28, 2015, Morrissey-Compton will present “Executive Function & Learning,” the first conference of its kind held on the West Coast, at Santa Clara University’s School of Education and Counseling Psychology.

Chaired by Morrissey-Compton’s Director of Research, Surina Basho, PhD, the conference will feature experts from across North America, who will present the latest on current research and applied work in executive function and learning differences. The conference is targeted toward behavioral health professionals, educational professionals, researchers, and medical professionals.

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Parents, please help us spread the word by passing this information on to your schools and teachers! For additional information, pricing, and to register, visit http://www.morrissey-compton.org/efri_professionals.php.
EF Boot Camp for Students: A Program for Academic and Daily Success

This winter, Morrissey-Compton will hold an Executive Function Boot Camp, an intensive, four-weekend program open to middle- and high-school students experiencing any or all of the following difficulties:

- Homework is turned in late, or not at all
- Trouble remembering homework assignments
- Struggles with communicating his/her needs to teachers
- Difficulty breaking down long-term projects
- Misses long-term project deadlines
- Disrupts home-life with frantic searches, urgent requests for late-night help, and/or anxiety-ridden meltdowns
- A backpack full of crumpled papers and random objects.

Each two-hour Saturday session is designed to equip students with foundational building blocks for academic success and personal growth. The comprehensive curriculum is carefully developed to help students develop their executive function skills for school, homework, and daily life. We are hoping to start the program January 31, contingent upon enrollment.

Advocacy

There’s No Need to Go It Alone!
by Ashley Koedel, M.A., Educational Specialist

Morrissey-Compton offers advocacy services to help parents navigate the Special Education and Section 504 Plan processes. Assessment is the important first step, but having the suggested services and accommodations formalized into a documented education plan at your child’s school is a necessary next step.

Advocacy services by Ashley Koedel, M.A. and Janet Dafoe, Ph.D. are provided by both consultation and direct advocacy. As 504, IEP, and other educational meetings are scheduled, we work with the parents to develop a strategic plan to meet the needs of the student. On occasions where parents would like to have an advocate on their side of the table during these pivotal meetings, we will also attend the educational meetings with the parents. Our in-depth knowledge of special education law, procedures, programs, and interventions, as well as our relationships with school and district personnel, allow you to listen to and focus on your child’s needs while the advocate guides the educational team to the proper determination.

For information about Morrissey-Compton’s Advocacy Services, call (650) 322-5910 or email ashley.koedel@morrcomp.org.
Creating a Culture of Giving
by Lyn Balistreri, Director of Fund Development

Philanthropy is to the 21st century what conspicuous consumption was to the 20th. Virtually every form of media bombards us with requests to give to this or that charitable cause. And yes, I’m well aware that you have likely received Morrissey-Compton’s Fall Appeal in the mail, so I’m not casting stones from this particular glass house! But to continue: affluent individuals are constantly in the news, touting the virtues of philanthropy to the other 99% of us. And they’re not just paying lip service—many of them have taken The Giving Pledge, a commitment by the world’s wealthiest individuals and families to dedicate the majority of their wealth to philanthropy. It’s a wonderful movement that has the potential to make a huge impact on the world, and if Morrissey-Compton could become one of its beneficiaries, it would be an amazing boon to an organization of our size.

However, most of us don’t have unlimited resources, and there are an awful lot of worthy causes out there. What is the average person to do if they want to feel as if their more modest gifts are making a real difference? One answer is to give to Morrissey-Compton. I’ll make a case for that later in this article, but in the meantime, I’d like to talk about the culture of giving we must cultivate as an organization if we are to continue to provide our services to all who need them in the future, regardless of ability to pay.

A Note about Income
Statistically, the average income in our area is among the highest in the country. I’m reminded of what a certain very cool individual had to say on the subject: “There are lies, d**** lies, and statistics.” Our geography can be deceptive; in many Mid-Peninsula neighborhoods, one older couple may be living off their Social Security income in a tract home that was built in the 1940s, while next door, in a sparkling new mansion, lives a family that made millions during the dot-com boom.

What I’m calling a culture of giving goes beyond what each household gives monetarily, although it certainly does help when our supporters are committed to giving as much, and as often, as they can. But what I’m referring to is how the community at large—and each family in particular—can create a culture that incorporates giving into its daily life.

History Repeats Itself
My own family did not focus on philanthropy when I was growing up. With eight children to raise, and living on a truck driver’s salary, my parents had enough challenges putting food on the table without putting a lot of time, energy, or resources into furthering charitable causes. My parents (photo at left, circa 1970s) did the best they could, and they were very decent people. But to this day, I notice that few of my siblings make it a point to give regularly, and I find myself wishing that we’d been taught differently. Had the ten of us collectively looked beyond ourselves and our problems, we could have found so many opportunities for volunteering, or fundraising, or simply helping to raising awareness of causes that we found important. These experiences would have not only made us more grateful for what we did have, but provided quality bonding time for us as a family. Moreover, giving just a little each can really add up for a family of our size; if the eight children in my family could come together to give just $25 per month to a single nonprofit that we could all agree on, that’s almost $2,500 per year that could go towards a worthy cause.

Into the Future with Morrissey-Compton
Although the world’s population has grown exponentially in recent years, the global community has become much smaller. Thanks to social media, charitable causes from around the world now have a means to enter our homes and our consciousness. It’s an exciting time,
with lots of potential for good works. And giving to causes that have demonstrated worldwide impact holds definite appeal to all of us.

At the same time, when I see a commercial appealing to the average person to send money to a large national or international charity, I can't help but feel that in a way, they make the playing field uneven for smaller nonprofits. Many charitable foundations with hundreds of millions to give annually have chosen to focus much of their giving on such causes, rather than on local agencies that don't fit into very specific categories (or have much of an advertising budget). I do see a certain logic in putting the largest sums of money towards proven large organizations, unless one has a very personal relationship to a particular smaller nonprofit—but that also means that places such as Morrissey-Compton must work a lot harder, and with fewer resources, to get just a tiny fraction of the money in gifts that is available.

To me, it makes much more sense for the average person to put their limited giving dollars toward smaller agencies within our own community that work to achieve the goals closest to our heart. And since you are reading this newsletter, it’s a good bet that, for you, helping individuals with learning differences is one of them.

We’re in this Together
As a small organization, we are also open to creative ways to raise money. For example, the box at right describes a wonderful gift of services that a Morrissey-Compton client donated, so we are holding a special auction that will hopefully raise a few hundred dollars towards our fundraising goal. It didn’t fit in with our formal fundraising plan, but we are grateful to have the opportunity to make it count. Similarly, if you have talents or time that you are willing to share to benefit Morrissey-Compton, please send your ideas our way!

If you are interested in giving to Morrissey-Compton, or have new ideas for fundraising, please call (650) 322-5910 or email lyn.balistreri@morrcomp.org.

Morrissey-Compton Receives $100,000 Grant

We are excited to share with you that in November, a private foundation awarded Morrissey-Compton a grant in the amount of $100,000 to provide services to lower-income Latino families. The money is designated to support a full-time Spanish-speaking clinician who will work primarily out of our Half Moon Bay office.

Morrissey-Compton Executive Director John Brentar states, “By bringing on Spanish-speaking staff members to conduct assessments, tutoring, and counseling for Latino individuals with learning differences, as well as perform outreach to Spanish-speaking parents to raise awareness that these services are available, Morrissey-Compton will be able to serve a significant portion of the population in a way that has never been done before. We thank the foundation for this amazingly generous gift.” The 2010 Census found that Latinos account for 31.5% of the population of Half-Moon Bay, a community of about 11,000 with few educational services for families.

It’s an Email Auction!

Former MLB player Terry Whitfield has graciously donated a voucher good for one lucky kid to receive six free lessons in baseball, softball, soccer, golf, basketball, or football from Futurepro—a $325 value!


If you would like to bid on this voucher for someone in your own family, or for Morrissey-Compton to give to one of our scholarship families, email your bid to lyn.balistreri@morrcomp.org between now and January 9. Thank you, and Happy bidding!
Meet the Latest Additions to Our Amazing Clinical Team!

Meredith Feinberg, M.Ed.,
Educational Specialist

Meredith Feinberg comes to the Bay Area from the beautiful state of Vermont.

While completing her Master’s Degree in Education at the University of Vermont, Meredith worked for a post-secondary education program for students with developmental disabilities. Meredith supported these students to be successful with academic, career, independent living, social, and executive function skills.

In June 2014, Meredith moved to California and worked at Michelle Garcia Winner’s Social Thinking clinic. At the Social Thinking clinic, she supported elementary and middle school students in developing social cognition skills through team-based activities and games in a summer camp setting. Meredith is thrilled to continue her passion for teaching at Morrissey-Compton!

Will Martinez, Ph.D.,
Postdoctoral Fellow

Dr. Will Martinez completed a dual B.A. in Psychology and Sociology from Drew University in New Jersey. He received his M.A. in Forensic Psychology from the John Jay College of Criminal Justice, a senior college of the City University of New York, and earned an M.A. and Ph.D. in Clinical-Child Psychology from DePaul University in Chicago.

While at DePaul, Dr. Martinez conducted cross-cultural research on treatments for depression, traumatic stress, and substance use in ethnic minority children. In addition, his research has focused on how neighborhood environments and cultural factors impact mental health in Latino youth.

Dr. Martinez completed the Multicultural Clinical Training Program, an American Psychological Association-accredited predoctoral internship program, through UCSF/San Francisco General Hospital. He has strong clinical training and experience in evidence-based treatments for depression, anxiety, and traumatic stress, including cognitive behavioral therapy.

Fluent in Spanish, Dr. Martinez also has extensive experience providing psychological and psychoeducational assessments, with a specific emphasis on bilingual (Spanish/English) assessments for Spanish-speaking youth and their families.

Edwige Gamache, M.A., Ph.D.,
Educational Specialist

Edwige Gamache does bilingual tutoring for students in elementary school through college at Morrissey-Compton’s Half Moon Bay Office. She was born, raised, and educated in France and in the U.S. and earned a Masters in Spanish Applied Linguistics from the Universidad de Jaén in Spain. In addition, she received a Ph.D. in Romance Linguistics, French Literature and Cultures from U.C. Berkeley.

Edwige has been teaching since 1997 in both high school and college, with much expertise and experience in teaching bilingual students. She lives in Montara with her family. Her extensive travels have taken her to Mexico, Costa Rica, Brazil, and Spain, to name a few.
Deconstructing Dyslexia
by C. Priya Tjerandsen, M.A., Educational Specialist

Developing reading competency is crucial to the success of school-aged children, yet research suggests that up to 20 percent of our population will find mastering foundational literacy skills to be the single greatest challenge of their childhoods. Even more perplexing to teachers, and sometimes parents, these same children are often verbally precocious and capable of quick, inventive thinking outside of literacy-based learning tasks. Dyslexia impacts one in five learners today, and children with this specific learning difference exist in every school setting across our nation.

Definition, Causes, and Commonalities
Researchers define dyslexia as a specific learning disability that is neurobiological in origin. It is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction.

Students with dyslexia share common characteristics in their approach to reading, including limited phoneme awareness. Linguists explain that English is an alphabetic-phonetic code, and making meaning of words in print requires a developed ability to associate sounds with letters and patterns of letters. Though individuals with dyslexia may not innately make these associations, explicit instructional interventions that emphasize sound-symbol relationships can elevate a student’s ability to interpret the sounds in words more effectively.

Further, individuals with dyslexia are known to over-rely on context and guessing when reading printed material. Given weaker decoding skills, students make predictions about words based on picture clues and surrounding context from the reading material. In studies of highly skilled readers, however, researchers found that context is not used as a primary strategy for determining unknown words. Ultimately, good readers assess letters in words, not context or pictures.

Solutions for Success
Without intervention, students with dyslexia do not develop the strategies necessary for decoding, which, in turn, means that substantial levels of energy must be devoted to interpreting the words on the page. This leaves less available resources for finding meaning or enjoyment when reading.

Dyslexia is also associated with slower naming speeds, or difficulties with recognizing individual words. Children with this learning profile will work to decode a word on one page, only to struggle over the same word repeated soon after. Automatic word recognition occurs when students can reliably intuit the phonological patterns of English. Once students can effortlessly make connections between sounds and letters, reading fluency can be more readily attained.

Importantly, the majority of struggling readers, when exposed to instruction that combines phonics, fluency development, and reading comprehension strategies from teachers well-versed in the linguistic structure of words, will see an increase in reading skills to average reading levels. With quality interventions and lots of practice, students with dyslexia can become competent readers.

Morrissey-Compton’s Educational Specialists are experts at diagnosing and treating many types of learning differences, including dyslexia. To set up a comprehensive evaluation, call (650) 322-5910.
Free! Parent Education

Visit www.morrissey-compton.org for workshop descriptions, presenter biographies, additional dates & topics, and a link to pre-register via Eventbrite (required). For information, contact Sue Garber, M.A. at sue.garber@morrcomp.org.

Half Moon Bay
840 Main Street, Suite B2
Half Moon Bay, CA 94019

Communicate with your Children in Ways that Increase Cooperation and Reduce Frustration (Grades K-5)
Sue Garber, M.A.
Tuesday, Jan. 27, 7 to 8:30pm

“Ewww! I Don’t Want to Eat That!” Helping Kids Overcome Picky Eating (All Ages)
Erica Ragan, Ph.D.
Wednesday, Feb. 11, 7 to 8:30pm

Organizational Skills: Strategies to Help Your Child (Grades 4-8)
Steve Corelis, M.A., Ed.T.
Tuesday, Feb. 24, 7 to 8:30pm

Manage YOUR Stress and Help Your Child (All Ages)
John Brentar, Ph.D.
Wednesday, Mar. 18, 7 to 8:30pm

Making Sense of Executive Function for Your Child (Ages 7-18)
Surina Basho, Ph.D.
Thursday, Apr. 23, 7 to 8:30pm

Recognizing and Treating Depression in Adolescents (Ages 12-17)
Will Martinez, Ph.D.
Wednesday, May 6, 7 to 8:30pm

Redwood City
595 Price Avenue, Redwood City, CA 94063

Attention: How it Impacts Learning and Ways to Help Your Child Improve (All Ages)
Erin Powers, M.Ed., B.C.E.T.
Wednesday, Jan. 7, 6:30 to 8pm

Explaining a Learning Disability to Your Child (Ages 8-17)
Erin Shinn Berg, M.Ed.
Thursday, Jan. 22, 6:30 to 8pm

Supporting Your Child in the School Setting (Grades K-8)
C. Priya Tjerandsen, M.A.
Monday, Jan. 26, 6:30 to 8pm

Organizational Skills: Strategies to Help Your Child (Grades 4-8)
Steve Corelis, M.A., Ed.T.
Tuesday, Feb. 10, 6:30 to 8pm

How to Navigate the College Application Process, Including Disclosing Learning Differences
Elizabeth A. Stone, Ph.D.
Wednesday, Feb. 25, 6:30 to 8pm

Executive Functioning (EF) and Social/Emotional Development (Ages 7 and above)
Jenna Rinsky, Ph.D.
Wednesday, Mar. 4, 6:30 to 8pm

Transitioning Your Child with an IEP or 504 Plan to Middle School (Grades 4-6)
Ashley Kinkaid Koedel, M.A.
Tuesday, Mar. 10, 6:30 to 8pm

Connect to Correct: The Importance of Emotional Connection in Parenting (All Ages)
A. Cassandra Golding, Ph.D.
Wednesday, Mar. 25, 6:30 to 8pm

Communicate with your Children in Ways that Increase Cooperation and Reduce Frustration (Grades K-5)
Sue Garber, M.A.
Thursday, Apr. 2, 6:30 to 8pm

Recognizing and Treating Depression in Adolescents (Ages 12-17)
Will Martinez, Ph.D.
Tuesday, Apr. 28, 6:30 to 8pm

Parenting Anxious Children (Ages 5-10)
A. Cassandra Golding, Ph.D.
Thursday, May 7, 6:30 to 8pm

Parenting an Emotionally Sensitive Child (All Ages)
Erica Ragan, Ph.D.
Wednesday, May 20, 6:30 to 8pm
New Social Skills Groups Beginning in January

There are typically 3-5 boys or girls in a group, who are close in age and have similar challenges and goals.

For information, contact Sue Garber, M.A. at sue.garber@morrcomp.org.

Making and Keeping Friends
For children who have difficulty navigating the social dynamics involved in peer relationships, we will practice skills such as identifying feelings in ourselves and others, reading social cues, conversational skills (initiating a conversation, showing interest in what the other person is saying, asking questions, taking turns talking, disagreeing respectfully), anger management, perspective taking, and helping kids understand how their behavior affects others.

Emotion Regulation: Managing Strong Feelings
For children whose feelings intensify quickly and may erupt into behavior such as arguing, yelling or having a “meltdown”, this group will provide an opportunity to learn ways to notice when emotions are escalating, so that calming strategies can be used. We will also work on learning to evaluate the size of a problem, to determine if our reaction is expected (typical, appropriate for the situation) or unexpected (over the top, making others feel angry or uncomfortable).

Impulse Control: Learning How to Stop and Think
For children who struggle with impulsivity, this group will offer strategies for pausing and thinking before acting. We will learn about how our own behavior affects the way others think and feel about us. Group members will practice techniques to reduce impulsive behavior, and increase their ability to understand the cause and effect relationship between impulsive behavior and negative outcomes.

End Notes

Shop ‘Til You Drop! Please?
Remember that AmazonSmile is a simple and automatic way for you to support Morrissey-Compton every time you shop, at no cost to you.

How it Works
To shop at AmazonSmile, simply go to smile.amazon.com from your browser. On your first visit, you need to select Morrissey-Compton to receive donations from eligible purchases before you begin shopping. After that, every eligible purchase you make at smile.amazon.com will result in a donation. Your account and settings are exactly the same on Amazon.com and AmazonSmile. Tens of millions of products on AmazonSmile are eligible for donations, and they are marked “Eligible for AmazonSmile donation” on their product detail pages.
It is the mission of the Morrissey-Compton Educational Center to enable children and adults with learning disabilities and school-related difficulties to achieve their goals by providing the highest quality diagnostic and intervention services in a supportive environment.