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Local spotlight

Adviser preps disabled kids for new life stages

Special ed expert, social worker fills gap in state's offering to help children and adults succeed.



Susan H. Rogers, founder of Parare Consulting, meets with parent Janet Ramseyer of Beverly Hills. "In order for people with disabilities to have success there needs to be transitional services," Rogers says. (Kiya Gibbons / Special to The Detroit News)

Karen Dybis / Special to The Detroit News

For many parents, one of life's most rewarding -- and worrisome -- events is sending their children into the world, whether it is high school, a first job or college. That can be even more challenging when your child has a disability.

Susan H. Rogers has seen families struggle with these issues, and as a special education expert she saw a gap between what the state offered and the growing number of people with disabilities.

That is why she founded Parare Consulting PLC, an educational, counseling and consultation firm in Royal Oak. Latin for "to prepare," Parare emphasizes practical training strategies for people moving into new life stages, Rogers said.

"In order for people with disabilities to have success there needs to be transitional services and they're really lacking," Rogers said.

Rogers is a licensed social worker with more than 27 years of experience. Her specialty is special

education, especially for children and adolescents. She also served as an adjunct professor in the graduate program at Wayne State University's School of Social Work.

Parare Consulting works mostly with school-age children, adolescents and adults. Her services center on autism, Asperger syndrome, mental impairments, learning disabilities as well as emotionally and cognitively impaired individuals.

For example, a family may contact Rogers when their child is graduating from high school. The family may feel lost without this structured environment for their child, Rogers said, and the parents want help to get their child to the next stage of their lives.

That may happen through guided learning activities, one-on-one counseling or sessions with the family, Rogers said. The end goal is to help the person with a disability become better equipped to handle a job, create and maintain social relationships and, ultimately, become an independent member of society.

"The need is there," Rogers said. "As people age, they either age out of the system or the services drop out. ... We need a continuum of services available to parents in Metro Detroit."

About 1.5 million Americans are living with autism, Asperger or other pervasive development disorders, according to recent studies by the Autism Society of America. And the number of cases is estimated to be growing by 10 percent to 17 percent every year.

Locally, the number of children and teens affected by these disorders has nearly doubled in the past five years in schools in Wayne, Macomb and Oakland counties, experts say.

Rogers' clients mostly include individuals and families, but they can range from school districts to universities to government agencies. She also works with companies looking for guidance when employing people with disabilities.

Another potential client is first responders or emergency service providers, such as fire or police departments, Rogers said. Her training can help emergency personnel with issues such as calming people with certain disabilities when agitated or frightened.

Karen Dybis is a Metro Detroit freelance writer.

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