Executive Summary: 2011 Autism Program Alumni Follow-up Study  
February 2013

As part of ongoing improvement efforts, the Ivymount School undertook an alumni follow-up study during the 2010-11 academic year in order to evaluate how well the school prepares its students for post-school life. This document summarizes a subset of these findings, focusing exclusively on interview responses from nine parents of Autism Program alumni. Topics covered as part of the 2011 Autism Program Alumni Follow-up Study include employment experience, post-secondary education, transportation issues, living arrangements, social and community life, and transition to post-school life.

Employment: All alumni included in this study are currently employed, most in volunteer positions with support from a job coach. Most alumni work between 10-29 hours per week. Job descriptions vary significantly, though most are entry level and require minimal skill. Alumni participate in several different local employment support programs, and all over the age of 21 receive state funding for employment support services. Almost all alumni are “very satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied” with their current employment situations, and parents of all alumni felt that the Autism Program had prepared alumni either “very well” or “moderately well” for post-school employment.

Post-Secondary Education: Only two Autism Program alumni are enrolled or have been enrolled in adult education programs or courses of some kind. Both were programs that focus on the job training or functional academic needs of adults with disabilities. Both received funding from the state or other sources to offset the costs of tuition. Both were “very satisfied” with their adult education experiences, and the parents of both felt that the Autism Program had prepared alumni “very well” for post-secondary education.

Living Arrangements: The majority of alumni are currently living with their parents, and the remaining two are in supported living. Both receive funding for residential support. More than half of the alumni who currently live with parents are on waitlists to receive such funding/support. Most alumni are “very satisfied” with their current living arrangements, and the majority of parents felt that the Autism Program had prepared alumni either “very well” or “moderately well” for independent living.

Social and Community Life: The majority of alumni have regular opportunities for structured social interaction, but a significant minority do not. Most commonly, these take the form of organized sports groups and social clubs for individuals with disabilities. All alumni have opportunities for unstructured social interaction with family members, but none have opportunities for unstructured social interaction with peers. The majority of alumni are “very satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied” with their social and community life, but several parents did not feel able to answer this question. Again, although the majority of parents felt that the Autism Program had prepared alumni “very well” for social and community life, several were unsure.
**Transition to Post-School Life:** Most parents reported that the overall quality of alumni’s post-school life is either “excellent” or “good.” Most parents reported that alumni required “about the same” support that they required five years ago. The most significant post school challenges included too much unoccupied time, insufficient services/funding, and lack of autonomy and concerns about safety. Key skills learned in the Autism Program included vocational skills and experiences, independent living skills, communication skills, and use of structural supports. Most parents felt that the Autism Program prepared alumni for the transition to post-school life either “very well” or “reasonably well.” Most also agreed that the Autism Program had adequately prepared families for the transition to post-school life.

**Recommendations:** Parents generated a number of recommendations for improving Ivymount’s support for Autism Program alumni’s transition to post-school life. They also expressed confidence in the quality of programming offered by Ivymount, and wished to see Ivymount expand its services to include some form of adult day services/supported work program and/or residential services for adults with autism.