



## Collaborative Care and Centralized Services for Individuals with Special Needs Under One Roof

### Background:

All too often, individuals with special needs get fragmented, uncoordinated health and social services from providers spread out all over the community. They often feel they do not have the support or knowledge needed to identify and navigate through their services options. As a result, they become overwhelmed by the complexities facing them and sometimes fall through the cracks. Many eventually give up. When this happens, instead of improving their health and quality of life, they regress or remain in limbo.



The solution is a unique, one-stop-shop model that provides medical and non-medical services for individuals with special needs of all ages. Such services will be offered through 30 partner organizations and coordinated through staff members known as Navigators. Service delivery is designed to be comprehensive, complementary, and synergistic, thus providing a better experience for individuals with special needs as well as better outcomes through improved coordination and communication among the different providers. It will be person- and family-centered, efficient, holistic, and integrated. This solution is the Multi-Assistance Center, or "The MAC," at Morgan's Wonderland™.



[MorgansWonderlandMAC.com](http://MorgansWonderlandMAC.com)



The MAC, scheduled to be operational in 2022, is an outgrowth of successful ventures to benefit the special-needs community by the Morgan's Inclusion Initiative of San Antonio, Texas. Morgan's Inclusion Initiative coordinates planning, fundraising and communication among a "family" that includes world-renowned, Ultra-Accessible™, nonprofit Morgan's Wonderland theme park, award-winning Morgan's Inspiration Island splash park, new Morgan's Wonderland Camp and new Morgan's Wonderland Sports. Because of these and similar inclusive endeavors to help citizens with special needs, the City Council in 2015 proclaimed San Antonio as "Inclusion City, USA."



### **The Approach: A Community-Driven, Collective-Impact Model**

No single organization can address the broad range of services required by individuals with special needs. Thus, the whole community of service providers needs to band together into a collective-impact model where collaboration will make it easier for those with special needs to receive services. Bringing together 30 organizations will result in greater synergy and follow-through for better care. The MAC will be data-driven and outcomes-based. Measuring and reporting progress will be key to assessing The MAC's effectiveness and making future improvements.

Four committees guiding creation of The MAC are reflective of the community-driven approach:

1. **The MAC Advisory Committee:** comprised of thought leaders and experts in all the areas of services to guide design, development, and oversight of The MAC.
2. **The MAC Navigation Committee:** comprised of organizations that will provide guidance to the Navigator function of guiding MAC Members to service providers (and keeping track of them).
3. **The MAC Client & Caregiver Committee:** comprised of future MAC Members and families of individuals with special needs that will provide feedback and help guide development of all MAC activities.



4. **The MAC Autism Committee:** comprised of key community stakeholders, which play a vital role in the development and delivery of the autism services at The MAC.

5. **The MAC Legal Home Committee:** comprised of key community stakeholders, which play a vital role in the development and delivery of the legal services at The MAC.

6. **The MAC Medical Home Committee:** comprised of key community stakeholders, which play a vital role in the development and delivery of the medical home services at The MAC.

7. **The MAC Therapy Home Committee:** comprised of key community stakeholders, which play a vital role in the development and delivery of the therapy services at The MAC.

### **What Is a 'Special Need?'**

For The MAC, a person with a "special need" is defined as an individual of any age with a long-term impairment of cognitive, sensory, motor and/or communication function(s), either congenital or acquired, that is not readily rehabilitated. Furthermore, a special need substantially limits an individual's ability to perform activities in the range of what is considered typical for a person of the same age and cultural context. A special need may result in associated social, behavioral, or mental health complexities, requiring specialized intervention by a professional.

### **The Growing Need**

The special-needs population in San Antonio and Bexar County that can benefit from The MAC is large and growing. A March 2019 report by the Texas Workforce Investment Council titled "People with Disabilities: A Texas Profile" indicates there are 297,255 individuals with a special need in Bexar County, or 15 percent of the total population. Adding the special need populations of the seven contiguous counties (Atascosa, Wilson, Kendall, Comal, Medina, Bandera, Guadalupe) increases the total to 369,558, also 15 percent of the combined population of the seven counties. Similar significant totals exist in other areas of the state and nation.

### **The MAC's Mission and Vision**

**Mission** – Improve the lives of individuals with special needs through comprehensive and coordinated services offered through a family-centered approach with collaboration from the family, client, and community partners.

**Vision** – Offer a new way of efficiently delivering an array of integrated and coordinated services that provides value to individuals with special needs and their families, as well as other relevant community stakeholders.

### **Guiding Principles of The MAC include:**

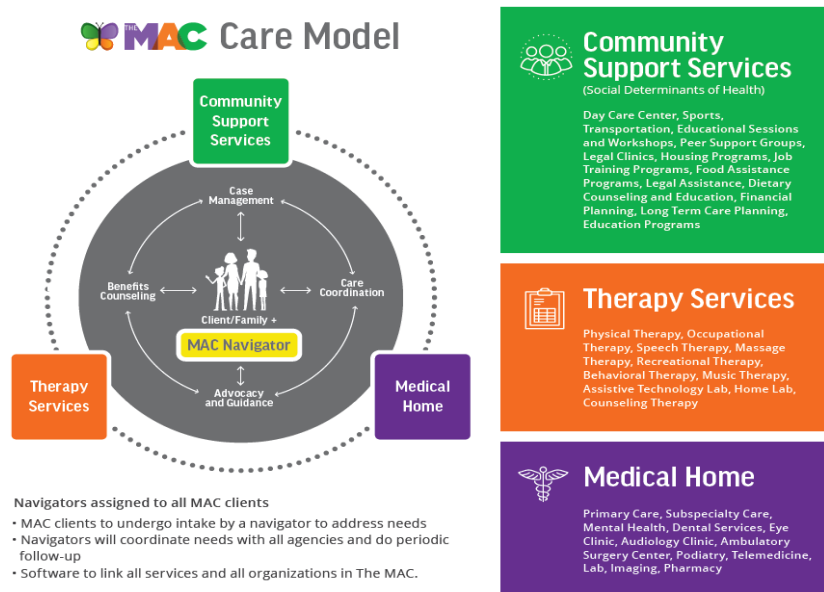
- The MAC will be unique in the scope and breadth of services provided. Currently, there is no facility in the United States offering the wide array of coordinated and tracked services for individuals with special needs.



- The MAC will provide comprehensive, integrated medical and non-medical services for individuals with special needs of all ages.
- The services available at The MAC through its affiliated organizations focus on addressing the Social Determinants of Health (SDoH) such as transportation unavailability and barriers to empowerment that result from income status, education level, food insecurity, etc. Studies have shown that up to 70 percent of an individual's health status depends on SDoH and behavioral factors. The MAC's approach will look at the individual and family holistically and strive to keep them healthy and equipped with tools to live a better quality of life.
- Community organizations with a presence at The MAC will provide services such as social, legal, financial planning, long-term care planning, housing, job training, education, and peer support.
- Although there will be many partner organizations, The MAC will have one centralized web presence, phone system and Welcome Center.
- All services provided at The MAC have been designed in a framework called The MAC at Morgan's Wonderland Care Model, which will provide clients with services they require in one facility and/or one network.

### The MAC Care Model™

The MAC Care Model consists of four service categories: Medical Home, Therapy Home, Community Support Services, and Navigation. It can be summarized in the graphic below:  
(Note The MAC Care Model™ is subject to change)





## **Medical Home – The Medical Institute at The MAC**

The Medical Institute will be the anchor of all medical services provided at The MAC, with a primary care focus. The Institute is designed to coordinate the majority of medical needs of individuals with special needs. Here they receive integrated medical care that will address physical and medical needs, along with emotional and social service support. The experts on-site have specific skillsets focused on individuals with special needs, something not seen in most healthcare settings. Feedback from individuals with special needs and medical providers suggests that most health centers, hospitals, and physician offices are not welcoming to these patients. Problems currently exist in the physical layout of the facilities; the providers' medical expertise in treating individuals with special needs is often lacking; and physicians are not eager to treat such patients, given the increased amount of appointment time required and the medical complexity of patients. The Institute will have dedicated staff members that want to treat the special-needs population and that have the skills to do so. In addition, The MAC is designed with special attention to Ultra-Accessibility™ and sensory sensitivity to eliminate physical barriers in accessing treatment and accommodating all patients' special needs.

## **Therapy Services Home**

Individuals with special needs require various therapy disciplines and modalities for habilitation, rehabilitation, and education purposes; many will be available at The MAC. To produce better outcomes, these therapy disciplines and modalities need to be coordinated, comprehensive, and complimentary. The MAC's therapy philosophy will employ a holistic and interdisciplinary approach that concentrates on team goal setting, provider coordination, and helping clients and their caregivers understand their conditions to improve their health and quality of life. Therapy at The MAC will be in coordination with programs such as assistive technology, seating and orthotics clinics, tele-rehab and in sync with The MAC Medical Home, Community Support Services, and the MAC Navigation System ("MAC Nav"). Therapy services at The MAC will be data-driven and outcomes-based. Measuring and reporting progress will be key to assessing the effectiveness of these coordinated and comprehensive services as well as contributing to future improvements.

## **Community Support Services**

While The MAC will have the best medical and therapeutic services tailored to those with special needs, it also will feature a lengthy list of social services provided by community-based organizations. Many of these services will address social determinants of health (SDoH), which are the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age that ultimately affect health and well-being. Studies have shown that 70 percent of an individual's health is attributed to these determinants. All support services will be offered under The MAC Care Model™ and tracked using an electronic platform that will serve as the client's service record of all medical, therapeutic, and social interventions received.



## **Comprehensive Navigation/Navigator – Key to The MAC’s Success**

Everyone with a special need that comes to The MAC will be assigned a specially trained Navigator, who will assess each person’s situation and patiently guide him or her to workable solutions to their needs, whether they are medical, therapeutic, social, financial, educational, training, or legal. The Navigator will conduct a comprehensive, in-person intake process with each MAC client to ascertain all areas of need. This means The MAC client will relate his or her story and circumstances only once, and the information will be entered into the electronic platform for referrals and tracking and updated as services are received.

Once a client completes the intake process, a score will be assigned to them that will indicate the level of navigation resources they need. Follow-up will be accomplished through an innovative and integrated electronic platform (The MAC™ Navigation System), which connects all appropriate community organizations/providers and enables tracking and coordination of connections, referrals, and follow-ups.

Since multiple organizations will offer services at The MAC, solutions to many needs will be available on-site. The MAC’s network will also extend to services not offered at The MAC. This pioneering approach represents the future of how health care as well social and community services should be made available for individuals with special needs.

The Navigator’s ultimate key to success is to get families with individuals with special needs dedicated to the plan of care created for them. It will be necessary and required for MAC clients to commit to following through on their MAC Care Plan™. Just as importantly, the Navigator will serve as a foundation for MAC clients and their families.

The experience of COVID-19 has taught that the framework of The MAC is now needed more than ever to serving the special-needs community. The MAC brings together 30 organizations under a single framework that allows them to focus on their core missions, become more efficient, and save them resources by sharing costs such as overhead. Furthermore, by pooling their talents, they can achieve better outcomes not just for individuals with special needs but for all community stakeholders. More importantly, a center like The MAC, in which many services are offered in one place, could potentially limit infection risks to medically sensitive individuals with special needs by allowing them to go to one place to receive most of their services rather than be exposed to many places throughout the community.

In summary, The MAC’s innovative, one-stop-shop approach that provides all medical and non-medical services under one roof seeks to help individuals with special needs of all ages find the assistance they need to improve their health and well-being. Medical and social services experts believe The MAC will become a destination for individuals with special needs from across the region, state, and nation. Furthermore, creators of The MAC hope that successful implementation of The MAC Care Model™ will encourage other communities to adopt a collaborative, coordinated healthcare effort to assist their community members with special needs.



**Partial List of MAC Partners (MACers):**

