



TOWARD MAXIMUM
INDEPENDENCE
TRANSFORMING LIVES

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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Headquartered in San Diego, Toward Maximum Independence (TMI) was formed in 1981 to provide independent living services as a vendor with San Diego Regional Center. In 1986, the agency became a California nonprofit 501(c)3 corporation. Over the next several years our services were expanded to include employment, supported living, and family support for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. In 2000, we began serving the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and in 2020 veterans with disabilities. TMI grew from a small sole-proprietorship based out of a home office, to providing support to now more than 1,100 individuals with offices in San Diego, Escondido, Temecula, El Centro and Corona.

TMI has been accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) since accreditations started in 2001. For 2015, we were nominated for the East County Chamber of Commerce Community Service Organization for best nonprofit, as well as being nominated for Best Service Organization by the Temecula Valley Chamber of Commerce.

TMI is comprised of a governing Board of Directors, as well as a staff of more than 400. Currently, we hold several vendorizations through San Diego and Inland Regional Centers including Independent Living Services, Supported Living Services, Community Integration Training Program, and Family Focused Services. We also provide support to youth through our licensed Resource (Foster) Family Program. In addition, TMI has an agreement with the Department of Rehabilitation to provide Supported Employment services.

Mission Statement:

To provide personalized services to those who require support, enabling them to make informed choices regarding how they live, work and function productively and independently in the community.

Vision:

Achieving valued roles, making critical life-defining decisions, gaining the respect of others, and contributing to the life of the community are opportunities enjoyed by all citizens.

TMI's Core Values Include:

- **Respect:** having a valued place and role among a network of family, friends, colleagues and neighbors.
- **Choice:** having autonomy in decision making both in small everyday matters and large, life defining issues.
- **Competence:** having the opportunity to perform functional and meaningful activities or work with whatever level of assistance necessary.
- **Full Inclusion:** sharing ordinary places with a growing network of personal relationships and making a contribution to the life of the community.

Principle Beliefs That Drive Our Work:

- **Community Living Services:** Anyone can live in a home of his or her own if given the support and assistance needed to be successful.
- **Employment Solutions:** All people are capable of performing real work for real pay.
- **Family Support Services:** All children belong in families.

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Human Rights:

TMI works to assure that the human rights and dignity of persons served are preserved within the scope of all our programs.

- To assure that every recipient of TMI services is treated as a valued client who has control of the services he/she receives, each individual will participate to the greatest extent possible in developing his/her personal support plan (PSP) and sign these plans to validate them.
- To ensure confidentiality, every recipient of TMI services signs release forms, which comply with state and federal regulations, before staff will communicate with other persons or agencies on the individual's behalf.
- To assure that TMI services meet the highest standards, Quality of Service Reviews occur internally. Licensing, Regional Center review, Area Board Life Quality Assessments and objective third party accreditations are conducted regularly.
- To assure satisfaction of services received, input is solicited from recipients of our services and other stakeholders as a part of the annual program evaluation.

To further assure the dignity and personal safety of every recipient of TMI services, it is the policy of TMI that physical and psychological abuse is prohibited. This includes corporal punishment, humiliation, exploitation and other adverse procedures. Adults with developmental disabilities previously living in state hospitals or group homes are today able to live in their own apartments or homes and have meaningful jobs in the community. Children once placed in institutions or group homes are today reunited with their families with in-home support or an alternative family where they can receive the benefits of family life as opposed to congregate care.

Agency Experience/Qualifications:

In addition to several Program Development Fund grants over the years, in 2006, TMI was awarded a \$118,000 grant by the California State Council on Developmental Disabilities. The grant entitled Project SEARCH, was a replication of the progressive, innovative, state and national award winning employment program initiated in 1996 at Children's Hospital in Cincinnati, Ohio.

In 2010, TMI was awarded the Employment for People with Hearing Impairment and Deafness (EPWHID) grant for \$405,000 by the California Department of Rehabilitation, which led to our expanded Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) program.

In 2025, TMI was awarded a \$200,000 grant from Inland Regional Center (IRC) to establish and provide a Parent Advocacy Support Group for DHH parents and clients. The primary focus of the support group is to empower and support parents of DHH clients served by IRC. The group aims to:

- Provide education and resources to help families navigate the regional center system and access appropriate services
- Create a safe and supportive space where parents can share experiences, challenges, and strategies
- Strengthen advocacy skills so parents can effectively advocate for the needs of their children
- Foster connection and collaboration among parents of DHH individuals
- Serve as a platform for parents to voice their needs and concerns directly to service funders and partners such as IRC, the Department of Rehabilitation (DOR), and the Department of Developmental Services (DDS)

This group will play a vital role in improving transparency, accountability, and culturally appropriate service delivery for the DHH community.

TMI undergoes an annual external financial audit and has passed without issue since auditing began in 2008.

All supports provided by TMI are designed to enable people, regardless of age or level of disability, to live in real homes in the community and to be fully included in family, school, work and community life. In order to achieve our goals we have always placed a high priority on providing the highest quality training to agency staff. We have developed and continually maintain, through regular update and revision, a comprehensive staff inservice curriculum. This includes a series of in-services, incentives to encourage outside conferences and workshop/attendance and, historically, staff retreats and trainings.