

Spaulding Academy & Family Services: FY 2024-2026 Strategic Plan

Approved December 2023

It is hard to believe that the time frame on the current (FY 2023) Strategic Plan has just about run its course. It seems like yesterday that we were grappling with issues of seclusion, branding, and break-even budgets. We were considering land development opportunities, an EChO poles course, and yes, even an aquatic park! The Board of Directors was expanding, and DCYF residential contracts were only a rumor. As far as I can tell, Covid wasn't even a word then. And yet, despite all the challenges that we have faced, as I write this today, I am struck by how successful we have been on so many fronts. There has been an almost 100% turnover in staff leadership. The residential rates environment has been completely overhauled. Covid happened. If there is a constant, it is the unwavering dedication of the leadership of our Board of Directors. It has been a tumultuous time, but we have persevered, and Spaulding is now a better, stronger, and more relevant organization meeting the needs of so many children across the state and in Vermont and Maine. As I perused the FY 2019-2023 Strategic Plan, I was amazed by the progress that we made on almost every front. It is fascinating ~ and certainly satisfying ~ to review the expiring Plan and note the accomplishments that we made: financial stability, IT security, program expansion, infrastructure expansion, media awareness, student testing improvements, CARF accreditation ... and the list goes on. Along the way, we celebrated turning 150 years old, adopted new payroll and HRIS systems, and expanded our campus footprint.

Yes, a lot has happened during these past few years, but we could not do what we do without the Board's oversight and support, and the passion and commitment of so many of our staff to the needs of the children we serve. With these in place, we now look forward to the next steps. In looking back, we can learn about ourselves and our ability to adapt and prosper. I realized long ago that it only makes sense to set achievable goals, i.e., that are under our control. And yet, it is with confidence that I know that we, being Spaulding Strong, can achieve anything that we set our minds to. And so it is that we present our FY 2024-2026 Strategic Plan, knowing things can change in an instant, and yet remaining ever confident in our relentless determination to seek the best outcomes for our students and staff.

Pillar # 1: Pursue Excellence

- Deliver the highest quality programs in residential care, clinical treatment, and education to the children and families on our campus and in our community.

- Recruit and retain excellent staff who meet our high-performance expectations and retain this staff through incentives including competitive compensation packages, educational support, and training in exemplary practices.

1:1 Safety for All

- Restraint – Continue steps to minimize and eliminate restraint by fully implementing trauma-informed programming and explicit instruction of Social Emotional Learning for staff and students.
- Redesign, adapt, and implement continuous quality improvement around the reduction of restraint, including a Spaulding Crisis Management Plan focused on a review and debriefing of reduction efforts.
- Expand and improve a consistent workers' compensation plan to include committee assignments, debriefing, and additional education regarding the reduction of workplace injuries.

1:2 Learning Environment for Students – Improved Outcomes

- Using best practice education methods and regular testing, increase outcomes for each student by having at least 50% of students achieve their expected RIT growth scores.
- Increase opportunities for students through the expanded use of technology, active inclusion in community integration activities, and promotion of school-based and extra-curricular activities.
- Design and implement a campus-wide vocational program that supports students in accessing career education on and off campus.
- Investigate and promote normalcy around cell phone usage, social media (including artificial intelligence), and other platforms.

1:3 Learning Environment for Staff

- Continue to update Policies & Procedures by developing, updating, and communicating policies and procedures regularly.
- Further enhance all types of training curriculum for both mandatory and progressive training, optimizing current tools, exploring new methods and utilizing a variety of delivery methods to train and develop staff at all levels.
- Provide tools and training to develop skills of frontline supervisors and all people managers across the organization.
- Provide support for professional development and tuition reimbursement.

1:4 Residential Environment

- Continue an investment in residential cottages to ensure they are as comfortable, safe, and useful as possible.
- Embrace a wide variety of after-school activities and evening and weekend community excursions that are fun and accessible for as many students as possible.
- Investigate the addition (construction/purchase) of an additional residence for medically intensive children.

1:5 Therapeutic Practice and General Methodologies

- Research and adopt the best therapeutic methods and standards to help our children and families meet and exceed their goals.
- Incorporate evidence-based practice into the daily therapeutic environment to include trauma-informed practices using increased therapeutic engagement, group and individual therapy and behavioral interventions to support all youth.
- Ensure high caliber staff in all wrap-around service areas, such as SLPs, OT, PT, BCBAs, Vocational Coordinator, clinicians, nursing, case and family workers, PCP and a child psychiatrist.
- Continue to develop a Spaulding Academy & Family Services system of support for all students (including community-based) utilizing a psychiatric and medical clinic model.

1:6 Technology Roadmap

- Develop a meaningful IT roadmap that includes maintaining a secure and reliable infrastructure.
- Maintain excellent basic tools (Outlook, SharePoint, hardware).
- Select and utilize security cameras throughout the campus; activate emergency information alerts and explore safety-related IT options

1:7 Communication – External and Internal

- Update the Spaulding Academy & Family Services website.
- Expand the use of social media and online presence.
- Continue to provide relevant marketing/outreach materials for referral sources, clients and supporters.
- Develop/expand/improve communication with external and internal stakeholders.

1:8 Compliance

- Prudent Parenting – Ongoing compliance review and TA from the state.
- Families First Prevention Services (with independent assessment)
- CARF Accreditation
- School Accreditation
- Child Care Licensing
- Child Placement (ISO)
- DCYF Certification for Payment

Pillar #2: Ensure Financial Sustainability

- Maintain sources of revenue for annual operations and special projects, expand options for planned giving and pursue external grant opportunities.
- Remain vigilant for opportunities to develop supplementary and diversified sources of earned income.

2:1 Fiscal Stability and Growth

- Maintain responsible annual operating and capital budgets with input from staff and Board approval.
- Maintain a close watch on monthly operating variances and proactively adjust actions based on results.
- Maintain contacts and active involvement with typical funding sources to influence rate/revenue growth.
- Update rates for current services as warranted and/or required.
- Revisit grant funding options and expand the donor database.

2:2 Donor Stewardship

- Improve Board member support and advocacy through direct and indirect sourcing, introductions and active stewardship of new and existing donors and supporters.
- Provide training to support Board members in development activities.
- Ongoing staff cultivation of supporters and donors.

2:3 Staff Recruitment and Retention

- Use progressive recruiting tools and techniques to attract diverse, high-quality staff.
- Maintain market parity in wages and benefits.
- Retain staff through well-executed performance, merit reviews, training, professional development and a high-performance workplace culture.
- Review and update current performance evaluation metrics.

2:4 Investigate New Programs

- Staffed Foster Homes
- Psychiatric and Medical Outpatient Model
- Additional Satellite Community-Based Programs
- Outpatient Mental Health Services
- School-based Mental Health
- Transitional Age/Independent Living/Vocational Career/Alternative Education Programs Early
- Childhood Development
- Child Care and After-School Care
- Affordable Housing
- Adult Foster Care

Pillar #3: Revitalize the Facilities and Maximize the Wise Use of the Campus

3:1 Campus and Facilities

- Review current Campus Master Plan; prepare revised 3-year Campus Plan.
- Maintain/update all buildings and infrastructure on campus.
- Explore options for an additional MI-centered residential building.
- Create an outdoor classroom/amphitheater and an adaptive tree house.
- Explore utility options, including renewable sources, water/sewer connections and solar.

3:2 Safety Planning

- Complete general safety and Homeland Security review of all buildings and practices and develop and implement action plans as needed (School safety, visitor control).
- Finalize Emergency Operations Plan review and develop and implement an action plan for day-to-day procedures as well as disaster plans as needed (informed by DOE and CARF standards).
- Update all emergency communication and safety protocols, ensuring relevancy and adherence to best practices

Pillar #4: Ensure Strong Leadership

4:1 Board Development

- Ensure Spaulding has a high-performing Board with governing principles in place to provide for healthy succession planning and organizational support.

- Ensure Board Governance focuses on updating Bylaws that support a high-functioning Board, with clear roles, responsibilities and attractive, simple principles.
- Ensure that Board development actively supports succession planning and transitions that encourage healthy growth to benefit the organization and its future.

4:2 Engagement of Staff

- Encourage employee engagement activities through an Events Committee, incorporating wellness programs and other methods.
- Continue building and maintaining a positive and high-performing work culture, focused on the optimization of roles and expectations.
- Continue the performance review process, creating positive dialogue for advancement and improvement.

4:3 Engagement with Decision-Makers

- Continue building relationships with key DCYF and DOE officials along with out-of-state counterparts.
- Maintain continual attendance and involvement at key functions, events, committees and statewide awards opportunities.
- Increase collaboration and program development with schools/colleges, non-profits, for-profit businesses and leadership in professional associations and statewide committees.
- Engage/solicit legislative and legal policy updates and introductions.

4:4 Engagement with Families

- Continue hosting Foster Family events and training opportunities.
- Continue building on methods for supporting parents and families through PTO, Advisory Councils and parent education programs for students, families and Community-Based Program (ISO) recipients.
- Develop a Family Engagement Committee and Advisory Counsel.
- Recruit a parent or family member to the Board of Directors.

— Todd Emmons, president and CEO 2020-2024