

## **NOTICE OF INTENT TO SUBMIT CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATION:**

**1. Name of School:** Bernalillo Academy (A Residential Treatment Facility)

Grade Levels: K-12; Projected Enrollment: 54

Point of Contact: Melinda Heller-Nellos

5400 Gibson Blvd SE #A

Albuquerque, NM 87108

**2. Persons on applicant team:**

- Melinda Heller-Nellos, LPCC, Administrator; Master's Degree; has been a supervisor, director and owner of successful businesses in Albuquerque for 27 years.
- Priscilla Garcia, Admissions Director; Bachelor's Degree; 8 years of admissions experience.
- Lynne Cordova, LISW, Director of Counseling Dept; Master's Degree; 14 years of social work experience.
- Brian Paolini, Director of Student Services; Bachelor's Degree; 11 years in student services.
- Rachel Theobald, MSN RN, Director of Nursing; Master's Degree; 8 years experience in clinical nursing.
- We will hire a team of qualified, certified, licensed Special Education teachers.

**3. Model or Focus of school:**

Autism Specific and Developmental Disabilities Curriculum and Programming.

**4. Contract w/ another entity for mgt of the school:**

No

**5. Applicant or members currently operating another school:**

No

**6. Is the school a replication of another school:**

No

**7. Vision Statement:**

To enhance the quality of the lives of children with autism, developmental disabilities and psychiatric disorders by providing the education and tools that will teach them how to function and succeed in their environment and eventually in their communities to the best of their individual abilities; while always referring back to the core values of safety, quality, trust, compassion and understanding.

**8. Describe the targeted student population including key demographic data (academic performance, home languages, ELL, and special education populations).**

The population of 54 will be made of multi-age, multi-level students. Ages will range from 5 years of age through 18 years of age. Academic abilities will vary amongst students who all are in special education, with the exceptionalities of Autism, Developmental Delay, Learning Disabled, Emotionally Disturbed, Other Health Impaired, etc. The majority of the students use English as their home language; however, at times a small percentage of students may enter Bernalillo Academy with Spanish as their home language.

**9. Provide evidence that the applicant team has assessed community need for a school of the nature that will be proposed in the application (e.g., objective surveys or other measures of local demand for the proposed educational program).**

Our team has done extensive research, school visitations and observations to search for a place that would safely accommodate the educational and individual needs of the students at Bernalillo Academy. Due to the wide range of individual needs, individual disabilities and the individualized treatment plans of each student, our team has found that there is no school in the community that can accommodate the students and their needs; therefore, the students are provided educational services by Albuquerque Public Schools Homebound program, which provides some students with less than an hour/day education.

**10. Identify significant innovative features that the school will implement in order to help it realize its vision / mission (e.g., non-traditional school year, longer school day, partner organizations, etc.).**

Bernalillo Academy will offer full residential treatment while providing a school that will educate students in grades Kindergarten to 12th grade. Along with our comprehensive psychiatric, nursing, therapeutic and behavioral services, we will offer a specialized Abilities Pathway Program. In this program, students will be able to learn and prepare to receive their diploma through the abilities pathway. Classes will be taught in a classroom with the model of embracing the philosophy that no child is beyond help and that we have a duty to provide a safe and positive learning environment to help every child transition and succeed in a public school setting. Bernalillo Academy will provide a multi-age/multi-level classroom which will offer a rich, multisensory learning environment for children with significant developmental/behavioral challenges. Classes will consist of 5-7 children present at one time in the classroom. Bernalillo Academy is attentive to the variety and the severity of the diagnoses and the specific individual needs of every child. Students will receive small group and individualized teaching from teachers who have a valid Dual License certification enabling them to teach the diverse population of students who attend the school. Students will have access to computers, iPads, iPods and other assistive technology devices to help with functional communication, visual aids and other supports. To provide a multisensory learning environment, teachers will have access to our sensory room, recreation room and outdoor courtyards, as needed. The school will provide the education to each student based on the needs of their IEP rather than

having to amend the student's time due to the inability to provide the student's with more hours from the Homebound program. This will allow the students of Bernalillo Academy the opportunity for the least restrictive environment. The school will also offer Life/Social skills education for the students who may otherwise not learn any of the necessary skills in a typical school setting.

**11. Describe how the school will be more effective than the schools currently serving the targeted student population, and/or plans to improve student achievement and exceed the academic performance of existing public schools in the targeted service area and any data you have to support this assumption.**

Bernalillo Academy will be more effective by being able to provide the students whom are in treatment with extensive treatment plans with the amount and quality of education that each student should have access to while being able to focus on the service hours, goals and objectives stated in each student's IEP. Bernalillo Academy will provide students with a structured daily program including, but not limited to: recreational services including organized group extracurricular and leisure activities, such as park outings, field trips to community venues, theaters and shopping experiences in various stores designed to improve student functioning and independence. Bernalillo Academy also will also provide social skills groups, communication groups, anger management groups, science activities, library time and book checkout, healthy body/hygiene groups, character counts activities and self-esteem building activities tailored to the students' individual needs and skill level; to improve every child's quality of life so that he/she can ultimately function in public school setting, a natural environment and in their community. Furthermore, teachers will be able to work collaboratively with the student's treatment team in order to further address and help achieve the goals of each student. We will help our special needs population function to the greatest of their individual abilities; many of these children will never speak, read or write nor will they be successful using only state adopted textbooks and/or materials. However, programs such as the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) will be implemented to teach the students ways of communication that will help them become functional and as independent as individually possible.