

January 8, 2014

Dr. Drucella Wheeler Ndoye, Director
Total Care Services, Inc.
5000 Philadelphia Way, Suite J
Lanham, MD 20706

Dear Dr. Ndoye:

I am so happy to have this opportunity to write to you today. It is an especially good time for me to do so. My daughter, Shielda Raye Dyer, was evaluated by DDS (formerly MRDDA) in 2007, and it was determined that she could benefit from services offered by your organization. Until that time I was afraid to entrust her in the hands of people whom I did not know given her limited communication, social, and emotional skills. Additionally, I was faced with the fact that most people were unfamiliar with Autism and its behavior patterns. The professional and caring manner with which Total Care accepted Shielda into the program was just what we needed, having lost my husband 2 years prior to that, and, being overwhelmed with responsibilities for other elderly and ill family members.

I had almost no personal time for Shielda, and my only support at that time was her brother, Miraculous Dyer (Mel), who was very concerned about her behaviors and her inability to function alone in most social settings. He took her out to neighborhood cafes, enrolled her in a gym, took her to salons to participate in activities with, and observe behaviors of other women, and worked on vocabulary with her at home. After having to give so much time helping me to give total bed care to his father for several years, this was a further sacrifice that prevented him from seeking full-time work and having a normal life for himself.

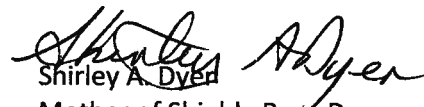
I am so very thankful for the Total Care program under your guidance. You and your staff, especially Ms. Ebony Graves, Case Coordinator, have sought ways for staff and clients to enjoy a compassionate family and community atmosphere, while being firm and professional at the same time. I am amazed at the level of training your staff members are required to take which makes me know that Shielda is safe. (Additionally, such training provides future employment opportunities for staff.) Your impeccable selection of professional support staff assigned to Shielda has extended her skills into her family life and enhanced her ability to communicate. She is learning so many new words and concepts in her daily living, and thus, is able to ask many, many questions that she probably wanted to ask for years. Words and knowing how to use them are so vital, especially to Autistic persons, and I am so grateful for this opportunity which I, alone, could not give my daughter. She still has a long way to go, but you all are giving her the "basic building blocks" to develop further learning methods.

Shielda was never able to attend regular public schools—only Special Education programs until she was 22. Thus, it seems that the world has become her classroom, and we are still looking for ways to financially afford to involve Shielda in this life-learning environment (movies, museums, programs, bowling, shopping, plays, nature, etc.). It gets to be expensive for me to pay for her plus a companion, and because of the expense, she probably gets to do less than what she actually needs; however, every little bit counts. She seems to be actually understanding and enjoying these events for the first time in her life, and is learning to use the computer to build

her vocabulary; Miraculous is teaching her some Spanish words; and Uwanda Williams, in addition to exposing her to interesting social activities, works with her on every-day language skills, "sayings," and verbal responses that she may use in ordinary settings. It has only been while working with them that Shielda is using hand gestures and movements to express herself while talking. I didn't know if I would ever see that!

I could go on forever, but basically I want to thank you personally for what you do for my family, and I'm sure, others. You are greatly appreciated in this household. Someday soon, I would like to do a presentation for your staff on Autism (from a parent's point of view), showing what it was like for our family when Shielda was very non-verbal with bizarre behaviors, and what we did about it. Please let me know if I can do this for you all, and a date convenient to us all. It seems to have been valuable to some other groups and will show you why I am so grateful to be part of your program.

Sincerely,


Shirley A. Dyer
Mother of Shielda Raye Dyer

cc: Ms. Ebony Graves
Ms. Uwanda Williams
Mr. Miraculous Dyer