



# Beyond BASIC Life Skills



**406 N Gum St | Summerville, SC 29483**

**[www.beyondbasiclifeskills.org](http://www.beyondbasiclifeskills.org)**

**Organization's Mission Statement:** Beyond BASIC assists people with intellectual disabilities to achieve fulfillment beyond the basics by developing independent living skills.

**Organization's Vision Statement:** Adults with intellectual disabilities will strengthen their own expectations and the perceptions of those around them in their ability to demonstrate independent living skills.

**Year founded:** 2015; I.R.S. Designation as Beyond BASIC Life Skills - 2017 (501.c.3)

**Target Service Area:** Berkeley, Charleston, and Dorchester counties

**Current Staff:** 6 full time – 3 part time – 1 intern

**Mailing address:** 406 North Gum Street | Summerville, SC 29483

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### **Our Building**

Beyond BASIC Life Skills (BBLs) started in 2015. For the first few years, BBLs operated out of donated space in Mt. Pleasant but soon realized the need for a permanent space large enough to provide an array of programs and services for participating adults, called Teammates. Our Teammates come to BBLs from all around the tri-county area.

BBLs was fortunate to identify an ideal location on North Gum Street in Summerville. An early supporter and Board of Directors member purchased the building for BBLs, and we began to renovate and prepare it for use as we focused on delivering high quality programs and services for our adult population. We currently make a monthly payment to this supporter to cover the mortgage on the building.

Since we moved into the building in December of 2019, we have been able to renovate and add several key elements to support our programs and services, including:

- Community garden and green space
- Pottery Studio job skills program
- Handicap accessible entrance
- "Blessing Box" to support community members in need
- Organized storage area for supplies and materials
- Shelving for Teammate supplies
- Outdoor storage shed

**What having our own building has allowed us to do:**

- Permanent space for storage of program supplies and materials
- Office space for safe keeping of administrative documents
- Access to free and dependable parking
- Utilize a full kitchen to practice kitchen skills
- Effectively facilitate daily living skills in a private, home-like setting with access to laundry facilities, shower, etc.
- Space for outside partners, MUSC OT Program, Chamber of Commerce, Trident Tech OT Program, and much more!
- Social Evening programs
- Host a junior summer camp
- Safe space for our caregivers group, Beyond Connection, providing a sense of community and educational opportunities
- Outside organizations' usage of our space
- Addition of new innovative programs such as bike club and garden club
- Space for staff training and continued education within our organization



**Owning our building outright will allow us to:**

- Eliminate monthly rent payment and redirect those additional funds towards program needs
- Create a new sensory room for Teammates
- Future modifications to suit our needs over time
- Establish ourselves as a community center and safe space within our area

### Who do we serve?

The following table represent the total number of individuals with a cognitive disability in the Tri-County region of South Carolina. The individuals with a cognitive disability are defined as the “number of non-institutionalized, male or female, all races, regardless of ethnicity, with all education levels reported.”

County	Under 18	Age 18 - 34	Age 18 - 64
Berkeley County	2,327	1,902	7,123
Charleston County	1,072	1,429	7,851
Dorchester County	1,579	1,677	5,507
Tri-County	4,978	5,008	20,481

### The Need for Beyond BASIC

Individuals with intellectual disabilities typically spend their first two decades in a structured environment with limited access to specialized support. Currently, South Carolina public programs for individuals with disabilities continue from Kindergarten until age 21. These early support systems are often not programmed to address individual needs, which leaves a gap in learning.

What happens when a child with intellectual disabilities turns 21 and ages out of their high school program? That individual typically winds up spending a significant amount of time in front of the television or is enrolled in an adult daycare center. While this meets the needs of some, we believe that more options should be available for these adults. The adults become victims of the “cliff of nothingness.” This is a fear held by caregivers, siblings, teachers, medical professionals, and individuals with disabilities. Prior to this “cliff,” these children attend school alongside neurotypical children while being provided with an education to help them find purpose, which may include employment in the competitive economy. Yet, once they cross the stage and receive their “certificate” they find a reality that is the complete opposite from the one they have become so accustomed to. They lose their previously held federal entitlement to special education and inclusion, and are tossed aside into an underfunded, uncoordinated, and forgotten system in which few services are available, if at all.



Adults with intellectual disabilities have historically been kept in a box, while everyone else assumes what they can and cannot do. Many people make generalized assumptions about what these individuals will be able to do in life, how they act, how they learn, how they look, etc. The Beyond BASIC team believes that everyone deserves the opportunity and applicable resources necessary to achieve their own definition of a fulfilled, independent life.

We have found that once our Teammates are challenged, they are excited to rise to the occasion. We believe that all adults should learn basic skills such as healthy cooking, exercising, communicating with others, performing household chores, and managing money. When given the opportunity, our Teammates not only meet expectations, they exceed them!

### **Our Five Elements**

1. **Develop social skills**—Social situations for verbal and nonverbal Teammates are provided to practice communication skills, manners, and etiquette.
2. **Develop health awareness**—Teammates learn good personal hygiene in addition to health and fitness practices. We also practice cooking and eating healthy, nutritious meals.
3. **Develop independent living skills**—Teammates practice time management, personal budgeting, housekeeping skills, planned everyday or special events and evaluating different transportation methods.
4. **Increase self-esteem**—We work to grow confidence and increase self-expression. We also learn about dealing with confrontation and anger management.
5. **Training and learning new skills**—Teammates learn about new talents and subjects to foster interest in specialized areas, as well as experiencing cultural immersion.

### **Evaluation**

BBLS staff regularly meets with each Teammate and their caregiver(s) to reevaluate their progress and success within Beyond BASIC and outside the program. We modify goals, individual plans, and methods used by staff on an as needed basis. BBLS identifies success and growth by increasing the number of Teammates served. We always want to ensure that we are giving each Teammate the highest quality program possible, so we want to make sure we continue to grow in a steady, controlled manner.



## **A Community Based on Mutual Respect**

Our program is based on a team dynamic! We are all Teammates, and staff are referred to as Team Captains. Many of our Teammates have spent their lives being in a position where they were answering to an authority figure. At Beyond BASIC, we are all adults, and we are all about the power of choice and mutual respect!

## **Present-Day Programs and Services**

Beyond BASIC offers adult life skills programming from 9:00am to 3:00pm every weekday at our Summerville headquarters. We believe that everyone has their own unique way of learning, thus, we operate using a zone system that allows our Teammates to have their learning style met in a group setting. We modify all tasks and programming to meet each of our Teammates where they are currently so that they can grow to where they want to be in the future!

## **Program Details and Examples**

**Home Skills**—Typical tasks needed to care for a home: cleaning, laundry, washing dishes, etc.

**Health Heroes**—Learning nutrition and healthy, realistic, and sustainable eating strategies.

**Money Skills**—Handle money, count bills, and use the "Dollar Up" strategy.

**Social Circle**—Appropriate and meaningful communication, manners, social etiquette, asking for help and many other important social requirements.

**Fine Motor Arts**—Practicing fine motor skills through creative art activities like painting and pottery.

**Movement**—Motivation to move, remain active, and work on personal fitness goals like improving walking stamina and strengthening muscles.

**Self-Care**—Important hygiene practices like showering, shaving, and what products to use on our bodies.

**Creative Science**—Hands on science experiments that encourage problem solving and attention to details.

**Kitchen Skills**—Improving cooking techniques and safety awareness while learning how to use kitchen utensils, appliances, and adapted tools.

**Social Events**—Beyond BASIC offers social events for teens and adults most Wednesday nights. These events typically focus on social skills, fine motor arts, or learning something new!

**Volunteerism**- BB actively engages in local service projects with our Teammates!

## **Program impact:**

The BBLS program's impact is defined by Teammates, caregivers, and community that we serve. Below are several personal testimonies of these individuals.

- “My son Westcott has been a teammate at Beyond BASIC since he graduated from high school five years ago, attending the program three days a week. The impact of Beyond BASIC on his life is immeasurable. At BB, Westcott has a safe place to learn and keep growing as an adult. The leadership at BB has a strong vision to make the members of BB as productive as possible, all within a positive environment so that they can build confidence in their abilities and then transfer them to the wider world. He is part of a community of BB Teammates, but, through BB, he is also a productive member of the larger Charleston community. At BB he learns and maintains social skills and self-care skills. He is part of a team that makes and sells beautiful pottery, as well as volunteers in places like the Children's Museum, the Lowcountry Foodbank, the Charleston Police Department, and Public Works in Summerville. He and his Beyond BASIC teammates are ambassadors from a population of people who have a lot to offer and are often overlooked. A big part of BB is giving back to the community that gives generously to them. This is just one view of how successful BB is. When COVID-19 closed down in-person programming in March 2020, I, Westcott's mother, discovered just how much he had learned in his time at BB. He undertook responsibility for many household jobs, which he carried out with knowledge and confidence. I give all the credit to the leaders of BB for this. Another part of this story is how quickly Beyond BASIC pivoted when COVID-19 closed it down. They evolved at first to an online schedule with different activities- exercise, home skills, math skills, cooking, science experiments, that were recorded and then put on a Youtube. They eventually were able to conduct all programming on Zoom so that Teammates were able to interact with each other virtually. Beyond BASIC saved us during the lockdown - we were able to keep a schedule and they made sure that the isolation suffered by people with special needs did not happen to their teammates. To me, this speaks volumes about the depth of Beyond BASIC's commitment to their mission. Westcott also learned some great computer skills in the process. Now that we are back in person, Beyond BASIC continues to grow and plan for the future. I can't even begin to imagine what our lives would be like without it.”

- Tina White (Caregiver/Parent)

- “Beyond Basic is a wonderful program for adults with disabilities. Going to Beyond Basic is the highlight of my son's week. The program has helped him improve his speech and social skills. He is more confident, more independent and has made great friendships with the other members of the group. This program is the greatest thing to happen to him.”

- Tony Pope (Caregiver/ Parent)

- “All I can say about Beyond Basics is... that it has been and continues to be a Godsend for our family. Since Smith finished high school about four years ago, he has been attending Beyond Basics in their Mount Pleasant location. There are not many options for adults like Smith in our area and I wanted him to be involved in a program where he could continue to learn in a safe and nurturing environment. Beyond Basics fits that bill! We are forever thankful for the Beyond Basics family.”

- Erin Pruitt (Caregiver/Parent)

- “At Beyond Basic you will find a group of dedicated individuals serving their community. The action to serve Beyond BASIC is not only community service but rather a humanitarian effort. This is a place to come and be a friend, a teammate, a neighbor, a member of a cause to include all peoples of our society. Being a volunteer has brought me sincere joy to know that I am planting love and care for those that our society does not equally recognize or represent.”

- Joanna Gonzalez (Volunteer)

- “Teaching yoga and volunteering at Beyond BASIC are the highlights of my week. I thought I would be giving a service to this organization and to these incredible teammates, and instead I am RECEIVING the most amazing gifts of joy, community, and compassion every time I walk through the doors. I am witnessing tiny transformations each week from teammates as they build their confidence and their own connections with one another. The atmosphere is addictively positive and I am forever thankful for them.”

- Erika Ford (Volunteer)

- “I would like to share my extreme happiness with Beyond Basic. Words can not express the greatness of the Beyond Basic program. Throughout the local area there is limited availability for adults with special needs who deserve opportunity to be active and part of community. The program and structure for the participants is professionally planned and executed to meet the individual needs. The diligence and compassion of staff is priceless. It’s reassuring having a trustworthy program available. Our son has more than exemplified how great the program and staff are by expressing daily his happiness, comfort, never wanting to miss it and always looking forward the next day. As a parent, I can comfortably say Beyond Basic is “BEYOND EXPECTATION” in all areas of their program. Thanks to Beyond Basic and staff, our son has opportunities.”

- Todd Olds (Caregiver/ Parent)

- “There is clear evidence of a need for services for adults with intellectual disabilities that extend beyond day care, but very few organizations offer these services. Beyond BASIC Life Skills works diligently to fill that gap by assisting their Teammates in building independent living skills, employment skills, and more. What they really build with these individuals—and their families—is a community of support, engagement, and achievement. Because they focus on helping Teammates achieve fulfillment by building independent living skills, Beyond BASIC assists them in resetting the expectations that family, friends, and the community may have about what they can achieve. Even more importantly, Teammates grow in confidence and are able to reset their own beliefs about what they can do and be. Beyond BASIC is truly making a meaningful difference.”

- Michael Lisle (Board Member)



- “Molly has done an incredible job with our 21 y.o. daughter. In fact, our daughter has made greater sustained progress at Beyond Basic in the last 6 months than her many years working with a therapist. Molly and Ashton involve the parents/caregivers in assisting the young adult succeed in actualizing his/her full potential. We strongly recommend that any parent/caregiver with a special needs young adult to become involved in the programming at Beyond Basic.”

-Troy Schiedenhelm (Caregiver/Parent)

- “Beyond BASIC’s life skills program truly does go above and beyond. Their mission is to create ways to offer life skills to all of the community no matter what their circumstances may be. The environment is unspeakable! I work during Wednesday social nights, and I've never not had a good time hanging out with Teammates, and Team Captains!! I can't wait to see how far they go!”

- Alyssa Degregorio - Volunteer

- "All my friends and all of my staff are nice here. I like it here. It's not boring, it's fun. I have a lot of friends. I like money skills. Health Heroes is good."

- Melissa Johnson (Teammate)

- "I like BASIC for earn my leadership points and earn my goal. To work hard. I like to do self-care and I need to learn. I like Health Heroes at BASIC to stay healthy and for healthy food and health drinks."

- Michelle Annibale (Teammate)



## **How Have We Grown?:**

BBLs began a pilot program in Downtown Charleston in 2015, serving 5 Teammates. Upon opening in the Mount Pleasant we served about 35 Teammates and families each month. Since that time, thanks to our permanent location, we have increased programs and services and now serve 82 Teammates and families each month.

Following is a brief timeline of our progression and growth to meet the needs of our Teammates and their families:

- July 2015 Pilot Program begins one day per week in downtown Charleston
- 2016 Move to different city location due to City's needs
- 2016 Summer BASH pool party with our Team and community in Ravens Run MTP
- 2016 Started relationship with Carolina Studios, a local non-profit organization that helps provide music in the Tri-County area.
- 2017 Collaboration with Christian Royal Pottery
- 2017 Beyond BASIC Job Skills introduction: Help Home Team BBQ / volunteer with the City of Charleston Aqua Angels Program / work with Tri-County Therapy LLC
- 2017 Attend and donated pottery to the Special Olympics Gala
- 2017 Volunteer and help with local non-profit Clap Your Hands, making weighted therapeutic blankets for children
- 2017 Help the City of Charleston provide unified cooking class
- 2017 Work with City of Charleston to provide Beyond Explorers Club- Teammates were experience STEM, hands on science, and local wildlife.
- 2017 Start the Good Rock Program- Teammates decorate and post positive quotes on rocks and laid them around local parks to bring joy to our community.
- October 2017 Began second program location in town of Mt Pleasant
- 2018 Second location moves to space in Seacoast Church
- 2018 Begin Community Garden with town of Mt Pleasant
- 2018 Next Chapter Book Club for Teammate literacy
- 2018 Volunteer / intern program with Charleston Children's Museum
- May 2018 Alpha Fest event partners with BBLs
- February 2019 Beyond Connection caregiver's support group created
- 2019 Partnership with Hustle Smoothie Bar - internship program
- 2019 Weekly volunteer work with Summerville Chamber of Commerce
- 2019 Volunteer work for Dorchester Paws
- November 2019 1st Annual Beyond the Disc Fundraiser
- January 2020 New location opens on N Gum St Summerville
- January 2020 Ukulele classes added to program
- 2020 Beyond the STARS Job Coaching Program created
- March 2020 Virtual Program created
- May 2020 Park Meetups begin to safely socialize during pandemic

- September 2020 Virtual 5k Fundraiser with I Got Legs
- 2020 BBLs is selected as the charity for Putts For Purpose
- November 2020 2nd Annual Beyond the Disc Fundraiser
- 2020 Neighborhood cleanup day in N Chas
- May 2021 1st Beyond BASIC Junior Summer Camp
- 2021 Addition of Social Evening Programs
- 2021 Volunteer with Public Works Art Center
- 2021 Volunteer with The Waylyn Heart Team
- 2021 Collaboration with Game Night Charleston
- 2021 Leadership Dorchester creates Green Space at BBLs
- September 2021 3rd Annual Beyond the Disc Fundraiser
- 2022 volunteer partnership with Meals on Wheels
- 2022 Job skills partnership with Benny's Pizza
- 2022 MUSC OT Capstone Garden Project with BBLs
- 2022 Partnership with YMCA Summerville
- 2022 BBLs begins Teammate Leadership Program
- May 2022 2nd Beyond BASIC Junior Summer Camp
- September 2022 4th Annual Beyond the Disc Fundraiser

### **New and innovative services**

As reflected in the timeline above, BBLs has developed and continues to offer both time-tested and innovative programming to meet our Teammates' needs. First and foremost, the Life Skills Program Beyond BASIC offers to the Tri-County area is unlike any other programs in the area and has proven to be innovative in of itself. Our Team is always thinking outside of the box to further individualize our program to fit the needs of every person who walks through our doors. We not only work with our Teammates but also work to help support the lives of caregivers through additional programming and groups.

BBLs continuously looks for and partners with community organizations. We open our doors to form community partnerships and also go out into the community as a Team to learn, advocate, and help make an impact in our area. One of these partnerships came about when we began volunteering and programming with a local public library. We created access for our Teammates to learn STEM, check out books, interact with the community and advocate for themselves. Additionally, we have adopted a beach to show the community that our Team can give back and to set the standard for beach travelers to stop littering.

During the Covid pandemic, our Team did not miss a beat as we jumped into virtual education programs. Our staff created take home kits so no one needed to print or buy supplies to participate successfully in the program. We recorded videos and hosted online cooking, music therapy, and fitness classes. We helped lift spirits by creating inspiration days, bringing guest speakers, and constantly singing and praising Teammates for their hard work.

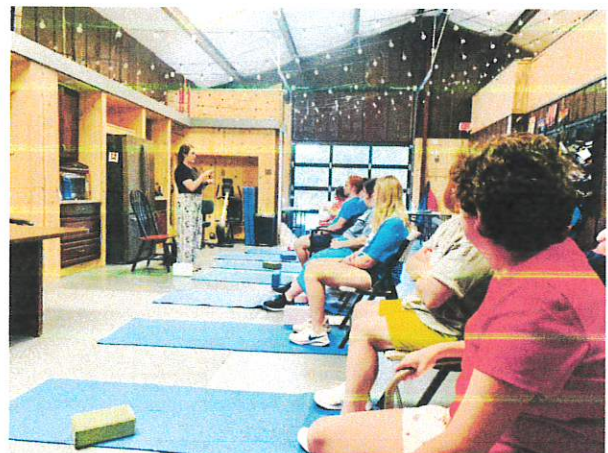


We also hosted Beyond the Cup during the pandemic. This group is a safe place for caregivers to have their own community, share stories, and seek council during these unprecedented times. We hosted park meets up throughout the Tri-County area, always picking different local parks to meet in order to make it accommodating for everyone. Our staff would do "drive-by's" in the neighborhoods of our Teammates to make sure they knew we cared about them and they are not forgotten.

Last summer we created a program called Beyond BASIC Junior. BBLS ran an eight week program to help teens with intellectual disabilities who are transitioning into adulthood. This program was a huge success and helped teens and their families feel hopeful for the future, knowing they have a place to go after High School.

Our N Gum St location has allowed us to continue being innovative in our collaborations and programs. With the help of the Chamber of Commerce, Leadership Dorchester Team, and MUSC Horticulture Therapy Team, BBLS was able to fund and put in a community garden. Our Green Project helped fill the order for Beyond BASIC Life Skills to fulfill its mission of increasing independence in the lives of individuals with intellectual disabilities and to promote inclusion in the community. This program received an updated garden space with the tools and equipment necessary to operate more effectively. The space has increased our ability to provide outdoor programming, bring in more Team Captains (staff) to facilitate Garden Club, help feed our community with a Blessing Box, and further our mission.

Another innovative program in 2021 and 2022 has been a full calendar of evening social events for Teammates and community members. Our building has allowed us to open up our facility for fun entertaining social evenings each Wednesday night. We host dances, art classes, movie nights, game nights, dinner clubs, spa and relaxation nights, and many more fun activities for our Teammates and community members to enjoy together. We truly look forward to the future and expanding on additional opportunities we can create together.

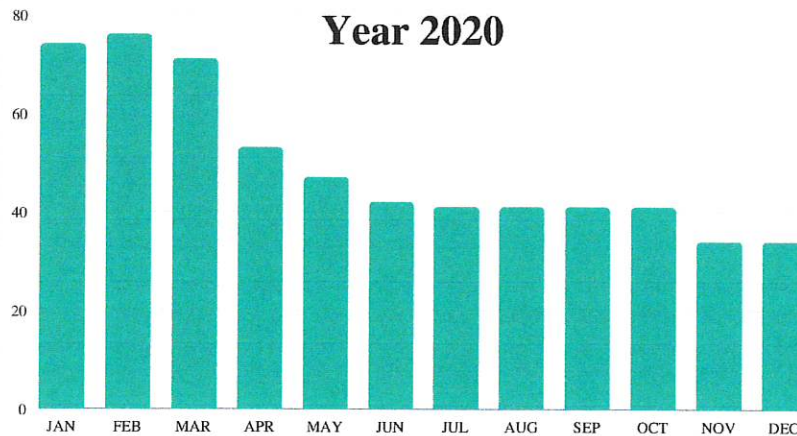




## Covid Impact

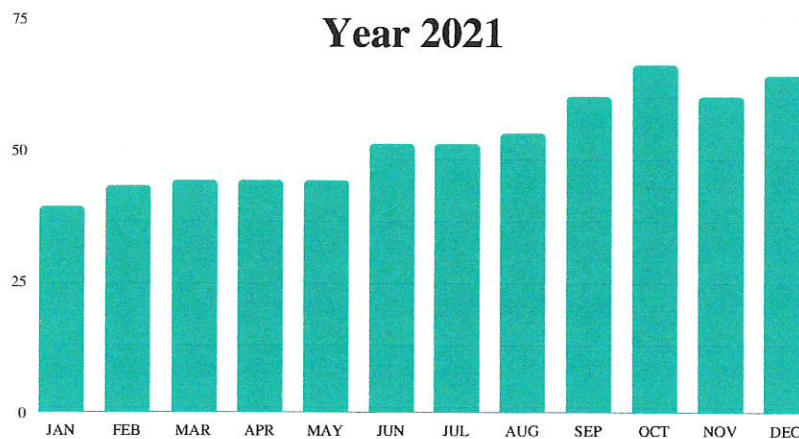
The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on BLS and the organization's growth. We moved into the new building on N Gum St in January of 2020. We saw a slight increase in the number of Teammates served as we made renovations and plans for our new space. As the pandemic became a greater concern, we began to see a decline in the number of Teammates served in March of 2020 (see graph below).

**The Effect of Covid on Number of Teammates Served**



The Administrative staff of the building we used for our Mt. Pleasant location, decided to shut down their space completely very early on in the pandemic. The Summerville N Gum location continued to operate for a few weeks until we were forced to shut down that location as well in the best interest of our Team. The BLS Team had to quickly put together a solid virtual program, as we did not want to shut our program down and leave our Teammates without any activity. We were able to successfully create a high quality virtual program and continue to serve Teammates in the best way possible. The reality of the situation was that a virtual program was simply not conducive to many Teammates and their families began to experience their own financial hardships.

The number of Teammates served has steadily increased throughout 2021 (see graph below), and we are currently exceeding the numbers we had prior to the Covid-19 pandemic.



## Workforce Impact

In South Carolina, there are 269,200 individuals with cognitive disabilities in the year 2016. Of these, 37,200 are employed and another 7,600 are looking for work. This tells us that approximately 244,400 individuals with cognitive disabilities are unemployed and not seeking employment opportunities. We believe this is due in large part to the lack of support and quality programming available in the state.

This data also shows that the gap between the employment rates of individuals with (33.4%) and without (78.0%) disabilities is significant. Among the six types of disabilities identified in the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey, the lowest employment rate was for individuals with an "Independent Living Disability," at 13.8%.

While BBLS works to create community partnerships and inclusive employment opportunities, we are fighting to make an impact on South Carolina's workforce. We believe an inclusive life skills program for adults with intellectual disabilities, such as Beyond BASIC Life Skills, can help to improve these outcomes in South Carolina.



## Funding challenges

As previously noted, there are very few services that exist for our target population. In the Charleston region, there are six foundations providing a total of 10 grant opportunities that support adults with disabilities over the last 10 years. By comparison, there are nearly 400 foundations providing a total of over 3,400 grant opportunities for children, and 55 foundations providing nearly 300 grant opportunities for the homeless.

The vast array of funding opportunities end as soon as individuals turn 21. While there is funding for respite care and adult day care, there is no dedicated funding for the types of services we must provide at the state level in South Carolina. Once these individuals become adults and are no longer adorable children, the issues of quality programs and funding become "out of sight, out of mind."

Being able to own our building outright to support our Teammates and their families will make a significant difference for Beyond BASIC. With those funds available in our budget, we will be able to explore serving additional Teammates and offering an increased level of programs and services.



# Projected Cost Breakdown

Project Name: Beyond BASIC Facility Support

The majority of the allocated funds will be used to purchase the building, calculated at 75% of the funds. The remaining \$150,000 will be used to cover any expenses towards repairs and maintenance of the space. For example, we estimate that the AC unit will need to be replaced within this year, and these funds set aside would allow us to guarantee that this building remains functional. Because of this outdated AC unit, our monthly electric bill has been double or triple each month. Additionally, there are 2 rooms in the building that do not have air conditioning or heat. The following are additional repairs that need to be made to the building:

- Replace AC unit to include rooms without heat and air conditioning
- Add insulation to minimize monthly utility costs
- repair roof to eliminate leaks during rain storms
- Repair window in kitchen damaged from leaks
- Repair skylights to eliminate leaks and minimize heat impact
- Upstairs space needs revitalized electric system. It is currently running off of one outlet and extension chords.
- Update parking lot to upgrade it as ADA compliant
- Upgrade doors to ensure safety and compliance. We currently have multiple sets of barn doors that are not safe for our population.

Expense	Cost
Building Purchase	\$450,000
Repairs / Maintenance	\$150,000