

## I. CHESTER COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION GRANT PROPOSAL SUMMARY SHEET

**One page only.** This page will be shared electronically with Grant Panel Members & Fund Advisors.

Note: If Philanthropy Network's Common Grant Application is used, CCCF's **Summary Sheet MUST accompany application.**

To obtain an electronic version of this application, visit [www.chescocf.org](http://www.chescocf.org)

Date

### Contact Information

Organization Name: The Big Puddle

Address: 2113 PENNSYLVANIA AVE, CROYDON PA 19021

Phone: 610-470-3351

Website: thebigpuddle.org

Year Incorporated: 2023

FEIN: 93-3343327

ED/CEO Name: Maria Duerson

ED/CEO E-mail: [tbpuddle@gmail.com](mailto:tbpuddle@gmail.com)

Board Chair Name: Maria Duerson

Board Chair Approval (check here):

Primary Contact Name: Maria Duerson

Primary Contact E-mail: [tbpuddle@gmail.com](mailto:tbpuddle@gmail.com)

### Organization Information:

#### Field/s of Interest:

Arts, Culture & Humanities

Environment/Animal Welfare

Education

Health

Human Services

Religion

**Mission:** The Big Puddle Charity seeks your support to continue our mission of providing essential resources to vulnerable individuals in our communities. By partnering with us, you can make a meaningful impact and contribute to positive change. The Big Puddle focuses on addressing critical gaps in services, ensuring that everyone has access to the support they deserve. Our programs are designed to bridge the gap in services and support for people who experience lack of support across one or more of the following needs: Homelessness, disability, mental health, and advocacy during medical treatment.

#### **Geographic Area Served** (If not all of Chester County, specify primary Chester County regions served):

All of Chester County, and State of Pennsylvania

#### **Describe Population Served & Annual Number of People Served:** The population served are Pa residents enrolled in need-based programs

Our charity was founded in quarter 4 of 2023. Our expected annual budget this year is 100,000.

<b>Annual Budget</b> \$ <u>500,000</u>	<u>0</u>	# of Full-Time Equivalent Paid Staff
<u>8</u> % of budget for program expenses	<u>6</u>	# of Board Volunteers
<u>0</u> % of budget for administrative expenses	<u>3</u>	# of Active Non-Board Volunteers
<u>30</u> % of budget for fundraising expenses	<u>500</u>	# of Volunteer Hours
<i>100 % total</i>		

#### **Top 3-5 funding sources:**

**Is this grant proposal for:** Capacity Building  or General Operating  ?

#### **If Capacity Building Proposal, the focus is:**

Mission, Vision & Strategy     Governance & Leadership     Partnerships & Collaborations

Fundraising, Development & Marketing     Technology    Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Grant Amount Requested from the Community Foundation:** \$ 5000.00-\$7500.00

#### **Proposal Summary:**

##### Proposal Objectives:

**Bridge Systemic Gaps:** Your support will help us bridge the limitations in our existing system, ensuring that no one falls through the cracks.

**Empower Vulnerable Individuals:** We aim to empower those facing challenges by providing essential funding for resources and advocating for their needs.

By aligning with us, you can raise awareness about critical issues of systemic gaps across service networks of mental health, disability, homeless risk, and medical treatment. That is, people in any one category experiencing need barriers for support in another category. Together, we can advocate for better access to essential services. Through our partnerships with community organizations in adult disability Medicaid Waiver programs such as MH/ID services and the Bureau of Autism Services, our sister company Umbrella Functional Consulting & Support Team, and connections with West Chester University's Pantry, and many others in five counties of southeastern PA, we have developed relationships with community organizations to succeed at our mission.

By contributing a modest donation, our organization can meet crucial needs to those we serve, enabling them to access essential treatment, support, and other vital resources necessary for survival and maintaining a life of well-being.



# The Big Puddle

Thebigpuddle.org

TAX ID:933343327

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## **Mission, Vision, & Strategy**

### The Big Puddle's history, goals, key achievements & distinctiveness

Founded in 2023, The Big Puddle was created by disability service providers and parents of children with disabilities. The founder, Maria Duerson, a mother to a child with autism, master-level behavioral health clinician, and owner of a Medicaid provider organization, Umbrella Functional Consulting & Support Team, sought to achieve results in bridging critical gaps in services for persons who faced challenges in finding quality care; a portrait which became more prominent during the pandemic. Mrs. Duerson is also the founder of the Bucks County Parent Group for Autism Support, the largest known social media advocacy support group in Pennsylvania. Umbrella donated an apartment to adults with disabilities who lost loved ones and/or lost housing during the pandemic. Through Umbrella Functional Consulting & Support Team's Give Back to the Community Project, Umbrella provides opportunities to support communities through philanthropy and service. Through Umbrella's annual Feed the Need campaign and other community service efforts, supporting community charities through vendor events, and other service projects to support the insurmountable needs of the community, Umbrella ultimately decided to invest funds to create a charity, The Big Puddle. To date, Umbrella has saved four people with disabilities by providing temporary housing and has collectively raised and donated nearly \$30,000 in cash annually to fund Feed the Need, Bucks County Housing Group, and West Chester University Amazon Wishlist, among other community charities in Chester County, Montgomery County, and Bucks County.

What sets The Big Puddle apart from other charities is that our mission is to provide support directly to individuals and providers that need funding to bridge critical gaps in care. Presently in the state of Pennsylvania there are four primary funding streams: Disability, Mental Health, Homeless Risk, and Medical. No one funding stream can bill for services in another, and thus no provider offers support in the form of staffing, or services to a person with more than one category of need. That is, if you are a



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person with disabilities, inpatient mental health services requires a person with disabilities to give up disability support services to enter mental health services. Major charities often focus on research initiatives rather than giving funding to people in need, including the people whom their charity seeks to support. Autism Speaks, Spark, Autism Cares are organizations who seek to help people with disabilities through activities, research, and publications. No one organization has addressed critical gaps in care, requiring people in need to use their own funds to cover out-of-pocket costs with poverty-level incomes. Through a survey, The Big Puddle found that 31 state mental health facilities that accept persons with disabilities will deny treatment if the person is incontinent, nonverbal, or has behavioral challenges. If a person with disabilities seeks independent housing, SSI benefits limit income to \$2000 per month, leaving independent housing out of reach in today's economy. Medicaid Waiver Funded Disability services only provide group housing to individuals with disabilities. Additionally, if a person with disabilities loses a family member who is their source of housing, as seen often during the pandemic, it can take months or even a year or more before a group home will become available, and often providers will consider the behavioral and medical needs of the person before accepting their referral for housing. The Big Puddle has a mission to provide the following programs to help address critical gaps in care:

The Helen Project: aims to ensure that individuals with disabilities never encounter the risk of homelessness upon leaving a hospital or due to their preference against group housing. It also addresses the challenge of inflated rents without a corresponding income. By expanding housing options and enhancing housing security, The Helen Project supports both people with disabilities and provider agencies.

EquiMind Project: A program that aims to create equitable access to mental health services for individuals with disabilities.

The Noah Project: Advocating for nonverbal individuals through caregivers across various settings. Offering assistance with daily living tasks in hospitals, clinics, mental health services, and other locations. The Noah project supports individuals and care providers to bridge the gap in funding and support for people to receive equitable treatment.

The Abilities Project: The best training is hands-on training. This project gives providers the ability to create training programs by developing apprenticeship opportunities for people with disabilities, people who are homeless, and people with mental health concerns. The Abilities Project aims to improve quality of care through the creation of committee-led improvement programs within facilities. By adding committees to plan of care trainings and employing apprentices, providers will open the doors for insightful value-added hands-on learning.

## **Capacity Building Initiative: Marketing, Branding & Communications**

### Current Strategic Plan

Our organization seeks to reach \$500,000-\$575,000 in donations to fund our projects by the end of Quarter 1, 2025. On October 5, 2024 the first annual Big Puddle Gala will be held at The Fuge in Warminster, Pa, thanks to partnerships with the President of the Pennsylvania Psychological Association, Umbrella Functional Consulting & Support Team, and Beasley Media Group. We anticipate mailing campaigns, social media, grants, and other community events in the next fiscal year to help us reach our goal.



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Mailing campaigns: \$1200 each campaign to reach audiences by county through USPS mailing lists. Three campaigns for Quarter 2, Quarter 3, and Quarter 4.

Social Media and Radio campaigns: \$15,000 with a reach of roughly 350,000 Impressions per month, serving ads directly to target demographic and geographical region with a high household income level of \$70k+. WMMR Preston & Steve show to advertise The Big Puddle and it's gala. Two campaigns for cash donations, and The Big Puddle gala including ticket sales and in-kind gala auction donations.

Grants: Through letters to Foundations across Pennsylvania, The Big Puddle seeks to gain support annually from foundations and local businesses whose mission is to support charities like ours. Small grants of \$10,000 or less are sought monthly through mailings and social media campaigns. For example, The Wawa Foundation has supported The Big Puddle this year in quarter 1, our first month seeking grant funding turned an amount of \$1500.00. Umbrella FCST has provided funding in the amount of \$16,000 to fund a grant writer for The Big Puddle.

Community Events: Through Volunteers, community event campaigns are developed to support our cause. This year, we received public interest letters in creating events such as a casino night to be held twice a year. We also are seeking to partner with community fair organizations to hold The Big Puddle as it's charitable organization. Casino nights twice per year are expected to cost \$5000.00 per event with a return of \$13,000 (\$3000 profit). Community fairs are expected to cost \$0.00.

Miscellaneous Fundraising: Small incremental funding through t-shirt campaign "Let's Be Friends", and 10% local business give back donations such as Five Below and Chic-Fil-A. These campaigns generally run for one week during the holiday season and return \$50 or less.

The Big Puddle Charity, a 501©(3) organization, aligns seamlessly with Chester County Community Foundation's mission to impact and foster meaningful connections. Our commitment to bridge gaps in services and support for those in need is both fundamental and deeply personal. Many of our board members and our founder share personal connections to disability, either as parents of children with disabilities, providers of service, or as disabled individuals themselves. Our innovative mission extends beyond local impact; it aims to encourage and build global philanthropy. Importantly, our projects operate without discrimination based on race, color, ancestry, familial status, marital status, sexual orientation or preference, religion, sex, age, gender identity or expression, national origin, citizenship status, disability, political affiliation, or any other characteristic—especially those protected by law.