St. Mary’s Home for Disabled Children
A Special Place for Special Children.
Our Home

A visit to St. Mary's Home for Disabled Children clearly shows that “Home” is in our name for a very good reason. St. Mary's is the only pediatric long-term care residential facility of its kind in Virginia for children with severe disabilities. We offer a comprehensive range of residential, medical, therapeutic, educational and recreational services for children from birth to age 21.

This around-the-clock, complex care would be impossible in a home setting, regardless of the resources and capabilities of parents or guardians. Yet, we provide this care in an atmosphere of warmth, nurturing and personal attention. Our staff combines medical care with a gentle touch to create a therapeutic environment for St. Mary's children.
Our Children

St. Mary’s cares for children with severe disabilities who come to us as a result of birth disorders, traumatic accidents, illness or child abuse. Each child is within the severe to profound range of mental retardation. Most of our children use wheelchairs for mobility and may rely on methods other than speech to communicate their wants and needs. Many use feeding tubes to provide some or all of their nourishment. A few have tracheotomies, and almost all require regularly administered medication.

We serve families from throughout Virginia. Our children reflect the state’s diverse economic, cultural and ethnic backgrounds. St. Mary’s does not refuse admission to any child due to limited family finances.
Our Facility

In February 2005, St. Mary’s moved to a new 88,000 square foot building in suburban Norfolk that was designed especially for the needs of our children, staff and our children’s family members.

Our children benefit from a comfortable, home-like environment where we keep treatment areas separate from sleeping areas for more normalized settings. Features include the following:

- Four residential “neighborhoods” that each house a nurses’ station, active treatment/classrooms and six four-person patient living units,
- Four interior courtyards – one has a playground with adaptive play equipment, and one has a hydrotherapy pool and fountain,
- Two private family visitation rooms,
- Physicians’ offices, dentist office, and barber and beauty shop,
- Spacious hallways to accommodate the children’s wheelchairs,
- Eight educational classrooms,
- Rooms and hallways with large windows and skylights,
- Modern environmental control systems.
An extraordinary feature of St. Mary’s is the exceptional commitment of our more than 200 full- and part-time employees. Tenures of 10, 15 and even 20 years are common. Some employees have devoted more than 20 years and, in some instances, entire careers to caring for our special children.

Our qualified, caring and motivated professionals possess the patience and sensitivity to care for children with complex health needs day after day. The staff is thoroughly trained and they continually update and refine their skills through ongoing education.

Daily care is delivered by registered nurses, licensed practical nurses, certified nursing assistants, and physical, occupational and recreational therapists, who work under the medical direction of a board-certified pediatrician. Every child receives routine examinations from a pediatrician to evaluate their medical needs.

Children also receive in-house consultations with medical specialists such as neurologists, orthopedists, physiatrists, gastroenterologists, a pharmacist and dentist. Most of St. Mary’s doctors are on staff at Children’s Hospital of The King’s Daughters (CHKD) in Norfolk.

Our nurses provide around-the-clock care, working in partnership with physicians. We emphasize communication among the medical staff. Nurses stay in close touch with physicians about each child. Physicians are always available to meet with families or provide phone consultations to discuss a child’s condition.

A full-time social worker, registered dietitian and Qualified Mental Retardation Professionals (QMRP) complete the professional staff. St. Mary’s takes an organized team approach to serving our children, and all team members recognize their important roles in maintaining the highest quality of care.
Our Programs

At St. Mary’s, we value our children as individuals, regardless of their physical or mental conditions. We concentrate on using our resources to help each child reach his or her full potential and to provide a variety of programs and experiences to enhance their lives.

Each child at St. Mary’s has his or her own individual care plan, which includes short- and long-term goals related to physical, educational, psychological and social functioning. A comprehensive team composed of St. Mary’s staff, including Qualified Mental Retardation Professionals who serve as advocates for the children, continually evaluates the health of each child and adjusts his or her care plan regularly to maximize the child’s development potential.

Off to School

Some of our children attend schools in the community daily, and all others attend school at the Home. Each child benefits from a comprehensive special education curriculum that includes physical, occupational and speech therapy; art, music and adaptive physical education; adaptive computers and audio-visual aids; and specially-designed field trips.

St. Mary’s partners with the Southeastern Cooperative Educational Programs (SECEP) to provide a specialized education program for each resident. SECEP uses the REACH – Raising Expectations and Abilities for Children with Complex Health Needs – Program to provide high quality education. The dedicated and qualified team members provide a safe and enjoyable learning environment that emphasizes communication development and active learning. The REACH program also strives to develop meaningful connections with families and communities.

A school principal has an office at the Home, and licensed special education teachers and teachers’ assistants provide instructional services. An assistive technology specialist ensures that classroom environments
can be activated independently by the children, and a school social worker serves as a liaison with the community and parents or guardians. Also, two education specialists mentor teachers and provide modeling programs based on best practices for students with severe disabilities.

**Developing Physical Skills**

Our therapy services help our children develop, build and sometimes regain skills essential for functioning at their optimal levels through customized adaptive equipment. The Home’s occupational therapy support services department provides and maintains custom-fitted wheelchairs and individualized musculoskeletal supports. Staff members also adapt toys for use on wheelchair trays.

Our assistive technology capabilities are always evolving. From accessing computers, to driving power wheelchairs, our residents are encouraged to gain independence to the best of their abilities. Our occupational therapy department constantly seeks the best technology that provides opportunities for many of our residents to gain levels of independence that will serve them now and when they leave the Home.

Licensed physical therapists maintain frequent contact with each child, providing direct hands-on therapy services. The therapists also train other staff members on how to follow through with certain aspects of each child’s therapy program, such as range of motion exercise and correct positioning.

All of our programs address specifics such as fine and gross motor skills, which are then applied to daily bathing, dressing and feeding activities. For example, at meal-times, children sit together in small groups, where special tables, chairs and utensils help them maximize their personal independence. Even though some of the children have feeding tubes, everyone participates in mealtime activities to develop both social and self-help skills.
Family Support

St. Mary's encourages family involvement through visits, regularly scheduled meetings with staff, telephone calls utilizing 1-800-237-6555, newsletters, and a quarterly parent forum. Many of our families live throughout Virginia and our staff recognizes the important partnership with family members. St. Mary's is pleased to serve military families through the U.S. Armed Forces' Exceptional Family Member Program.

We also provide the intense personal attention that some children with developmental delays require very early in their lives to reach their full potential. These children receive the nursing and nutritional care, with the therapeutic and educational programming they need to prepare them for a return to their own homes. While the child is with us, parents or guardians can adjust to their situation and visit St. Mary's to learn and master the techniques that will enable them to properly care for their child at home. We can also help these parents or guardians coordinate the community support services they will need.

Our Activities

Our children have the same social and emotional needs as children everywhere, and our activities and therapeutic recreation departments provide daily opportunities for children to enjoy recreation and leisure pursuits. Children are provided the opportunity to participate in leisure education and skill development programs. These programs are designed to help them make progress on physical goals, cognitive skills, social skills and overcoming emotional barriers that may impact their recreation participation. Some activities are individualized, while others provide interaction in group settings.

Through our activities, we focus on community integration by taking children out into the community and
inviting community groups to the Home to interact with the children. Activities include the following:

- Field trips to the zoo and museums,
- Monthly birthday celebrations,
- Halloween parades,
- Movies,
- Visits from holiday carolers,
- Shopping trips with staff and family,
- Camping in the Atrium and at special summer camps,
- Visits from Therapy dogs,
- Afternoons with high school volunteers,
- St. Mary's own Girl Scout Troop.

Our Special Moments

Because family relationships are vital to our children’s well-being, seasonal events and special family programs provide opportunities for family members to stay active in their children’s lives. Extensive visiting hours, open classroom visitation and an overnight leave policy keep residents in close contact with their families. A toll-free telephone line allows frequent phone contact with long-distance family members. A certain number of the children are in the care of Social Services. Sometimes staff members take children to their own homes for visits so they can participate in family gatherings away from St. Mary’s.

Beginning in 1990, St. Mary’s began holding “graduation” ceremonies for residents who would be moving to adult care facilities. Complete with caps, gowns and music, these ceremonies evoke mixed emotions. Many children live at St. Mary’s for more than a decade, so close relationships with our staff are a natural result. We rejoice in the progress that each child achieves, but saying goodbye is never easy.
Our Admission Process

Families can self-refer to St. Mary's, although children are also referred by sources such as hospital discharge planners, physicians, Community Service Boards and current residents' families. Parents or guardians must live in Virginia while their child resides at St. Mary's.

Our admissions process requires a completed admission application and transmittal of the child's medical and educational records. We understand it is difficult to place a child in a residential care facility, and we strongly encourage families to contact our social worker to make a pre-admission visit to tour St. Mary's and meet our staff.

An admissions committee carefully screens each application to ensure the appropriateness of placement. Our staff will assist parents or guardians with the application requirements, and we may be able to expedite the process in emergency situations.

Sometimes, a family emergency, vacation or other event creates a temporary need for residential care. St. Mary's offers a respite program for children who need short-term placement for as few as 30 days.

Because the Home is located in a region with a large military concentration, St. Mary's also assists military families through the U.S. Armed Forces' Exceptional Family Member Program.
St. Mary’s is a private non-profit, non-sectarian organization, licensed by the Virginia Department of Health and the Virginia Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation. The Home’s revenues come from Virginia’s Medicaid program, the U.S. Armed Services Tri-Care program, private insurance and private donations; the Home refuses no child due to a lack of financial resources. St. Mary’s is also a certified United Way Agency (Agency Code #5039) and receives support from individuals who have specifically designated the Home on their annual United Way pledge form.

As a non-profit organization, St. Mary’s looks to the community for annual support. Please consider making a gift for the children of St. Mary’s. Your tax-deductible donation contributes directly to their quality of life. Gifts of $1,000 and above receive recognition on a donor plaque and invitations to receptions with the Trustees and CEO. All donors of $100 or more will be recognized in St. Mary’s Annual Report. A donor may prefer to remain anonymous. St. Mary’s is registered through the Division of Consumer Protection in the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. If you would like more information about donations or a copy of our IRS Form 990, please contact the Development Office at 757-622-2208 or 1-800-237-6555.

For More Information

For an admission application, questions or to schedule a pre-admission tour, contact the Social Worker at 757-622-2208 or 1-800-237-6555, or go to www.saintmaryshome.org to download admissions materials.

To schedule a group tour or presentation or learn more about supporting St. Mary’s or volunteering, contact the Development Director at 757-622-2208 or 1-800-237-6555.

The mission of St. Mary’s Home for Disabled Children is to provide quality, specialized care within a home-like environment for special children with severe disabilities, so each child can achieve his or her fullest potential.
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Located directly across from Sentara Leigh Hospital.