

Penn-Mar expands with Maryland merger

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A nonprofit provider of services for adults with developmental disabilities is growing its reach in Maryland via a merger with a similarly focused nonprofit.

Freeland, Maryland-based Penn-Mar Human Services expects to finalize an agreement with Change Inc., a smaller mental health service provider in Westminster, Maryland, next month.

Penn-Mar splits its resources between Pennsylvania and Maryland, serving approximately 250 individuals with developmental disabilities in each state. The nonprofit's programs focus on helping people find work and provide in-home support to help them live independently.

Penn-Mar offers services in York County, as well as in Baltimore city and Carroll, Baltimore and Harford Counties in Maryland.

Change offers similar programs but focuses its efforts on Carroll County, Maryland, where it serves 160 people. Greg Miller,

CEO of Penn-Mar, said a merger will strengthen two organizations that are similar in mission and services.

"It wasn't that they had something we needed or we had something they needed," Miller said. "We are flying in similar directions and ... this was a way for us to be more cost-effective and mission-effective together."

Change's CEO, Mike Shriver, was CEO of Penn-Mar from 1984 to 2000. Shriver said that he and Miller stayed in contact over the years and have regularly discussed the future of the human-services industry.

Like Penn-Mar, Change offers personal support services and day services like community volunteering, aquatics and social enrichment to help its clients gain independence.

But Penn-Mar also operates 50 residential homes that allow its clients to live on their own. It has 24 homes in Maryland and 26 in Pennsylvania.

Change, on the other hand, does not offer residential space.

Its clients live in their own homes or with family.

The organizations expected to be fully integrated within the next year. Change's 120 employees will be employed by Penn-Mar, which employs 500 people. But the smaller nonprofit will operate under its current name for the foreseeable future, Miller said.

Both organizations receive some funding through Medicare and Medicaid - and they have been responding to regulatory changes calling for supporting people with developmental disabilities in a community environment instead of offering support in locations closed off from other people.

Changes at Penn-Mar include having its clients use public gyms like YMCAs and other services offered by their communities instead of private gyms operated by Penn-Mar.

"If the opportunity exists in the community, let's get them into that type of program as opposed to bringing them in-house," Miller said.