

Joshua Stuart: A Developmentally-Disabled Child in Search of Treatment

by Mebane Rash with Karen Tam

Joshua Stuart is autistic. He has an IQ of 36, and he can only speak a few words, like “Ma” and “hurt.” After he violently attacked his mother and little brother at home when he was 13 years old, Joshua spent eight days at Wake County Mental Health Services, his local management entity, waiting for a bed to open up. He slept in a chair. He did not have access to a shower.

At the time, there were open beds at Central Regional Hospital. There were only 13 children there, and they have the capacity for 34. But there were not enough workers to care for Joshua. After his eight-day wait, he was transferred to Broughton Hospital in Morganton, 200 miles west of Raleigh. It was the first time he had ever been away from his mother for more than two days. Then he was moved to the Murdoch Developmental Center in Butner in the PATH program—Partners for Autism Treatment and Habilitation.

This program is designed to serve children from ages six to 16 with autism spectrum disorder and serious behavioral challenges. The goal is to reduce behavior problems and to promote positive social skills. Joshua’s treatment includes person-centered teaching in the areas of self-help, education, communication, and recreation, as directed by the interdisciplinary team of professionals working with him.

Joshua spent six hours each day in 30-minute classes learning everything from new words to daily living skills. With only four children per class, each child has an individualized education and therapy plan. The staff at the Murdoch Center closely follow the progress of each child, monitoring everything from sleep schedules to diet and nutrition to changes in a child’s daily completion of basic tasks (e.g., brushing teeth and getting dressed). Some of the children in the PATH program go to classes at the Butner-Stem Middle School, giving them an opportunity to learn tasks and activities in a regular school setting. Other children receive educational services at the Murdoch Center. It depends on the needs of the child. Joshua was discharged, and he now lives back in the community. 🏠

The family is greeted by the staff, including Aleck Myers, the Director of the Murdoch Developmental Center.

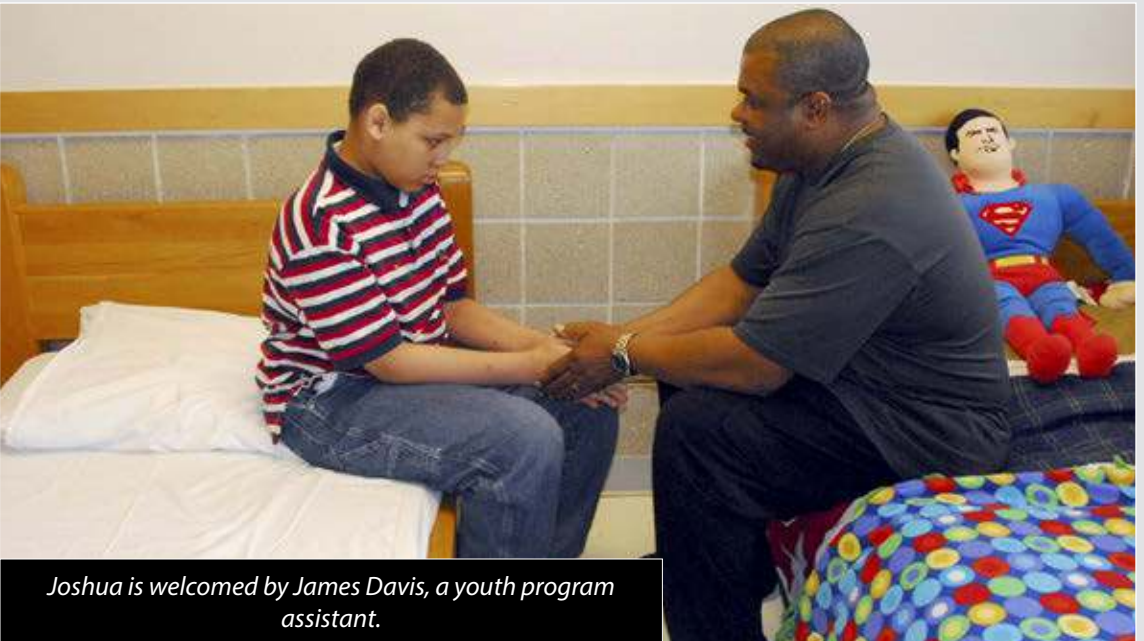




Joshua with his parents, arriving at Murdoch Developmental Center in Butner.



Joshua laughing with his dad, Antonio Stewart.



Joshua is welcomed by James Davis, a youth program assistant.

Joshua's parents, Salima Mabry and Antonio Stewart, are surrounded by 16 staff members in a meeting room. They ask questions about Joshua's needs, wants, likes, and dislikes.



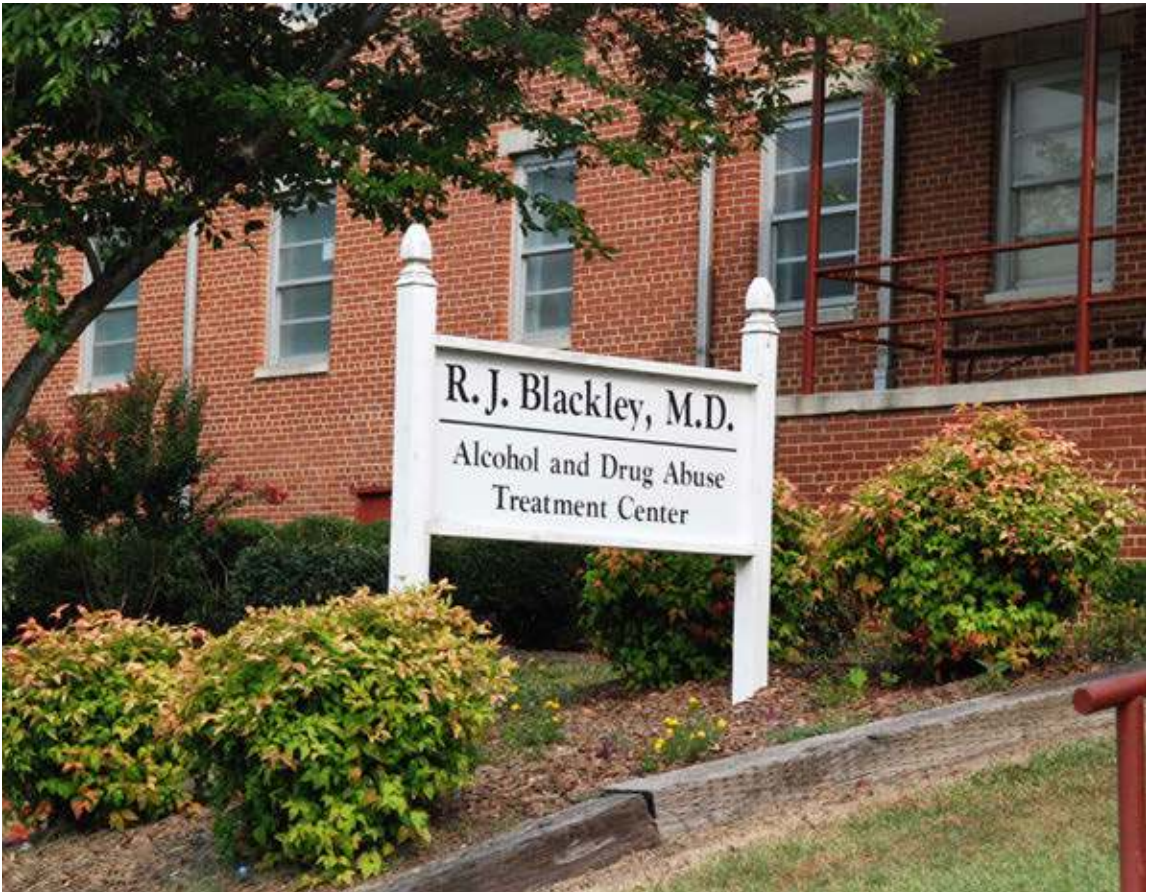
Karen Tam

The Neuro-Medical Treatment Centers:
Treating People with Disabilities Needing Long-Term Care

There are three state-operated neuro-medical treatment centers, serving 1,000 people with disabilities needing long-term care in FY 2010–11: Black Mountain Neuro-Medical Center serving 426 people, O’Berry Neuro-Medical Center in Goldsboro serving 299, and Longleaf Neuro-Medical Treatment in Wilson serving 275.⁸ The Black Mountain Center serves those with lifelong disabilities and those diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease.⁹ The O’Berry Center was the first institution in N.C. for African Americans with mental retardation, and now it serves those with developmental disabilities in need of long-term care.¹⁰ Longleaf Neuro-Medical Treatment Center serves adults with severe and persistent mental illness with long-term medical conditions requiring residential, medical, and nursing care. The Center also serves adults with a diagnosis of Alzheimer’s or dementia who are unable to be treated in a traditional nursing home setting because of assaultive and combative behavior.¹¹

Alcohol & Drug Abuse Treatment Centers:
Treating People Addicted to Alcohol or Drugs

North Carolina has three state-operated alcohol and drug abuse treatment centers (ADATCs) that treated 4,590 people in FY 2010–11 for alcohol or drug addictions: Julian F. Keith ADATC in Black Mountain serving 1,610 people; R.J. Blackley ADATC in Butner serving 1,296; and Walter B. Jones ADATC in Greenville serving 1,684.¹²



Aislander Duda