



LIFE LAB

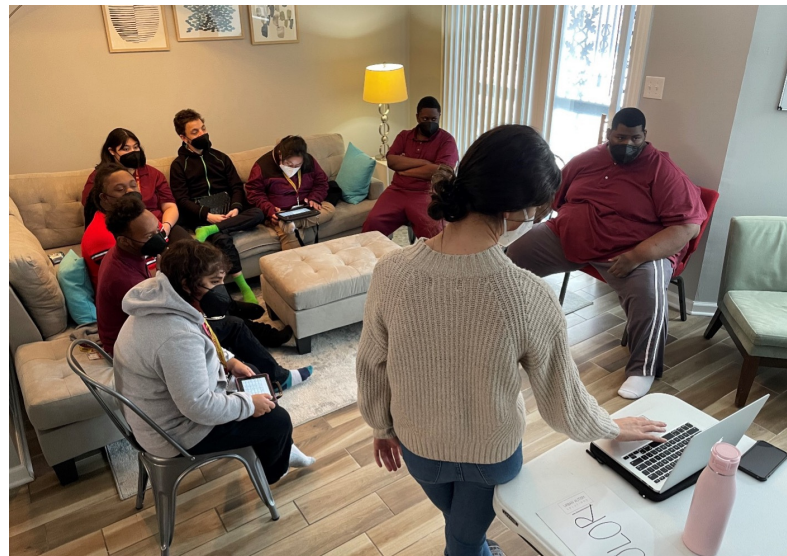
POWERED BY URBAN AUTISM SOLUTIONS



The UAS Life Lab launched in January 2022 as a 20-week pilot program with 12 students with the greatest functional challenges related to autism and other intellectual and developmental differences.

Students who participate in programs at the UAS West Side Transition Academy come to the Life Lab townhouse in the Little Italy neighborhood from their West Side Chicago public high school transition programs. Guided by clinicians, Life Lab participants perform everyday skills to help them increase their autonomy and lead more independent lives as they transition to adulthood.

The Life Lab is a fully furnished three-bedroom townhouse that provides a true-to-life environment for students to practice 'activities of daily living' – light cooking, laundry, household chores, engaging with the community and other routine self-care tasks like personal hygiene and grooming. Practicing these skills in a realistic setting makes it easier for students to apply them at home.



URBAN AUTISM SOLUTIONS' LIFE LAB SERVES STUDENTS WITH AUTISM AND RELATED CHALLENGES FROM CHICAGO'S WEST SIDE WHO ARE MARGINALIZED BY LOW SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS AND RACIAL DISCRIMINATION.

THE UAS LIFE LAB



3 BEDROOMS



KITCHEN



WASHER/DRYER



VIRTUAL CAPABILITY



2 BATHROOMS



3 STORIES

CURRICULUM AND GOALS

Goals for students who come to the Life Lab include building mastery in several domains: meal preparation, home management, safety and emergency responses, activities of daily living, communication, community engagement and overall engagement. The curriculum was designed by occupational therapy graduate students from Rush University in consultation with a licensed speech-language pathologist. All lessons include visual aids and demonstrations along with repetition to build competence. Progress of individual students as well as overall class performance is shared with teachers and administrators.



OUTCOMES

During the 20-week pilot program, all UAS Life Lab students showed significant improvement in the communication domain, including properly introducing themselves, answering questions about the previous lessons and responding over a virtual platform.

Students also made strides in following routines such as taking off shoes and jackets and placing them in the proper designated area when arriving at the Life Lab, getting settled in the living room and gathering supplies needed to complete tasks.

Other areas where students showed consistent improvement over time were meal preparation and community engagement including navigating public transportation.

