

# The Emerge Center

Expansion of Facility and Services to Children in Baton Rouge, LA



26,000  
SF



3,200  
Capacity



139  
Direct Jobs



## Project

In December 2012 the Baton Rouge Speech & Hearing Foundation (BRSHF) began construction on its new Emerge Center for Communication, Behavior & Development at Louisiana State University's (LSU's) Innovation Park. Founded in 1960 in response to a rubella epidemic, the nonprofit organization offers clinically effective therapies to children and adults with communication difficulties from the Greater Baton Rouge area, regardless of their ability to pay. As the primary provider of early intervention and education programs for children on the autism spectrum in southern Louisiana, the organization has outgrown its current facility due to great demand for its programming.

**TOTAL PROJECT COST:**  
\$8,591,000

**NMTC ALLOCATION:**  
\$8,100,000

**FINANCING COMPLETE:**  
December 2012

**PROJECT SPONSOR:**  
The Emerge Center Holding Company, Inc.

**CDE:**  
East Baton Rouge Community Development Entity (EBRCDE)

**NMTC INVESTOR:**  
Chase Community Equity, LLC

**LEVERAGED LENDER:**  
The Emerge Center, Inc.

**ADDRESS:**  
8000 Gsri Avenue  
Baton Rouge, LA

**Census TRACT:**  
22033004011

**LOW-INCOME COMMUNITY:**  
Poverty Rate: 29%  
Median Family Income: 53.5%  
DRA Distressed Area  
FEMA Disaster Area

The foundation is committed to serving those who have no other resource in the community. The Emerge Center will more than double its square footage to 26,000 square feet and allow the foundation to provide services to an additional 2,150 clients annually, an increase of 86% over 2011. The foundation's current 9,000-square-foot building can accommodate 46 children with autism but has a lengthy waiting list. The new facility will increase that capacity to 100 children and the occupational therapy division will increase its capacity to 60 patients weekly. The Emerge Center will focus on early intervention for children with autism between the ages of 18 months to 6 years. Services will be offered five days a week instead of the one day per week that is currently offered. The new facility will feature an auditorium, an occupational therapy gym, 10 group-therapy classrooms and a pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classroom to serve up to 12 children at once.

The 200-acre Innovation Park contains research, business and technology buildings that belong to LSU and tenant organizations. "Today is an exciting day for the LSU Innovation Park and The Emerge Center," said Charlie D'Agostino, Executive Director of the LSU Innovation Park. "This is the ideal 'first building' at the Innovation Park, which sets the theme for the Park. The Emerge Center exemplifies the vision of LSU for developing a world class Innovation Park where the university and the private sector come together."

## Financing

The NMTC Program filled a gap in financing that allowed the project to expand and relocate to the Innovation Park. With total project costs over \$8.5 million, the NMTC subsidy contributed over \$1.7 million of capital to the project. Receiving substantial support from the local community, the foundation self-leveraged the transaction with \$3.4 million of capital campaign contributions and a \$2.7 million bridge loan from IberiaBank. Mark Goodson, Assistant Executive Director of the EBRUDE, noted "the broad and strong community support for the project was certainly impressive. The amount of pledges and cash gathered in a short period of time speaks to the strong reputation of the organization." Since the NMTC closing, the foundation has received an additional \$6.4 million in pledges.

That was the goal, to offer all the services our children need under one roof. Without New Markets Tax Credits, The Emerge Center would struggle to fill the gap in its building campaign, and construction of its new facility would have delayed, likely for years. The new facility will provide the space for the foundation to continue growing the number of children and families it serves for years to come."

**Melissa Juneau**

*Executive Director, The Emerge Center*

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