

The Blanchard Institute
10348 Park Road
Charlotte, NC 28210

May 3, 2025

To whom it may concern:

It is my pleasure to write this letter of recommendation for Ed Speedling. For over 15 years, I have worked all over the country and within every level of care of behavioral health. While a decade of professional experience was living and working in Southern California, in 2015—I moved to Charlotte, NC and founded The Blanchard Institute by 2017, a dual diagnosis, family focused full outpatient continuum; our mission was to provide comprehensive dual diagnosis with multiple locations across North Carolina. Founding and developing the Blanchard institute is how I became familiar with working with Mr. Speedling. Ed was instrumental in helping The Blanchard Institute (TBI) navigate through start-up operational pains that often cripple healthcare companies.

The Affordable Care Act had significant impact on the behavioral health industry, as it delivered expanded coverage and parity requirements, leading to increased access to care and treatment for mental health and substance use disorders. Such rapid growth and demand from the ACA, colliding with 2020's COVID pandemic's massive influence on behavioral health services presented unique hurdles that prompted seeking experienced consulting support and ultimately working with Ed Speedling. By 2020 just before the COVID period, TBI was riding the rapid growth from the ACA and actively looking to scale and develop our second stand-a-lone location. Ed and I were introduced by a mutual colleague who thought Ed's extensive health care experience could be an asset and help us scale and solve the problems TBI was experiencing at the time. Behavioral health consulting is a part of our industry that often can be compared to old-timey snake charmers and illusionist---as very few consultants I have experienced have actually delivered on their commitment in a way that produced measurable results. This was far from my experience with Ed Speedling, as Ed's initial consulting work and contract with the TBI was so effective and helpful, we came back for more as we needed his expertise a second time!

Ed's wide-ranging experience across admin, operations and clinical services was extremely helpful. It's very difficult to find a consultant that understands the admin operational components while also truly understanding the clinical work and vital importance of clinical quality. Ed came to us with experience in all the important areas of this business that normally would take 2, sometimes 3 consultants in order to be able to cover: operations, clinical, compliance, revenue cycle management, HR, etc..Ed was able to provide experienced and quality support in all these areas. Any operational decision, clinical service discussion, etc... Ed would be knowledgeable about the subject at hand, but he would also introduce key information in other areas of the company that would be impacted but we never considered. In addition, TBI has very passionate beliefs about leadership and core values. Ed was able to absorb our beliefs and incorporate our unique beliefs into his assessment, understanding of TBI, and his recommendations. Equally if not more important, Ed's communication style and demeanor allowed for clarity, empathetic directness with staff that resulted in a quick trust to be established in relationships and conversations with staff. His ability to connect and communicate with everyone on our leadership team, daily staff, the employment candidates he helped interviewed, and anyone he crossed paths allowed for him to ample context of the company---that consultants are rarely able to derive in a short period of their contracts. Ed was careful and intentional with everything and everyone, which was key to his ultimate success and why we brought him back a second time.

Our organization experienced immediate success upon opening, fueling an exciting and often intimidating growth step with a second location, while shortly being disrupted by COVID in so many personal and professional ways. Ed and his two consulting stints came along at a tenuous and vital time in TBI's growth and business development. Running

any behavioral health organization of 1 location is difficult, scaling to multiple locations is a completely different approach, but the success of that first expansion step location was going to be the 'make or break' step of TBI's long term mission of scaling across the state of NC. If that second location didn't work, I doubt The Blanchard institute would have been able to survive and comeback during that COVID environment of 2020-22. Thankfully, we do not have to worry about that! The Blanchard Institute successfully established our second location in a way that readies TBI's operational and organizational structures to be prepared for further growth and are already working on multiple growth locations in 2025. The Blanchard institute would not be where we are today without Ed Speedling's help and support.

Please, feel free to call me with further clarification or additional information or questions: 704-288-1097 or email me at ward@theblanchardinstitute.com.

Sincerely,



Ward Blanchard