

Section 1: General Policies

9. Accessibility Plan

The Accessibility Plan seeks to eliminate potential barriers that might impact upon program participants, staff members, and other stakeholders including but not limited to visitors, family members and members of the public. This plan is reviewed annually and updated as needed.

The Accessibility Plan is a result of a comprehensive organizational review of potential barriers to full inclusion of people with disabilities served by Options for Community Living, Inc. both within the program and services offered as well as within the communities in which we live and work. Review includes input from staff members, program participants and other stakeholders. Input may be obtained through discussions at staff and program participant meetings and through feedback to information disseminated through electronic and print media.

All requests for accommodations and potential accommodations that were otherwise identified as a need are carefully considered. The accommodation will be reviewed and a decision regarding the feasibility of providing the accommodation will be made and if applicable will be communicated to the person who made the request within thirty days. Management will consider all relevant factors in making the decision regarding the accommodation.

The Accessibility Plan is reviewed annually by the entire management team. All program participants receive a copy of the Plan on an annual basis. Questions regarding accessibility needs and requests may be included on customer service surveys.

Employment

Options abides by the 1991 Civil Rights Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act. Options' policy is to ensure equal opportunities for all, without regard to race, color, religion, gender, nation of origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, veteran status, or any other non-job-related characteristic. The agency holds the views of equal employment opportunity as an essential element in employment policy making and a system of good management. The full text of Options' affirmative action plan can be found in Section 2 of this Policy and Procedure Manual.

Actions:

Options will continue to fulfill the policies and procedures developed to ensure adherence to the 1991 Civil Rights Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act. All open positions will continue to be advertised to ensure the full participation of people with disabilities.

Attitudinal

Options recognizes the value of program participant input and participation in fostering the development of a community free of attitudinal barriers. Options seeks to ensure that program participants have ample opportunities to have impact upon the programs in which they participate. Participation in social, recreation and educational activities helps to integrate program participants into their communities.

Actions:

Options staff participates in many activities which are designed to teach persons about disabilities and help reduce attitudinal barriers. Some examples of these activities are health fairs, craft fairs in which the crafts that program participants made are displayed and sold, attendance at public rallies about issues specific to persons with disabilities and participation in numerous letter writing and telephoning and in person advocacy efforts. Input from all program participants is valuable and therefore effort to obtain such feedback is made on a regular basis.

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These attempts include meetings, surveys, and follow-up phone calls. All such input is carefully considered and used for program planning and development.

Architectural

The Mental Health Supportive Scattered Site Housing and the Access to Care Housing Programs have the ability to provide barrier free housing to individuals with chronic mental illness, HIV/AIDS and/or other chronic medical conditions who have mobility impairments. Each program offers many accessible housing sites. Whenever appropriate and applicable, program participant meetings are held in an accessible site.

Accommodations for program participants from all programs who require a ground floor bedroom are made, as necessary. All individuals who apply for entry into housing programs and whom cannot be accommodated are referred to agencies that can accommodate their needs.

An elevator is available in the Hempstead and Amityville Administrative offices. The Ronkonkoma office is accessible. Meetings between staff and program participants and between the Human Resources Department and applicants for employment may be arranged via video conference or in the office or in public areas such as libraries or clinics. Home visits are routinely provided for program participants. Video conferences may also be offered as an option for meetings between program participants and staff.

Actions:

The agency endeavors to accommodate all program participants and staff and continues to work to remove architectural barriers. All program participants are given regular opportunities to discuss needs regarding architectural concerns. Wherever possible, appropriate accommodations for employees who are mobility or otherwise impaired are also considered. All information resulting from any discussions regarding accommodations in this area is documented and shared with a member of the management team and action is taken, as necessary.

Environmental

The agency is responsive to the environmental needs of its staff and program participants. Both staff and program participants can request environmental accommodations if necessary. For example, air conditioning has been installed in individual bedrooms and common areas based upon need. Equipment for hearing impaired residents has also been utilized. Based upon need, the agency is ready to assist clients in accessing sight impaired adaptive equipment and is also prepared to offer IT assistive technology as applicable.

The agency is also prepared to offer accommodations based upon medical or other needs. For staff, these accommodations could include a standing desk or the ability to work remotely. For program participants, these accommodations could include a private bedroom or the opportunity to meet with staff via video conference instead of in person.

Actions:

The agency endeavors to accommodate all program participants and staff and continues to work to remove environmental barriers. All program participants are given regular opportunities to discuss needs regarding environmental concerns. Any information resulting from such discussions is documented and shared with a member of the management team and action is taken, as necessary.

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Transportation

The agency is responsive to the transportation needs of its program participants. Program participants are aided in obtaining reduced cost transportation passes and in accessing additional entitlements which provide transportation and transportation related services. Staff work with program participants to help them develop skills and confidence in accessing and using public transportation services. In some cases, staff may also be available to transport clients as needed. A ramp has also been installed onto an agency van to aid a mobility impaired client. The main administrative office has a handicapped parking space available.

Actions:

The agency endeavors to accommodate all program participants and staff and continues to work to remove transportation barriers. All program participants are given regular opportunities to discuss needs regarding transportation. Any information resulting from such discussions is documented and shared with a member of the management team and action is taken, as necessary.

Communication

The agency is responsive to the communication needs of its program participants. The agency maintains a language database which lists staff members and the languages other than English in which they have proficiency. These languages include Spanish, Creole, Greek, French, Russian, Hindi and American Sign Language. The agency's web site can be translated into Spanish or Creole at the press of a button. If necessary, staff work with program participants in accessing translation and other communication services including the language bank. A TTY phone number is available. Callers may dial either 7-1-1 or 800-421-1220 (hearing individuals call this number) or 800-662-1220 (deaf or hearing-impaired individuals call this number) to access the service in which communication between a deaf or hearing-impaired individual and hearing individual is facilitated. In addition, selected agency documents such as the Program Participant Satisfaction Survey have been translated into Spanish and Creole.

Actions:

The agency endeavors to accommodate all program participants and staff and continues to work to remove communication barriers. All program participants are given regular opportunities to discuss needs regarding communication. Any information resulting from such discussions is documented and shared with a member of the management team and action is taken, as necessary.

Financial

The agency endeavors to provide services to all eligible applicants and is committed to working with applicants to help them obtain the financial entitlements necessary for enrollment. In addition, individuals and families who meet enrollment criteria in the Access To Care Program, but whom are not Medicaid eligible can be referred to a grant funded case management program.

Staff work with program participants to promote financial independence. Program participants are aided in the development of realistic budgets and staff also assist program participants in helping them to understand and obtain the full range of benefits for which they may be entitled.

Actions:

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The agency endeavors to accommodate all program participants and staff and continues to work to remove financial barriers. All program participants are given regular opportunities to discuss financial needs. Any information resulting from such discussions is documented and shared with a member of the management team and action is taken, as necessary.

Community Integration

The agency endeavors to remove the barriers that program participants may face when attempting to integrate into the community. Staff work with program participants to develop service plans that include goals that are designed to help facilitate participation in the community.

Staff work with program participants to locate activities, treatment teams and programs that endeavor to aid them to integrate into their community. In-person, telehealth, and video conferencing options may be explored.

Actions:

The agency endeavors to accommodate all program participants and staff and continues to work to remove barriers to community integration. All program participants are given regular opportunities to discuss needs regarding community integration. Any information resulting from such discussions is documented and shared with a member of the management team and action is taken, as necessary.