



**PARENT/GUARDIAN
RESIDENTIAL
INFORMATION
PACKAGE**

2007

OPTIONS' SERVICE PROVISION WITH RESIDENTIAL STAFF SUPPORT

Welcome to **OPTIONS!** We hope that we will have a long, happy and satisfying relationship in our mutual support of your son or daughter. This package is designed to provide you with some information about **OPTIONS'** processes and procedures and to outline our values and philosophy with regard to service provision. Please feel free to make suggestions that you feel might be helpful and to provide us with feedback. Your input is valued and welcomed.

A. AN INTRODUCTION TO OPTIONS

OPTIONS is a private company incorporated on August 7th, 1986. The owner of the company, Elaine(Yost) Burak, is the President and Director of the company and as such has ultimate control and responsibility for the company in its operations. An advisory committee comprised of parents, consumers, professionals and lay people assists in the development of policies and procedures that affect the company in its work.

OPTIONS was formed for the purpose of creating a new service choice for people who wish to initiate innovative routes for the provision of services to people with complex service needs. It is **OPTIONS'** belief that people who are disabled have the right to be treated with dignity; have the right to make choices; have the right to dignity of risk and have the right to live in the community.

It is our belief that those individuals who know the person best should have access and input to all decisions made about and with the individual. It is our hope that the relationship between parents/guardians, consumers, and **OPTIONS** and its staff can be built on a joint commitment to supporting the individual in the most positive way possible; on openness in communication; on mutual respect; on constructiveness and creativity in problem solving; on integrity in all aspects of support.

OPTIONS' desire is to strengthen the voices of people with disabilities and their families and friends. We take a "Person Centered" approach in the planning that is done with individuals and their families. Our belief is that individuals are supported most effectively when supports are flexible, and when there is a commitment to on-going learning. We offer an organizational culture that is based on respecting and supporting peoples choices about how they want to live and participate in the life of their community.

Over the years **OPTIONS** has grown and changed significantly from a small organization that mainly provided residential support to an organization today which provides unique and individualized services to children, adults and seniors. We assist in facilitating services to a number of individuals who live in homes with a Supported Room-mate; we interview, screen and match potential room-mates; provide supports to

a number of individuals who are more significantly challenged; provide supports to individuals who require a more individualized day alternative program and to individuals who are retiring from work; support individuals living in their own homes; provide respite and family support.

OPTIONS' Mission Statement

**SEEK TO UNDERSTAND
and
SHARE IN THE CELEBRATION OF LIFE OF THOSE
OFTEN THOUGHT OUT OF LIFE**

B. SUPPORT STAFF

The most critical consideration for **OPTIONS** in hiring support staff is the commitment to and understanding of the principles of basic human rights. We seek to attract those individuals who have a sincere belief in the value of all human beings and who have an understanding of and are dedicated to playing a supportive role in assisting another human being reach his/her goals. We seek creative people who are sensitive, accepting, caring, willing to be open and challenged, and who have an appreciation of the struggle individuals who have been labelled often face.

OPTIONS hires people who have training and experience in Community Rehabilitation or related disciplines such as Sociology, Communication, Psychology, Recreation, Nursing, Attendant Care, Social Work, etc. All of our staff are required to have an up-to-date Standard First Aid and C.P.R. certificate. All staff are required to participate in an orientation, and attend in-house meetings and in-services. **OPTIONS'** staff combines commitment, specific experience and education so that a team approach can be developed. The team members can identify and enhance problem-solving by bringing skills and knowledge from a variety of disciplines.

OPTIONS performs an evaluation of employee performance prior to the end of the qualifying period and prior to the employee's annual anniversary date thereafter. Input and feedback is also welcomed from the individuals and their parents/guardians. All **OPTIONS'** staff sign an oath of confidentiality regarding any information that is gained through the on-going performance of their job. Ethical behaviour must be maintained at all times.

C. THE ROLE OF THE FAMILY/GUARDIAN

You as a family (mother, father, siblings, etc.) and **OPTIONS** and its' staff will be involved in a partnership of support to an individual you have cared for, nurtured and supported for many years. We know the steps toward independence can be difficult for all involved. You have come from different places and experiences that are unique to you. We cannot duplicate or replace your family-life or your home. We must all work together to help you son or daughter, brother or sister created their own home, their own life and realize their own dreams.

It is important to keep in mind the relationship your son or daughter forms with their support staff will develop from a different emotional and in a different physical space from your own family. New facets and strengths of our personalities emerge as we grow, face new challenges, experience different opportunities and establish relationships with new people. If you see your son or daughter doing things that you had difficulty getting them to do, this in no way means that you have not been "good parents" or that you should feel bad or guilty that you "have not done enough". It may only mean they are flexing their independence muscles and using new opportunities to show you and themselves that "I can do it".

You are crucially important in making the experience a successful and positive one. Your input and continued commitment to the planning process will be welcomed and embraced. You are the best resource we could ask for. We need your support, input and involvement. So does your son or daughter!! Funding does not allow us enough staffing dollars or the flexibility to meet all the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of your son or daughter.

It has been our experience that each individual taking this step from a school experience to employment, volunteer or other day alternative experiences is very aware of their desire to be viewed as an adult, to have the same things as their brothers or sisters; to be viewed as competent, and to be respected. They also want to show you how well they can do on their own. This new experience may also be a bit frightening and it is reassuring to know you are there and you will remain involved. What they need is your confidence in them, encouragement, support, the freedom to assert their own opinions, and your continuing and on-going involvement.

D. YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH STAFF

Over the years you have probably had both positive and negative experiences with teachers, staff, and other professionals. We want to make our involvement with you as positive as possible in order to ensure the highest quality of support possible. We also want to see stability in the staff, and the staff will require your input, involvement, support, suggestions and feedback. We believe you are the expert on your son or daughter; their success or failure affects your self-esteem as a parent; and we can find a way to establish a positive working alliance. That is why we ask you to be involved in interviewing and orienting new staff.

Our paid staff have certain responsibilities and guidelines under which they must work, and we as an agency must comply with a number of standards and regulations. We know the majority of our staff give of themselves and their time over and above the call of duty. In order for them to continue with their high degree of commitment to the

individuals they are supporting, we would encourage you to follow these suggestions in order to promote a positive relationship with staff:

- ❖ Be friendly, supportive and open.
- ❖ Ask the staff if they need any assistance
- ❖ Be considerate of their feelings and opinions.
- ❖ Avoid discussions about specific staff, their personal weaknesses, etc. with other staff
- ❖ Be complimentary when you see something positive.
- ❖ Recognize that each person is a unique personality and has different strengths.
- ❖ Communicate in a relaxed, patient and pleasant manner.
- ❖ Plan what you want to say before you speak, especially if you are giving negative feedback. Offer an alternative.
- ❖ Give the staff your undivided attention when they are discussing concerns or opinions.
- ❖ Ask for clarification if you are unsure of the meaning or intent of something that is said.
- ❖ Become conscious of how you communicate both verbally and non-verbally.
- ❖ Follow the agreed upon communication lines so that your wishes can be communicated to the appropriate people.
- ❖ When you feel comfortable, share your fears, expectations and wishes with the staff.

Note: In their orientation, **OPTIONS'** staff are also given guidelines and suggestions regarding communication (both written and verbal).

E. YOUR MONITORING ROLE

We want you to feel comfortable with what is happening in your son's or daughter's home. We, as well as you, will be concerned about their happiness, nutrition, cleanliness, medical concerns, clothing and appearance, activities, choices, staff performance, confidentiality, communication, problem solving, handling of money, setting priorities, their relationships and their involvement with the community at large. It will be helpful if you become familiar with the day to day operation of the home, i.e. staff schedules, and are aware of the staffing structure.

In most situations when two or more individuals are living together, a Coordinator is responsible for the day to day operation of the home and sets the staffing schedule, delegates responsibilities, supervises and supports the staff, and writes any reports that may be required. As the Coordinator has the primary responsibility and is in the home a significant amount of the time, s/he will be most helpful in providing you with information. S/he will also be responsible to see that any specific requests are met and the home operates smoothly. There will likely be other full-time support staff and relief staff. These individuals report to the Coordinator in terms of supervision. If you wish to see something implemented or have a concern, please contact the Coordinator, their Supervisor or the Director. Any one of these people can ensure that all staff are aware of your request and can follow through.

When we are upset about an issue it is easy to assume the worst, especially when it affects someone we love. We want action now! There are positive ways of getting action, obtaining information and of raising concerns that can promote the development of trust and open communication between parents and staff. We are all sensitive to feedback and criticism if it is presented in a manner which appears to be "attacking". It is often wise to "think before we speak". You may not be aware of all the reasons a particular decision was made and these may need to be considered before any action is taken. It is important to have the facts.

Staff are people too! They become very attached to and concerned about the individuals they are supporting. There may have been times when you experienced hurt by the public's lack of sensitivity, negative reactions, comments or stares. Most of us have felt uncomfortable when our child was having a tantrum in the store and everyone was watching.

We naturally felt it reflected on us as parents. We expected "good behaviour" because it reflected our "good parenting". Staff may experience similar feelings. They want to be perceived as "good staff". They may need to talk to you about their feelings too!

With this model of support it has been our experience that any difficulties that arise are best dealt with as soon as a concern arises either through discussions at the parent meetings, or through the Supervisor. Not all decisions staff make are infallible and you may feel uncomfortable with something that is happening. You may also feel tentative about raising your concerns. If that is the case, please do not hesitate to bring your concern to the attention of the Supervisor who can assist you in resolving the problem. Our desire is to promote positive problem solving. Employment grievances will be dealt with through internal channels.

Your son or daughter will give you the best indication, either verbally or non-verbally, whether they are happy and comfortable. Observe the interactions they have with the staff. Read the communication book and feel free to discuss any concerns you may have. It is not unusual to go through some anxiety when moving into a new situation but if it continues over a prolonged period of time, the situation must be addressed.

F. GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

All clients, parents, or Guardians have recourse to **OPTIONS'** grievance procedure. The purpose of the procedure is to promote harmony and to ensure there is a mutual understanding and agreement to decisions and policies and procedures. The focus of grievance procedures should be the mutually successful conclusion of difference

The following outlines the process for filing a grievance:

1. Parents/Guardians and/or clients may contact the appropriate program staff to discuss specific problems. If the matter remains unresolved, the Parents/Guardian or client may proceed to the next step.

2. Contact the appropriate Supervisory staff who will attempt to resolve the matter. If the concern is still not resolved, the Parent/Guardians or client may proceed to the next step.
3. Parents/Guardians and/or clients may contact the Director of **OPTIONS** in writing outlining the concern. If after a discussion of the grievance a mutually satisfactory solution cannot be reached, the parents/Guardians and/or the client can direct their concerns to the Persons with Developmental Disabilities Calgary Region or to the Provincial Ombudsman for further investigation.
4. Outside mediation will also be considered if all parties are in agreement.

G. WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

As an agency we are required to keep log notes on each individual for each shift. These are kept in the house and you should feel free to read your son or daughter's notes. Menu plans are also required and are available for your perusal. All medical information including records of medications, medical appointments/follow-up, seizures, B.M., or anything else of note for a particular individual are also kept.

The daily log notes should include the activities of the day, and some comments as to how the individual participated and enjoyed activities, their general mood, health, etc. Any unusual or out of the ordinary occurrence should be noted. If an incident occurs regarding an error in medication, an accident or injury, or a behavioral outburst, staff are required to write an "incident report" which documents the event, the action taken and follow-up required. If an incident occurs, Parents/Guardians and supervisory staff must be contacted. These reports are also available for you to read.

The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act guarantees that all citizens have the right to access information collected on them, to have their individual privacy protected, to access their own personal information and to correct personal information.

H. THE ROLE OF THE SUPPORT STAFF IN AN INDIVIDUALS' HOME

The role the staff perform can be demanding, challenging and rewarding. They are required to provide support to individuals in a manner which enhances self-esteem, respects the dignity and autonomy of the person, respects individual choice and preference, and which promotes growth and the development of new abilities. A wide variety of support may be required by an individual and the staff may be involved in the following:

- Personal Care and Assistance
- Instruction in Self-Care
- Emotional Support
- Life Skills Support

- Nutritional/Diet Planning
- Support re: Medical/Dental Appointments/Follow-Up
- Follow-up re: Physiotherapy, R.O.M., Occupational Therapy, Speech Therapy
- Current Standard First Aid and CPR (Level C)
- Recreation and Leisure Support
- Support in Community Involvement
- Liaison between other Agencies/Schools
- Relief Care/Support i.e. when ill or during school closure)
- Behaviour Management Support
- Administration of Medications
- Support during Emergencies/Seizures/Illness
- Accessing Assessments/Information/Resources/Program
- Budgeting and Financial Accountability
- Person Centered Planning/Life-Style Planning
- Arranging for Wheelchair Maintenance/Repair or other Technical Support

The staffs' role is to support the individual in all areas where they may require assistance; to assist and support the individual in making informed choices and experience the natural consequences of the decisions and choices they make; and to ensure the individual is not at risk. Staff must present information and alternatives in a manner which can be understood and which enables reasonable decisions. Because the staff are working in an individual's home they must respect personal preferences and taste, and the need for privacy.

Staff must be sensitive to the assumptions that are often made about individuals who are disabled and support the community in a positive way to value our clients and give them opportunities. OPTIONS' staff are not allowed to use physical punishment, speak to the individual in a sarcastic or derogatory manner (verbal abuse) or use restrictive procedures.

I. TRADITIONAL ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

- The person is disabled
- Disability is a problem
- Problems need to be fixed
- Special people are needed to fix them
- "They" can only be served in special places
- "They" need to go to be fixed
- "They" can only come out when "they" are fixed
- Needs are seen as services, professionals and places
- They always must be told what to do, how to do it
- Basic human needs, feelings, desires are not present
- "They" have nothing to contribute
- "They" are a burden
- "They" mustn't make mistakes

OPTIONS' BELIEFS

All people share the same basic needs:

Relationships - Respect - Belonging

Autonomy/Independence

Individuality

Love and Acceptance

Stability - Continuity

Growth and Learning

Contributing to their Community

Security

Human and Legal Rights

Spiritual Life of Own Choice

**We view people with disabilities as people first
The difficulties they encounter become secondary needs
-
the vision of needs will focus on ordinary human needs.
The description of the disability is relevant only to the
extent that it complicates meeting needs.**

J. FUNDING

The mechanism for most funding applications comes through Persons with Developmental Disabilities, the Individual Funding program. With **OPTIONS'** support or through an independent broker, the individual requiring support develops a proposal and approaches Persons with Developmental Disabilities to apply for funding. The proposal is presented to a Funding Review Committee. **OPTIONS'** services may be retained prior to approval of the budget but staff cannot be hired until written approval of funds is received. We request one month's notice after receipt of approval of funds before staff are recruited and hired. The usual route to obtain funding is to contact a Client Services Coordinator through the office of Persons with Developmental Disabilities, who will then open a file.

(Individuals in receipt of A-I.S.H. (Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped) may have a Client Services worker and an A.I.S.H. worker already assigned. It is important when you meet with the Client Services Coordinator or speak to them on the phone, to describe what supports your individual needs and what you would like to see for them. If you are not aware of the services which might be appropriate or what is available, the Client Services Coordinator can assist you by providing information about different programs in the Calgary area. They may also refer you to a Broker or an agency which is involved in developing service proposals. The process then is to obtain as much information about individual needs and to develop a plan to meet those needs.

This plan must be signed and approved by you before it is presented to the committee. The Individual Funding Coordinator reviews the proposal and makes comments as to whether the plan can be supported before it goes to the committee, so it is important to provide him/her with as much information as possible.

Once funding is approved you will receive a letter, which confirms the approved budget amount.

K. PERSONAL MONEY

The individual's personal monies are the responsibility of the trustee/funds administrator. A certain amount of money will be required for transportation and activities that may come from an individual's personal budget. These will be accounted for by the Support Staff. At the end of each month a statement will be given to you so your records are current. Any specific accounting requests should be discussed with the Supervisor.

OPTIONS is ready and willing to explore new opportunities with you. We thank you for selecting us as your service provider.