



Sharing Journeys

Building Futures

**SUPPORTIVE
ROOMMATE
MODEL
INFORMATION
PACKAGE**

2013

OPTIONS SUPPORTIVE ROOMMATE MODEL

Welcome to **OPTIONS!** We hope our relationship is long and satisfying in our mutual support of your son or daughter. This package is designed to provide you with information about **OPTIONS** processes and procedures and to outline our values and philosophy with regard to service provision. Please feel free to give us your input and suggestions. Your feedback is important, welcomed and appreciated and your involvement enhances the effectiveness, focus and outcome of the service.

A. AN INTRODUCTION TO OPTIONS

OPTIONS is a private company incorporated on August 7th, 1986. Elaine Yost is the President and Director of the company and as such has ultimate control and responsibility for the company in its operations. As a parent of a son with a disability herself, Elaine and her staff are committed and active in ensuring that individuals receive the highest quality of support possible. 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 and more responsive service choice for individuals with disabilities and for those with complex service needs. It is **OPTIONS** belief that people who are disabled must be treated with dignity and respect and have the right to make choices about the important things in their lives. We also believe that people should have the right to dignity of risk and have the right to live in the community.

In respect of the individual's wishes, we also believe that the individuals who know the person best should be aware of and have access and input to all decisions made about and with the individual. It is our hope that the relationship between parents/guardians and **OPTIONS** and its staff can be built on a joint commitment to supporting the individual in the most positive way possible with the best outcomes possible. You will find that we are open in our communication, respectful of the differing roles and responsibilities and

constructive and creative in problem solving. We are committed to act with integrity in all aspects of support.

OPTIONS wants 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.

VISION STATEMENT

SHARING JOURNEYS - BUILDING FUTURES

Mission Statement

OPTIONS is dedicated to building opportunities, professionalism, trust, ideas, optimism, networks and success.

B. SUPPORTIVE ROOMMATES

The most critical consideration for **OPTIONS** in recruiting people who are interested in becoming a supported roommate is their commitment to and understanding of the principles of basic human rights. The individuals we look for are those who have a sincere belief in the value of all human beings. They must also have an understanding of and be dedicated to playing a supportive role in assisting another human being reach his/her goals. We look for 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 labeled often face.

OPTIONS recruits' people who are willing to make a commitment to sharing their lives in the long term support of an individual with a disability. Being skilled in communication, teaching and having a sense of humor are definite assets. Encouraging and supporting the development of new skills and the achievement of personal goals is an essential component of the service. Each arrangement is individualized in terms of the support required and the funding that is accessed to support it.

To be considered as a supportive roommate the following process is followed:

1. A resume for the primary caregiver is submitted.
2. A home visit is arranged and other members of the household are introduced (if applicable); attitude's and values are assessed; expectations are discussed; life style, interests, pets, skills, availability, commitment are ascertained
3. Reference checks, Criminal History Checks and Child Welfare Checks are provided
4. Standard First Aid, C.P.R. and Annual Liability insurance is obtained
5. **OPTIONS** provides information as to possible timelines for finding a roommate.
6. The type of support needs the individual requires and their suitability is discussed.
7. **OPTIONS** then arranges potential matches and visits.

C. THE MATCHING PROCESS

The process of matching the individual's needs to the skills and needs of the proposed Supportive Roommate is crucial in the long term success of the arrangement. A holistic approach is taken regarding the individual requiring support and the individual willing to provide it.

In order to ensure success each participant should have the opportunity to meet on number of occasions and have an overnight stay if possible. This allows for some level of ease and comfort with each other and the opportunity to discuss expectations. This process can occur over a period of a month to several months. Then when ready, the individual and their family/Guardian, the Supportive Roommate and **OPTIONS** meet to discuss the details of the arrangement.

D. SUPPORTIVE ROOMMATE CRITERIA

The potential Supportive Roommate and their home and environment must meet certain criteria and maintain certain standards in order to be considered potential roommates. Other requirements are:

- an up-to-date Standard First Aid and C.P.R. certificate
- clear Criminal History checks and Child Intervention checks for all adult members of the household
- willingness to support the values and philosophy of **OPTIONS** in the service delivery approach
- willing to meet the expectations of the Creating Excellence Together Standards
- Confidentiality
- Adhering to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

- Three references must also be provided

The home must be physically suitable to the needs of the individual. It must be in good repair and have the usual amenities. The individual must be considered a member of the family and there is an expectation that they will be free to be in all the common areas of the home.

E. THE CONTRACT FOR SERVICES (attached)

The Supportive Roommate, the Parent/Guardian and **OPTIONS** form a team of support around an individual. By working together problem solving can be enhanced by bringing together skills and knowledge from a variety of areas.

OPTIONS enters into a Sub-Contract with the Supportive Roommate when all criteria have been met. The contract is reviewed on an annual basis. At that time or at any time during the agreement, all parties can agree to reassess their satisfaction with the effectiveness of the support arrangement, respond to changing needs and /or discuss their willingness to continue to the arrangement.

F. THE ROLE OF THE FAMILY/GUARDIAN

As a family (mother, father, siblings, etc.), **OPTIONS** and the Supportive Roommate will be involved in a partnership of support to an individual you have cared for, nurtured and supported for many years. We know the transition and steps toward independence can be difficult for all involved. Your family is unique. We must all work together to help your son or daughter, brother or sister create their own home, their own life and realize their own dreams.

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!!

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 support model. We will require your input, involvement, support, suggestions and feedback.

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. Not all decisions 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 Residential Support Facilitator who can assist you in resolving the problem. Our desire is to promote positive problem solving.

G. RESPITE

Supportive Roommates, like family, require regular opportunities to get a break and replenish their own lives. Relief may be limited. Based on what is happening with the individuals and in their own lives Supportive Roommates may need some additional support from you from time to time if that can be arranged. The Supportive Roommate is authorized to obtain their own relief and make their own arrangements but it is important that you know what the arrangements are and that they have been discussed.

H. YOUR MONITORING ROLE

We want you to feel comfortable with what is happening in your son's or daughter's new home. We, as well as you, will be concerned about their happiness, nutrition, cleanliness, medical concerns, clothing and appearance, activities, choices, 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 routines.

In most situations when two or more individuals are living together flexibility, communication and mutual respect are key. In this unique arrangement where there are often many demands and competing needs, it requires a willingness to listen and understand the needs of all involved.

Your son or daughter will be the best indicator of whether they are happy and comfortable. Observe the interactions. Feel free to discuss any concerns you have with the Residential Support Facilitator. 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.

I. THE ROLE OF THE RESIDENTIAL SUPPORT FACILITATOR

The Residential Support Facilitator plays a significant role in the selection, screening and ongoing support of the individuals and their Supportive Roommates. They develop the service plans, assist in the review process, and coordinate and facilitate meetings. They are often involved in facilitating communication between other programs and the Support Partner.

A primary responsibility of the Residential Support Facilitator is to ensure

the health and safety of the individual and to verify that the support an individual is receiving is being given in an accountable, conscientious, warm and caring manner. We hope that through our involvement a positive relationship is created between all parties. .

Residential Support Facilitators can access and provide a wide variety of information and assistance to the individual, the Supportive Roommate, the parent/Guardian, and Funds Administrator/Trustee and the other members of the network. In dealing with issues or crisis situations they can also act as a consultative resource. There are times when they need to advocate on behalf of the individual and they can act as a mediator if there problems in the relationships.

The visits that occur give both the individual, the Supportive Roommate and the parent/Guardian the opportunity to discuss how things are going, to prompt ideas about activities or skill development, and to celebrate the successes that are so often achieved.

K. 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 differences.

H. WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

The recording of information is decided by the Supportive Roommate based on the needs of the individual, **OPTIONS** requirements and the requests of the parent/Guardian. We advise that all medical information including records of medications, medical appointments/follow-up, seizure records, incident reports, or anything else of note for a particular individual are documented.

The monthly reports may include information about the activities of the month, 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, we also encourage Supportive Roommates to write an "incident report" which documents the event, the action taken and the follow-up required. If an incident occurs, Parents/Guardians and the Residential Support Facilitator must be contacted.

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. **OPTIONS** and the Supportive Roommate must comply with the Act.

I. THE ROLE OF THE SUPPORTIVE ROOMMATE

The role of the Supportive Roommate 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.

The 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. Information and alternatives must be presented in a manner which can be understood and which enables reasonable decisions. Personal preferences and personal taste, and the need for privacy must also be respected.

Supportive Roommates 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. The Supportive Roommate is not allowed to use physical punishment, speak to the individual in a sarcastic or derogatory manner (verbal abuse) or use restrictive procedures.

The monies that the sub-contractor receives for providing support comes through **OPTIONS**. The Supportive Roommate must invoice **OPTIONS** on a monthly basis for the services they have provided. The Sub-Contractor is NOT an employee of **OPTIONS** and the money that is received is non-taxable if certain conditions set by Revenue Canada are met.

J. FUNDING

The usual route to obtain funding is to contact a Client Services Coordinator through the Alberta Place 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. A Supports Intensity Assessment (SIS) is completed and a level of support is determined. 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.

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 room and board, or rent, transportation and activities that may come from an individual's personal budget. These should be accounted for by the Supportive Roommate. At the end of each month a statement should be given to you so your records are current. Any specific accounting requests should be discussed with the Supportive Roommate.

Other responsibilities such as shopping for clothes, taking holidays or trips out of Province need to be negotiated with and approved by the parent/Guardian.

L. LONGEVITY OF THE RELATIONSHIP

We have found from our past experience that when a match is done with care and forethought, the relationships last for a long time. In most situations the Supportive Roommate becomes an extended family member to the individuals' own family and there is a sense of sharing of the responsibility and support. We believe that this model ensures, to a large degree, the safety and security of individuals to be in stable and rewarding relationships.