



OPTIONS
Family of Services

Philosophy Handbook



A non-profit organization providing positive choices for persons
with disabilities since 1984



A Bit of History

In the early 1980s, OPTIONS' founder Mike Mamot was working as a special education teacher in Paso Robles. His work brought him into contact with many students who were struggling in school because they had severe behavioral problems and poor adaptive living skills. He came to know these young people better and found that many of them lived with families that were ill-prepared to deal with the unique challenges presented by their special needs children, and were desperately seeking outside assistance. Realizing that San Luis Obispo County lacked adequate residential services, he opened a small group home where these kids could grow, learn and have their individual needs addressed in a caring, supportive environment.

Since that time, OPTIONS has grown considerably. In 2002, the Mary Lou Stewart Learning Center of Lompoc became part of OPTIONS. In 2003, the Santa Maria Independent Living Environment (S.M.I.L.E.), a grassroots organization, also joined forces with OPTIONS. OPTIONS' growth has been guided by the needs of persons receiving services. Today, over 200 men and women benefit daily from a diverse array of community-based services that are designed to meet each individual's choices and needs. Although the organization that Mike originally founded in 1984 has gone through changes in name and location, the core philosophy has never wavered:

“By increasing self-reliance, we will improve the quality of life for those we serve.”



Making it Fun

We at OPTIONS do not have to go to work but rather get to go to work. We are privileged to have the opportunity to be able to give something away that cannot be measured. Some would say that this must be really challenging and difficult work and



they may not understand how we can possibly do it. The individuals we serve are our greatest motivation and yet sometimes our greatest challenge.

Coping with day to day situations would not be achievable without the ability to have “fun.” There is a fine line between professionalism and having fun on the job. Having fun on the job is being able to roll with the flow and share a story or laugh with each other without it being at the expense of others. If one is not having fun doing this job then there has been a wrong turn in the highway of life. Getting the job done in a professional manner and having fun in the process is very much attainable and a necessary component of who we are.





Commitment

At OPTIONS, we recognize that people work for love or money. Given our wages, we know that persons come to OPTIONS to help those we serve. There are times when our commitment may be challenged due to the struggles of the day. When that happens it is important to remind ourselves of our commitment to get through such difficult times.

One of the things that aids everyone in understanding their own commitment to OPTIONS is the fact that everyone is part of a team. We share both our successes and our failures. In fact, we must understand and experience our failures in order to fully experience and appreciate our successes. We are only as strong as our weakest link, the person with the smallest commitment to OPTIONS. Therefore, it is important for each person to understand his/her own commitment; to renew their commitment on a regular basis, and should that commitment wane, to get in touch with the reasons that have brought it into question.



Because of the strong commitment to OPTIONS, you will find few secrets, few closed door meetings and you will experience open communications. Your ideas are valuable, and we want to hear them. We cannot act on all ideas, but we still want to know what people are thinking and want each person to participate in decisions. Your

input is extremely valuable and it is appreciated.



Our Ethics

MAIN HEADING

OPTIONS has four ethical pillars: Trustworthiness, Respect, Responsibility, and Caring. All of our actions should always live up to these four pillars. Below is a description of each:

Trustworthiness - To be truthful in all of our dealings; to

be honest and forthright with one another and with the people we serve, and their families, and our community partners and stakeholders; to be sincere and candid; to have integrity in all our dealings; to be reliable by avoiding unclear or unwise commitments; and to avoid bad faith excuses.

Respect - To treat one another with dignity and fairness

appreciating our diversity and the uniqueness of the people we serve, our employees, our community partners and our stakeholders; to be civil, courteous and decent; to exercise authority in a responsible way; to tolerate individual differences of opinion and belief.

Responsibility - To be responsible for our choices; to

be committed to excellence; to honor our commitment; to ensure that the people we serve have the highest quality of life possible; to produce and deliver person-centered services with expected outcomes in a timely manner; to be accountable; to be informed; to provide and exhibit leadership in our field; to ensure that we act with diligence in all we do; to look for ways to improve our work; to show self-restraint when necessary.

Caring - To show care, compassion, and empathy

toward the people we serve and their families; to have genuine concern about the welfare of our co-workers, community partners and stakeholders; to show gratitude and appreciation; to



High Standards & Professionalism

OPTIONS strives to provide the highest quality services to the persons we serve. In order to do that, OPTIONS aims to hire persons who possess a high degree of professionalism and will strive to meet high standards in a challenging field.

Professionalism is how a person demonstrates respect for themselves and others, it is a willingness to learn, to grow and change. Professionalism may be conveyed to others in many ways. It is demonstrated in how we dress, act, speak to others, listen and how we approach our job each day. It is about having pride in yourself, what you do and the company you work for. It is caring enough to want to make a difference and a desire to be the best in your position.

To help employees become professionals and develop their skills, OPTIONS strives to provide on-going training and constantly makes changes, paying attention to new ideas and regulatory changes in the field or community which will help the persons served. OPTIONS continues to maintain licensed programs and accreditation from the highest sources possible such as the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF).

Although resources are often limited, particularly during times of statewide financial crisis, OPTIONS maintains a commitment to quality services. In order to do that, each person employed at OPTIONS is held accountable for maintaining and providing quality care. We strive for and maintain these high standards because we realize few people are lucky enough to find work that appeals to the heart. Few pleasures are more wonderful than having a job we really enjoy and making a difference for others is why we have chosen to work here.



Teamwork & Family

Generally, families that stick together have strong values. Here at OPTIONS, it is our strong values and our commitments to our ethical pillars that holds us together. Teamwork means everyone knows their role and supports one another. It means always listening and showing empathy to one another.

Our organizational goals must always take precedence over our individual goals. However, individual goals are very important. We want each person to be healthy and to grow professionally. You must be strong individually in order to be a strong team contributor. It is not what we do, but how we do it that will distinguish us here at OPTIONS.



Another aspect of teamwork is communication. We ask that all your communication with both supported persons and your fellow works always be respectful and purposeful. We also ask that you are a good listener and try to understand another person's perspective.

With teamwork, you will always have a safety net and a sense of belongingness. By relying on others, your job will be much easier.



Dignity, Respect & Equality

As employees of OPTIONS, our attitudes and actions, with both the individuals we serve and our coworkers, will demonstrate a sense of equality, dignity and respect. We value this as an inherent right for everyone and essential for helping to improve quality of life. It means walking in another person's shoes and understanding their unique perspective and challenges without judging or criticizing.



Training

At OPTIONS we believe that all employees should be highly trained and prepared to work with the persons we serve. As a result, we stress training and have developed a comprehensive curricula. All staff members are required to take training so that, as a team, everyone has the same information and knows the expectations. You can only perform at your highest level if you have all the necessary tools to do your job. In the case of OPTIONS, you are the primary tool. The way you interact and respond to persons on the job will determine your effectiveness.

We are proud of our training program and our commitment to ensuring staff members are prepared to work with the persons we serve.



Accountability

We believe that everyone that works for OPTIONS needs to be accountable for their actions as an employee. Because we work with those that require our support in a variety of ways, it is essential that we be counted on to do what is in their best interests.

It is our duty to the people we work with, both persons served and co-workers, that we act responsibly on their behalf, that we accept liability for our own actions. By acting in an accountable, responsible manner we ensure that our actions will reflect positively back on us as employees, caretakers and people who care about others.

