

SERVICE NAME	Options Counseling
SERVICE NUMBER	A-7
SERVICE CATEGORY	Access
SERVICE DEFINITION	Options Counseling (OC) is an interactive and unbiased process that can help an older person, their family member, or their caregivers to receive guidance in their deliberations to make informed choices about long term supports and services.
UNIT OF SERVICE	One unit per month when any OC activity is provided for an individual. One unit equals one individual each month regardless of number, length, or time of contacts within that month.

Minimum Standards

1. Each program shall employ staff with a minimum of an associate's degree in a human service field or who, by training or experience, have the ability and knowledge to provide information, assistance, supports, services options, linkages, and strategies for participants.
2. Program staff shall be knowledgeable of long-term care support options available within the planning and service area (PSA).
3. Each program shall develop a network of community resources and resource information, including non-traditional services and assistance, in order to meet non-traditional service needs and requests.
4. Each program shall maintain linkages with Older Americans Act funded Information and Assistance programs within their PSA and establish protocols to identify potential participants for referral (making contact with a particular provider on behalf of an individual)/person-centered advocacy (efforts that seek to meet individual needs).
5. Each program shall demonstrate effective linkages with agencies providing long-term care support services within the program area (i.e., case coordination and support, care management, long-term care facilities, veteran services, and community-based Medicaid programs).
6. An initial screening via a personal interview (either in person or by phone) shall be provided that includes the participant (and/or their representative and/or family caregiver as indicated) to learn about the person's values, strengths, preferences, concerns, and available resources that they may use for long-term support services.
7. Program staff shall explore with participants potential resources to assist participants with long-term services and supports, including informal support, privately funded services, publicly funded services, and available benefits, among others.

8. Providers of OC must make unbiased referrals/person-centered advocacy reflecting the best outcomes for the participant and shall make efforts to avoid a conflict of interest.
9. Each OC program is required to have policies and procedures that address follow up for potential vulnerable adults that includes mandated reporting of suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation of an older adult as required by law.
10. Decision support shall also be provided to assist the participant in making an informed choice including the evaluation by the participant of the pros/cons with each presented option.
11. The provision of assistance with determining financial eligibility, when appropriate.
12. The provision of assistance with enrollment into public programs and benefits.
13. The program encourages future planning for long-term care.
14. The program shall provide a written summary to the participant, which details important issues discussed, participant desires and preferences, resources, and identified strategies.
15. The program must offer follow-up to each participant provided at their direction. Follow-up may be conducted in person, by phone, or electronically as resources allow and the participant prefers.
16. Each program shall have bilingual personnel available and/or have the capacity to acquire interpretation services as necessary. Additionally, each OC program is strongly encouraged to have materials in the most commonly spoken languages within the PSA. In addition, each program must have the capacity to serve deaf and hard of hearing persons and visually impaired persons in a manner appropriate to their needs.
17. Providers of OC services must have the capacity to:
 - a. Provide private, confidential telephone and face-to-face OC as requested.
 - b. Respond to participants seeking supports and services by using methods and accommodations, which are compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act including, but not limited to:
 - i. Adequate, accessible, barrier-free, comfortable and confidential space for OC,
 - ii. Website requests,
 - iii. Email requests,
 - iv. Interpreter requests (including American Sign Language),
 - v. Alternative material formats (including Braille),
 - vi. The Michigan Relay Center,
 - vii. Requests via independent facilitators (someone designated by the individual to speak/obtain information on their behalf), and/or
 - viii. Other assistive technology.
 - c. Provide a standard of promptness for returning calls, e-mails or other communications within three business days. Urgent requests may require an immediate response.

18. Program staff shall receive in-service training at least twice each fiscal year that is specifically designed to increase their knowledge and understanding of the program and participants, and to improve their skills in completion of job tasks. In-service training requirements shall also be consistent with Care Management (CM) and Case Coordination and Support (CCS) standards of practice.
19. Each program is encouraged to seek employee certification from the Alliance for Information and Referral Systems (AIRS) for individual OC employees and volunteers.

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