



SERVICE GUIDELINES

TITLE III-B Options Counseling

December 2021

DEFINITION

OPTIONS COUNSELING: A person-centered, interactive, decision-support process whereby individuals receive assistance in their deliberations to make informed long-term support choices in the context of their own preferences, strengths, and values.

Essential Components:

- Personal interview
- Assistance with the identification of choices available (including person, public, and private resources)
- A facilitated decision-support process (weighing pros and cons or various options)
- Assisting as requested and directed by the individual in the development of an action plan
- Links to services
- Follow up

ELIGIBILITY

Options Counseling will be available to all persons 18 and over with disabilities or an older adult who requests or requires current long term support services and/or persons who are planning for the future regarding long term support services without regard to income or assets.

UNIT OF SERVICE

Each individual consumer contact made as part of the Options Counseling service constitutes one unit of service. These units can include follow-up on behalf of that consumer.

Internet web site "hits" should be counted only when Options Counseling information is requested by the consumer and supplied by the provider. For example, an older adult requests by e-mail that they want information on a benefit program. If the provider provides this information by e-mail, traditional mail or telephone, this is one contact (one unit of service). The response must be individualized for the specific consumer and situation.

If the older individual or family member simply reviews information on the provider's web site and does not request specific information, then this situation cannot be counted as a contact (unit of service).

SERVICE REQUIREMENTS

- AGING IS will serve to document units of service and unduplicated consumer. The Grantee will be expected to fulfill the projected number of units and unduplicated consumer.
- The Grantee will receive both scheduled and unscheduled monitoring visits and phone calls. AgeSmart Community Resources will inform the Grantee of monitoring efforts through written reports.
- During normal business hours on weekdays, the Grantee is expected to have a "live" voice answer telephone calls 85% of the time with someone present to answer an inquiry 85% of the time. It is expected that calls received will be returned within 24 hours. An answering machine will record after-hour calls for which the Grantee will respond in a timely manner, usually the next business day.
- Options Counseling Grantees must be able to provide this service for at least 7 hours a day, 5 days a week with the exception of holidays.
- Options Counseling Grantees shall have computer capability, internet access, e-mail, fax and staff with competent computer skills to operate the aforementioned equipment. Computer capability is defined as: the ability to navigate the Internet for information and communicate effectively using e-mail, as well as being capable of learning AGING IS for accurate consumer recording, referral, and reporting.

- Options Counseling Grantees must be able to assess the consumer to determine if there are other services that may be needed beyond what the consumer has specifically inquired about.
- Options Counseling grantees will be required to have on staff: one SHIP counselor, one person trained in Options Counseling and one person who is certified through the Alliance of Information and Referral Systems (AIRS), preferably CIRS-A/D (Certified Information and Referral Specialist-Aging/Disability). This can be one single individual who holds all of the aforementioned skills.
- Grantee Organizations are encouraged to join the Alliance of Information and Referral Systems, Inc., and/or partake in Illinois AIRS programs and trainings.
- Options Counseling Grantees will also be required to attend AgeSmart training and update sessions, as well as other program trainings and updates.
- There shall also be a willingness for all Options Counseling Grantees in the PSA to work together in order to develop a network of I&A that would be beneficial to the consumers. Options Counseling grantees will be required to work with other AgeSmart grantees within their service area who are not themselves Options Counseling grantees. Example: Senior Center that is a Nutrition site/transportation provider.
- INITIAL INTAKE

An intake form should be utilized for the collection of all needed information for input into the AGING IS consumer tracking system.

- The required information must be entered into AGING IS at the time of contact or as soon after the contact as possible. AGING IS should be utilized to match services to the consumer's request. Referrals may then be given verbally, via e-mail or fax, printed and handed to consumer or mailed via postal mail. Information such as address, phone, fax, or e-mail address must be collected from the consumer, if they request information be sent to them.
- If AGING IS does not have information on the service that the consumer has asked about, Options Counseling Grantees shall use their files, internet, resource guides, or knowledge of other staff members or persons in the aging network to find the information. The Options Counseling Grantee shall utilize all resources to get an answer for the consumer. Any new resource information shall be forwarded to AgeSmart Resource Specialist for input into AGING IS.

- Grantee shall have a revocable Release of Information Form (ROI) for consumers to sign. This form is necessary so that I&A Staff can make calls on behalf of consumers.

- ASSESSMENT

During an interview with a consumer, the Options Counseling Grantee shall be able to ask appropriate questions to determine if other services may be needed. This information may be offered to the consumer at that time to avoid the consumer having to call back at a later date.

- Example: if a consumer is calling to find out about home care, they may also find information on home delivered meals to be helpful.

- PROVISION OF INFORMATION

Information must be provided in a clear, professional manner to the consumer. This requires that staff possess excellent verbal and written skills, since referrals are made verbally or in printed form. The information shall be provided to the consumer in the manner that they request.

- DESIGNATIONS

Options Counseling Grantees shall be designated as Coordinated Points of Entry, SHIP, SHAP/MIPPA and Caregiver Resource Centers. These designations require that Grantees establish working relationships with Congregate Meal Sites, other AgeSmart Grantees and members of the Aging Network in the service area.

- Grantees will use the AgeSmart logo on facilities, webpages, newsletters and brochures. All logo and branding standards are available to Grantees. Along with branding, the following statement must be used by Grantees:

Funding for Grantee is received from the United States Administration for Community Living, the Illinois Department on Aging and AgeSmart Community Resources. Grantee does not discriminate in admission to programs or activities or treatment of employment in programs or activities in compliance with appropriate State and Federal Statutes. If you feel you have been discriminated against, you have the right to file a complaint with AgeSmart Community Resources by calling 618-222-2561.

- The Grantee shall conduct pre-employment criminal background checks for all employees of AgeSmart-funded programs. The Grantee shall also conduct criminal background checks on volunteers participating in AgeSmart-funded programs with access to confidential client information including, but not limited to, addresses, social security numbers, financial information, etc.

IDOA SERVICE REQUIREMENTS

- Providers of options counseling must utilize person-centered planning procedures when advising consumers and must demonstrate respect for the consumer's self-direction.
- The Grantee will have in place a screening process for receiving initial inquiries regarding or that may lead to the initiation of the Options Counseling process. This will be a uniform process for all Options Counseling providers regarding the initial contact that is utilized at all locations and with all partners (e.g. common forms to record information regarding individuals).
- Every attempt should be made to deliver Options Counseling in the setting and by the method desired by the individual. Settings and modes of service delivery may include office or satellite office, by phone, by e-mail, by video conferencing technology, other electronic method, or in the individual's place of residence. Options Counseling is generally provided on-site (at the Options Counseling agency), on the phone or electronically.
- Options Counseling is usually provided prior to a Comprehensive Care Coordination (CCC) assessment; Options Counseling is not provided as part of case management.
- Options Counseling activities will include the following:
 - a. Personal interview or person centered conversation to learn about the person's values, strengths, preferences, concerns, and available resources which they may use for long-term support services. This discussion is guided by the need to obtain specific information to assist the person in developing a long-term services and support plan.
 - b. Exploration of resources to assist with long-term services and supports, including informal support, privately funded services, publicly funded services and available benefits, among others.
 - c. Decision support to assist the person in evaluating the pros/cons of specific choices.
 - d. Assisting the person to develop a written plan of action. The written plan serves as a guide for the individual for future work and/or steps necessary to obtain LTSS, as requested by the individual, that are important to the person in maintaining independence. The written plan should include a process for follow up.

- e. On-going contact with an individual to answer questions they have about their written/action plan implementation or to assist in the implementation of service. Written plans may be adjusted as determined by the consumer.
 - f. The complexity, diversity, and/or quantity of needs and providers may necessitate the assistance in the coordination of short-term assistance. If short-term assistance is not provided directly by Options Counselors then there must be a process in place to link people to needed services or assistance.
 - g. Determining financial eligibility, when appropriate.
 - h. Assisting with enrollment into public programs and benefits.
 - i. Encouraging future planning for long-term care.
 - j. Providing a list of agencies, organizations, or facilities and questions to consider when looking at various options. Providers of Options Counseling must make unbiased referrals reflecting the best outcomes for the consumer and shall make efforts to avoid a conflict of interest. Providers of Options Counseling are prohibited from making referral to agencies that are unlicensed, unregistered, or uncertified, if such agencies are required to be licensed, registered or certified.
- Options Counseling agencies must follow up with each individual and provide at the direction of the individual. Follow-up may be conducted in person, by phone, or electronically as resources allow and the individual prefers. Follow up should be implemented no later than 60 days after the initial Options Counseling contact with the consumer.

Follow-up allows:

- i. The individual to clarify questions concerning their plan;
- ii. The individual to receive assistance from the Options Counselor regarding the application and eligibility process, if requested;
- iii. The individual the opportunity to request assistance regarding the implementation of long term supports;
- iv. The individual and the ADRC to track the usefulness of the service

TARGET POPULATION

Options Counseling is available to all person with a disability, older adults or caregivers who request/require long-term support services for a current need and/or persons of all incomes and assets who are planning for their future long-term support service needs. Priority will be given to those with greatest social and economic need and/or those at risk for nursing home placement.

REIMBURSEMENT

The Grantee will be paid one-twelfth of the grant amount each month. **Reporting must be correct and submitted on time. Should reporting be late, reimbursement may be withheld.**

Fiscal Guidelines for all Title-III Programs

Program Income

Program Income is defined as contributions made by recipients of service and interest on such contributions.

A. Program income includes, but is not limited to:

1. Contributions of recipients of service and interest on such contributions.
2. Income from service fees obtained through the use of a sliding fee scale or suggested fee schedule.
3. Proceeds from the sale of personal or real property with an acquisition cost of less than \$5,000.
4. Usage or rental fees.
5. Sale of assets purchased with grant funds with an acquisition cost of less than \$5,000.
6. Royalties on patents and copyrights.

B. The following specific revenues shall **not** be included as program income:

1. Interest income on State funds whether earned on advances or the "float." This does not include interest on contributions made by recipients of service under a project which is considered program income.
2. Rebates, discounts, and recoveries.
3. Income earned by individuals or a group of project participants, when such income accrues directly to the participants.
4. Revenues raised by a grantee or contractor which is a government under its governing powers, such as taxes, special assessments, etc.
5. Tuition and related fees received by an institution of higher education for a regularly offered course taught by an employee performing under a grant or contract.
6. Proceeds from the sale of personal or real property with an acquisition cost of more than \$5,000.

7. Sale of assets purchased with grant funds where the acquisition cost was more than \$5,000.
8. Contributions made by representatives of service recipients, relatives, non-related individuals or entities, on behalf of service recipients are not program income, but are considered to be local cash.
9. Organized fund-raising activities carried out by Title III grantee agencies.

Allowable Uses of Program Income

A. Additional Costs Alternative

Under this alternative, the income is used for costs which are in addition to the allowable costs of the project or program, but which, nevertheless, further the objectives of the Federal statute under which the grant was made.

Examples of purposes for which the income may be used are:

1. Expanding the program.
2. Continuing the program after grant ends.
3. Supporting other programs that further the broad objectives of the statute.
4. Obtaining equipment or other assets needed for the program or for other activities that further the statute's objectives.

Award recipients under an Area Plan must receive prior approval by the Area Agency on Aging for costs borne with program income under this alternative.

B. Additional Requirements

1. All program income earned under Title III must stay with the service provider who earns it.
2. All program income earned under Title III, Part B, Part C-1, Part C-2 and Part E must be used only for services allowable under the part from which it was earned except as provided in (6) below.
3. All program income must be expended prior to requesting federal funds from the Department on Aging and must be expended within the fiscal year in which it was earned.

4. All program income received in the form of “cash” must be expended as it is earned to minimize cash draw down.
5. Program income earned as a result of services provided with Title III, Part B or Part E assistance may be used for any service which that contractor is authorized to provide with Title III-B or Title III-E funds.
6. Program income earned as a result of services provided with Title III C-1 or III C-2 must be used:
 - a. To increase the number of meals served by the project involved;
 - b. To facilitate access to such meals; or
 - c. To provide other supportive services directly related to nutrition services.
7. Prior approval requests to expend program income in excess of the amount approved on the Notification of Grant Award must be submitted on the Program Income Addendum to the Department by no later than prior to September 30 of the current fiscal year (refer to section 900 of this manual for detailed reporting requirements).

C. Special Requirements for Providers Receiving Section 5311 Funds from the U.S. Department of Transportation

All transportation providers receiving support from Section 5311 and Title III-B and/or Title III-E must report rider donations as program income. Program income collected should be reported under Section 5311 and Title III-B and/or Title III-E only to the extent and in direct proportion to each funding source's financial participation. Thus, the same rider donations shall not be reported in the same amount as program income under both funding sources.

Accountability for Program Income

- A. Program income must be deposited into an appropriate bank account or converted to money orders on a regular basis.
- B. Cash participant contributions should be counted by two (2) persons, placed in a safe, secure place until deposited, deposited intact, and deposit receipts compared with count sheets. Such standards require the accurate recording of amounts collected at the project and site levels and subsequent use of these funds.
- C. Grantees must account for program income on an on-going basis, and must report such income to the Area Agency on Aging through the established financial reporting system.

- D. Accounting records and reports submitted by a recipient to the Area Agency on Aging should provide a clear audit trail on all program income and its uses. Account records and reports should accurately reflect the receipt of such funds **separately** from the receipt of Federal funds, grantee funds, and the use of such resources.
- E. Although interest income earned on General Revenue and/or local funds by non-profit organizations is not considered program income, project grantees should maintain adequate accounting records on any interest income earned. The Department on Aging must approve the Area Agency on Aging's proposed use of General Revenue Funding interest income as an activity which will further the purpose of the project and the Act.
- F. Rebates, discounts, and recoveries on leases should be treated as applicable credits and credited to the Federal grant accounts.

Voluntary Contributions

Each service provider must:

1. Provide each older person with an opportunity to voluntarily contribute to the cost of the service;
2. Protect the privacy of each older person with respect to his or her contribution;
3. Establish appropriate procedures to safeguard and account for all contributions; and
4. Use all contributions to expand the services of the provider under this part and supplement (not supplant) funds received under the Older Americans Act.

The service providers that receive funds under this part **shall not means test** for any service for which contributions are accepted or **shall not deny any older person service because the older person will not or cannot contribute** to the cost of service. Contributions made by older persons are considered program income.