NYS Office For People With Developmental Disabilities
Putting People First

GUIDELINES FOR WILLOWBROOK COMMUNITY INCLUSION

UPDATED 9/30/2011

WILLOWBROOK REFERENCE REGARDING COMMUNITY INCLUSION

The Willowbrook Permanent Injunction, *Paragraph 10a*, requires that OPWDD "shall provide all class members with meaningful, full day habilitative programming and services appropriate to their individual needs each week day, and meaningful, appropriate recreation and community inclusion each day during evenings and weekends for their lifetime. Class members with capacity have a right to refuse to partake in such programming."

OPWDD and the Willowbrook parties agree that community inclusion is:

- An important value, process and goal for people with developmental disabilities.
- A lifetime process that builds community membership over time through participation in a variety of day-to-day activities. The level of participation is based on an individual's capacities, needs and desires.
- Supported and fostered by family, friends, neighbors, volunteers, community organizations and staff.
- Activities that reflect the person's abilities, goals and desires; broaden experiences, interests, relationships, "membership" (interaction in the community in which he/she resides); and are culturally relevant.

Community inclusion provides opportunities for four accomplishments in the lives of class members:

1. Community presence – for people to interact with people from their community. This interaction should occur based on individual needs and not a predetermined standard.

2. Promote community participation – for people to expand their relationships and become involved in activities that address individual cultural backgrounds. These relationships should/can be with family, friends, neighbors, and groups and/or organizations. The variances in frequency and community participation through activities and services must be based on personal activities and preferences.

3. Promote choice – for people to have more control over their lives by deciding what they would like to do, when they would like to do it, and with whom. For some people, the initial activities will focus on expanding their awareness of the options that are available so that they can make informed choices.

4. Encourage valued social roles – offer people opportunities to contribute to their own lives and the lives of others. By participating in activities that will change the negative attitudes of others, people will be viewed as contributing members of society.

WHAT ARE THE OBLIGATIONS FOR INCLUSION FOR CLASS MEMBERS?

The team, which includes the class member and their advocate, should develop and implement an individual community inclusion strategy as part of his/her plan of care/services, i.e., ISP, CFA or plan of services by whatever name known. The team should consider the class member's needs, preferences, and capabilities.

The strategy should be reviewed along with the plan of care/services, and updated accordingly. Each community inclusion experience, and the frequency of its occurrence, should be documented.

Documentation should reflect breakaways, i.e., if the class member arrives to an activity together with other people, and then splits up into smaller groups or go out as individuals upon arrival at the destination. Documentation should also explain when weather conditions or other circumstances impacted on the class member's participation in a planned community experience.

COMMUNITY INCLUSION IS....

...activities from both the home and day services location that ensure that an individual:

- *Uses facilities that are typically used by community members;* AND
- *Interacts with people who are not paid staff and who do not have a developmental disability.*

Community inclusion is NOT...

...taking people to community places in large groups, or bringing community members into segregated programs in large groups. These recreation experiences, while appropriate and useful at times, are just not considered community inclusion.

The Willowbrook parties are looking for...

Individual inclusion strategies based on the class member's interests, preferences and capabilities;

Individual and small group inclusion experiences with person centered frequency and variety; and

Documentation to reflect implementation.

WHAT IS THE WILLOWBROOK EXPECTATION FOR VARIETY, FREQUENCY AND GROUP SIZE?

...be varied, take place as often as appropriate for the person, in groups as small as possible for the activity

Variety should provide a rhythm of life based on the *things the class member enjoys*. The team can identify stores and other places where the class member can become a valued customer or regular; places to go that build upon religious and ethnic heritage; and maximize opportunities for the class member to meet new people and nurture relationships with family and friends. Individualized variety will not be the same for all the people living in a home or participating in day services.

Group size should be *as small as possible* for the community experience. Group size is not defined as the number of people who travel to a community location, but the number of people who participate together once at a community location. Therefore, a class member may arrive to an activity in a large group and split apart (breakaway) into a smaller group or individually upon arrival. Individual or small groups maximize interaction with community members.

Frequency should be specified as a component within the inclusion strategy for each class member from home and day services. Frequency should be *as often as possible* given the individual needs, interests and capabilities of the class member. Any limitation that would impact on frequency should be detailed in the inclusion strategy within the plan of care, i.e., clinical concerns, weather restrictions, health issues, preferences, etc.

CAN A CLASS MEMBER REFUSE TO PARTICIPATE IN COMMUNITY INCLUSION?

OLD, BETTER, BEST OF INCLUSION: MOVE FROM OLD PRACTICES THAT SEGREGATE PEOPLE; IT IS BEST WHEN COMMUNITY PRESENCE IS COUPLED WITH MEMBERSHIP AND CONTRIBUTION!

OPWDD assumes that all people with developmental disabilities have some capacity for self-advocacy, decision making and express choice. When a class member shows a pattern of refusals, the team, including the person, his/her advocate, friends and familiar staff, must convene to discuss and document the community options being refused, the reasons for the refusals, and new community experiences that have not been explored in the past. The team must ensure that a class member is offered a variety of experiences consistent with his/her preferences and interests; and alternatives, including counseling, to accommodate choice of experiences that enhance the quality of life of the class member.

To maximize participation, the team should minimally consider:

- What does the person like to do?
- What are the person's favorite places?
- Who are the most important people in the person's life?
- What is unique about the person?

HOW DOES DQM SURVEY INCLUSION ON BEHALF OF CLASS MEMBERS?

Questions?

Call your DDSO Willowbrook liaison

or Lori Lehmkuhl, OPWDD Willowbrook Liaison

at 518.473.6026

The DQM UNIVERSAL PROTOCOL and Universal Protocol and Surveyor Guidelines specifically looks at community inclusion services for class members. Per the guidelines, surveyors look to see that frequency, variety and group size of inclusion is appropriate based on each person's needs, preferences and capabilities and not measured against any predetermined standard. The surveyors talk with staff and the class member/advocate, if possible, and review available documentation. They ask how individuals make use of the community as part of day program activities and at the home in accordance with individual plans of service; whether they participate in food/clothing shopping, or whether these activities are done by staff only; whether they make use of recreation in the community, such as parks, movies, YMCA, restaurants, etc.; how often; whether they go out in large groups only, or are opportunities provided to go out in small groups or individually; whether they break-away; how are group activities chosen; and whether a protocol is in place for people to "opt out" of activities.