

**INDEPENDENCE ASSOCIATION HCBS Policy: 011****Title: Choice of Services****Date: May 16, 2022****Policy:**

Independence Association (IA) recognizes and fully supports the inherent right of all individuals to make informed decisions about their lives. IA is committed to the belief that when people are engaged, challenged, encouraged, and supported to identify and reach toward their life goals, new capacities and quality lives can be achieved. Communication between members of each team is recognized as being individualized as well as varied. Respect for cultural identity as well as the dignity of accessibility is in place in each facet of our agency. IA will cultivate a philosophy where people served make informed decisions about their lives whether smaller day-to-day decisions or life changing choices. IA believes people who receive HCBS should have equal access to the same community resources and activities as the greater community, so that they are fully immersed and connected in their communities. All individuals served have the right to control their own schedule and choose activities occurring both inside and outside the setting in the broader community that are aligned with an individual's goals interests and preferences. Therefore, IA staff will explain and encourage the use of resources, services and activities in the community which are possible alternatives and/or additions to options they have at their respective programs.

**Procedures:****Assessments:**

IA also believes that everyone served should be afforded the most choices possible in accessing their community and while living in their homes. The best way to accomplish choice and community access is to fully explore the interests, skills, desires, and supports necessary to make those activities a reality, and document those interests and skills into the respective Person-Centered Plan (PCP). Hence, IA will choose assessments that focus on domains to identify the abilities of the person, the interests of the person, any goals they wish to achieve, as well as identify opportunities for socialization with friends, families, and community members.

All staff will be trained on how to provide learning and training opportunities focused on making informed choices and exercising personal autonomy at the time of hire. Retraining will occur as needed, to ensure policy and procedures are followed correctly and consistently.

**Guidelines:**

1. Independence Association (IA) will provide opportunities and supports for individualized schedules that focus on the goals, preferences and needs of each person and provide an opportunity for personal growth.
2. These opportunities will be based on the various interests identified in their respective PCP which were ascertained from the various assessments required for each program.
3. IA staff will ensure activities scheduled directly tie back to the individual's PCP which delineate the goals, interests, preferences identified in the assessments.
4. Program offerings will change from year to year, month to month, and day to day to reflect the people receiving the services at any given time.
5. Activities will be flexible throughout the week in both days and time to reflect individualization.
6. Age-appropriate activities will be offered and selected by the person to maximize personal growth and new learning aligned with the person's goals and interests.
7. Staff will work with people to fulfill those choices which they have indicated in their Person-Centered Plan or have expressed to staff.
8. Individuals will develop their activity schedules as desired but at least monthly and will develop their schedule from a variety of activities with community, center, and home-based options informed by their goals, interests, and desires.
9. Options will include a variety of times when the activity is available and attended by individuals not receiving HCBS services in the broader community.
10. Individuals will have information provided via written, pictorial, or other adaptive aids as needed.
11. Individuals will be offered opportunities to update schedules as desired based on their unique preferences, changing needs, preference, or options, but as a minimum on a quarterly basis.
12. Settings will have a welcoming environment to promote interactions between people served and members of the broader community who do not receive HCBS services.
13. Individuals may decline to participate, stay home, or choose an alternative activity if desired and available.
14. They may choose center-based options if available.
15. No one person's schedule will be dependent on everyone in the setting having to participate together.
16. In times of conflict staff will support individuals to use a problem-solving method to review their schedules, discuss options and make an informed, consensus driven decision.
17. IA staff will support individuals about informed decision making and autonomy so that they are able to make decisions throughout the day.
18. In the effort to fully exercise autonomy IA will provide individuals supported materials and contact information from Speaking Up for Us, SUFU; Maine's Self Advocacy Group

- at least annually. Materials will include how to get involved, which may include inviting SUFU to come in person to meet participants and teach participants about advocacy.
19. Staff will provide opportunities for choice throughout the day as it relates to any support, service, regardless of how small or mundane it may appear.
  20. Making informed decisions will be an objective in all plans for documenting on people's choices, decision making skills and progress.
  21. Opportunities to choose services in the broader community, rather than their program, must occur as frequently as possible, but at a minimum of three (3) times a week.
  22. Choice of interests in activities will be reviewed and updated at least quarterly at the individual's meeting to determine satisfaction, dissatisfaction with services and activities from the prior quarter.
  23. Changes to the individual's calendar will be made based on the quarterly review.
  24. When individuals have not defined or expressed what to include in their individual schedules, staff will include the following:
    - a. Provide additional resources to participants about upcoming age-appropriate community-based activities.
    - b. Provide pictorial, PECS, and/or the preferred means of communicate to facilitate communication to support choice.
  25. All programs will provide signage and/or accessible information that:
    - a. Communicate an individual's opportunities for community participation, and home-based activities based on an individual's interest's goals and preferences.
    - b. Offer a variety of opportunities for activities that take place at a variety of times, based on what is available in the community
    - c. Provide pictorial or written schedules that outline their choices
    - d. Allow opportunities for individuals to make changes in their schedule based on changing needs, preferences, or opportunities
    - e. Ensure individuals have the option to decline in participation, stay at home, or participate in another activity if one is available.

#### **\*Choice of staff**

1. Individuals will be included in the staff hiring process by identifying the qualities desired in new staff to the respective program managers, who will incorporate those qualities into the interviewing process.
2. Input will be solicited via the Community Supports Stakeholder Committee and through the Residential Council.
3. Once a staff member is hired, he/she will formally introduce themselves to the members of the respective program.
4. Program managers will incorporate program participant comments into the probationary evaluation.

5. When members of a program report significant deficiencies, the staff member may be transferred into a different program where the skills of the staff can be better utilized.
6. When unhappy with a particular staff member, participants may request a change in a staff through their program manager.
7. Program managers will investigate why the person is desirous of a change and determine if mediation can resolve the problem.
8. If mediation does not remedy the situation, the program manager may transfer the staff to a program that better matches the skills and needs of a different program.
9. If the program manager is the individual the individual requests to change, he/she will need to contact their respective case manager, or the director of that department.
10. Individuals will be informed of the procedure for requiring a change of staff via the grievance process at least annually and any time they make such a request they will be supported to work with their team for a satisfactory outcome.

*\*Note: Due to staffing availability, choice in staff may not be available.*

### **Choice of Programs**

1. IA will allow any prospective participant the opportunity to tour and visit the program before deciding on whether they would like to reside or participate in the program.
2. Potential participants will be allowed to participate for an agreed amount of time to determine if they like the program, and if the program can support their unique needs.
3. Referrals for residential living should have a series of visits, to include meals together to determine if the individuals in the home along with the potential new resident believe they will be good housemates.
4. IA will collaborate with other providers and state agencies to identify non-disability specific settings in which it is permissible to provide the services being offered to the individual. Such settings could include residential settings owned or controlled by the person served and integrated community settings to include community businesses, community organizations, integrated community educational settings or other community-based settings.
5. Annually, IA will also engage all individuals in a discussion about the opportunity to transition living in their own home or apartment, with waiver services to support them in the new location. When interest is demonstrated by the individual, IA will share this information with the provider and the case manager to explore new options when feasible.
6. All residents in group homes or shared living arrangements will be offered the opportunity to receive services outside of the home a minimum of three times per week, even if they have participated in competitive integrated employment, or in a community supports program.