

Options Counseling Training

Training Overview

This training will provide you with information, tips and case studies to help you screen for individuals who may be appropriate for Options Counseling.



What is Options Counseling?

Options Counseling is a person-centered, interactive decision-support process whereby consumers, family members, and/or significant others are supported in their deliberations to determine appropriate long-term support choices in the context of the consumer's needs, preferences, values, and individual circumstances.



How long have you been conducting Options Counseling?

A. 0-6 months

B. 6 months- a year

C. More than a year



Why is Options Counseling Necessary?

- Institutional placements often occur without consideration of available community-based options.
- Lots of information is available on-line, but it can be complex, contradictory, and confusing.
- Few people plan ahead for long term support needs
- Many are unaware of available resources.



Who Can Receive Options Counseling?

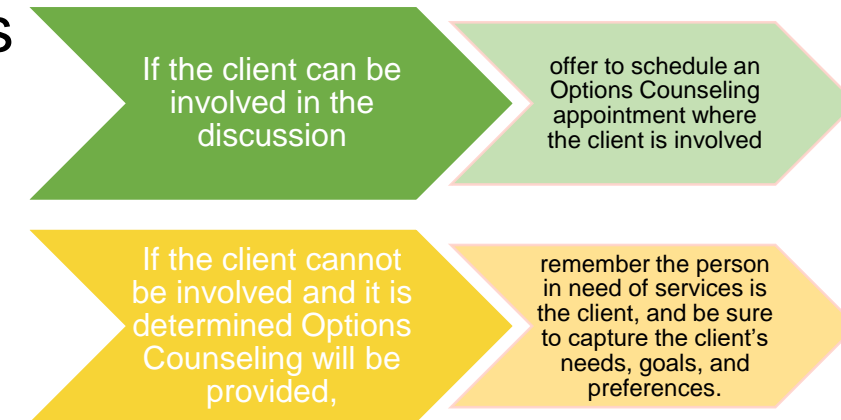
- Persons 18 and over with a disability.
- Older adults who request or require decision support related to aging resources.
- Persons who are planning for the future regarding long term support services without regard to income or assets.



Working with Informal Caregivers

If a family member or other informal caregiver contacts you on behalf of the person in need of services, determine the client's level of involvement and ability to participate:

- Inform the caregiver that the client needs to be involved unless the client defers or there is a very good reason to exclude (e.g. inability to participate, harm).
- Does the client know about this inquiry? Do they want assistance?
- Is there legal guardianship, not power of attorney?
- Can you contact the client directly?



Opportunities for Options Counseling

While providing Information and Assistance

During SHIP counseling

During an assessment of need

When applying for public benefits

While waiting for an application to be processed

After applying unsuccessfully for public programs



Common Misconceptions

- The client must receive multiple options.
 - The process will not always result in multiple options presented. If there is only one option available to fill this need – options counseling may be used to further explain the option to the client. The act of going over options even if the client ultimately decides not to utilize them, is options counseling.
- Options Counseling cannot be done if the individual qualifies for Care Coordination.
 - When waiting unspecified periods for CCU assessments, there may be needs that are more urgent. Clients can be assisted with meeting these needs as they await the assessment.
- The intake form must be fully filled out.
 - The intake form should be used for record keeping and to gather information that the client offered. Each question does not have to be filled in order for it to count as options counseling. (Try to at minimum include: Name of individual(s) receiving OC, contact information, statement of needs, options discussed, plan of action, follow-up scheduling).



How to know if it's Options Counseling

- ✓ Does the client need a more detailed explanation?
- ✓ Does the client have multiple request for resources?
- ✓ Is the client unsure about next steps after receiving resources?
- ✓ Is the client struggling to decide about a service they could have?
- ✓ Does the individual need to weigh options of benefits programs?
- ✓ Were they denied for CCU services?
- ✓ Do they have immediate needs that must be addressed before a CCU assessment?

Options counseling goes beyond informing clients about services and supports. Options counseling diverges from other services when there is an opportunity to provide Information tailored to each client based on their values and preferences, and then staff elicit the client's views with each of the options presented.



Options Counseling Cues

"I need help, but I don't know where to start or what's available."	"I don't have many resources"
"I'm trying to decide if I should stay in my home."	"I have multiple needs to be addressed"
"I need help looking for housing, but I don't know where to start."	"I'm unsure...," "I don't know..," "I can't..."
"I'm getting older and want to know what is available in terms of financial assistance and care."	"Can I privately pay for services and home modifications?"
"Does my current insurance cover any services and/or home modification? If not, what funding, loans or donations may be available?"	"I need help in my home, I'm ineligible for the Community Care Program, but those private homemaker services sound expensive."



Let's review the differences between Options Counseling and other types of services:



INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE



BENEFITS COUNSELING/ASSISTANCE



CARE COORDINATION

Services

Information & Assistance (I&A): Informs individuals about programs and services available and how to access them and provides assistance connecting with resources or service providers to meet identified needs.

Benefits Counseling/Assistance: Involves offering counseling to individuals about which public benefits may be available to them, assisting in applying for benefits, and offering guidance regarding appeals for denied applications. Helping clients sort through and apply for benefits may be a part of the Options Counseling process when necessary.

Care Coordination: (also referred to as case management) Is designed to follow consumers on a longer-term basis, requires development of a service plan (e.g. Community Care Program) and requires the care coordinator/case manager to maintain regular contact with the consumer and includes monitoring of services.



Case Example: Jack who is 74 years old, calls to request a list of local affordable, accessible housing. Jack says he does not need additional assistance with exploring housing options and does not present any other long-term care needs during your conversation.

What service would you provide for Jack?

Answer: I&A

Why?

Jack declined additional assistance.



Case Example: Mr. A. contacts your agency stating he is interested in the license plate discount. You assist him with the Benefit Access application and determine he is eligible. You then ask if he needs additional assistance or has any other questions. He declines and states he was only interested in receiving help with the license plate discount at this time.

What service would you provide for Mr. A?

Answer: Benefits Counseling/Assistance

Why?

Again, specialist asked if he needed additional assistance and he declined.



Case Example: Thomas who is 66, fell on the ice and is badly bruised. He contacts his local ADRN because he needs assistance in his home as soon as possible. He does not have much income and spent a significant amount of his saved resources recently on medical bills from hip surgery last year. His son can help during the weekends and his daughter can help at various times during the week, but she has a part time job. He wants to get some help in the home for when they are not available, as soon as possible.

What service would you provide for Thomas?

Answer: Care Coordination

Why?

Based on the urgency of his situation, the I&A specialist determines Thomas sounds appropriate for the Community Care Program. The specialist makes a referral to the CCU so Thomas can schedule an appointment for the in-home assessment.

Could this also be options counseling- if yes, how?



Case Example: Larry is in his 60s and residing with his family members. He had been in and out of the hospital and rehab for several months and was referred to the ADRN by rehab facility staff. Larry's medical conditions include respiratory issues and hypertension. Larry wanted to move out of his family member's home and live independently again.

What service would you provide for Larry?

Answer: Options Counseling

Options Counseling would be beneficial to help explore Larry's goals, strengths, and needs.

Staff can meet with Larry at the rehab facility.

Explore relevant options –housing, food resources, transportation, Lifeline cell phone and money management.

Conduct a follow-up visit one week later which includes help with applications for subsidized housing, SNAP and Lifeline cell phone.

Additional follow-up should be provided over the next few months to check on the status of these applications and provide support as needed.



Case Example: Maxine is a retired teacher and is trying to determine the best insurance plan for herself. She recently received information in the mail notifying that the state retiree system is changing, and the changes will impact her healthcare. She has always relied on the coverage that was a part of her retirement and does not understand the options that are being presented to her. You determine that she could benefit from SHIP counseling and offer to make a referral to the SHIP counselor. During the conversation Mary also mentions that money is tight, and she is looking for ways to stretch her budget.

What service would you provide for Maxine?

Answer: Options Counseling

Why?

Maxine needs assistance addressing multiple issues.

Options counseling can help in considering healthcare options, addressing financial concerns, and screening for benefit program eligibility.



Case Example: Mr. Smith's landlord sent notice that his rent will be increasing by \$300. He cannot afford to live in his building once this goes into effect. He is calling for a list of affordable housing in his area.

What services would you provide for Mr. Smith?

Answer: Depends...

You might say...

- “Mr. Smith, I would be happy to give you a list of housing that you can call to get more information. However, it sounds like you may be interested in exploring all your options for housing and what is available in your area. We have a staff member who can talk to you more about these options...If you are interested, the counselor will set up a time to talk to you about your needs and make sure you get the assistance you need.”





Questions?





Breaking Down the Steps of Options Counseling

1. Screening
2. Personal Interview
 1. Motivational interviewing
 2. O.A.R.S
3. Exploring Resources &/or Decision Support
4. Written Action Plan
5. Follow Up

Screening for Options Counseling

Screening for Options Counseling will often occur during initial contact with the agency. During the contact, staff determine if Options Counseling is appropriate by assessing who is contacting the agency, the purpose of the contact, the kind of assistance the client is looking for and determining if they want or need assistance in making decisions about their needs.

- Skills needed include:
 - Allowing client to tell their personal story.
 - Taking time to listen to the client's needs and situation.
 - Paraphrasing, reflecting and asking open and closed-ended questions to clarify and summarize needs and situation.
 - Ask them to describe a typical day.
 - Asking questions to probe beyond the presenting need.
 - Understanding that people may not know what they want or need.
 - Articulate, clarify and discuss assumptions and uncertainty.
- During each contact take note of:
 - The significance and complexity of the request.
 - The number of differing requests that the client has.
 - The need for one-on-one assistance to walk the client through the situation.



Personal Interview

This is a one-on-one conversation with the client and/or if appropriate, other family member(s) or representative(s) such as the legal decision-maker. The conversation is guided by the need to obtain specific information to assist with exploring choices and developing the personal action plan. Key information is learned about why they contacted your agency for help, the client's goals, values, preferences, concerns, current and needed resources and supports, and more.

Use this time to build rapport: introduce yourself, practice active listening, summarize, try not to make assumptions about their knowledge (ask the client instead of assuming), aid them in prioritizing things most important to them.



During the Personal Interview:

- Use the IDOA Options Counseling Intake Form OR your agency's preferred intake form/assessment tool to collect information about the client and their situation.
- In addition to collecting the client's personal and demographic information, the IDOA Intake Form has a section called Issues to Address (page 4) where you can list areas where the client has concerns and needs assistance.
- "Issues to Address" section can be a helpful tool to make sure you are conducting a holistic review of the client's potential needs and situation
- Sometimes clients may not want to share personal information like Social Security numbers or income – that's ok! Keep in mind that Options Counseling is directed by the client.
 - As a suggestion, you can explain that by asking about income and assets, you are checking if they will qualify for any public benefits or publicly-funded programs and so you can help them explore a wider range of options; also, this type of information is necessary if you will be completing benefit applications.



PRINCIPLES OF MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEWING

EXPRESS EMPATHY

Build rapport by expressing genuine empathy for the patient's experience.



DEVELOP DISCREPANCY

Elicit the pros and cons of behaviors, identify the difference between their goals and current behaviors.



AVOID ARGUMENTATION

Direct confrontation will put the patient on the defense and make change talk difficult.



ROLL WITH RESISTANCE

Respect the patient's autonomy and help them uncover their own motivations for behavior change.



SUPPORT SELF- EFFICACY

Communicate to the patient that he/she/they are capable of change.



ADAPTED FROM:
[HTTPS://MOTIVATIONALINTERVIEWING.ORG](https://motivationalinterviewing.org)



Tools for Personal Interviewing: Motivational Interviewing

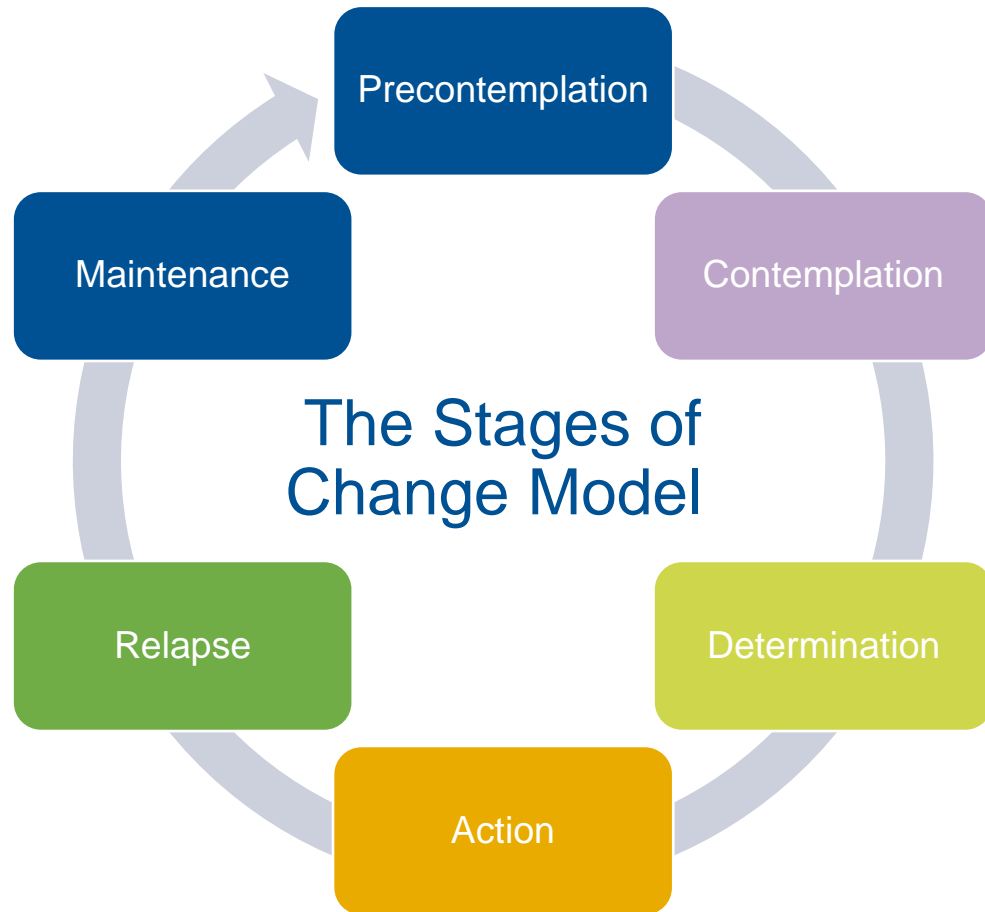


<https://med.stanford.edu/visit/the-clinical-encounter/treatment-options/motivationalinterviewing.html>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SsNgZ47o2I4>



Tools for Personal Interviewing



Precontemplation: Person is not aware of the need for change.
They may not be aware of resources or be skeptical about them.

Contemplation: Person is considering if there is a need for change. Person is generally more open to receiving information or considering different strategies.
May not know what specific approach to take but are ready to think through their options.

Determination: Individual is planning and preparing to make the changes necessary. They recognize something needs to be changed and are preparing to take the steps.
May be deciding if they need support, if they need to gather documents, deciding how etc.

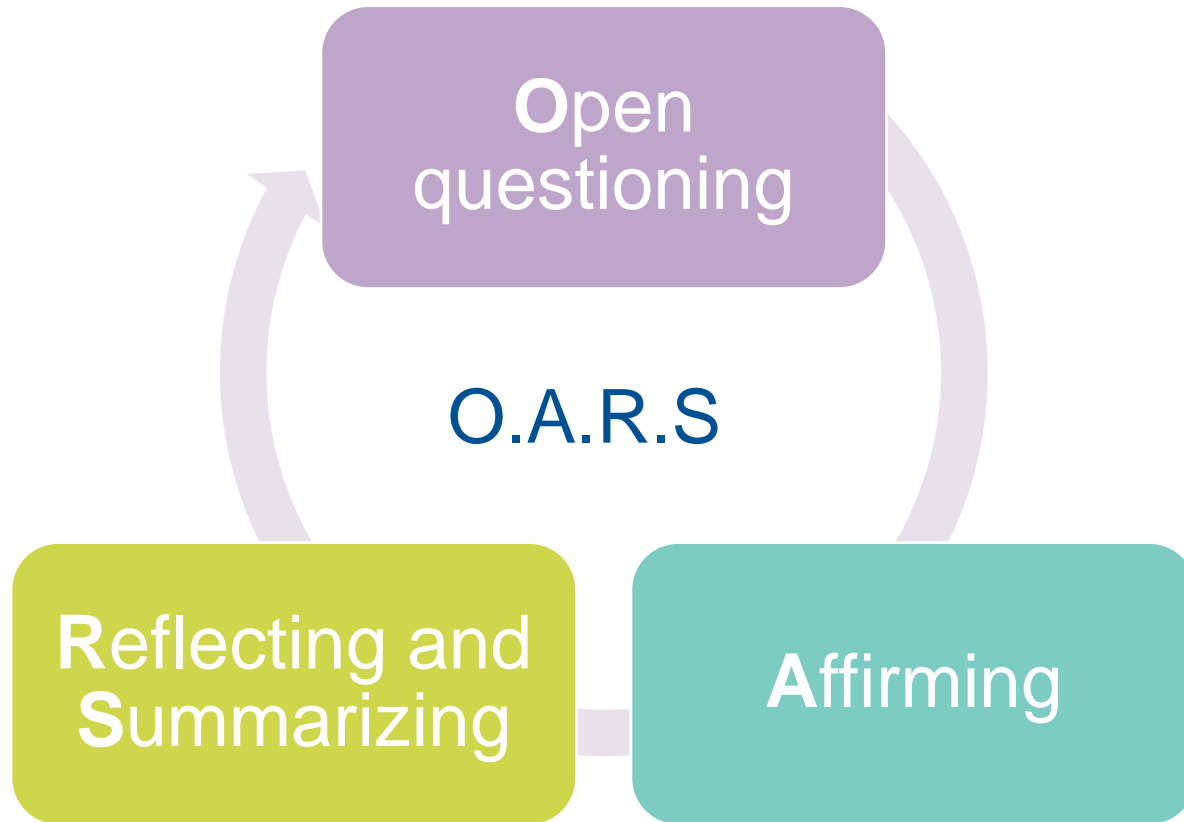
Action: The individual recognizes that there is a need and is actively participating in making a change.
Beginning to make calls, filling out paperwork, sending documents, etc.

Relapse: Person may be struggling to adjust to the change or suggested change and stops actions from previous stage.
Person does not like the change, wants to reconsider, met with challenges, etc.

Maintenance: The Individual is working to maintain or continue the progress that began in the action stage.
Doing what is necessary to sustain what has been done.



Tools for Personal Interviewing



Open-questioning: Explore, clarify, and gain an understanding of clients perspective.

Affirming: Build rapport, offer empathy, and affirm the clients' strengths and abilities.

Reflecting and Summarizing: Listen observe, share. Tell the client what your understanding of their need is. Summarize the conversation from beginning, middle, and end to confirm understanding.

Tip! See the ADRN Options Counseling Desk Guide for additional sample questions and statements and tips for conducting the Personal Interview



Explore Resources

Based on information gathered during the interview, the next step involves exploring programs and services available to meet the client's needs.

Explore both private and public resources.

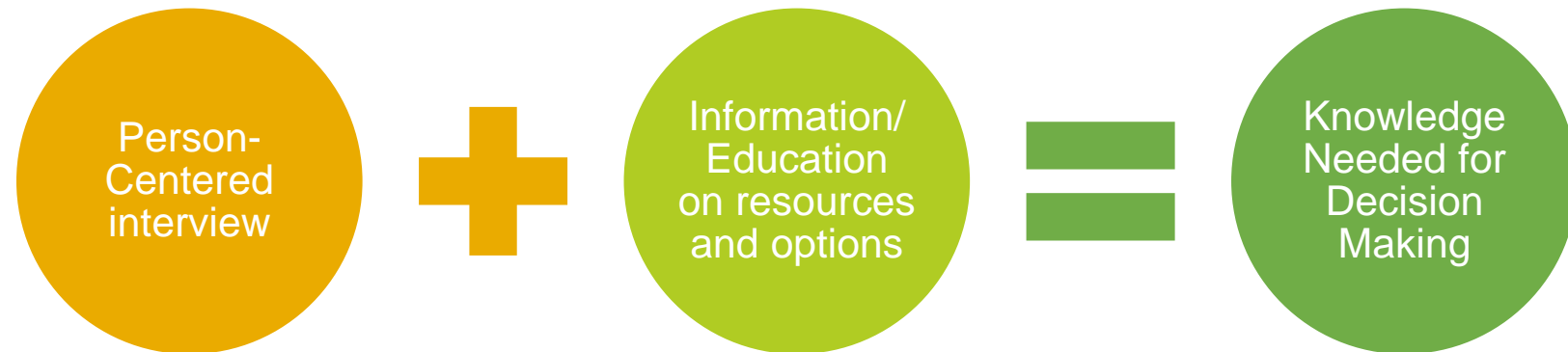
- Local/state/federal programs
- Discuss payment/funding options

Explore informal supports and community resources that may be available (Family, friends, neighbors, places of worship, volunteer groups, etc.).



Decision Support

- Decision Support is a defining feature of Options Counseling – our goal is to provide objective information and education so the client can make informed decisions about the options that are presented



Written Action Plan

Summarizing the conversation can bring the interview to a close with the identification of a written action plan if the client chooses. The action plan serves as a guide for the client for future work and/or steps necessary to obtain the options they have chosen.

The plan helps the client move from identifying resource needs to specifying next steps to be taken to access the options (i.e. services and resources)



A written action plan should be offered to all clients as part of this step in the Options Counseling process.

These next steps are based on the client's priorities, their desire to proceed, and the availability of services

The action plan does not have to be formal and should match the client's comfort level



Creating an Action Plan

GOALS:

- If an action plan is being created the **IDOA Personal Plan Worksheet has a section for goals**, this can be a good place to include the goal(s) identified by the client
- Goals are framed to address the main needs and preferences described by the consumer earlier in the process
- Goals do not have to be extensive
- **The goals must be documented in a case note in the client file and/or your case note system if not**

Examples of consumer goals:

- “Get the help I need to care for myself”
- “My goal is to live safely in my home”
- “To obtain affordable, accessible housing”
- “Get information to prepare for the future” (*no current needs - just planning ahead*)



Creating an Action Plan

OPTIONS:

- The Action Plan includes the options identified by the client, likely during Decision Support.
- Options identified and listed on the Action Plan may be changed or declined by the client. However, the client may need to go through the steps before deciding if an option is what they feel is best.

NEXT STEPS:

- Steps for each option should be simple and tailored to the client and does not need to be extensive – may include: Timelines, Resources Needed, Responsible Parties
 - The Options Counselor may need to facilitate the completion of applications or assessments.
 - Include a process for Follow Up including the agreed upon date for follow up by the Options Counselor (or consumer).



Action Plan Tips

- ❖ Options are not set in stone. Clients have the right to change their plan at any time.
- ❖ Make sure the client receives a copy of their Action Plan, and keep a copy for their file.
- ❖ If the client elects to not create an Action Plan, document in their file that one was not created and why (i.e. in a case note).
- ❖ Case notes should include the client's goals and which options were discussed.



Follow Up



Follow Up is offered to all Options Counseling Clients.



Provides an opportunity to check back and learn how the client is doing, what happened or didn't happen, if anything has changed, and if they need additional assistance.



Follow up should be discussed during the Action Plan phase and/or when wrapping up your conversation.

Additional Follow Up contacts may be needed

when ...

- Multiple referrals were provided
- Complex situations
- Next steps were dependent on information mailed/emailed
- Next steps were dependent on discussions with others

*See the **ADRN Options Counseling DeskGuide** for sample questions and statements to encourage Follow Up*



Follow Up

What if the client refuses a Follow Up contact during Options Counseling?

- Leave the door open for future contact.
- Make sure to document this in the client's file and/or your case note system.

What if the client does not respond to agreed-upon Follow Up contacts?

- Try contacting them 3 times - use different methods, if possible, e.g. Phone/text message, mail, email.
- If still no response, you may “close” the case – re-open the case if the client re-engages.
- Make sure to document this in the client file and/or your case note system.



Case Example – Jose

Jose called about the Senior Property Tax Freeze. The I&A Specialist determined Jose was not eligible, but continued the conversation to see if he had other needs. Options Counseling was used to explore various areas of support (mental health, social functioning, transportation) and to look at future planning (asset protection). The I&A Specialist and Jose worked together to create an action plan with next steps to help him access those supports.

Case Example – Mr. C.

Mr. C. came in for help with questions about Medicare and Medicaid. After asking many questions about his current situation and needs, it was found that there were many other resources and services that he was not tapped into. Mr. C. is in his early 60's and uses a motorized wheelchair. He would benefit from using local transportation services. He also needed services provided by Prairie State Legal Services and was interested in the counseling program offered by the local health department. He was set up with an action plan to acquire and utilize these services and many others and is flourishing in the community. Monthly follow up calls have been great learning tools and have provided even more opportunities to guide him to other resources in the community.



Case Example – Ms. J.

Ms. J., who is 90 years old, came to the agency seeking information on services that she may benefit from in the future, stating that she wanted to be prepared. She was not yet in need of in-home services as she was independent with her daily living activities but did need some additional assistance with obtaining linkages with programs such as LIHEAP. She also specified that she wanted to move into more affordable housing but did not know where to begin seeking senior housing in this county. Through Options Counseling, she was able to receive LIHEAP assistance and began the process of seeking entrance in a senior housing complex in the area.

Case Example – Mr. G.

Mr. G. contacted the agency seeking living options. Mr. G. lives in Arizona but is seeking to return to Illinois to be closer to his family. He asked about living options, both nursing home and assisted living facilities. He shared that he had difficulty taking care of things on his own and wanted to better understand which facility would work best for him. Mr. G. was referred to Options Counseling to receive assistance thinking through options. The staff person provided information on the differences between nursing homes and assisted living (e.g. the level of care provided, payment, etc.). The staff person also inquired if Mr. G. had thought about the option of independent living and receiving help in the home, but Mr. G. stated he was ready to live in housing where he could receive more help with his day-to-day activities, and have meals provided. Mr. G. determined that he was interested in looking at assisted living facilities as he does not require 24-hour care. The staff person mailed him a list of assisted living facilities near his family to research, along with questions to ask each facility.



Case Example – Mrs. B.

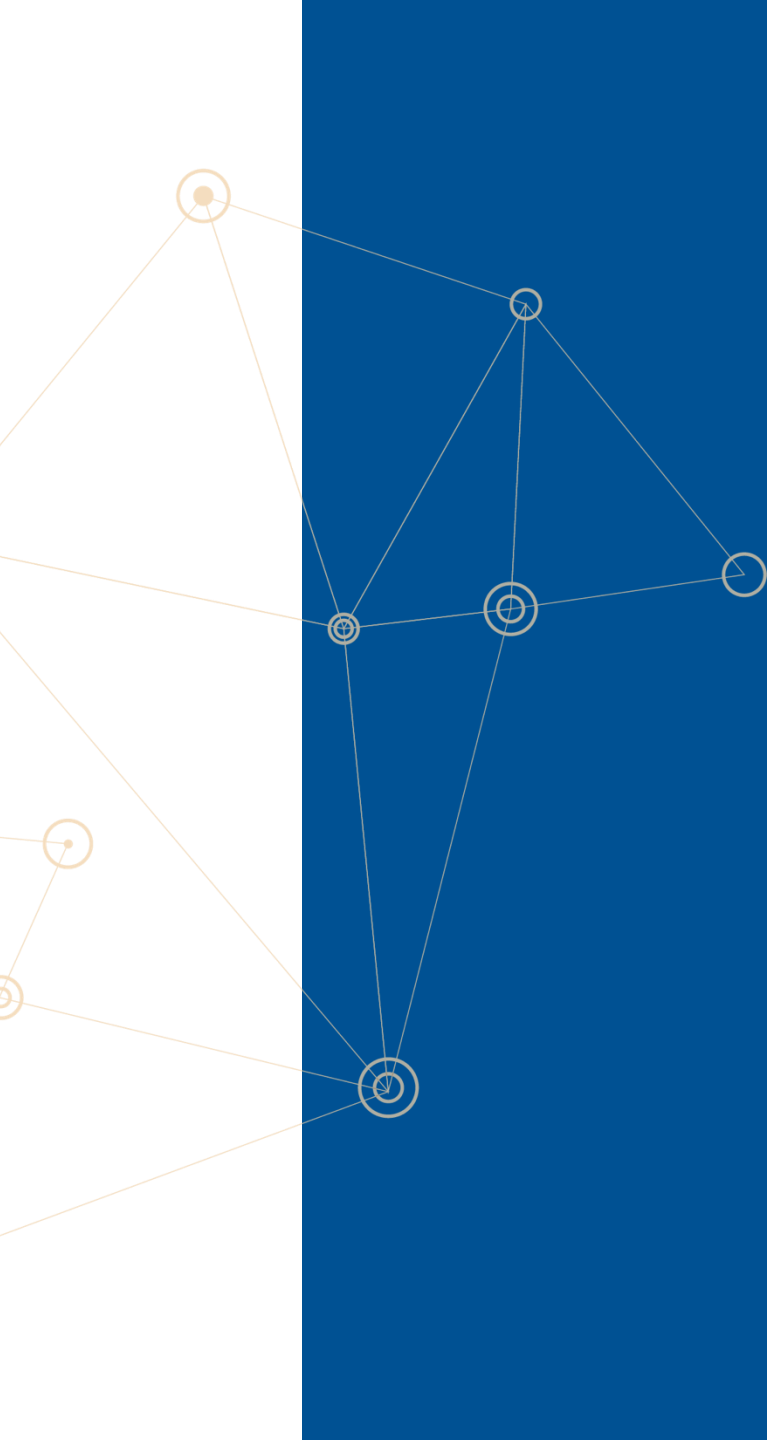
Mrs. B. came in for information about turning 65 and entering the world of Medicare. Her appointment was originally a simple SHIP counseling session but turned into an Options Counseling opportunity. She was turning 65 the next month and was interested in enrolling in Medicare, Part D, and Supplemental Insurance. She was new to the area and unsure of the services we offered. After getting to know her situation, staff were able to direct her to services for finding physicians, elder law attorneys for asset protection, a local selection of realtors and support groups for health concerns and loss of a family member. Since her initial appointment, staff found additional resources that were beneficial for her and helped her find a new church home in the community. A little digging into her situation and goals provided several opportunities to guide and direct her to the available resources in the community.





Questions?





Let's Practice

Case Study: Mary Jones

- During the initial I&A call to the ADRN, it was determined that Mary is appropriate for, and interested in, receiving Options Counseling.
 - Mary wants information and guidance on resources to help her stay in her home and maintain independence for as long as possible.
 - An appointment is scheduled for Options Counseling the next week.
 - During the appointment, the Options Counselor begins the conversation ...





- **You will need:**
 - ADRN Options Counseling Desk Guide
 - IDOA Intake Form
 - IDOA Personal Plan Worksheet
- **Remember!** Options Counseling can be broken down into 6 components:
 1. Personal Interview
 2. Explore resources
 3. Decision support
 4. Written Action Plan
 5. Links to Services
 6. Follow-up



Case Study Mary: Personal Interview

Mary Jones is 59 years old and has multiple sclerosis. She will be 60 years old in a few months and reports that she retired about 6 months ago as the MS advanced. She has difficulty walking and with some ADLs and IADLs. She currently uses a cane for mobility. She lives with her husband who works full time and often travels for work. She has two adult children that live out of state. She has always been in good health and is concerned about her limited ability to navigate all the areas of her home and the need for assistance with tasks. She reports experiencing the following symptoms: Blurred vision, loss of balance/coordination, numbness/tingling in hands & feet, weakness in arms/legs and chronic pain. She indicates that she lives in a 2-story house and the bedroom and main bathroom are on the 2nd floor.

Mary is seeking resources that will help maintain her independence. She also indicates that her husband, Mike, earns \$6000 per month in income. Mary currently does **not** have a separate source of income. She indicates that she worked as a nurse prior to retiring. The Jones' have about \$200,000 in assets (not including their home). Mary has Blue Cross/Blue Shield PPO health insurance coverage through Mike's employer. Also, you learn that she is talking with her sister who is home during the day and possibly could spend some days with her when her husband is traveling for work.



Case Study: Personal Interview

What questions would you ask to learn more about Mary's situation, needs, preferences, etc.?

**Remember! Options Counseling is Person – Directed:
Focus on Individual Preferences**

Is the cost important?
Or... Is proximity to family and friends important?
Or... Is autonomy in hiring your own providers important?
Or... Is hiring caregivers through an agency important?
Or... Is the quality of services important?

What resources and services might you suggest? (This is where using questions/statements from Motivational Interviewing can be helpful. See the **ADRN Options Counseling Desk Guide** for additional sample questions, statements and tips for Exploring Resources and conducting Decision Support.)

See the **ADRN Options Counseling desk Guide** for sample questions, statements and tips to help you and the consumer create the Action Plan and encourage planning for follow-up. Use the personal plan and the intake form to narrow down which options are best for Mary.



Summing Up the OC Process: Did I Do This?

Did I review all of the client's needs?

Did I go over the pros and cons of options?

Did I help the client view the situation from a variety of perspectives?

Did I check for Understanding of the options and action steps in the action plan

Are the client and I going to follow up?





Questions?





This concludes the Options Counseling Training

FOR QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS TRAINING, PLEASE CONTACT:

Mauria Owens (Mauria.Owens@ageoptions.org)

Jennifer DiNicola (Jennifer.Dinicola@ageoptions.org)

Resources:

- *Ageguide Learning Center*. AgeGuide. (n.d.). <https://ageguide.org/learning-center/>
- Solutions & Interventions Toolkit. (n.d.). *Motivational interviewing*. Information, Solutions & Interventions Toolkit. <https://med.stanford.edu/visit/the-clinical-encounter/treatment-options/motivationalinterviewing.html>
- *Behavioral change models*. The Transtheoretical Model (Stages of Change). (n.d.). <https://sphweb.bumc.bu.edu/otlt/mph-modules/sb/behavioralchangetheories/behavioralchangetheories6.html>
- Motivational interviewing: The basics, oars - University of New Hampshire. (n.d.). <https://iod.unh.edu/sites/default/files/media/2021-10/motivational-interviewing-the-basics-oars.pdf>