



OPTIONS Philosophy

Introduction

For years, OPTIONS has operated within the framework of a philosophy which has proven successful. The purpose of this document is to provide an outline of our guiding principles. We hope the reader will be left with an understanding of the approach we use at OPTIONS. Companywide (including persons served, employees, and stakeholders) understanding of our philosophy is a key component in providing the best services possible as an organization.

History

In the early 1980s, OPTIONS' founder Mike Mamot was working as a special education teacher in Paso Robles. His work brought him into contact with many students who were struggling in school because they had severe behavioral problems and poor adaptive living skills. He came to know these young people better and found that many of them lived with families that were ill-prepared to deal with the unique challenges presented by their special needs children, and were desperately seeking outside assistance. Realizing that San Luis Obispo County lacked adequate residential services, he opened a small group home where these kids could grow, learn and have their individual needs addressed in a caring, supportive environment. Since that time, OPTIONS has grown considerably. In 2002, the Mary Lou Stewart Learning Center of Lompoc became part of OPTIONS. In 2003, the Santa Maria Independent Living Environment (S.M.I.L.E.), a grassroots organization, also joined forces with OPTIONS. OPTIONS' growth has been guided by the needs of persons receiving services. Today, over 200 men and women benefit daily from a diverse array of community-based services that are designed to meet each individual's choices and needs. Although the organization that Mike originally founded in 1984 has gone through changes in name and location, the core philosophy has never wavered: "By increasing self-reliance, we will improve the quality of life for those we serve."

Ethics

OPTIONS' has four ethical pillars: Trustworthiness, Respect, Responsibility, and Caring. All of our actions should always live up to these four pillars. Below is a description of each:

- Trustworthiness - To be truthful in all of our dealings; to be honest and forthright with one another and with the people we serve, their families, and our community partners and stakeholders; to be sincere and candid; to have integrity in all our dealings; to be reliable by avoiding unclear or unwise commitment; and to avoid bad faith excuses.
- Respect - To treat one another with dignity and fairness appreciating our diversity and the uniqueness of the people we serve, our employees, our community partners and our stakeholders; to be courteous and decent; to exercise authority in a responsible way; to accept and welcome individual differences of opinion, belief, and identity.
- Responsibility - To be responsible for our choices; to be committed to excellence; to honor our commitment; to ensure that the people we serve have the highest quality of life possible; to produce and deliver person-centered services with expected outcomes in a timely manner; to be accountable; to be informed; to provide and exhibit leadership in our field; to ensure that we act with diligence in all we do; to look for ways to improve our work; to show self-restraint when necessary.
- Caring - To show care, compassion, and empathy toward the people we serve and their families, and to people we work with; to have genuine concern about the well-being of our co-workers, community partners and stakeholders; to show gratitude and appreciation; to support each other; to admit our mistakes, and to forgive.

Accountability

OPTIONS believes that everyone that works for our organization is accountable for their actions as an employee. By acting in an accountable, responsible manner we ensure that our actions will reflect positively back on us as employees, caretakers and people who care about others. As we work with those that require our support in a variety of ways and count on us to provide the best services possible, it is essential that we can each be reliable in acting in the best interest of the persons we serve.

Commitment and Teamwork

Commitment at OPTIONS, is more than just sticking with the program. It means to show up, take the time to get to know the people within our organization including the people we serve, their families, and employees, to continue to learn and take on more responsibilities, and to grow the organization along with and within our community as a whole.

One way we commit to our work is through teamwork. Teamwork is the individual

commitment to a group effort, it is what makes a company, an organization, a country and our society function. We must be able to rely and trust one another. We share both our successes and our failures. We are only as strong as our weakest link. Therefore, it is important for each person to assess their own commitment in conjunction with the team and to renew their commitment on a regular basis.

High Standards/Professionalism

OPTIONS strives to provide the highest quality services to the persons we serve. In order to do that, OPTIONS aims to hire persons who possess a high degree of professionalism and will strive to meet high standards in a challenging field. Professionalism is how a person demonstrates respect for themselves and others, it is a willingness to learn, to grow and change. Professionalism may be conveyed to others in many ways. It is demonstrated in how we dress, act, speak to others, listen and how we approach our job each day. It is about having pride in yourself, what you do and the company you work for. It is caring enough to want to make a difference and a desire to be the best in your position.

To help employees become professionals and develop their skills, OPTIONS strives to provide on-going training and constantly makes changes, paying attention to new ideas and regulatory changes in the field or community which will help the persons served. OPTIONS continues to maintain licensed programs and accreditation from the highest sources possible such as the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF).

Although resources are often limited, particularly during times of statewide financial crisis, OPTIONS maintains a commitment to quality services. In order to do that, each person employed at OPTIONS is held accountable for maintaining and providing quality care. We strive for and maintain these high standards because we realize few people are lucky enough to find work that appeals to the heart. Few pleasures are more wonderful than having a job we really enjoy and making a difference for others is why we have chosen to work here.

Dignity/Respect/Equity

As employees of OPTIONS, our attitudes and actions, with both persons served and our coworkers, will demonstrate a sense of equity, dignity and respect. We value this as an inherent right for everyone and essential for helping to improve quality of life. It means walking in another person's shoes and understanding their unique perspective and challenges without judging or criticizing.

Preparedness/Training

At OPTIONS we believe that all employees should be highly trained and prepared to work with the persons we serve. As a result, we stress training and have developed a

comprehensive curricula. All staff members are required to take training so that, as a team, everyone has the same information and knows the expectations. You can only perform at your highest level if you have all the necessary tools to do your job. In the case of OPTIONS, you are the primary tool. The way you interact and respond to persons on the job will determine your effectiveness.

We take a great deal of pride in our training program and our commitment to ensuring staff members are prepared to work with the persons we serve.

Making it Fun

We at OPTIONS do not have to go to work but rather get to go to work. The nature of this work not only provides a nourishing and supportive space for our community to come together, but the opportunity to get to know and enjoy time with folks we might not meet otherwise.

As we grow as a team, fun times are unavoidable. Life can be so serious, especially work, but we make a point at OPTIONS to take time to enjoy our time together. No one knows more than the persons we serve, that life is about taking time to appreciate the small things, to cherish each moment. Our work reminds us of this every day.

Along with supporting the people we serve in achieving their dreams, we find there are new things to learn each day. Our persons served show us how we can be better workers, advocates, and people. We are proud to work together to lift up our community and to have fun while doing so.