

# Options Counseling

## ADRC Operations Manual

### I. Introduction

The ADRC provides counseling about options available to meet long-term care needs as well as factors to consider in making long-term care decisions. Options counseling is a person-centered, interactive decision-support process that typically includes a face-to-face interaction. Options counseling is more in-depth than just providing a list of service providers or programs for customers to choose from. The ADRC must provide options counseling to members of its primary client populations, when the criteria have been met or when deemed it would be helpful. Although customer's families, caregivers, and others who ask for assistance on the customers behalf may occur, if the customer is not involved in the options counseling meeting, these encounter would be considered information and assistance rather than options counseling.

The information provided during options counseling must be timely, accurate, thorough, unbiased, and appropriate to the customer's situation. Long-term care options counseling is tailored to the needs of the customer and does not attempt to persuade the customer to choose any particular long-term care setting, program, or service. Options counseling does not exclude information about any suitable option, program, or provider.

### II. Requirements for Performing Options Counseling

#### A. Process for Providing Options Counseling

The options counseling process consists of four core values and six steps. The process and values are described in detail in the options counseling training curriculum and certification process.

The four core values include:

- Choice: Options counseling focuses on a customer's strengths, goals, and preferences to allow them to make informed decisions.
- Direction: The customer remains in charge of the ultimate direction at all times.

- Control: Respect the right of customers to control and make choices about their own lives to the greatest extent possible, while providing access to the support that they need and desire.
- Building Rapport: Establish a trusting relationship by understanding the customer's preferences and needs and behaving in an ethical manner at all times.

The six steps of the options counseling process include:

### 1. Identification of Need

This step will usually be done while providing [information and assistance \(P-03062-01\)](#). Identifying need involves recognizing that there is a need for options counseling and ascertaining the customer's willingness to engage in options counseling. When offering to meet with the customer to complete options counseling, ADRC specialists should not use the term 'options counseling' with a customer. Rather, the ADRC specialist should phrase the offer to meet with the customer to learn more information about their situation so staff can provide more in-depth assistance. The ADRC should conduct an appointment within 10 business days or at another time preferred by the customer.

The criteria used to evaluate the need for options counseling are:

- Limited ability to communicate
- Limited ability to advocate for self
- Limited support system
- Limited capacity to act on information provided
- New or advancing health condition that is adversely impacting the customer.
- Life altering event or situation that is adversely impacting the customer.
- Significant change in circumstances that is adversely impacting the customer.
- Limited financial resources to fund needed services

### 2. Welcome

Once a customer has agreed to engage in options counseling, a warm and inviting greeting should be extended to them, and other individuals the customer invites, by the staff providing options counseling if this wasn't already completed as part of information and assistance. It is important to introduce yourself, explain the role and function of the ADRC, and to explain the ADRC's [confidentiality policy \(P-02923-06\)](#). [If other individuals are present, it is important to ask the customer if they are comfortable in moving forward with the discussion in their presence or if the customer would prefer to meet in another location or reschedule the meeting.](#)

### 3. Discovery

This key step in options counseling is typically done through a face-to-face visit, either at the customer's home or another location of their choice. Discovery includes obtaining information about the customer's concerns and needs; identifying their strengths, goals, values and preferences; learning about their family, friends, lifestyle, and current living situation; learning about their health conditions and other areas of necessity; and learning about any current services or supports they have tried in the past. As part of the discovery process, it may be appropriate to determine eligibility for [publicly funded long-term care \(P-03062-03\)](#) programs. This would include conducting the [long-term care functional screen \(P-03062-04a\)](#) and assisting, as appropriate, with the financial eligibility process.

### 4. Decision Support

Through decision support, the options counselor helps the customer by identifying and presenting information about potential resources and costs that may meet their identified needs and preferences. From there, the counselor will facilitate an unbiased discussion with the customer to help them narrow their options and then gauge their readiness to move forward. Decision support may lead to [enrollment counseling \(P-03062-03a\)](#) for someone found eligible for publicly funded long-term care programs during the discovery process.

### 5. Action Planning

Creating an [action plan](#) with the customer helps to set clear expectations about responsibilities in moving forward with the plan. It clearly articulates the items that must be completed and who will complete these items.

### 6. Follow-Up

Follow-up helps gauge the customer's progress on their action plan and provides an opportunity to assess whether or not the action plan is working well for the customer. Follow-up should be planned at a date and time convenient to the customer and based on the timelines for the items described in the [action plan](#). Staff who provide options counseling should reference the [Follow Up Policy \(P-02923-07\)](#) for additional information on these requirements.

Options counseling is meant to be a flexible process by which all of the above steps are addressed; however, you may find that you move in between the steps based on conversations with the customer, and that is to be expected. It is important that conversation and process flow naturally. It may take multiple contacts with the customer to complete all of the steps in options counseling. Therefore, there will also be multiple contacts in the client tracking system to account for the entire process.

Options counseling should directly involve the customer. Sometimes it is appropriate to conduct options counseling with a family caregiver or a legal decision-maker. In these instances, it is best practice to meet with and involve the customer to

whatever degree is appropriate, but this is not required. Best practice is always to obtain or confirm the status of a legal decision maker; however, this should not create a delay in providing options counseling for the individual.

All customer interactions must be recorded in the ADRC client tracking database following the procedures described in the [Client Tracking \(P-03062-09\)](#) section of this manual. It is important to select the appropriate outcome in the client tracking system. This chart may be used as a reference to help options counseling staff determine which outcome(s) to select based on the step of options counseling they were engaged in with the customer.

## B. Client Tracking

Encounter	ADRC Outcome(s)	Call Topic(s)	Example of Note
<p>1. The customer contacts the ADRC.</p> <p>2. The ADRC specialist identifies customer's inquiry, situation capacity, and personal preferences.</p> <p>3. The ADRC specialist determines need for options counseling.</p> <p>4. The ADRC offers to meet with the customer to learn more information about their situation so they can provide more in-depth assistance.</p>	<p>Provided information and assistance</p>	<p>Youth in Transition</p> <p>Home Services</p>	<p>ADRC received call from mother about her child who will be turning 18 in a few months. The child currently uses paid caregivers. Mother explains that they have to be at their home or the grandmother's home to check in/out on the child's cares. Mother was told that once the child turns 18, they don't have to worry about all of that and is asking how they circumvent all of this. Writer explains LTC options. Mother does not have finances to cover private pay services, briefly discussed publicly funded long-term care and requirements. Explained the role of the ADRC. Writer also shared the confidential nature of the ADRC and how we are unable to disclose if we are working with someone without a</p>

5. The customer accepts options counseling visit.			release. Mother agrees to meeting to discuss needs and next steps. Scheduled meeting for 01/31.
<p>1. The ADRC visits with the customer, likely in person.</p> <p>2. The ADRC completes the steps of options counseling.</p>	Provided options counseling	<p>Youth in Transition</p> <p>Public Benefits (other)</p> <p>Caregiving – Elder CG of Child or Disabled Adult</p> <p>Public Benefits LTC Programs</p>	<p>Writer visited with customer and mother today. Explained role and shared confidentiality information. Customer is currently CLTS participant that will be turning 18 in May and needs an adult screen to determine eligibility for adult programs. Customer lives with mother and sisters; mother shares there are no plans to change the living situation. Customer's mother would like to be customer's guardian but is not sure how to go about it. Writer explains applying for SSI and adult disability determination through SSA. Respite services are currently provided by the customer's grandparents, and this will need to continue. Customer currently attends school and enjoys the teacher. Enjoys spending time with grandparents and going out on their boat. Also enjoys independent activities like watching movies, watching game shows, and Judge Judy. Writer shared information about publicly funded LTC programs. Mother indicated interest in IRIS and</p>

			will discuss in more depth upon confirmed eligibility. Scheduled time to complete the LTCFS.
<p>1. Through options counseling the ADRC determines the customer is interested in publicly funded long-term care.</p> <p>2. The ADRC provides options counseling including discussion about the programs, how they may differ from other programs like Medicaid, the eligibility requirements, etc.</p> <p>3. The ADRC completes the long-term care functional screen.</p> <p>4. The ADRC provides assistance with completing a Medicaid application, if necessary.</p>	<p>Provided options counseling</p> <p>Conducted Long-Term Care Functional Screen</p> <p>Provided assistance with Medicaid application process</p>	<p>Youth in Transition</p> <p>Public Benefits (other)</p>	<p>Met with customer and mother to gather information to complete the LTCFS. Customer's diagnoses include autism and scoliosis. Customer does not use language to effectively communicate basic wants and needs and relies on caregivers to anticipate most needs. Customer relies on family to provide most ADL and IADL care due to cognitive impairment. Writer obtained signed release of information for primary care physician and for the school to obtain collateral information for the screen. Writer will contact mother when functional eligibility has been determined.</p>
<p>1. The ADRC follows up with the customer regarding</p>	<p>Provided follow-up</p>	<p>Public Benefits (other)</p>	<p>Phone call with customer's mother. Functional eligibility was confirmed. Mother has applied for SSA and has</p>

the action plan and service information provided.		Public Benefits LTC Programs Legal Services	filed guardianship paperwork. Scheduled time to discuss enrollment which mother would like to have occur ASAP.
<p>(Procedures of <a href="#">Enrollment Counseling (P-03062-03a)</a>)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The customer is found functionally and financially eligible.</li> <li>2. The ADRC confirms that the customer wants to enroll in a publicly funded long-term care program.</li> <li>3. The ADRC discusses the different long-term care programs available in the county.</li> <li>4. The ADRC discusses the MCO or ICA and FEA providers available in the program that the customer selected.</li> </ol>	Provided enrollment counseling	Public Benefits LTC Programs	Met with mother to explain Family Care and IRIS programs. Mother would like to proceed with self-direction and selected IRIS. Reviewed ICA and FEA scorecards. ICA and FEA selected. Referral made. No additional follow up from the ADRC needed at this time.

### C. Recognizing and Responding to Emergencies

ADRCs need to be prepared to recognize and effectively manage emergency situations. All staff will be trained on how to identify an emergency and apply emergency procedures to handle situations. When handling an emergency, staff should:

- Remain calm.
- Attempt to de-escalate the situation.
- Identify emergency-related symptoms such as a heart attack, stroke, suicidal ideation, or domestic violence.
- Collect needed information.
- Connect the person with local emergency service providers.
- Follow up as needed.

ADRCs are expected to recognize and respond to emergencies; however, they are not expected or considered to be emergency service providers. During business hours, ADRC staff will follow protocols and processes established by local emergency resources, such as 911 services or crisis intervention services, in order to assure that people are promptly connected with the appropriate emergency service provider when an immediate risk has been identified. After-hours phone calls will be answered, at a minimum, with a message instructing caller about whom to contact in the case of an emergency.

#### **D. Short-Term Service Coordination**

Short-term service coordination may include any of the following activities during a period of 90 days or less: evaluation of an individual's needs, resources, and ability to handle a situation; planning, arrangement, and coordination of multiple services, people, and resources; recruitment of natural supports and volunteers; and maintenance of contact, reinforcement, and encouragement.

ADRCs provide short-term service coordination to the extent that their agency's financial and personnel resources permit and when the provision of this service does not interfere with the ADRC's ability to provide all other services required under the contract, consistent with the [Short-Term Service Coordination Policy \(P-02923-04\)](#).

Subject to the limitations described above, short-term service coordination is provided to assist individuals and their families in managing complex and immediate needs. This occurs when the individual cannot manage the situation, other ADRC services are insufficient to deal with the situation, there is no one else to take the lead, and the person cannot be enrolled into a publicly funded long-term care program. Through short-term service coordination, the ADRC can address the immediate concern, attempt to stabilize the individual's situation, and either enable the person to manage on their own or set them up with the needed support.



While a formal care plan is not required for short-term service coordination, the ADRC should document basic information about the customer's service needs, the actions taken and services provided, and the responsibilities of the various parties involved with the person.

ADRCs must have protocols to assure that short-term service coordination is focused and does not last more than 90 days.

## **E. Options Counseling for Special Population Groups**

### **1. Memory Screens**

Memory screening is an early intervention tool that can be used during options counseling, as appropriate, for individuals who express concern about changes in their cognition or display signs of memory loss. ADRCs must have staff available to provide memory screening to customers. Memory screens should be done in accordance with the [Memory Screening in the Community \(P-01622\)](#) manual.

### **2. Youth Transitioning to Adult Services**

ADRCs must designate staff to be the contact(s) for transition planning and services and to participate as needed in any local transition advisory committee in its service area. The designee may be a supervisor or a staff person that provides options counseling. ADRCs must ensure that youth with physical or intellectual/developmental disabilities and their families and guardians know that the ADRC is available to assist with the transition from children to adult services. ADRCs may publicize these services through information and assistance, marketing and outreach, and options counseling. ADRCs provide youth and their families with information about the resources that will be available when they reach adulthood, help them think through available options, and assist in accessing appropriate programs and services. ADRC services are available to youth who are age 17 years and 6 months or older and their families or guardians.

### **3. Pre-admission Consultation**

Nursing homes, community based residential facilities, and residential care apartment complexes are required to refer prospective residents to the ADRC for pre-admission consultation. Facilities provide customers with the brochure [Are You Considering Assisting Living or a Nursing Home?](#) (P-00040) and will refer the customer to the ADRC. ADRC specialists will

follow the steps in the options counseling process as they would for any other customer while ensuring to discuss the following:

- The range of care settings and options available to meet the customer's long-term care needs, including supports and services that could permit the customer to remain at home.
- The cost and financial implications of the various options.
- Methods to evaluate facility quality and appropriateness.
- Programs which may be available to help pay for the customer's care, eligibility requirements and procedures, and limits on the use of public funding in certain settings.

ADRC specialists cannot attempt to persuade the customer to choose a particular provider or type of service. Another tool that ADRC specialists could use is a cost calculator to help the customer weigh the costs associated with their various options. [Considering a Move? The Cost Calculator Can Help](#) (P-00546) is available for ADRC Specialists and customers to use in the decision support process.

#### **4. Nursing Home Transition**

ADRC specialists will provide options counseling to customers interested in transitioning from a skilled nursing facility or other institution. The ADRC specialist will provide the customer with information about locally available long-term care options and supports for community living to help the person fulfill their desire to relocate to community living. Assistance must be provided by the ADRC regardless of whether the customer is paying privately or is eligible for publicly funded programs. The involvement of the ADRC is meant to supplement the role of the nursing home discharge planner and does not replace their role.

When nursing homes downsize or close, ADRCs will assist the nursing home residents in the transition process to a new living arrangement. ADRCs assist by providing information from the state relocation team, participating in informational meetings with the residents and their representatives, and providing residents with the same services that it provides to other ADRC customers, including information and assistance, options counseling, and eligibility determination. Details about the ADRC's role with downsizing and closing of facilities can be found in the [Resident Relocation Manual \(P-01440\)](#).

## 5. MDS-Q

ADRCs are the designated local contact agency for referrals generated from the Minimum Data Set (MDS) Section Q assessment process required to be done by nursing homes. Section Q of the MDS asks nursing home residents about their desire to transition back into the community. For individuals that indicate an interest in transitioning to the community, a referral is made to the ADRC to meet with that individual for options counseling. Detailed information on how to obtain referrals from the MDS system can be found in the [MDS-Q Nursing Home Referral Processing Instructions \(P-03062-02a\)](#).

# III. Collaborating with other Aging and Disability Programs

Staff that provide options counseling must collaborate with other ADRC and aging program areas. Options counselors must also be well-versed and up to date on aging and disability-related programs offered within the local community.

## A. Benefit Specialist Programs

Options counselors must have a strong understanding of the elder and disability benefit specialist programs. They often encounter ADRC customers who require more in-depth assistance with public and private benefits beyond long-term care options counseling, just as benefit specialists often encounter ADRC customers who require more in-depth assistance with long-term services and supports.

## B. Marketing, Outreach, and Public Education

All staff at the ADRC must be knowledgeable about the services provided by the agency, and all staff play a role in outreach and public education. Options counselors may participate in community events or other outreach activities to promote and educate citizens about the ADRC. Options counselors may also have suggestions for marketing and outreach based on the information that they hear from ADRC customers.

## C. Nutrition

ADRCs that are integrated with their county aging unit may have options counselors conduct initial assessment for the home-delivered meal program. Regardless of whether the ADRC is integrated with the aging unit, options counselors must be knowledgeable about the nutrition services in their service region, including how to make referrals.

#### **D. Caregiver Support**

ADRCs regularly have customers who act as a caregiver to a family member or friend. Often, caregivers benefit from options counseling for themselves as well as for the person for whom they are caring. ADRCs that are integrated with a county aging unit may have options counseling staff work directly with the National Family Caregiver Support Program, the Alzheimer's Family Caregiver Support Program, or other caregiving programs. Regardless of whether the ADRC is integrated with the aging unit, options counselors must be knowledgeable about the caregiver programs that are available in their service region.

## **IV. Operational Policies and Procedures**

#### **A. Statutory References**

[Wisconsin Statute §46.283](#)

[Wisconsin Statute §46.82](#)

[Wisconsin Admin. Code § DHS 10.23](#)

[Older Americans Act of 1965—2020 Reauthorization](#)

#### **B. Agency Requirements**

The ADRC will have at least one full-time position, wholly within the ADRC, that provides options counseling as its primary job responsibility. This position may also provide information and assistance, eligibility, and enrollment functions.

Employees of the ADRC and any of its subcontractors who provide information and assistance, options counseling, benefits counseling, long-term care functional screening, enrollment counseling, or other professional responsibilities must have a Bachelor of Arts or Science degree or a license to practice as a registered nurse in Wisconsin. They must also have the

equivalent of at least one year of full-time experience in a health or human service field, working with one or more of the client populations served by the ADRC. Qualifying work experience may be paid or unpaid and may include internships, field placement, and volunteer work.

A [waiver of education and experience requirements](#) can be requested from DHS in the event that a candidate lacks the degree or experience described above.

ADRC specialists must have private office space or access to private meeting space where they can have confidential conversations. Customers and families should not experience a delay in meeting with the ADRC staff because of a lack of private space.

## C. Supervision

ADRC staff providing options counseling will be directly supervised by the ADRC director or by another supervisory position within the ADRC. Supervisors are expected to maintain expertise in options counseling requirements and best practices in order to support agency staff.

Supervisors of staff who provide options counseling are required to complete the Supervisory Training Modules in the Options Counseling Training Curriculum, located in the [Learning Management System](#). They are encouraged to also complete the options counseling modules and certification. The options counseling process used by Wisconsin's ADRCs is an evidenced-informed process that requires ongoing fidelity monitoring by a supervisor. Supervisors are required to use two fidelity tools with agency staff that provide options counseling:

- [Options Counseling Supervisor Observation and Support Tool](#) (F-02861): The supervisor observation and support tool is designed to provide both agency staff and supervisors with the opportunity to evaluate the options counseling process in action. Observations are meant to give the supervisor the opportunity to observe staff providing options counseling and for the staff to receive feedback from their supervisor on their skills and adherence to the model. All staff providing options counseling must be observed twice per calendar year. At least one of the required observations must be done by a supervisor; a second observation may be done by either the supervisor or a peer. One observation and support tool completed by a supervisor will be submitted to the Office for Resource Center Development annually. If a staff person is newly hired within the second half of the year, the Options Counseling Supervisor Observation and Support Tool requirement will be waived for the remainder of the year in which they were hired. The [Supervisor Observation and Support Tool Instruction Guide \(P-00885\)](#) provides detailed instructions for supervisors for how to complete this tool.

- [Options Counseling Record Review Tool \(F-02583\)](#): The options counseling record review tool provides a process for supervisors to review client tracking notes from staff who provided options counseling. Supervisors are required to review client tracking notes for two options counseling encounters per staff member per calendar year. If a staff person is newly hired within the second half of the year, the Options Counseling Record Review Tool requirement will be waived for the remainder of the year in which they were hired.

## **Fidelity Tool Requirements Summary**

	Peer Review				Directors or Supervisors		
	Required or Optional	Completion Time Frame	Submitter		Required or Optional	Completion Time Frame	Submission
<a href="#">Supervisor Observation and Support Tool (P-00885a)</a>	Optional	Annual	ADRC Director	<a href="#">Supervisor Observation and Support Tool (P-00885a)</a>	Required: 2 per year per staff	Annual	Submit 1 per staff per year to ADRC SharePoint by December 31.
<a href="#">Options Counseling Record Review Tool (F-02583)</a>	Optional	Annual	ADRC Director	<a href="#">Options Counseling Record Review Tool (F-02583)</a>	Required: 2 per year per staff	Annual	Submit 1 per year per staff to ADRC SharePoint by December 31.

## D. Allowable Funding Sources and Expenses (P-03062-16)

[ADRC grant](#)

## E. Policy Requirements

[Follow-Up \(P-02923-07\)](#)

[Conflict of Interest \(P-02923-03\)](#)

[Confidentiality \(P-02923-06\)](#)

[Complaint and Grievances Regarding ADRC Services \(P-02923-02\)](#)

[Appeals for Adverse Benefit Determinations \(P-02923-01\)](#)

[Short-Term Service Coordination \(P-02923-04\)](#)

## F. Training and Certification Requirements

Knowledge of long-term care resources, programs, and supports is critical to the professional responsibility of options counseling. ADRC staff that provide options counseling must become certified through successful completion of the options counseling curriculum and certification exam. Staff providing options counseling are strongly encouraged complete the following modules in the [Learning Management System](#):

- ADRC Orientation
- ADRC Specialists Initial Training
- Options Counseling Standards — Modules 1–4 and Post-Test (**required**)
- Motivational Interviewing

The Office for Resource Center Development and other aging and disability network partners regularly offer training and continuing education opportunities that are beneficial to staff who provide options counseling. Staff are strongly encouraged to participate in the following opportunities:

- In-person or online training opportunities for options counseling staff.
- ADRC skills training.
- Professional conferences, such as the Aging and Disability Network Conference.

An up-to-date schedule of trainings can be found on the [ADRC Calendar of Events](#).

## Options Counseling Program Training and Certification

The National Options Counseling Standards, developed by the U.S. Administration for Community Living, provide an evidenced-informed model for conducting options counseling in ADRCs. ADRC customers should expect to receive options counseling that is conducted in the same manner from one location to another. For this reason, ADRCs must use the training, certification, and fidelity tools that have been developed for the options counseling program based on the national standards.

The options counseling training and certification program requires the successful completion of e-learning modules and a post-test. Training and certification must be completed within 60 days of hire for any ADRC staff that will be performing options counseling as part of their job duties. The training is available through the [Learning Management System](#). Upon completion of modules one through four of the options counseling training, staff must pass the post-test with a score of 80% or higher in order to be certified to perform options counseling at an ADRC. Staff may review modules as many times as necessary and may repeat the exam twice if they score 79% or lower.

Staff performing options counseling must maintain their certification. Recertification training and testing will occur as determined by the Office for Resource Center Development.

### G. Reporting Requirements



ADRC staff must document their interactions with customers, including the nature of the inquiry, information discussed, resources shared, decisions made, and next steps. Documentation must include the required elements as described in the [ADRC Client Tracking \(P-03062-09\)](#) section of this manual.

ADRC staff providing options counseling are required to complete 100% Time and Task Reporting for Medicaid Administrative claiming. Detailed information on [100% Time and Task Reporting \(P-03062-10\)](#) can be found in that section of this manual.

## V. Additional Resources and Tools

[Utilizing Behavioral Health Screening Tools](#)

[Alcohol and Drug Abuse Screening Tool](#)

[Alcohol and Drug Abuse Screen Scoring Instructions](#)

[Depression Scale](#)

[2015 Statewide Customer Satisfaction Survey Results](#)

[2018 Statewide Customer Satisfaction Survey Results](#)

[SSI-E](#)