

Questions to Consider Asking the Community Service Provider during an Out-of-Home Placement Tour and Accompanying Assessment of a Dually Diagnosed Relative

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There could come a time when the highly challenging needs of a loved one affected with dual diagnosis might be best addressed in an out-of-home community residential treatment program. Once this has been determined and approved by working with the respective New Jersey state agency serving the individual (i.e. Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) Case Management; Support Coordinator; or Children's System of Care (CSOC) assigned Care Management Organization (CMO) there is a great deal to consider throughout this decision making progress.

The following questions and advice can serve as a guide to obtaining relevant information. Making an informed decision is key to surrounding the individual with the appropriate services and supports, in order to promote the principles of wellness and recovery, as a means of improving their overall quality of life. This type of preparation may also help to reduce some of the stress and apprehension associated with this potential life changing choice for both the individual, and their family.

Note: Please keep in mind that some of these questions might be automatically answered by the service provider's admissions and clinical team members during the tour (often referred to as a "meet and greet") and assessment process. However, if that is not the case, you will be prepared to make the necessary inquires as follows:

1. What is the overall goal of the community service provider, in terms of addressing an individual's identified strengths and needs? Does the service provider adhere to the principles of person-centered planning?
2. Has the service provider instituted accepted best practice therapeutic strategies in the treatment and support of the individuals they serve? (i.e. Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA), Positive Behavior Supports (PBS), Natural Supports, Medication Management, etc).
3. What are the credential qualifications of the professionals assigned to work with individuals accepted into the program? (i.e. Psychiatrist; Psychologist, Nurse or Nurse Practitioner, Board Certified Behavior Analysis (BCBA), Speech Therapist, Occupational Therapists, Licensed Social Worker (LSW) or Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW), Teacher; etc.). What are their job responsibilities?
4. Who is responsible for overseeing the school, day program, vocational program, supportive employment, and residential program? How is the management team set up? What are their responsibilities?
5. How does the service provider's communication system operate? Who specifically will call the family with progress reports? How often are family members able to meet with the individual's interdisciplinary team (IDT) to review the current status of their treatment, as well as next steps?

6. What is the typical coverage, in terms of direct care staff to individual ratio? What type of training does the direct care staff receive? Is this training ongoing and person-centered specific? Does the service provider offer parent training in respect to their loved one's Behavior Support Plan (BSP)?
7. What security and safety measures does the community service provider have in place to address these types of problems? Is there a mechanism in place for family members and direct care staff to report incidents of abuse and neglect?
8. Upon admission to the program, what are the typical protocols followed? For example, what happens first, and so on...? Will the individual's current Individualized Education Plan (IEP) / Individualized Support Plan (ISP) goals and Behavior Support Plan and/or Medication Management Plan be followed until revised plans are drafted? What roles does a family member/legal guardian play in terms of the individual's treatment plan? In other words, does the service provider consider the family an integral part of the division making process?
9. Will the individual have opportunities to participate in preferred activities? Who is responsible for planning the individual's activities? (Parents should make a list of these activities to share with the service provider). Will the individual be given ample opportunity to engage in community based activities, including community service initiatives?
10. What is the service provider's home visit policy? For example, is there a maximum number of out of program days that must be adhered to? What is the family/friend visitation policy in respect to all perspective programs?
11. Are there family members whose children are currently being served by the designated program who would be willing to speak about their loved one's experience with a prospective client's parent/ guardian?
12. When does the service provider anticipate getting back to you with a decision as to whether or not your loved one will be offered the placement? Is there an existing waiting list in effect? What is the anticipated wait list duration?

SOME ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS...

A parent should ask the service provider admissions representative if there is any additional information needed, in order to complete the application and intake evaluation process.

If a family member is firmly convinced of the overall merits of a community service provider's program(s) in serving their loved one, they should consider communicating the following points:

- It is important to inform the service provider that you will be actively involved in the person-centered development and implementation of your loved one's plan (i.e. academic, vocational/employment, social, medical, physical fitness, etc.).
- It might also be helpful for you to let the service provider know that you would be interested in participating as a member of agency convened committees, boards, as well as fundraising events to support their mission to improve the overall quality of life for the persons they serve.