



SERVICE USER HANDBOOK

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Approved by: TB - 1/3/2022, TB - 1/13/2023

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MISSION STATEMENT & GUIDING PRINCIPLES

WE BELIEVE that all **HUMANS** are **EQUAL**, with the right to **INDEPENDENCE**, self-determination, **ADVOCACY**, and the **RIGHT** to be afforded **DIGNITY & RESPECT** regardless of physical or intellectual **DISABILITY**.

ALL PEOPLE ARE EQUAL & WILL BE TREATED WITH DIGNITY & RESPECT

Choices will be provided and honored. Every person is a contributing member of Branches of Life and has a voice.

MAKING DECISIONS & MANAGING PERSONAL FUNDS IS A HUMAN RIGHT

Self-determination will be practiced to help service users achieve their personal goals.

VARIETY IS THE SPICE OF LIFE

All people deserve to participate in new social and cultural experiences in order to expand their world-view.

PEOPLE HAVE THE RIGHT TO FREEDOM FROM DISCRIMINATION

We will model our beliefs through education, training, and socialization.

ALL PEOPLE HAVE THE ABILITY TO BE EMPLOYED

ALL PEOPLE CAN PARTICIPATE FULLY IN THEIR COMMUNITY

We will give back to our community through volunteering and other social pursuits.

WE WILL HELP BUILD FULL & RICH LIVES

We respect the right to privacy; believe in access to good food, entertainment, opportunities for learning and the development of meaningful personal relationships.

OUR SERVICES ARE RESEARCH BASED

Strategies, research, assessment and best practices will be continuously investigated and implemented to ensure that we are providing the best services to our service users.

ALL PEOPLE CAN LEARN

Even the gain of one part of one skill is a step toward independence.

THE FASTEST WAY IS NOT ALWAYS THE BEST WAY

Everything that we do is meaningful and has a purpose. We will always take the opportunity to allow a person to learn rather than doing it for them to save time.

SERVICE GUIDELINES

SERVICES OFFERED

1. Therapeutic Consultation
 - a. Directed and supervised by a Board Certified Behavior Analyst, VA Licensed Behavior Analyst, Positive Behavior Support Facilitator, Licensed VA Special Educator, and Certified Autism Specialist
2. Community Engagement
 - a. Community engagement service means a service that supports and fosters an individual's abilities to acquire, retain or improve skills necessary to build positive social behavior, interpersonal competence, greater independence, employability, and personal choices necessary to access typical activities and functions of community life such as those chosen by the general population. The community engagement service may include community education or training and volunteer activities.
 - b. The community engagement service shall provide a wide variety of opportunities to facilitate and build relationships and natural supports in the community, while utilizing the community as a learning environment. These activities are conducted at naturally occurring times and in a variety of natural settings in which the individual may actively interact with persons without disabilities, other than those who are being paid to support the individual. The activities shall enhance the individual's involvement with the community and facilitate the development of relationships and natural supports.
3. WISA (Benefits Analysis)
 - a. Benefits Analysis provides the SSI/SSDI recipient with information about how working (earned income) may or may not impact an individual's disability cash benefits and Medicaid/Medicare health

insurance benefits. In addition, a Benefits Analysis may review the availability of work incentives to help the individual transition to self-sufficiency, and how to protect health benefits. This service is an important planning tool for the individual who wants to start working or make changes to their current employment status and want to understand how doing so will impact their benefits

PROGRAM ADMISSION CRITERIA

Individuals who are interested in utilizing Customized Services are eligible for Admission consideration if they meet all of the following criteria:

THERAPEUTIC CONSULTATION SERVICES

1. Anyone with applicable Waiver Funding Services in Virginia
2. For those who do not have the Waiver or are currently on the Waiver waiting list are eligible for services through private pay

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Individuals interested in utilizing this service are eligible for admission consideration if they meet all of the following criteria:

1. Individuals are receiving active consultation services through Branches of Life with a focus on Health & Safety, Skills, and / or Community Contributions
2. Individuals primary environment supports a score of 75% or higher on the Positive Environment Checklist, indicating a supported environment.
3. Individuals have received person-centered planning.
4. Individuals are aged 18 – 54.
5. Individual has an intellectual disability as determined by a standardized measure of intellectual functioning that falls at least two standard deviations below the norm, or a documented diagnosis of ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder) or Developmental Disability; and significant limitations in adaptive behavior as

expressed in conceptual, social and practical adaptive skills that inhibit average levels of independence as determined by same aged people without disabilities.

6. Must be able to participate in scheduled activities with no more than average physical assistance as determined by peers with similar disabilities and within the staffing ratio set forth by Branches of Life.
7. Negative behavior is not so severe as to cause significant bodily harm to other clientele, volunteers, members of the public and/or employees of Branches of Life as characterized by incidents occurring with frequency greater than once per three month period prior to admission or during services provided by Branches of Life upon successful admission.
8. Medical and/or Health care needs are manageable by staff who are not licensed medical professionals (medication administration, feeding protocol and personal hygiene needs are manageable). If daily care requires a medical procedure that must be conducted by a certified nurse, it is the responsibility of the individual and their caregivers to procure and fund medical staff during services.
9. Reliable funding sources must be available. This might include funding through Medicaid, private pay or scholarship funding. Private pay options and scholarship funding can be discussed during pre-admission.
10. Pre-admission interviews must be completed.
11. Admissions packet and requested information must be completed and received prior to admission.
12. Transportation arrangements must be reliable and discussed prior to admission.
13. Provisions must be made to provide a packed or pre-prepared meal when necessary.

WISA (Benefits Planning)

- Branches of Life is able to provide benefits planning services through both DARS and waiver funding.
- In order to be eligible for this service through Medicaid, interested people must have the Community Living (CL), Family and Individual Supports (FIS) or Building Independence (BI) Developmental Disabilities (DD) Waivers.
- Medicaid Waiver providers may not bill for waiver Benefits Planning services while the eligible individual has an open employment services case with DARS and is eligible for this through DARS.
- Each of the allowable activities is available dependent upon the individual meeting criteria for receipt of the service activity.

SETTING

Branches of Life does not have a physical location, as all services are community based. Our mailing address is 5514 Townsbury Terrace, Chesterfield, VA 23832

HOURS/DAYS

Branches of Life is open Monday through Friday with occasional weekend events, unless otherwise specified.

WAIT LIST

To ensure that resources are available to adequately support our service users, there is the potential of a wait list for services at Branches of Life, contingent upon the type of resources required to provide support and available openings. The wait list is reviewed monthly and service users are selected based on our ability to assist them, our available resources, and their urgency of service needs.

EXCLUSIONS

In the event that a prospective individual does not meet admission criteria, they will be informed via written correspondence with the recommendation of other services that might better meet their needs.

CONTINUED PARTICIPATION

Branches of Life reserves the right to terminate services for the following reasons:

- a. Failure to participate
- b. Failure to follow-through with agreements after conflict resolution may result in termination of services provided by Branches of Life.

The service user is welcome to reapply for services through Branches of Life once the issue that led to service termination has been reasonably resolved.

SERVICE MODIFICATION

In the event that a service user's needs exceed the available support at Branches of Life, a change in services will likely occur. The decision to modify, suspend, or terminate services occurs after violation of the following admission criteria.

COMMUNICATION

Prior to initiating a modification, suspension, or discharge, all efforts to communicate information regarding the incident in violation of admission or continued participation criteria will be made to the service user, their substitute decision maker, and their Support Coordinator. Communication regarding these issues will be made within 24 hours of the incident. Written documentation will be kept on file, and a copy will be made available to the service user, their substitute decision maker, and their Support Coordinator upon request.

SOLUTIONS BASED COLLABORATION

Appropriate to circumstances and details surrounding the admission / continued participation criteria violation, a meeting may be requested in order to gather the service user's team together for problem-solving and solution based collaboration.

MODIFIED SCHEDULE

An outcome of the solutions based collaborative meeting may be to modify a service user's schedule to better support them. Recommendations are based on scheduling and resource availability at Branches of Life, and may vary from person to person.

SERVICE SUSPENSION

In the event that a violation of admission criteria occurs, an outcome of the solutions based collaborative meeting may be to temporarily suspend or decrease time on agreed solutions through Branches of Life services. This option is likely to be considered in the event of unusual circumstances or in the event that additional services and supports are necessary prior to continued attendance.

SERVICE TERMINATION

Branches of Life initiated termination will occur for the following reasons:

- In the event of continued violation of admission / continued participation criteria after exhausting solutions based problem solving
- Upon team refusal to participate in solutions based problem-solving, including follow-through with agreed upon responsibilities
- In the event of an incident that is determined extreme, at the discretion of Branches' leadership
- In the event of nonpayment for services rendered after attempts to collect.
- Failure to attend, participate or follow through in a timely manner with shared responsibilities and agreements made with Branches of Life services regularly over an extended period without communication with a member of Branches' Practitioner team. After 60 consecutive days of non-attendance or inability to make progress on responsibilities and agreements, Branches will discharge the person from services at their nearest quarterly unless a resolution is reached and work can be continued.
- Upon request of the service user and/or their team.
- After work has been completed and no further solutions are needed or desired within a quarterly period.

PAYER SOURCES & FEES

PEOPLE WITH WAIVER FUNDING:

Therapeutic Consultation Services:

- PBSF \$89.38 per hour (effective July 2022)
- BCBA \$115.78 per hour (effective July 2022)

This rate is determined by DBHDS (Department of Behavioral Health and Disability Services).

WISA (Benefits Planning):

- This service may be authorized one time per allowable activity per individual per calendar year. However, a service may be reauthorized within a calendar year if the individual's situation has changed in terms of disability conditions, benefit type, or employment status. Medicaid waiver providers may not bill for waiver Benefits Planning services while the eligible individual has an open employment services case with DARS and is eligible for this through DARS.
- The annual year limit for this service is \$3,000. No unspent funds from one plan year may be accumulated and carried over to subsequent plan years.

Community Engagement:

- Tier 1 = \$22.28 per hour (effective July 2022)
- Tier 2 = \$24.94 per hour (effective July 2022)
- Tier 3 = \$28.48 per hour (effective July 2022)
- Tier 4 = \$35.01 per hour (effective July 2022)

This rate is determined by DBHDS (Department of Behavioral Health and Disability Services).

PEOPLE WHO DO NOT HAVE WAIVER FUNDING:

For those who do not have the Waiver or are currently on the Waiver waiting list are eligible for services through private pay.

PEOPLE WHO WILL BE PAYING PRIVATELY:

For people who are on the DBHDS Waiver waiting list and are found ineligible for funding, you can still access services by paying privately. Please contact us through info@branchesva.org to discuss specific packages and payment options.

MEDICAL INFORMATION

ILLNESS

At Branches of Life (BOL), it is our priority to protect our employees, service users, and their families to ensure they are safe and healthy from infectious diseases. As such, we will abide by governmental guidelines which may include but not be limited to telehealth.

For the wellness of Branches of Life employees, we ask that people who display symptoms of a mild/moderate virus, cold, flu, severe allergy, or COVID symptoms to stay home. In the case that someone starts displaying symptoms of a cold, flu, COVID, or severe allergy while receiving services, we will evaluate their symptoms and may call their emergency contact to arrange for them to return home if needed. We understand that we all have busy lives but having your person stay home while they are sick can help them recuperate quicker & can protect Branches of Life employees from any contagious illnesses.

EMERGENCIES

In the event that an individual requires emergency medical attention a Branches of Life employee will call 9-1-1 and then verbally communicate with the service user's Emergency Contact person listed on their FACE sheet. Make sure if you have a change of personal information (phone number, address, medication, etc.) that you let us know so we can update our information.

PRESCRIPTION MEDICATIONS - COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SERVICES ONLY

At this time, Branches of Life (BOL) is only able to administer emergency / life-saving PRN medications that are prescribed by a physician. These medications would include, but are not limited to: seizure medication, severe allergic reaction (Epi-Pen), etc. BOL is not able to administer scheduled prescriptions, over-the-counter medication, or injectable medication (excluding Epi-Pen).

Who will administer medication:

Medications will only be administered by a BOL employee who has successfully completed a Medical Management Training Program approved by the Virginia State Board of Nursing. Those employees may be selected by the BOL Administrative team to become a member of the Medication Management Team if they have: completed the necessary trainings, been employed at Branches of Life for at least 6 months, are employees in good standing, and pass the necessary medication administration classes/tests approved and required by state law.

Staff members of the Medication Management team will have the ability to handle and administer medication to our service users. Staff members of the Medication Management team will always ensure that medications are administered following the 5 rights: right person, right medication, right dose, right route, and right time - as prescribed and instructed in their medical protocol.

Documentation and verification of medication:

Upon admission and renewed annually during their ISP, the Service User (SU) and Substitute Decision Maker (SDM) will complete an annual intake form that covers medication administration. If no medications will need to be administered by BOL, no further action is needed.

If life-saving medication may be needed in case of emergency, before BOL is allowed to administer any life-saving PRN medication, the Service User's team (Substitute Decision

Maker or Residential Provider) must provide BOL with current documentation that details information for each medication, and must keep this information up to date. If any changes are made at any time, BOL must be notified immediately and updated documentation must be provided as soon as possible in order to prevent interruptions in services.

The Medication Authorization & Permission form must remain current for each prescription and a new form must be updated and signed when:

- Annually at the SU's ISP renewal.
- Any time a Rx has changed from this authorization, BOL must be notified immediately. The prescription label on the bottle/packaging must have the corresponding change updated.
- Any time a medication needs to be added to this list, BOL must be notified immediately of the new medication and this updated med list must be re-signed by the SU's SDM.
- Any time a medication from this authorization has been discontinued, BOL must be notified immediately with the discontinued date.

In some instances, BOL may allow a 48 hour window for the SU's SDM to update this form and provide updated medication and prescription label.

- If the medication is the same and the dosage has changed, BOL will allow a 48-hour window from the time branches is alerted of the change in med dosage and will continue following the original prescription until updated documentation has been obtained. If 48 hours pass and BOL does not have an updated Med Authorization form completed and new medication with an updated prescription label, community services will be suspended until BOL receives everything required.
- BOL is not allowed to provide this window if the medication being updated has been discontinued and replaced with another medication. BOL must have all required documentation and updated prescription label before the SU can resume services.

If the Service User receives services from a Residential Provider that provides agency oversight with medication, the provider will need to share monthly copies of the SU's MAR (Medication Administration Record) with BOL to verify the medication is current and no changes have been made.

If the Service User does not receive services from a Residential Provider that provides agency oversight with medication, BOL will provide a Medication Authorization & Permission form for the SDM to complete and the BOL CE Supervisor will frequently (no less than quarterly) check in to ensure the medication is still current and no changes have been made.

Medication documentation must include the following information:

- Service User information:
 - Full name
 - Birthday or Medicaid Number
- Current month and year (if MAR)
- Medication information
 - Name of medication
 - Exact dosage of medication
 - Route / type of medication (oral, topical, rectal, etc)
 - Detailed instructions for administration
- Prescribing doctor information
 - Doctor's first and last name
 - Prescription number
 - Original Rx date, date written, and stop date (if MAR)

If the medication is a psychotropic, the SU/SDM must verify that they have been informed by their doctor of the effects and are giving consent for the medication to be administered.

Proper labeling for the medication:

The medication must be in its original bottle/package with a legible prescription label attached and must match the information listed on the BOL Medication Authorization form. The label should be complete with the service user's name, name of medication, exact dosage, instructions to be administered, the licensed prescriber's name, prescription number, and the date the prescription was filled (must be within 90 days).

Medications in any other form are not acceptable and will not be administered.

Medication Storage and Management

Medications will only be handled by a member of the Medication Management team and service user who has been prescribed the medication. BOL is not able to store medication, so all medications must be brought with the service user each day they attend a community activity. BOL staff will check for and help monitor medication daily, however, all medications must be kept securely on the services user's person at all times and out of sight - this could be a lunchbox, purse, backpack, etc. Medications shall be maintained in environments that maintain their efficacy, and are the responsibility of the service user.

MEDICAL PLANS (Seizure/Feeding/G-Tube/Diabetes)

For safety & care reasons we must have all special care medical plans (seizure plans/diabetes plans/feeding plans) for your person on file prior to receiving services at Branches of Life.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

THE BRANCHES OF LIFE RESPONSE PROCEDURE:

1. Identify the situation as a crisis.
2. Identify the person who will be the point person during the situation.
3. Assess the location for safety.
4. Assess the immediate environment for danger.
5. Observe & identify the cause of the crisis.
6. Interact with the person in crisis.
7. Assess what additional supports are needed.
8. Maintain and keep all parties as safe as possible.
9. Notify the administrative team
10. Contact families and caregivers

WARNING & NOTIFYING INDIVIDUALS RECEIVING SERVICES & THEIR FAMILY MEMBERS:

In the case of an emergency or closing, our service users & their caregivers will be informed through a variety of communication modalities including: telephone, text message, email, Branches of Life's Facebook page, and/or the Branches of Life's website.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Main Telephone Number: 804-571-6687

Email Addresses:

Wendi Strickland (Wendi@BranchesVa.org)

Jessee Helbert (Jessee@Branchesva.org)

Traci Brown (Traci@branchesva.org)

Shirley Hedeem (Shirley@branchesva.org)

Facebook: www.facebook.com/BranchesOfLife

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/branchesva/>

CONFIDENTIALITY

ALL SERVICE USER INFORMATION WILL BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL. EACH SERVICE USER HAS THE RIGHT TO GIVE AUTHORIZATION BEFORE BRANCHES OF LIFE SHARES IDENTIFYING INFORMATION ABOUT SERVICES. TO ENSURE COMPLIANCE:

- Branches of Life will maintain the confidentiality of any information that identifies a Service user.
- Branches of Life shall keep confidential all medical, social, referral, personal and financial information regarding any service user and his/her family.
- Service user files are accessed by authorized personnel only.
- Service Users and their authorized representatives will be asked to give consent, if necessary, for Branches of Life to disclose identifying service user information.
- Branches of Life must obtain written consent from the service user prior to any audio, video recording, and photography.

THERE ARE CERTAIN SITUATIONS IN WHICH BRANCHES OF LIFE IS NOT REQUIRED TO OBTAIN CONSENT FROM THE SERVICE USER AND THEIR AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE IN ORDER TO SHARE CONFIDENTIAL SERVICE USER INFORMATION. THESE SITUATIONS MAY INCLUDE:

- Emergency situations
- Communication with Branches of Life employees/contractors/consultants/agents CSB, DBHDS, or Medicaid Billing for purposes of providing services and/or billing of services provided.
- Court Proceedings
- Legal Counsel
- Human Rights Committees
- Protection & Advocacy Agencies
- Inspector General
- As required by law

GRIEVANCES, COMPLAINTS & CONCERNS

The quality of our services and your satisfaction with them are very important to us at Branches of Life.

If you find yourself with a concern or a complaint, please don't hesitate to contact us.

We will make every attempt to resolve the complaint at the earliest possible step.

We will not take, threaten to take, permit, or condone any action to retaliate against anyone, or prevent anyone from filing a complaint.

If you need more information or if you need help to understand the complaint process, we will assist you. It is important to us that you feel good about where and how your person with a disability spends their time.

The Grievances and Complaints Policy ensures that all persons are presented with procedures that:

- Value the opportunity to be heard;
- Promote conflict resolution;
- Encourage the development of harmonious partnerships and a culture free from discrimination and harassment;
- Ensure that conflicts and grievances are mediated fairly;
- Are transparent and equitable and compliant with legislative requirements.
- Keep confidential, where practicable, the information provided by any person involved with a complaint.

You may want to contact your service coordinator if you feel you cannot comfortably express your concerns to a Director at Branches of Life. Your service coordinator will be able to communicate on your behalf to express your concern. If necessary, the director will meet with you and will conduct an investigation.

The directors will give a written preliminary decision and where appropriate, an action plan for resolving the complaint within 10 working days of receiving the complaint. Along with the action plan, the directors will provide written notice about the timeframe for the response, information on how to contact the human rights advocate for assistance if the service user and/or their caregivers feel that there has been a case of abuse, exploitation or neglect and don't feel that it was handled appropriately in-house.

If the service user and/or their caregiver disagrees with the directors' preliminary decision or action plan, they can respond to the directors in writing within 5 working days after receiving the preliminary decision and action plan. If there is no response within 5 working days, the complaint will be closed.

If the service user disagrees with the preliminary decision or action plan and reports their disagreement to the directors in writing within 5 working days after receiving the decision or action plan, the directors will investigate further as appropriate and will make a final decision regarding the complaint. The directors will forward a written copy of their final decision and action plan to the service user and his/her chosen representative and the human rights advocate (in instances of abuse, neglect concerns) within 5 working days after the initial appeal. Along with the action plan, the directors will provide written notice to the service user about the time frame for the service user's response, information about how to contact the human rights advocate for assistance, and a statement that if the service user does not respond, the complaint will be closed.

If the service user disagrees with the directors' final decision or action plan, they may file a petition for a hearing by the local human rights committee (LHRC).