

# Pathways to → Independence

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## Young Adult Participant Handbook July 2022

### Our Mission:

Pathways to Independence supports the development of skills that positively impact the lives of individuals with disabilities who seek greater independence and social success.

### Core Values:

Authenticity • Empowerment • Community • Respect • Striving

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## **WELCOME TO PATHWAYS TO INDEPENDENCE! (PTI)**

Pathways events are a great way to have fun, meet new friends, and learn how to more effectively interact in social situations. You are important to PTI and we hope Pathways has a special value to you. This handbook provides guidelines for participating in Pathways events. It also offers suggestions for making the most of the program.

We have 6 full-time staff members (an Executive Director, a Program Director, three Program Managers, and the Development Manager) and multiple part-time Program Specialists. At events, we typically have staff-to-participant ratios that are no more than 10 participants to one staff member. However, it is most common to have 1 staff member present for every 4 or 5 participants registered.

## **OUR HISTORY**

Pathways to Independence was founded in 1987, first as a committee of the Learning Disabilities Association-St. Louis, and then as a separate not-for-profit organization. PTI was created by a small group of parents with adult children, to address the problems of young adults with severe learning disabilities in their transition from high school to post-secondary education or work.

Parents and professionals first identified the need to help this population with their living arrangements. Twenty individuals moved into their own apartments through this project. Social isolation was recognized as another major hurdle for young adults with learning disabilities, so the "Leisure and Learning" program was developed in 1992 and served thirty individuals in enhancing their social skills. The program grew to maintain eighty individuals by 2004, with the program touching more than five hundred lives. Today, PTI serves about 150 participants.

## **PROGRAM INFORMATION**

### **TYPICAL PARTICIPANT DESCRIPTION**

Pathways to Independence seeks to serve individuals with complex learning and social disabilities. Individuals who enter the PTI program typically are seeking to learn and more fully understand how to apply skills necessary to develop a social network, identify and engage in meaningful relationships, and to participate in the community at-large.

Individuals who seek PTI services often feel that other programs in the St. Louis area do not fit their needs or learning profile. New participants often report that they have few reciprocal friendships and struggle to find others with whom they relate on a similar social and cognitive level.

Individuals who find that the PTI young program suits their personal goals typically:

- Are 16-21 years old
- Live throughout the greater St. Louis area
- Have a diagnosis of a learning or developmental disability (see below for examples)
- Are comfortable and successful in a 1 staff to 10 participant ratio, not requiring constant/near-constant supervision or support.

Pathways does not discriminate in selecting participants with respect to gender, race, color, age, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, or type of learning disability.

Primary and secondary disabilities that require additional supervision are accommodated to the best of our ability; however, we cannot provide supervision at all times for individuals while on events. If a participant requires constant/near constant supervision or support, or presents a risk with respect to their health/safety, acceptance into or continued participation in the program may not be possible. The Executive Director, in consultation with a committee of the Board of Directors, has complete authority in this matter.

Upon completion of the enrollment application, PTI requires an individual meeting before participation in the program. This meeting is used to review the program policies and procedures and to determine the best program offering that would meet individual goals. If an applicant falls within the typical population described

above and identifies a program offering that would meet their individual goals, participation may begin through whichever program is applicable. If an applicant determines that our programs and policies are not a good match for their needs at this time, we will gladly make a referral to other organizations.

### DIAGNOSIS

- A primary diagnosis of one or more of the following is most prevalent but not limited to: (as defined by the fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM V).
- Learning Disorders
- Intellectual Disabilities
- Level 1 Autism (typically previously diagnosed as)
- Pervasive Developmental Disorder (PDD, PDD/NOS)
- Autistic Disorder (High Functioning)
- Asperger's Syndrome
- AD(H)D
- Traumatic Brain Injury (Head Injury)
- Communication Disorders
- Down syndrome

### DOCUMENTATION

Documentation of the diagnosis is required. This documentation must include:

- St. Louis Regional Office CIMOR form and/or diagnosis from a physician or psychologist
- Additional psychological testing or case management ISP (if available) are encouraged to help staff understand the abilities and needs of the individuals seeking services.

If an individual does not have a formal diagnosis, they may still be considered for participation in Pathways programming, but may not be eligible for county-based funding dollars.

### PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHIC DATA COLLECTION

In an effort to be more aware of Pathways to Independence participant demographics and to be able to report group data related to this information on an annual basis, the following information will be recorded for each participant willing to share such information:

- Gender
- Age (date of birth)
- Race / ethnic composition
- Employment status and employer if applicable
- Annual income
- County of residence
- Housing status (living independently vs. living with family)
- Years of membership
- Diagnosis

The use of this information shall be in accordance with HIPAA and Missouri Data Breach Notification Law policies and information on individual participants is not to be shared without written consent or legal authorization/requirement to do so.

### **PROGRAM STRUCTURE**

The Young Adult Program offers social events and social skill-based classes (Social College) each month. Participants are able to sign up for 2 social events and 2 Social Colleges each month.

**Social Events:** The focus of these events is to expand social connections, have positive social experiences, and to have opportunities to enhance social skills through fun activities. Staff plans these events and is able to provide social coaching for participants as needed to help them make progress toward their individualized goals.

**Social College:** These classes will be focused on a specific social skills topic. An emphasis will be placed on why these social norms are important and how to apply those skills in a variety of settings. Each session will include interactive discussion and opportunities to apply content within a group, receiving immediate feedback. This program is designed to assist participants to:

- Increase self-esteem
- Develop a robust personal network of friends and natural supports
- Initiate self-advocacy
- Enhance soft skills necessary for vocational and employment success
- Gain self-confidence
- Enhance socialization skills and social understanding
- Integrate into and access their community

With this in mind, it is imperative that the program be designed using well-rounded events and individualized learning opportunities to assist in developing a more complete set of skills. Each month, participants will be able to make progress towards their individualized goals through programmed events. Programming is delivered in a variety of settings, including in community locations, at the PTI office, and virtually on platforms like Zoom

Events being planned shall encompass the individual needs, geographic location, and financial consideration of each participant with the individualized support based on goals identified in the individual support plan of the individual.

It is important to consider the overall social and community needs as well as the physical needs of the participants when choosing event locations and make every attempt to plan these opportunities at locations that meet current ADA accessibility guidelines or notify the participants in advance when accessibility may be an issue.

#### GAP (GROWTH AND POTENTIAL)

GAP services consist of 1:1 skills coaching in social skills and other related topics specific to each participant. Participants using this service will be able to identify scenarios that want to address and Pathways staff will help them develop steps to achieve their goals.

GAP services can help lead to increased confidence, more meaningful contributions in social situations, and greater self-advocacy for wants and needs. Common topics for GAP include:

- Conversation skills
- Budgeting
- Community access and safety
- Interview skills
- Emotional / stress management

#### **PROGRAM INTERVENTION METHODS**

Our role is to learn how to give support to each individual, how much support to give, and what type of support participants need in order to make progress toward their goals. Using the person-centered planning process wherein the process is directed by the individual, with assistance from our organization, we are able to work together to identify the needs and desired outcomes of the participant and offer the coaching and support necessary. Participation in all PTI programming is voluntary.

#### NEEDS IDENTIFICATION AND EVALUATION

The PTI intervention method begins with an assessment known as the Individual Support Plan (ISP) performed at intake and annually thereafter. The ISP helps to identify areas where support is wanted/needed and allows the participant to set goals related to our service options. These goals may be adjusted during the year based on the changing wants/needs of the individual.

Progress towards goals is evaluated to determine if new goals are needed or if continuation of the same goals

is appropriate. This is done in part by review of the documentation from the previous year and through the ISP process for the coming year.

When designing an individual support plan, participants identify goals and dreams they wish to work toward in the coming year (and beyond). Many of those goals and dreams are then broken down into what skills are needed to achieve the desired outcomes. There are many skills that may be suggested to participants as possible areas of improvement, which include but are not limited to the following:

- Using eye contact
- Introducing self to new people
- Asking open-ended questions
- Responding to conversations on topic
- Recognizing moments to join conversation
- Communicating emotions in challenging situations
- Moving past topics of fixation
- Accepting group decisions
- Avoiding sharing overly personal information
- Avoiding dominating conversation
- Finding common interests with others
- Budgeting money throughout events
- Speaking up for wants and needs

Participants will be given the opportunity to provide input in the planning process and/or evaluation of the overall program. This is done through annual evaluations, the ISP process, and conversations that occur during the year.

### COACHING & SUPPORT TECHNIQUES

Once the assessment is complete and goals have been identified, PTI staff use a variety of techniques based on the individual's wants/needs and learning styles to support the desired skills. These may include any of the following or others not specifically mentioned, but commonly known to be used when supporting individuals with disabilities:

- Prompts: Cues used to guide someone through a process. In most cases, PTI participants will need verbal cues, gestures, expressions, or visual cues.
- Task Analysis: Breaking tasks down into small, easy steps. Best taught when repeating the same steps each time. This technique helps to build competence and confidence.
- Error-Free Learning: The process of beginning to teach when the individual has mastered basic skills and feels confident, consisting largely of offering prompts to insure correct performance. Abundant praise and reinforcement along the way are important and the learning period should end at a point when the individual is still successful.
- Modeling: Demonstration of a skill and asking the individual to repeat the skill and verbally explain the process.
- Role Playing: Rehearsing a skill before it is used in a real setting. This offers guidance before the "real situation" and allows the participant to "see" reactions or behaviors through practice in order to learn how to react in an appropriate manner.
- Embedded Choice: Offering the individual more than one option, but giving specific options to choose from. E.g. "Do you want to go bowling or go to the dinner theater?" as opposed to, "What do you want to do tonight?"

### **PROGRAM ASSESSMENT**

On-going assessment of the Pathways to Independence program is essential to its long-term success. PTI will involve the participants, Board of Directors, parents or significant family members, referral sources, and staff in the overall assessment of the organization.

Assessment of effectiveness will primarily include measures of participant and program progress, along with staff competencies. Assessment data may come through the ISP process, individual progress notes completed after each interaction, and annual surveys completed by participants, family members, and/or key service providers.

Assessment of satisfaction will come through the Pathways Annual Survey. This data is very important to

program development. We highly encourage participants and family members to complete this survey annually. In addition, specific public funding sources may issue a separate "Satisfaction Survey" and collect results independent of that performed by PTI on an annual basis.

## **ATTENDING PATHWAYS EVENTS**

### **EVENTS & REGISTRATION**

The monthly calendar of events is mailed or emailed by the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month. Activities are selected with input from participants. You can call or email the Young Adult Program Manager with ideas or mail event information to the office at least 6 weeks prior to the event date. If you do not receive a monthly calendar of events by the 1st of the month, call the PTI office.

If you lose your monthly calendar after you have received it, call the office and we will send you another. However, we will only send you one extra copy. If you lose the second one we will charge you a nominal fee for the third copy.

### **EVENT REGISTRATION**

When registering for events, please include:

- Your first and last name
- The name and date of the event
- Your transportation for the event (e.g. meeting there, taking the van, Call-a-Ride, etc)

Emailing event requests to [registration@ptistl.org](mailto:registration@ptistl.org) is highly encouraged. If you use this option, you will receive a confirmation email in return to let you know that you have been registered. If you do not have access to email, you can call in your reservations to the office at 314.863.0202 ext. 5. If you reach the voicemail, please leave your first and last name, the name and date of the event, and your transportation choice for the event if it is provided. Staff will make return calls to confirm reservations left on voicemail.

Registration is on a first-come-first-served basis. If no space is available for an event, you may ask to have your name added to a wait list. Staff will call you if space becomes available.

Registration should be done at least 2 days before the event. The number of staff working an event is based on the number of people registered, so it is very important that we have an accurate count ahead of time. As a rule, guests are not permitted to attend PTI events.

### **EVENT CANCELLATION**

Event cancellations must be made at least 24 hours before an event to avoid cancellation fees. You can email [registration@ptistl.org](mailto:registration@ptistl.org) or call 314-863-0202 ext. 5 to cancel a reservation. Please do this as soon as possible, as there may be people on the waitlist who would like to take your place.

### **CANCELLATION FEES**

Pathways to Independence will charge a cancellation fee when any of the following occur:

- Participant cancels or is a "no-show" for any event with less than a 24-hour notice: \$10
- Participant cancels or is a "no-show" for any event that requires funds to be expended by PTI (such as pre-paid tickets for a concert). Participants will be responsible for reimbursing the cost to PTI.

PTI staff have the right to waive fees for individuals who claim illness or extenuating circumstances out of their control.

### **COST OF PARTICIPATION**

Funding sources do not pay for the ENTIRE cost for individuals to participate. Therefore, some fees apply for all participants. Fees will vary based on county of residence, funded spots available, and what program a person chooses. Please speak with Program Staff to obtain information about costs.

Prior to July 1 each year, participants will submit a Service Election Form, which will outline how many events per year the participant may attend, and whether they would like to pay fees monthly or annually. Participants will be responsible for budgeting their assigned number of events throughout the year, but may pay for additional events individually if they utilize all of their allocated events prior to July 1.

A scholarship fund has been developed for participants who may not be able to afford the fees, however scholarship funds will not cover 100% of the fees. To obtain a scholarship application, please contact the Program Director.

### PERSONAL MONEY AT EVENTS

The membership fee does not cover the event costs like dinner or bowling. Participants are responsible for paying for events they choose to attend. Anticipated costs for each event are indicated in the monthly calendar of events. Each participant is responsible for the cost of their own admission, meals, tips, snacks, etc. unless otherwise specified. For Social Focus Small Groups, the planner should make you aware of anticipated expenses but you are also responsible for finding out about fees in advance.

Try to plan ahead so you are carrying enough money to cover your expenses during an event. Asking others for money is not acceptable. It is also helpful to bring bills smaller than \$20.00 when purchasing reserved tickets, eating with a group, or ordering delivery.

### **TRANSPORTATION**

PTI does not provide door to door transportation. We may provide transportation from the office to an event location. You will know if this is the case, as it will be detailed in the event description on your monthly calendar.

Do not try to arrange transportation during an event; this should be planned and settled beforehand. You may ask other participants to carpool, but the driver has the right to refuse. Be polite if the answer is no. If you are given a ride, it is expected that you will offer the driver some gas money.

If you need assistance with transportation, staff is available to help determine available options such as carpooling, taking the bus, Call-A-Ride, or using cabs.

Staff is not permitted to transport participants in their personal vehicles.

### START OF EVENT

- Staff may be able to wait up to 15 minutes at a meeting place before leaving for an event. If you are registered for an event, but are unable to attend, please call to cancel so you do not make others wait.
- If you arrive at the office early, you are welcome to wait in the lobby. Please note the building doors are locked on Sundays.
- If you are running late, call the staff who is working that event on their cell phone. We will wait if possible.
- If you arrive at the meeting location and the group is gone, you may try to meet the group at the event location.

### END OF EVENT

- Staff may be able to wait up to 15 minutes with participants at the final drop-off location.
- If it appears a participant will have to wait past the 15 minutes or the staff member cannot wait with the individual, staff will talk with them about any safety concerns they may have and address them on a case-by-case basis.
- Please keep this policy in mind when registering for PTI events. Please think about if you will feel safe at the pick-up location at the time of day the event will be ending. If you do not feel safe waiting by yourself at the final location, you should choose a different event.



## **CHANGE IN EVENT LOCATION / CANCELLATION OF EVENT**

From time to time, events and locations must be changed or canceled due to weather, cancellations by an outside agency/organization, or conflicts that create an environment that is not suitable to the planned event.

Should this occur, the following actions will be taken to ensure communication with participants and the safety of those attending the event:

- If known in advance, staff will attempt to notify participants by phone and /or email to make them aware of any changes.
- If staff are unable to contact participants, staff will attempt to provide information at the original site either with management or through a sign on the location entry indicating the changes.
- If a participant arrives at the location and cannot locate staff for any reason, including that the event may have been changed or canceled without receiving notice, they should contact the young Adult Program Manager. You may also call the office and leave a message on voicemail, but your primary call should be to the Manager.

## **SAFETY**

Staff will have their cell phones on half an hour before an event and during the event. Staff phone numbers will be found on the last page of the monthly event calendar. These should be used only in the case of being lost, running late for an event, an emergency, or for a last minute cancellation.

- Participants are expected to carry a valid health insurance card and a valid picture ID.
- Participants are encouraged to be aware of safety in all situations. If someone displays behaviors that staff considers unsafe, staff will review and discuss the behaviors with that person. If a participant observes someone displaying unsafe behaviors, they must report the situation to staff immediately.
- PTI does not allow any illegal behaviors or activities at any PTI event. Examples of illegal behaviors include, but are not limited to, underage drinking, drug use, driving while intoxicated, and physical or verbal aggression, including threats.
- Absolutely no weapons of any type (including pocket knives) are allowed at PTI events.

## **CONSEQUENCES FOR UNSAFE AND ILLEGAL BEHAVIORS**

Participants who demonstrate any of the unsafe or illegal behaviors noted above will be sent home from an event at their own expense. The individual may be suspended from future events either temporarily or permanently. Parents/family will be notified if a participant is sent home from an event, and a meeting with a Program Manager may be required before an individual is able to attend future events.

## **SOCIAL ETIQUETTE**

One of the goals of Pathways to Independence is to assist participants in enhancing their social skills. This includes behaviors that will assist participants in achieving a higher level of social independence. Staff will work with participants to develop these skills.

## **ATTENDING EVENTS**

Meeting new people and going to new places could feel uncomfortable. Everybody feels like this sometimes. In order to feel more comfortable in the social interactions that will take place at Pathways events, keep the following concepts in mind:

- When arriving at the event, try to say hello to the other people who are there.
- Join the group by taking a seat near where everyone else is sitting. Sitting with the group can make it easier for conversations to get started.
- Use a question to get to know other people in the group. Starting a conversation with someone might help you feel like part of the group.
- If you have something you would like to add to the conversation, make a mental note of it and say it after the person is finished talking.
- Pathways staff may offer you suggestions to help you feel more comfortable. They may assist in facilitating activities and conversations.

- All the Pathways staff members are here to support you. You can ask them questions or for help when needed. Different staff members can help you with different things based on their role.

### RESPECT FOR OTHERS

- Do not judge others by how they look or act.
- Kissing, touching, and overt displays of affections are not appropriate.
- Talking negatively about others is not acceptable. This includes spreading rumors of any kind.
- If a conflict develops between participants, try to work it out with each other. If this is unsuccessful, ask the staff for help.
- “Cliques” are not encouraged; we want everyone to feel like part of the group.

### USE OF ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION

Please try to limit your use of electronics (phones, hand-held devices, etc) while attending PTI events. The goal of PTI events is social interaction, and these devices are often distracting or make it appear that you are not interested or available to interact with others.

We understand the social and behavioral challenges of using electronic communication (e.g. texting, social media, etc.) and will do our best to assist participants with understanding appropriate behavior on these platforms. However, as much of this takes place away from our program, the following expectations are in place:

- When exchanging contact information with other participants, there is an expectation that participants respect appropriate boundaries (e.g. refraining from harassment, respecting requests to cease communication, utilizing appropriate language and communication).
- If PTI receives repeated reports of inappropriate, illicit, or harassing behavior, participants may face disciplinary actions including but not limited to dismissal from the PTI program.

## **PARTICIPANT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

It is the policy of Pathways to Independence to support all participants by explaining their Rights and Responsibilities while participating in our programs.

<b>You have the RIGHT...</b>	<b>With those RIGHTS, you have the RESPONSIBILITY....</b>
To be treated with dignity and respect	To treat others with dignity and respect
To have a voice in choosing the goals in your Individual Support Plan (ISP)	To work toward your goals to the best of your ability and change them as necessary.
To receive the type of support you need to help you to do your best and to achieve your goals	To ask questions about your services, and ask for help or support when you need it.
To have information about you kept private	To respect the privacy of others
To pursue friendships with individuals of your own choosing	To respect others' choices about who they would like to pursue friendship with
To have your personal boundaries and preferences respected	To respect the personal boundaries and preferences of others
To make your opinions or concerns known about programming or issues that come up at PTI	To advocate for your rights and preferences
To be informed of PTI and community policies, procedures, and expectations	To follow PTI and community policies, procedures, and expectations to the best of your ability
To choose to participate (or decline to participate) in activities based on your personal capability	To communicate your needs or choices, and work cooperatively with staff.
To make your own choices and decisions.	To carefully consider the possible good or bad consequences of decisions before making them, to ensure the safety and success of yourself and those around you.

**Your Information.  
Your Rights.  
Our Responsibilities.**

This notice describes how medical information about you may be used and disclosed and how you can get access to this information. **Please review it carefully.**

**Your Rights**

**You have the right to:**

- Get a copy of your paper or electronic medical record
- Correct your paper or electronic medical record
- Request confidential communication
- Ask us to limit the information we share
- Get a list of those with whom we've shared your information
- Get a copy of this privacy notice
- Choose someone to act for you
- File a complaint if you believe your privacy rights have been violated

➤ **See page 2** for more information on these rights and how to exercise them

**Your Choices**

**You have some choices in the way that we use and share information as we:**

- Tell family and friends about your condition
- Provide disaster relief
- Include you in a hospital directory
- Provide mental health care
- Market our services and sell your information
- Raise funds

➤ **See page 3** for more information on these choices and how to exercise them

**Our Uses and Disclosures**

**We may use and share your information as we:**

- Treat you
- Run our organization
- Bill for your services
- Help with public health and safety issues
- Do research
- Comply with the law
- Respond to organ and tissue donation requests
- Work with a medical examiner or funeral director
- Address workers' compensation, law enforcement, and other government requests
- Respond to lawsuits and legal actions

➤ **See pages 3 and 4** for more information on these uses and disclosures

## **POLICIES & PROCEDURES**

### **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

In order to stay active in the program, new participants must attend an event within 30 days of the intake meeting. Participants must attend one event during any three-consecutive month period in order to remain active in the program.

It is the responsibility of all participants to let PTI staff know if there are extenuating circumstances (extended vacation, illness, etc.) that prohibit attendance within a three consecutive month period or longer. If this is the case, the Attendance Policy may be waived by the Executive Director.

If a participant does not attend one event during any three consecutive month period and they have not contacted PTI staff to discuss extenuating circumstances, staff will contact participants to determine if there are barriers that are hindering participation. If no barriers are determined, the participant will be informed they are in jeopardy of being discharged from the program. The participant will have 30 days, from the date of the staff contact to attend an event.

If a participant still does not attend at least one event during this 30-day period and they have not contacted PTI staff to discuss extenuating circumstances, they will receive notification stating they have been discharged from the program.

### **DISCHARGE POLICY**

Participants may be discharged from the program for several reasons. Some reasons include but are not limited to the following:

- Participant indicates they met all goals and can independently demonstrate relationship, residential and/or pre-employment skills. The participant chooses that they no longer require services and support.
- Participant is not satisfied with services and chooses to leave the program.
- A new enrollee does not attend an event within 30 days.
- Participant moved out of the area and/or no longer resides in the City of St. Louis, St. Louis County, St. Charles County, or Jefferson County and does not wish to continue by utilizing the private-pay option.
- Participant displays unacceptable behavior towards staff, others, or self.
- Participant presents behaviors/changes to functioning that impact eligibility or the ability for the program to adequately serve a participant's needs.
- Existing participant did not adhere to the Attendance Policy.

Individuals discharged from the program may reapply for services one year after the discharge date. Individuals will be processed as a new enrollment. Any applicant, participant or family member of PTI may file an appeal if services are denied. Participants may choose to leave the program at will. If this is the case, Pathways to Independence requests advance notice of this decision. Individuals leaving the program may reapply for services one year after the departure date.

### **MEDICATION POLICY**

The PTI staff will never distribute prescription medications to any participant, under any circumstances. However, over the counter medications, such as Ibuprofen, a nasal decongestant, and an antacid, are located in the first aid kits and will be made available to participants who are their own guardians to use at their own discretion. Individuals who have a court appointed guardian, will only be given access to over the counter medications from the first aid kit if staff can obtain approval from the guardian over the phone and that conversation is documented.

Participants needing to take prescription medication during an event will keep the medication in their possession. Individuals may request a verbal reminder from staff to take the medication; however, the ultimate responsibility for taking the medication falls upon the participant.

Staff members' personal medications that are brought to the office or on events will be kept in a purse, back pack, etc., where no one else has access to them. Personal medications will not be distributed to participants.

## **SERVICE ANIMAL POLICY**

A service animal may accompany a participant, employee or volunteer. A service animal is defined as an animal that is individually trained to perform a specific task for a person with a disability. Service animals include, but are not limited to animal that:

- Guide individuals who are blind
- Alert individuals with hearing disabilities
- Pull wheelchairs
- Carry and/or retrieve things for the individual
- Assist people who have difficulties with balance
- Alert an individual of an oncoming seizure

Pathways to Independence may exclude a service animal, but never the individual, from vehicles, facilities, and other program locations when the animal's behavior poses a direct threat to the health and safety of others. A direct threat must be documented in accordance with incident reporting procedures and will be investigated by management. Allergies or the fear of animals does not constitute a direct threat. In such an instance, an individual may request that management consider a reasonable accommodation to an allergy or fear of a support animal.

A service-animal-in-training is not deemed to be a service animal under the ADA and may be excluded from entering Pathways to Independence vehicles and facilities. Comfort or therapy animals which are used solely to provide emotional support are not generally considered service animals under the ADA and may be barred from entry to Pathways to Independence vehicles and facilities.

## **INCLEMENT WEATHER PROCEDURES**

This is handled on a case-by-case basis and may include, but is not limited to, heavy snow, hail, severe storms, flash flooding, prolonged periods of rain, high winds, or other catastrophic weather events.

### SEVERE WEATHER FORECASTED PRIOR TO AN EVENT

PTI may cancel an event in advance if the weather forecast is severe. If PTI cancels events, we will do so no less than 2 hours prior to the event and attempt to notify all registered participants by phone (and email if unable to reach by phone).

If you are uncomfortable traveling in severe weather conditions, please notify staff of your cancellation by calling the staff member(s) who are listed as working that event. All staff phone numbers are provided on the last page of each month's calendar. You may also call the office (please be sure to talk to a person if possible rather than leaving a message), but your primary call should be to that event's staff members.

### SEVERE WEATHER LESS THAN 2 HOURS PRIOR TO AN EVENT

In the event of severe weather that arises less than 2 hours prior to an event, PTI staff will attempt to notify participants by phone if any changes in scheduling is necessary. If unable to reach participants, staff will attempt to meet the individual at the designated meeting location and wait for up to 10 minutes past the scheduled meeting time and continue to try to reach the individual. If the weather is too severe to attempt to meet at the designated meeting location, staff will contact someone at that location and request assistance in intervening with the participant and helping them find safety. If the participant is stranded

with staff at the location, staff will assist participants to a safe location and follow the guidelines of that location as well as assist the participant as needed in contacting individuals who may be concerned about their well-being.

### SEVERE WEATHER DURING AN EVENT

In the event of severe weather that arises or worsens during an event, PTI staff will assist participants to a safe location and follow the guidelines of that location. If in a vehicle, PTI staff will pull off the road and turn on the vehicle lights and emergency signals until the situation becomes safe to proceed.

Staff will assist participants as needed in contacting individuals who may be concerned about their well-being.

**No cancellation fees will be applied when canceling due to severe weather conditions.**

### **EMERGENCY PROCEDURES**

PTI staff will conduct emergency drills with participants for the following events:

- Fire Drill
- Tornado/Severe Weather
- Power Outage
- Medical Emergency
- Earthquake
- Automobile Breakdown
- Automobile Accident
- Lost in Community
- Crime Prevention & Personal Safety

Drills will be conducted in a variety of locations and at various times each year. Often, drills will simply consist of a group conversation to ensure that procedures are fully understood by all parties.

### FIRE EVACUATION

In the event of a fire, staff and participants will evacuate the building immediately. The alarm can be set off at the firebox in the hallway by the Exit sign closest to the Pathways office. Evacuation routes are posted in the office at 11457 Olde Cabin Rd Ste. 235. The group will not re-enter the building until it is declared safe.

### TORNADO WATCH/WARNING

In the event of a tornado, staff will retrieve flashlights and general emergency items and guide participants to the lowest part of the building (moving away from windows and doors). Staff will keep participants informed, encourage the group to stay calm, and assist in contacting participant family members or caregivers if needed.

### ELECTRICAL OUTAGE

If the power failure is a result of a different emergency (severe storm, fire) refer to those emergency procedures. Staff will keep the group in one location, encourage everyone to stay calm, and inform participants on how to proceed.

### SEVERE WEATHER

Every situation is unique and must be dealt with based on the circumstances. Refer to other procedures if appropriate.

If outdoors:

- If possible, staff will guide the group to a building or the van. If no structure is available, staff will keep the participants informed on how to proceed.

If in a car:

- Staff will pull safely onto the shoulder of the road away from any trees that could fall on the vehicle. The group will stay in the car and turn the emergency flashers on until heavy rain subsides.
- If indoors:
- Staff will get general emergency items and check into local weather reports. If possible, the event will continue as scheduled. Staff will assist in contacting participant family members or caregivers if needed.

### EARTHQUAKE

In the event of an earthquake, staff will encourage the group to stay in their current location and to remain calm. If the group is indoors, they will take cover under a desk or table, or against inside walls or doorways. If the group is outdoors, staff will guide the group away from buildings and utility wires. Staff will keep the participants informed on how to proceed and check in with participants for any potential injuries.

### AUTOMOBILE ACCIDENT

If safe to do so, the vehicle will remain in the position of the accident for purposes of police investigation. If the situation warrants action, staff will pull the van over to the side of the road. Pathways staff will notify 911 and check with participants for any injuries and administer first aid if needed. The group will exit the van and support will be provided in contacting family members or caregivers if needed.

### AUTOMOBILE BREAKDOWN

In the event of an automobile breakdown staff will pull the van over to the side of the road and assist the group in safely exiting the van. Staff will assist in contacting participant family members or caregivers if needed and will keep the group informed on how to proceed.

### MEDICAL EMERGENCY

All staff who work directly with participants are certified in Adult CPR and First Aid Procedures. Staff will take preventative measures to avoid situations that will expose participants to extreme temperatures (heat & cold). If there is a medical emergency, staff will notify the participants' emergency contacts.

### PARTICIPANT LOST IN THE COMMUNITY

Coaching for participants at the beginning of each event is key to participant safety in the community. Participants will be encouraged to save staff contact information in their cell phones. Staff will establish a meeting place for participants to return to in case someone gets separated from the group. The buddy system is encouraged when stepping away from the group. Staff will contact the Executive Director if a participant is missing longer than ½ hour. Emergency contacts will be notified in this situation. Together, the staff and Executive Director will determine if and when police should be notified.

### **INTRUDER POLICY**

Any participant who perceives threat of danger or is concerned about suspicious persons or activity should inform a staff member immediately. If necessary, the appropriate individual will call 911. Staff and participants will stay away from the danger and try to remain as calm as possible. If an intruder is in the lobby or other areas of the building, staff will close and lock the office doors, turn out lights, and help participants hide under desks. Staff will inform participants on how to proceed.

If the threat occurs while out in the community, staff will help participants take shelter where they can, out of harm's way. If the group becomes separated, staff will attempt to locate any separated participants once



the danger has passed, and make sure everyone is together, safe, and calm. Staff will assist participants in contacting family members or caregivers if needed.

## **PARTICIPANT GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES**

It is the policy of Pathways to Independence to support all participants in communicating their wants, needs and concerns regarding the services being provided by PTI staff. PTI is committed to addressing any complaints and concerns and coming to a resolution in a timely manner.

Any participants of PTI may file a grievance. The Grievance Procedure is as follows:

1. If for any reason, a participant is not satisfied with the services being provided, the participant will inform the Program Manager to try and resolve the situation.
2. If the participant is not satisfied, a grievance can be filed with the Executive Director.
3. The Executive Director has 10 working days to resolve the grievance.
4. If the grievance remains unresolved, the Executive Director will communicate the grievance to the President of the Board of Directors or a member of the Executive Committee.
5. A member of the Executive Committee will contact the party issuing the grievance within 3 business days.
6. If needed, a hearing could be scheduled to take place within 20 business days to help resolve the issue.
7. If no hearing is scheduled, the Executive Committee will make a final decision regarding the grievance within 5 business days.
8. The decision of the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors will be final.

PTI staff will make any accommodations (i.e. transportation, communication) necessary for the participant to express their complaint.

## **APPEALS PROCESS**

It is the policy of Pathways to Independence to support all interested parties, including applicants, participants and their families, in communicating their wants, needs and concerns regarding the policies and services provided by PTI. PTI is committed to addressing any complaints and concerns and coming to a resolution in a timely manner. PTI staff will make any reasonable accommodation (i.e. transportation, communication) necessary for an individual to express their appeal. Any applicant, participant or family member of PTI may file an appeal if services are denied. The Appeals Process is as follows:

1. If for any reason, an applicant or participant is being denied services, suspended from or terminated from receiving services by PTI, they may file a written appeal to the Executive Director within 5 business days of receiving notification. The appeal shall include the following: the individual's full name, date of birth, address, phone number, and reason the appeal is being filed.
2. The Executive Director has ten business days to perform an impartial review of the allegations contained in the appeal to determine if PTI has failed to comply with its policies/bylaws or acted without benefit of all available facts, and to respond in writing to the statements made in the appeal. If the party submitting the appeal is not satisfied with the Executive Director's decision, the party will have five business days to request Board intervention in writing.
3. The Executive Director will forward documentation about the appeal to the President of the Board of Directors or a member of the Executive Committee.
4. A member of the Executive Committee will contact the party issuing the appeal within 3 business days of receiving the request for Board intervention.
5. If the party issuing the appeal makes the request, a hearing will be scheduled for the Executive Committee to take place within 15 business days to help resolve the issue. A written decision will be submitted to the person issuing the appeal within 3 business days of the hearing.
6. If no hearing is scheduled, the Executive Committee will make a final decision regarding the appeal within 5 business days of contact with the party issuing the appeal. The decision will be submitted in writing to the party issuing the appeal.
7. The decision of the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors will be final.

## **VOLUNTEER PROGRAM**

From time to time, Pathways to Independence will utilize volunteers to enhance the experience of our participants at events. Volunteers go through an application and vetting process, and are subject to their own policies and procedures to ensure that PTI is providing the safest and highest quality services possible.

## **INTERN PROGRAM**

When full-time staff members are able, they supervise interns at Pathways to Independence. Interns are most likely college students with educational backgrounds in occupational therapy, social work, or other disciplines associated with service provision at PTI. The purpose of their internship is educational and staff strongly believe our interns learn the most by engaging with you. By sharing your stories or actively engaging our interns, our participants offer valuable experiences that will impact the interns' professional careers. Interns are at Pathways for a short time (3-6 months). Interns go through an interview process and receive the same training as staff.

Participants should use their experiences with interns and volunteers as an opportunity to practice appropriate social boundaries and communication skills. Like staff members, volunteers and interns serve a "helping" or "support" role at Pathways. While they are genuine in their desire to get to know you and have meaningful experiences together, their role is often temporary. We ask that participants refrain from exchanging or asking for phone numbers or other more personal information from these individuals. Volunteers and interns may also decline your requests to be friends on Facebook or connect on other social media platforms. These types of exchanges are most appropriate after building a meaningful relationship with someone that you can reasonably expect to encounter in the future. The short-term nature of the volunteer and intern programs do not always allow individuals to form these types of relationships.