

**Nor-West Regional Special Services
Providing Quality Therapeutic Recreation
Since 1973**

Special Recreation for
Special People

INFORMATION & POLICY



INFORMATION & POLICY BOOKLET

NOR-WEST REGIONAL SPECIAL SERVICES

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INTRODUCTION:

This booklet explains the policies and procedures of Nor-West Regional Special Services and clarifies the scope of its programs and services for our participants and their families.

NOR-WEST DESCRIPTION:

Nor-West Regional Special Services, established in 1973, is a social service agency providing community-based therapeutic recreation programs and transportation services to persons with differing abilities ages seven through adult residing in the northwestern portion of Westchester County. The agency's mission statement follows:

“Nor-West provides therapeutic recreation programs for persons with differing abilities. Our goal is not only to provide recreation, but also to develop emotional security, social skills, physical coordination, and personal confidence in each individual. These achievements, no matter how small, become stepping stones to further self-confidence.”

PROGRAMS & SERVICES:

At Nor-West, we understand the importance of providing engaging and meaningful activities that contribute to the overall well-being of our participants. We firmly believe that recreation is crucial in achieving happiness and fulfillment in life. Therefore, we have thoughtfully designed our programs to be both enjoyable and beneficial, offering opportunities for socialization, skill-building, and personal growth.

- Community-based day/evening programs
- Special Olympics Training & Competitions
- Weekly social programs and special events
- Skill development programs
- Round-trip transportation services

Most Nor-West programs are designed by the full-time staff and implemented by a talented group of part-time staff. Participant intake and medical information are reviewed by the staff and used as a guide in placing the participant in an appropriate program based on age, functioning level, and interests.

GEOGRAPHIC SERVICE AREA & FUNDING:

The Nor-West collaborates with four municipalities: Cortlandt, Peekskill, Ossining, and Yorktown. Funding from these communities helps support our programs. Residents of these communities are considered in our catchment area, and they *receive first priority for program registration*.

Nor-West receives funding from the NYS Office for Persons with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) through Medicaid and state funding streams. This funding is specifically intended to support individuals living

at home with their families as a respite service approved by Hudson Valley DDSO. Individuals living at home outside of Westchester County and who are eligible for respite may attend Nor-West programs if space permits. Registrations from out-of-catchment areas will be processed after the program registration deadline.

FEES & CHARGES:

There are several types of fees & charges associated with our programs.

Registration Fee: Registration Fees apply to residents of IRA, Supported Apartments, Group Residences, or those who live independently. Unfortunately, individuals who reside in state-funded settings do not qualify for respite funding. While contributions from our four municipalities supplement the fees, they do not cover the entire cost.

Venue Charge: Money needed at the program site as part of the therapeutic recreation activity. It may include admission charges, tickets, user fees, meals, beverages, or snacks. **All consumers (regardless of waiver status) need to pay Venue charges.** Typically, this means bringing cash to the program and paying venue charges directly to the commercial establishment. Pre-purchased tickets generally must be paid in advance of the event. There are no refunds for pre-purchased tickets.

Transportation Fee: Transportation Fees apply to those in an IRA, Supported Apartment, Group Residence, or living independently and must be paid at the time of registration via check or money order.

OPWDD Liability of Services Regulations: As part of our new participant packet, you will receive *Liability for Services Regulations*, which explain how OPWDD services are paid. You must sign one of the liability notices acknowledging receipt of the information.

Participants in arrears: Participants with outstanding balances should contact the Director of the agency to establish a payment plan. Participants in arrears who HAVE NOT established payment plans with the agency will not be allowed to register for future programs until their balance has been paid in full.

Refund Policy:

1. If a program is canceled in its entirety, a full refund will be issued.
2. If certain program dates within a session are canceled due to inclement weather, facility closing, or other issue, we will attempt to “make up” the dates at the end of the session. If this is not possible, we will issue pro-rated refunds or credits based on the number of sessions missed.
3. If a participant cannot attend for an extended period (three or more weeks) due to ILLNESS, providers can request a pro-rated refund in writing with an accompanying letter from a physician.

PARTICIPANT ELIGIBILITY:

Nor-West programs are designed for individuals ages 8 through adults who have recreational needs not met by the traditional municipal recreation departments in their community. Due to the nature of our funding, we are mandated to serve those individuals who have **developmental disabilities**. Individuals must be deemed eligible for services by OPWDD. Information about eligibility and OPWDD services can be found on their website, Front Door | Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (ny.gov)

If you are already enrolled in the HCBS Medicaid Waiver and want to join Nor-West programs, specific documentation is required before starting. Nor-West programs are considered respite, and we need to be included in your Lifeplan. Your Care Manager can assist with the process. Individuals may not start programs until all required documentation is properly submitted by Care Manager or Parent. To continue receiving our services, we need annual and semi-annual Lifeplan reports. Failure to provide them may lead to a suspension of

services. We also require the Service Authorization Letter (SAL), Notice of Decision (NOD), and Level of Care and Eligibility Determination (LCED) on file.

SELF DIRECTION:

If you have self-directed services, funding must be allocated to Nor-West for respite services. Nor-West bills Medicaid directly, and our services are considered a "direct provider purchase." Adequate funds must be allocated in your self-direction budget for our services. Nor-West is required to submit monthly utilization reports to your Fiscal Intermediary (FI) for our services. Please contact your broker to ensure that funds are properly allocated to Nor-West.

PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY AND STAFFING RATIOS:

Generally, our youth programs are staffed at a 5:1 participant-to-staff ratio, and our adult programs employ a 8:1 ratio. We recognize that some participants require additional staffing to achieve success in our programs, and we will try to accommodate their needs IF staffing is available and program/bus space is available.

Intensive Supports: Sometimes participants require a 1:1 level of support based upon the following:

- Elopement (running away) from the program room or area;
- Physical safety of themselves or others in the program
- Behaviors which cause frequent disruption of the program

If we determine that a participant requires a 1:1 staffing ratio due to any of the above situations, the parent/guardian would need to provide a 1:1 aide.

Unfortunately, we cannot accommodate individuals who have the following issues:

- Physical assaulting behavior or biting which cannot be curbed
- Invasive medical procedures or nursing assistance
- Daily seizures or other recurring medical conditions/issues
- Incontinence with no provisions for diapers or pull-ups

Please note some Nor-West programs may require participants to navigate or be exposed to elements that are beyond our control. These elements might not be suitable for all participants. However, in such cases, we will make accommodations if they are available. Examples of such elements include climbing stairs, walking long distances, exposure to varying temperatures and weather conditions, animal encounters, strobe lights, smoke, loud sounds or music, and excessive crowds. Please be aware that Nor-West reserves the right to limit participation in any program or trip based on safety concerns and available staffing.

SPECIAL OLYMPIC POLICY:

Nor-West conducts training programs throughout the year for Special Olympics events. The Nor-West Special Olympic program is made up of two categories: Team and Skills Group. Athletes will practice and compete in an appropriate division at Special Olympic competitions. Athletes ready and capable of competitive play will be selected for team competitions. Those who require additional training in team concepts will be placed into the Skills Group.

Special Olympics of New York requires varying staff ratios (coach/athlete) depending on the event registration. Nor-West will make every effort to register all athletes into the appropriate competition; however, if staffing ratios cannot be maintained, then team moves from one group to another for competition registration may need to be made.

Athletes who train with Nor-West are expected to compete with Nor-West at Special Olympic competitions. Athletes should make every effort to attend the competitions; the team depends on athlete participation.

*Note: Participants must have a current Special Olympics Medical, Athlete Release, and Communicable Disease Waiver on file at the Nor-West office. Special Olympics will not allow athletes to participate without current forms on file.

RESTROOM SUPERVISION POLICY:

We serve a wide range of ability levels in our programs. Some of our participants are independent in the restroom, while others require a significant level of support with toileting. Our programs operate in public buildings, schools, and recreation centers, and the general public often has access to the restrooms that we use. We need to protect our participants in public restrooms while at the same time avoiding placing our staff in a potentially compromising situation where they are alone.

With this in mind, we have established the following policies regarding supervision/assistance in restrooms:

1. Adult and older teen participants who are ambulatory and verbal with mild cognitive impairments can go unescorted to the restroom.
2. All participants under 14 will be escorted by one staff to the restroom. Single staff are to check the restroom as the participant enters but will wait outside the room for the participant.
3. Any participant who requires physical assistance (e.g., diaper change, soiled clothes, etc.) in the restroom will always be accompanied by two staff members.
4. In situations where one staff member needs to check on a participant in the restroom, they will use our “15-second rule.” They will enter the restroom and ask the participant if they need assistance, remaining in for no more than 15 seconds. If they require assistance for any reason, the staff member will leave to secure a second staff member to assist in the restroom.

MEDICATION ADMINISTRATION:

Nor-West staff cannot administer medication at our programs. Participants requiring medication while at our programs will need to self-administer, or caregivers should plan to administer medications before/after programs.

TRANSPORTATION:

Transportation routes will be created based on the registrations on a first-come, first-served basis. We will close transportation when either vehicle capacity is reached OR the route time from first pick-up to the program site reaches 75 minutes. We will not allocate a vehicle to any program if there are fewer than three requests for transportation, and we may not use a particular stop if there is only one request. Unfortunately, we cannot provide transportation outside of our catchment area.

In certain situations, home pick-up/drop-off for participants may be accommodated, depending upon the route, time of day, and home location. Please contact the Director to discuss possible arrangements.

Nor-West vehicles are equipped with video cameras as part of the agency’s risk management protocols. Anyone boarding the bus agrees to be videotaped for review, as needed, by the Nor-West administration.

At Nor-West, we are committed to treating all participants with the utmost respect and dignity. This commitment extends to individuals of all races, religions, national origins, creeds, ages, ethnic backgrounds, sexual orientations, and disabilities.