



# MENTAL RETARDATION BULLETIN

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SUBJECT

OPPORTUNITIES AND SUPPORTS FOR OLDER PERSONS WITH MENTAL RETARDATION

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## SCOPE:

County Mental Health/Mental Retardation Administrators  
Area Agency on Aging Directors  
Community Homes Directors  
State Intermediate Care Facilities for the Mentally Retarded  
(ICF/MR) Directors  
Non-State Operated Intermediate Care Facilities for  
the Mentally Retarded (ICF/MR) Directors  
Base Service Unit Directors  
Adult Day Care Center Directors  
Vocational Facility Directors

## PURPOSE:

The purpose of this bulletin is to provide guidelines on opportunities and supports for older persons with mental retardation.

## BACKGROUND:

As individuals age, their goals, needs and choices may change. People who reach a point in life where they choose to retire from the general work force or other organized group activities should have the opportunity to enter into other valued roles, activities, routines and relationships in their community, in accordance with age and cultural norms.

Activities and routines which are consistent with the changing personal needs, interests and physical condition of older persons are as important for individuals with mental retardation, as they are for the general public. Local agencies need to ensure that appropriate opportunities and supports are made available to individuals with mental retardation who choose to enter into activities outside the realm of work and other group activities.

COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS REGARDING THIS BULLETIN SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO:

Appropriate Regional Mental Retardation Program Manager

Guidance and clarification regarding the provision of opportunities and supports for older persons with mental retardation are needed to ensure compliance with Federal and State requirements.

ALTERNATIVES:

Persons with mental retardation have the right to choose to retire from the work force or organized group activities due to age-related or health-related reasons. Based on the person's decision, the County Mental Health and Mental Retardation Program is responsible to ensure that the person continues to receive opportunities and supports designed to assist that person to meet life goals, needs and aspirations.

Alternative roles, activities and routines for people who choose to retire from work or organized activities may also include but are not limited to:

- a change in paid and/or volunteer work in community businesses or organizations, full or part time.
- enriching family and other personal relationships.
- involvement in community organizations and activities.
- developing new interests, hobbies and learning skills.
- participation in generic activities for older persons.
- attending to health and fitness.
- travel and other leisure activities.
- spiritual development.

PLANNING:

Opportunities and supports for older persons with mental retardation are based on an individual program plan which documents:

- The individual's choice to retire from the work force or other organized activities.
- The individual's interests in alternative roles, activities and routines.
- The strategies to be used to address the individual's pursuit of his or her interests.
- Any additional support needed to assure the individual's health and safety.

OPPORTUNITIES AND SUPPORTS FOR OLDER PERSONS IN ICF'S/MR:

Opportunities and supports reimbursed through the Intermediate Care Facility for the Mentally Retarded (ICF/MR) program must conform with active treatment requirements defined in 42 CFR 483.440.

Under HCFA Transmittal No. 212, Appendix J (relating to Survey Procedures and Interpretive Guidelines for ICF's/MR), HCFA directs inspectors to be sensitive to the total life span of the individual when reviewing an

older person's unique needs. Additionally, these guidelines acknowledge that active treatment for older persons may increasingly need to focus on:

- 1) Interventions and activities which promote physical wellness and fitness.
- 2) Socialization and tasks that stress maintaining coordination and skills.
- 3) Reduction of the rate of loss of skills.

Other provisions within the ICF/MR regulations and Federal guidelines permit active treatment in generic programs and opportunities or supports. The regulations promote individual choice, recipient participation in service planning and support the provision of individualized services for older persons with mental retardation.

OPPORTUNITIES AND SUPPORTS FOR OLDER PERSONS IN COMMUNITY HOMES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH MENTAL RETARDATION AND FAMILY LIVING HOMES:

The Community Homes for Individuals with Mental Retardation and Family Living Homes regulations, 55 Pa. Code Chapters 6400 and 6500, require all individuals to receive services based on an individual habilitation plan. Training, day services and opportunities for recreational and social activities are to be consistent with individual habilitation plan goals and objectives. The regulations encourage individual choice and participation in the program planning process and utilization of generic services which support the provision of individualized opportunities and supports.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

The County Mental Health and Mental Retardation Program, in cooperation and conjunction with the Area Agency on Aging and providers of service, have the responsibility to ensure that:

- Opportunities and support activities offer the person a sense of challenge and self-worth.
- There are varied and individualized alternatives for the person to choose.
- Supported resources are available to assist the person find satisfaction in the activities he or she selects.
- Opportunities and support activities are modified to meet changing conditions.
- An individual's choice to retire from the workforce or other organized activities is not used as a rationale for promoting inactivity or custodial care.
- Provider staff receive appropriate orientation, training and supervision.