

## Information and Options Counseling (I&OC) Guidance

One of the key requirements to providing Information and Options Counseling is that at least one (1) Certified Options Counselor is employed to provide individual Options Counseling to adults age 60+. Eligible clients receiving Options Counseling must be registered in ARMS and their service tracked in ARMS. Additionally, all unregistered Information and Assistance contacts are reported monthly in ARMS.

A provider accepting HCCBG funding for Information and Options Counseling is required to meet the service standard requirements regardless of the amount of funding received. Utilizing multiple funding sources to support a service is not an uncommon practice in the aging network. However, the provider must adhere to the requirements of each fund source utilized.

### Question:

Q- A provider has six (6) certified Options Counselors on staff. Two (2) staff are supported through HCCBG I&OC funds and four (4) are funded with local resources. Are all six (6) staff required to report every Options Counseling referral in ARMS and these client records be monitored by the AAA?

A- No, only the two (2) staff supported with HCCBG funds and designated to provide the I&OC service are required to report to ARMS and consequently be monitored by the AAA.

### Question:

Q- A provider has one (1) certified Options Counselor supported by Family Caregiver Support Program (FCSP) funds. Can this staff serve as the Options Counselor for the I&OC service funded by HCCBG?

A- First, providers receiving any HCCBG funding for I&OC must have at least one (1) Certified Options Counselor on staff. Second, I&OC providers must report Options Counseling referrals conducted by the counselor for all adults age 60+. Lastly, Options Counselors funded 100% under FCSP, may serve **caregivers only** which does not meet the target population defined in the I&OC Service Standards (see IV. Client Eligibility). Therefore the answer is no.

An Options Counselor can be supported through blended funding of FCSP and HCCBG, however, the position must be budgeted to reflect the estimated portion of time spent serving each targeted population. If this method is utilized, then the reporting requirements and monitoring for both I&OC and FCSP must be followed.

**Remember** - Certification of an Options Counselor is a separate process and is not tied to a specific funding source. The recertification requirement of completing eight (8) Options Counseling Referrals in a two-year period **is not limited** to counseling provided to eligible I&OC clients through the HCCBG (i.e. age 60+). For example, a 55 year-old individual receiving options counseling counts toward recertification but is not reported in ARMS nor monitored for the I&OC service funded by HCCBG.

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### Question:

Q- Will Information and Options Counseling (I&OC) be monitored in SFY 2014-15?

A- 1) The first year of I&OC service implementation is SFY 2014-15. An I&OC provider scheduled for monitoring during SFY 2014-15 will receive a Technical Assistance (TA) visit from the AAA to go over monitoring requirements, but it **will not** be a formal monitoring visit. AAA staff will go through the monitoring tool and information will be reviewed within the context of TA. A TA report will be written but it **will not** be a formal monitoring report. There will be no identification of violation of policies and no corrective actions.

2) I&OC providers scheduled for monitoring after SFY 2014-15 will receive a formal monitoring visit by the AAA.

### Question:

Q- Will new providers who come on board with the I&OC service after July 1, 2014 get a grace period before being monitored?

A- Yes. Any new provider will receive a Technical Assistance visit from the AAA during the first year of service implementation. After that, the provider will be monitored as scheduled by the AAA.

### Question:

Q- Is a provider of Home and Community Care Block Grant (HCCBG) services who does not provide I&OC eligible to have staff become certified Options Counselors?

A- Yes. The provider's staff would complete the initial application process as outlined in the Information and Options Counseling Standards and submit the application for approval.

### Question:

Q- Individuals wishing to participate in Options Counseling certification training must be with an agency/organization that is a member of a Community Resource Connections for Aging and Disabilities (CRC) or affiliated with an Area Agency on Aging (AAA). What is meant by "affiliated"?

A- Affiliation means having a formal working relationship with the AAA such as through the funding of services, contractual agreements, interagency agreements or other circumstances as deemed appropriate by the State.

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**Question:**

Q- Is there an expectation that Area Agencies on Aging will provide Options Counseling?

A- 1) As a general question, the answer is no, there is not an expectation by the Division of Aging and Adult Services. Staff of AAAs may become certified Options Counselors and therefore be qualified to provide the service.

2) If this question is specific to Information and Options Counseling through the HCCBG, the answer is that it would be determined through the county planning committee's process for selecting services and providers of services.

**Question:**

Q- The I&OC Standards require 10 hours of annual training for staff providing the service which occurs on a fiscal year basis. Options Counselors are required to have 20 hours of continuing education training within their two-year certification period to be eligible for recertification. How are these two reconciled?

A- Options Counselors can use the 10 hours of annual training toward meeting the 20 hours of continuing education training within their two-year certification period to be eligible for recertification. The counselor's certification period may not line up with the 10 hours of annual training. Ultimately, it is the counselor's responsibility to obtain the 20 hours of continuing education. This may be a combination of hours accrued through annual training as well as other continuing education training credit in order to meet the Options Counseling recertification requirement.