

# ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT FOR A GROUP HOME SETTING



I hope the information contained in this handbook is helpful. The information provided is not meant to be all inclusive. It is only meant as a guide to get the creativity of our many dedicated caregivers flowing. One mind and ideas is good, but as a community of caregivers the ideas are multiplied! Thank you for your dedication and hard work.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

People with developmental disabilities have the right to enjoy the same quality of life as the rest of society. This can be encouraged through active engagement.

It is difficult to define the term “active engagement” but the outcome is not. In 2008 the Michigan Department of Community Mental Health issued a concept paper which stated: “Their lives must be supported through meaningful engagement, rather than being left to be aimless or thrust into activities that routinely offer a convenience for their caregivers and do not promote their opportunity for meaningful involvement and participation at the highest level of personal capacity and interest” (page 8, *Focusing A Partnership for Renewal and Recommitment to Quality and Community in the Michigan Public Mental Health System*). Caregivers have a responsibility to provide our consumers with support and opportunity to participate to their highest practicable level of ability: to help them actively engage.

Active engagement can be applied broadly to all activities that affect the consumer during the day. This includes for example their basic activities of daily living (ADL), their leisure activities, and their formal programs (i.e. daily exercise). It also includes activities outside the home that provide a chance for interaction with people as well as their environment. This engagement outside the home is the area of focus for this handbook. To help our consumers fulfill their rightful role as a community member they need to experience inclusion, participate in meaningful activities, and contribute to their community.

## **THE BASICS**

**Inclusion:** Simply stated inclusion is being included – being involved. No matter what the activity or location look for ways to help the consumer be involved. The more they are involved the more likely community members will be to interact and recognize them for the people they are.

**Meaningful Activity:** An activity is a deed that involves a direct experience. An activity happens with the person, it does not happen to them. Involvement is an essential part of a meaningful activity.

**Service to Community:** Service can be described as a helpful activity. Volunteering allows a person to ‘give back’ to their community. This helps to foster a sense of belonging.

The following sections will further explore these basics.

## **How to Foster Inclusion**

1. Always approach involvement in a manner that ensures their self respect, sense of worth and their dignity
2. Find a way for the consumer to participate in as many parts of the activity as possible.
3. If they are able to speak encourage them to do so, interpreting only as necessary for success.
4. Utilize adaptive /assistive materials that may be available at each location (i.e. picture or Braille menus) or bring items with the consumer and take the time to use them (i.e. communication books). If possible obtain copies of items to be used and take them home to practice to increase chance of success in the community (i.e. practice pointing at items on picture menu)
5. Always make sure that if the consumer has a way to communicate with staff if they:
  - a) need help
  - b) need to use the bathroom
  - c) want to leave
6. If the setting for the activity is new it may be helpful for staff to ‘scout it out’ ahead of time to see what might need to be brought with to aid in success, where to park, where to sit, etc.
7. When going into the community, try to utilize things that are in the setting already to provide necessary physical structure (i.e. if consumer is distractible when they eat use a booth that faces away from the door) for increased participation and success.
8. Use gestures and verbal cues for prompting when necessary. If unsuccessful with these limited prompts, use hand over hand guidance (i.e. if using a picture menu set the menu in front of consumer and gesture to the menu saying “what do you want for lunch”. If no attempt to point to item gently support hand and arm, isolate a finger for pointing and begin touching pictures asking “do you want a hamburger; do you want chicken” and wait for yes / no response). If you know this may take a few minutes ask to take the picture menu with you and step out of line. Follow above process until wanted item is identified. Have consumer accompany you to the counter and assist them to point to the item they would like). How to break down an activity to provide assistance that fosters inclusion will be covered further in the next section on engagement through activity.

## **How to Promote Engagement Through Activity**

1. An activity must be individually defined. The same activity may be used for multiple consumers but the supports / modifications will be different based on individual needs. When an activity is individualized it is to be meaningful, understandable, and promote independence.
2. Avoid becoming ‘stuck’ repeating the same activity the same way. Change it up so that the consumer has a different experience each time. Novel or new experiences are alerting and exciting. They help to prevent boredom and elicit increased internal motivation to participate.
3. Even mundane activities can have a sense of fun. Try to enable pleasure. If fun / enjoyment are had, then the activity is a success. It is not a perfect end product that should be the focus. Rather look at the involvement in the process.

### **Examine the Activity**

Ask yourself:

- a) What is necessary to successfully complete the activity?
- b) Does the consumer have the necessary ability / skill?
- c) What can the consumer successfully complete and what will they need help with?
- d) Of the items that they need help with which one will be the easiest to learn or complete successfully?
- e) What can I (staff) do to assist them with this item (see step ‘d’ above)?

This process can be used with any activity, but the answers may be different for each consumer. Also, it is a good idea to reevaluate an activity from time to time, to keep building on new skills learned. Remember the focus is to help them participate at their highest level.

### **How to Simplify a Step of an Activity (Grade the Activity)**

Grading is a progression of changing an activity to be simpler or more difficult. It may result in increase / decrease need for staff support, the need for adaptive equipment, or the need to eliminate steps. Always look for a way to promote success and involvement. You are building a scaffold of expectation and acceptance – the expectation that you believe they have the capability to actively engage, and the acceptance that their best is good enough.

- a) Does the physical structure need to be modified? (i.e. do they need to shop in a smaller store, do they need a picture sequencing card showing what to do next, do they need to have 1:1 staffing while completing activity)
- b) Do they need parts of activity pre completed? (i.e. begin to fill bags when packing groceries so that they stay upright and open; Put a blouse on hanger for them to hang back on clothing rack when choosing a new top)
- c) Do they need visual strategies to help them understand the concept of what the next step is? For example asking someone to put the groceries into a bag may not be successful because they may not understand what groceries are, or the concept of what into means. However, showing them by putting cans in a bag while gesturing to a second prepared bag and saying put the cans into the bag may be successful
- d) Consider the physical limitations of the consumer. For example, if they are already tired from walking from the van to the grocery store you may need to have them sit and take a break. If they have upper extremity weakness have them assist with putting groceries in bag, but have them pack the lighter boxed items rather than the can goods.

Once the activity skills being worked on have been successfully learned, look to increase the challenge (have the consumer do more). This increase is important as it helps to prevent boredom. The changes can be simple.

- 1) use the same materials but in a different setting (i.e. if painting post at community garden now paint a picnic table)
- 2) Increase the communication component (if possible)
- 3) Practice the same skill in a different setting (i.e. if going to MacDonald's and using picture menu, try going to Arbys' and utilizing a picture menu there).
- 4) Increase the length of time spent completing the activity

Following are some sample activity ideas with examples of how to break the activity down to promote inclusion and involvement (active engagement!)

## **Sample Activity #1**

### **Going to the Library**

- 1) Assist consumer in getting a library card
  - a. if verbal have them attempt to answer questions from library employee, assist only as needed
  - b. if not verbal, and do not have a way of communicating that would be understood (i.e. dynavox that speaks), answer the questions for them. When doing so stand slightly behind and to the side. This way when the employee looks up to ask a question they will be looking at the consumer even though you are answering (if you stand to the side the employee will be turning their head away from the consumer to look at you – this is not inclusion).
- 2) Take the consumer (with their library card) to select books. If a consumer is unable to look at books independently select books that interest them, and staff may read them to them in the home.
- 3) Have consumer carry the books to check them out if they are able. If they are w/c bound and unable to carry find away to place them on their lap or in the wheelchair with them. (i.e. Use a bag or small box to put them in – a box can go on the lap, a bag can be held or placed over handles of wheelchair)
- 4) Escort consumer to check out desk.
- 5) Assist if necessary to present books (assist will be greater if needed to protect books from damage).

Have consumer present library card using hand over hand assist if necessary. In addition to checking out books utilize other areas of the library as the consumer shows interest. For example a consumer may want to look at the latest hair style magazine, look at world atlases, use the internet, or touch and feel the different textures of the many puppets.

## **Sample Activity #2**

### **Shopping**

A few words about shopping in general: As shopping is an activity that is part of daily life for the majority of the community, it is important that each consumer be given the opportunity to go shopping. If a consumer does not like crowds, noise, and bright lights going to Wal-Mart would not promote participation. Instead they may feel overwhelmed and distressed. For this consumer a trip to a neighborhood grocery store or a drug store may be more enjoyable.

- 1) Make a schedule for the home showing which consumer's turn it is. When making this schedule consider the individual needs and limitations of each consumer before deciding which shopping trip they will go on. Remember that the focus is active engagement.
- 2) If consumer is capable physically encourage them to push the cart
- 3) Make up a 'standard' list of items bought on a regular basis. Use a picture list if needed to allow consumer to find matching items on shelves and place in cart. Use a page protector and put the list inside it. Place on a clipboard and set this up in the front of cart (or hold on lap in wheelchair). Have a dry erase pen tied to the clipboard. As item is placed in cart consumer can find the item on list and cross off with dry erase marker. (Once home have consumer wipe the page protector clean and it will be ready to use again).
- 4) Ask consumer to make item choices when possible
- 5) Ask consumer to assist with placing items from cart onto the conveyor belt or cashier's shelf.
- 6) Have consumer present any bottle returns or coupons to the cashier
- 7) Have consumer hand money to cashier if possible, use hand over hand assist if necessary
- 8) Have consumer swipe bridge cards through machine (staff may still need to enter pins) if being used
- 9) Have cashier give receipt to consumer.
- 10) Have consumer assist with packing items
- 11) Have consumer assist with carrying bags or pushing cart to the van.

### **Sample Activity #3**

#### **Spa Days**

- 1) Make arrangements to meet at a pre determined location (i.e. picnic area of a park) with peers and staff from another home.
- 2) Go shopping and have consumer select a new nail polish color
- 3) Meet at the predetermined location. Staff will have other items needed to groom nails, style hair, perfume, etc with them.
- 4) Once at the location consumers will be organized so they can see each other (i.e. in a circle) and staff will switch consumers so the one doing the 'spa treatment' will not be someone who normally does their cares.
- 5) When completed take a group picture and see that each participant gets a copy.
- 6) Picnic lunch could follow if weather and time permit

### **Sample Activity #4**

#### **Going to a Medical Appointment**

- 1) Have consumer greet and tell their name to receptionist to check in. If unable to speak their name (or if shy) provide the consumer with a name card on which their name is neatly written. Be sure to use titles such as Mr. or Ms. The name should be neatly written or typed. The card can be laminated so that it lasts. Do not decorate the card, add stickers, etc. It should look professional and dignified.
- 2) Have consumer choose where to sit in waiting room
- 3) Have consumer select a magazine or book to look at if they want one
- 4) When their name is called, if they are able, have them walk ahead of staff and into the treatment area first.
- 5) If in a wheelchair, stand slightly behind and to the side so that the medical personnel are looking at them while talking. If possible sit or kneel to bring yourself at an equal level with the consumer
- 6) When completed have consumer check out (again use name card if needed).

**Other activity suggestions /locations (without individualized steps)**

**Refer to instructions on promoting engagement through activity and use activity samples to break suggested activities below into steps for consumer success, as needed for individual consumers.**

- Post Office (mail or pick up letters, buy stamps, write family and mail to them)
- Concerts (free city concerts, school or church concerts, out to lunch events)
- Movies (be sure they participate in selection of movie, buying and handing ticket to ticket taker)
- Bowling
- Community marathon walks (usually have a shortened distance available, usually allow w/c participation), don't hesitate to assist the consumer in obtaining pledges if for charity
- Grow pumpkins to exhibit at the county fair
- Skiters
- Farmer's Market
- School events (plays, concerts, marching band practice, sporting events and practices)
- Submit newspaper articles (what done for community service projects, what it is like to live with a disability)
- Out to eat (request picture menus if needed)
- Take pop bottles back
- Recycling
- Community picnics
- Local church events and picnics (i.e. during Norway City Wide garage sales a local church sets up and provides free hot dogs and lemonade)
- Garage Sales (shop them and have them)
- Vote (and attend local debates and rallies to learn about the candidates)

## **Service Activities**

Completing service activities is a way to promote community inclusion and community pride. The activities available are limited but with creativity they are available. The following is a list of suggested service activities to use as a starting point.

Animal Shelter (walk the dogs, play with cats and puppies, or shred paper for bedding)

Help place small flags on gravesites of veterans (if unable to actually put the flags in the ground may be able to hold a box on lap with flags while another consumer places them in position)

Help clean up of these gravesites following the holidays (when flags are taken down)

Make cards or obtain donated cards for soldiers or the elderly. Deliver cards for soldiers to organizations that bulk mail them. Take cards for elderly to nursing home or community center for personal delivery

Assist in cleaning Salvation Army building, Habitat for Humanity offices

Assist with set-up for local soup kitchens or at churches when they offer community meals.

Work in community gardens or city golf course

See resource list for organization contact information and more suggestions

## Community Resources

**Use these resources to obtain up to date schedules of community events  
in your area**

### **Dickinson County**

Dickinson County chamber of commerce

[www.dickinsonchamber.com](http://www.dickinsonchamber.com)

Go to link for calendar

Dickinson Public Library

[www.dcl-lib.org](http://www.dcl-lib.org)

Go to link for news & events (left hand side of page)

(Breitung Township Schools)

[www.kigsford.org](http://www.kigsford.org)

Go to picture icon of Athletic Department or click on Athletics in word bar located top part of page

Use this to find the practice and game schedules for all athletic events

(Iron Mountain Schools)

[www.imschools.org](http://www.imschools.org)

Go to the school of interest (they have all schools in district listed) and then click on Athletics and then onto Schedule

Use this to find the practice and game schedules for all athletic events

(Norway – Vulcan area schools)

[www.norway.k12.mius](http://www.norway.k12.mius)

Go to the school of interest and click

Then click onto calendar

Midtown Mall promotion coordinator (call for updates on events)

906-779-9667

### **Iron County**

County website

[www.iron.org](http://www.iron.org)

Go to camber of commerce and click

Go to calendar of events

West Iron District Library

116 W. Genesee Street

Iron River, MI 49935

906-265-2831

<http://als2.web.uproc.lib.mi.us/WestIron>

Click on calendar of events on left side of home page

West Iron County Middle & High School

[www.westiron.org](http://www.westiron.org)

Go to athletics and then to schedule

Use this to find the practice and game schedules for all athletic events

### **Menominee County**

County website

[www.menomineecounty.com](http://www.menomineecounty.com)

Go to news and announcements

Menominee and Marinette Chamber of Commerce

<http://mandmchamber.com>

Click onto Events in top word bar

Spies Public Library

940 First Street

Menominee Michigan 49858

906-863-3911

[www.uproc.lib.mi.us/spies](http://www.uproc.lib.mi.us/spies)

Scroll down page until find library calendar and click open

Menominee Area Public Schools

[www.menominee.k12.mi.us](http://www.menominee.k12.mi.us)

Click on athletics in the word bar

Then click on calendar icon for month of interest

Use this to find the practice and game schedules for all athletic events

Stephenson Area Public Schools

[www.stephenson.k12.mi.us](http://www.stephenson.k12.mi.us)

On left hand side of page click on eagle sports and then choose sport interested in. You can then choose schedule

To find a schedule that shows where in the building specific events are occurring you can also look to left hand side of home page and click on school calendar. Then click onto the facility option.

## Community Service Resources

Use this list of suggested contacts to explore / set up service opportunities. Remember to get a signed release prior to taking consumer to volunteer site.

It is advisable to first contact the agency to see what might be available.

Beneath each resource you will find an example of an activity and how consumer might actively engage. Don't limit yourself to only the example when contacting the agencies. Be creative! Ask: How can we help you. Be sure to keep an eye open for any other opportunities that may be in your community.

NOTE: Although listed by county the activities can overlap from one county to the next. It would be beneficial for home managers to be in contact with one another and share information about volunteer opportunities, so that they are selected based on the best way to meet individual consumer needs.

### **Dickinson County**

The Caring House  
1305 Prospect Avenue  
Iron Mountain, MI  
906-774-1112

**Suggested Activity:** Assemble personal care welcome packages

**Active Engagement Suggestions:** set up collection stations for items in grocery and drug stores (get approval from store management ahead of time). Limit the time they are set up (i.e. 2 weeks or 30 days) and collect them. Sort items and place in bags. Take to the Caring House for delivery.

Salvation Army Bread of Life Center  
221 E. A. Street  
Iron Mountain, MI  
906-779-5717

**Suggested Activity:** Offer to help with cleaning of building, organizing shelves, simple office work, or shredding. Participate as bell ringers (request indoor location for safety from slippery conditions) at Christmas time

**Active Engagement Suggestions:** Help to rotate, clean and stock food pantry shelves. Fold and /or sort clothing items.

VFW Post 4581  
730 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Norway, MI  
906-563-5641

**Suggested Activity:** Placing flags on graves of soldiers, sending cards to soldiers serving  
**zActive Engagement Suggestions:** Pick up flags from designated person. Go to cemetery and if able put the flags on site. If unable to place the flags they could hold a box with the flags on their lap and another consumer or staff could place as they go grave to grave. Consumers can make cards or use donated cards of thanks (or holiday cards if seasonal) and sign them, put into envelopes, seal envelopes (a flag sticker could be used to hold flap if unable to seal independently) and deliver to designated person for inclusion in mailings overseas. Ask for local contact person when contacting VFW

Habitat for Humanity  
427 S. Stephenson Avenue  
Iron Mountain, MI  
906-779-5377

**Active Engagement Suggestions:** Offer to assist with general office tasks, cleaning, shredding, sorting, collating flyers, posting benefit flyers  
**Suggested Activity:** If consumer is able may offer to assist with data entry on computer. Shredding and general cleaning can be accomplished from w/c or standing, with assistance as necessary. If posting benefit flyers always check with management / owners first. Have consumer ask if able. If unable have them present (and if possible they can give the flyer to the person for review while staff asks for permission)

Restore; Habitat for Humanity  
113 S. Milwaukee Avenue  
Breitung Township, MI  
906-774-2867

**Suggested Activity:** Light stocking, cleaning, organizing, sorting. Grounds beautification  
**Active Engagement Suggestions:** Police the grounds for trash (staff will assist in actual pick up for safety as necessary; gloves should be worn by consumer for picking up trash). A long handle (i.e. from a broom) with a spike on the end makes a handy pickup tool for paper as the consumer can stab the paper from standing or while seated in wheelchair). Plant flowers (if plant them be sure to come back regularly to water and maintain them). Straighten shelves. Dust stock (can use long handled feather duster to accomplish from wheelchair)

Oak Crest Golf Course  
N 1475 US 8  
Norway Township, MI  
906-563-5891

**Suggested Activity:** Volunteer to assist with routine daily activity or set up, grounds clean up, beautification projects.

**Active Engagement Suggestions:** Wash golf balls, put score cards / pencils on golf carts, maintain flower beds (deadhead flowers, weeds, plant in season), sort golf balls (damaged from non-damaged)

The Soup Kitchen  
1<sup>st</sup> Presbyterian Church  
395 Hamilton Avenue  
Kingsford, MI 49802  
906-774-4211

(They so a community dinner every Monday)

**Suggested Activity:** Offer to help with set up or clean up

**Active Engagement Suggestions:** Set up dishes, tables, chairs, utensils; clean up by pre rinsing dishes, stacking dishwasher (if used) taking trash out to dumpster, wiping tables, folding chairs, etc.

Denise Formolo  
Community Corrections Officer  
906-774-9920

**Suggested Activity:** Assist with making items for children's Christmas Party

**Active Engagement Suggestions:** Complete community service blanket kits (from Walmart, in the sewing department [there is no cost]– if approved by Denise). Be sure to let consumer pick out the kit(s) they want to complete, assist as necessary to be successful in completion and have consumer hand deliver them to drop off point. Could also assist with making stockings, name tags, and wrapping the presents if needed.

Denise coordinates the program.

### **Iron County**

American Legion  
916 River Avenue  
Iron Mountain, MI  
906-774-5797

**Suggested Activity:** Placing flags on graves of soldiers, sending cards to soldiers serving

**Active Engagement Suggestions:** Pick up flags from designated person. Go to cemetery and if able put the flags on site. If unable to place the flags they could hold a box with the flags on their lap and another consumer or staff could place as they go grave to grave.

Consumers can make cards or use donated cards of thanks (or holiday cards if seasonal) and sign them, put into envelopes, seal envelopes (a flag sticker could be used to hold flap if unable to seal independently) and deliver to designated person for inclusion in mailings overseas. Ask for local contact person when contacting Legion

George Young Golf Course  
159 Youngs Lane  
Stambaugh Township, MI  
906-265-3401

**Suggested Activity:** Volunteer to assist with routine daily activity or set up, grounds clean up, beautification projects.

**Active Engagement Suggestions:** Wash golf balls, put score cards / pencils on golf carts, maintain flower beds (deadhead flowers, weeds, plant in season), sort golf balls (damaged from non-damaged)

### **Menominee County**

St. Vincent DePaul  
1619 Main Street  
Marinette, WI 54143  
715-735-6955

**Suggested Activity:** Offer to help with cleaning of building, organizing shelves, simple office work, or shredding.

**Active Engagement Suggestions:** Help to rotate, clean and stock food pantry shelves. Fold and /or sort clothing items. If they have items that need sorting or straightening (i.e. boxes of buttons or tangled jewelry chains) they may allow our consumer to pick them up and take back home to complete, and then redeliver back to them at a later date.

Country Bible Church (talk to Kevin Newlin about other possible scenarios)  
N5636 US Highway  
Wallace, MI 49893  
906-788-4809

**Suggested Activity:** Fold and collate weekly bulletins, general cleaning, site beautification

**Active Engagement Suggestions:** Pick up and deliver bulletins, dust woodwork, police grounds for trash pick up, plant flowers (be sure to return regularly to maintain the flowers)

### **ALL COUNTIES**

Local churches may need to have weekly service bulletins folded and collated. These may be able to be picked up once printed (set day) and taken home to complete. Be sure our consumers participate in pick up and delivery if this activity can be arranged.