

I. POLICY

It is the policy of Unique Caring (UC) to identify and remove barriers to program accessibility as well as to ensure that all individuals receive the necessary assistance to successfully access behavioral health services. It is also the policy of UC to provide access to handicapped persons by ensuring that the building remains free of architectural barriers within certain limitations and provide for special assistance to handicapped persons.

II. PURPOSE

To provide all individuals receiving Specialized Foster Care and Employment, Employment & Community Services, personnel and other stakeholders the appropriate access as related to unnecessary barriers and promote accessibility, remove barriers to the persons served, and ensure that handicapped individuals receive whatever help and assistance necessary to successfully garner services offered by UC.

III. PROCEDURES / STANDARDS

1. UC will demonstrate accessibility planning that addresses the needs of the:
 - a. Persons served
 - b. Personnel
 - c. Other stakeholders
2. UC will address accessibility issues in order to:
 - a. Enhance the quality of life for individuals served in all programs and services.
 - b. Implement non-discriminatory employment practices.
 - c. Meet all legal, regulatory, and accreditation requirements.
 - d. Meet the expectations of stakeholders in the area of accessibility.
3. UC will actively identify and remove architectural and attitudinal barriers to people with disabilities in its programs and services according to applicable statutes.
4. UC recognizes and promotes efforts to accommodate the broad spectrum of disabilities possessed by its clients and to foster their participation in the identification and removal of barriers.
5. UC will promote the recruitment of people with disabilities as board members, employees, contractors, and employees.
6. UC will display appropriate signage, which shall direct those persons served, employees, contractors and visitors with disabilities to request appropriate assistance. Individuals with visual impairments shall be assisted by oral means, large print documents, etc.
7. UC will support the Board of Directors, employees, contractors, and clients and their representatives in community efforts which promote social and economic opportunities

for people with various disabilities and impediments, for the goal of reducing stigma and increasing public knowledge.

8. UC shall ensure that its Administrative Offices and its sites of the service provider's area accessible to individuals with disabilities and make all reasonable efforts to meet the needs of those who use assistive devices. If needed, UC will furnish materials in alternate formats and/or assistive devices to afford individuals with disabilities equal opportunity to participate in, and secure the benefits of services, supports or employment offered by UC.

UC Site Locations and Architectural Environmental Descriptions

A. Unique Caring

1. UC offices and receptionist area are located on the 1st floor. There is a wheelchair ramp leading to the 1st floor. The facility consists of one floor: The offices are located on this floor. Handicapped clients have access to the buildings and can receive all services there.
2. The parking lot has at least two designated spaces for handicapped individuals. Entrance from the parking lot to the front of the building is barrier free.
3. Security cameras are positioned in all UC parking lots and are monitored

Annual Update(s)

A. The Accessibility Plan Review addresses and includes the following:

1. Attitudinal barriers;
2. Architectural barriers;
3. Environmental barriers;
4. Financial barriers;
5. Employment barriers;
6. Communication barriers;
7. Technological barriers;
8. Transportation barriers;
9. Community integration
10. Any other barrier identified by the:
 - i. Persons served;
 - ii. Personnel;
 - iii. Other stakeholders.

Input to promote accessibility and identify barriers is obtained through:

1. Discussion with persons served, stakeholders and personnel
2. Consumer Advisory Council Meetings
3. Community events
4. Staff meetings

5. Customer service and consumer satisfaction surveys. Input from persons served and stakeholders is incorporated into service planning, policy change, in addition to input from the persons served, the report also includes action taken and time lines for removing barriers. (Current accommodations include literature translated into Spanish)
- B. The Accessibility Plan is reviewed at least annually and updated as needed by the Health and Safety and Quality Management Committee and reported to Administration. It identifies progress made to remove identified barriers and areas needing improvement.
 - C. Physical inspection of each facility is completed annually.
 - D. Requests for reasonable accommodations are:
 1. Identified – Either by the consumer, family member or UC employee. The UC employee will inform the clinical team, Quality Management Committee (QMC) or Administration of the request.
 2. Reviewed – By Clinical team members, QAC, or Administration.
 3. Decided Upon – Action Plan is documented by the Quality Management Committee with formal recommendation(s), persons responsible and time line(s) for completion.
 4. Documented – Requests for accommodations are documented in the Accessibility Plan.
 - E. UC shall ensure the following with regards to individuals with communication impairments:
 1. All services, programs and/or activities shall be accessible and usable to individuals with communication impairments.
 2. Communication aids, alternative communication, including a qualified sign language interpreter or augmentative communication specialist, shall be provided for consumers and family members, and others who are involved in the provision of services and treatment.
 3. Arrangements for the provision of accommodations shall not depend on a request by the consumer or others involved in the treatment.
 4. Accommodations shall be made at the expense of UC (in accordance with its contracts) and:
 - a. Meet the consumer's needs.
 - b. Be compliant with requirements of the *Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA)*.
 - c. Afford accessibility to the building work site and any areas used by consumers.
 - d. Enable consumers to perform all essential program functions.
 - e. Services and relevant documents are provided to the consumer in their primary language, if possible.
 - f. Staff and contractors will receive periodic training on resources and technology available for individuals with communication limitations/impairments.
 - g. TTY/TDD service numbers shall be available and listed with other telephone numbers for programs or services that a deaf consumer may contact by telephone for information or assistance, i.e. Customer Service, Recipient Rights.
 - h. UC strives to offer services to meet the needs of persons with disabilities through the use of technologies and resources that maximize opportunities for participation of the person served. Augmentative and Alternative

Communication strategies (UC) shall be offered to the persons served in the manner for which the person served believes he/she to be most suitable to express their needs, wants, to share feelings, thoughts, ideas and to plan for services. These UC strategies are provided to ensure the person served and allies, advocates and partners full participation in the person-centered planning process. The individual with the disability may be consulted to identify the ways effective communication can be achieved, including how to obtain a particular auxiliary aid or service if UC does not have a community resource for this auxiliary aid.

- F. UC shall ensure the following with regards to individuals with visual or mobility impairments/disabilities:
1. Individuals with disabilities shall not be excluded from services, programs or activities.
 2. UC shall ensure that services and programs are accessible and usable by individuals with disabilities.
 3. Staff will receive periodic training on sensitivity towards individuals with visual and mobility impairments and other disabilities.
 4. Accommodations/Modifications shall be made at the expense of UC and:
 - a. Meet the consumer's needs.
 - b. Afford accessibility to the building, work site, and any areas used by consumers.
 - c. Enable individuals to perform all essential program functions.
 - d. Be compliant with requirements of the *Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990*.
- G. Service Animals shall be permitted to accompany the person served, visitors, and other stakeholders with a disability to the areas of UC involved in the provision of services. A person served with a service animal shall not be segregated from other persons served or staff.
- H. UC's services are geared toward promoting optimal functioning of the individuals seeking help, by resolving and reducing the intensity of psychosocial stressors, cultural differences and conflicts, and by generating options for change, and helping individuals develop the necessary skills for social adjustment. Some of UC's accomplishments are, but not limited to: (1) Reduce the stigma of mental illness for the persons served through Consultation and Education services to the community; and UC provides cross-cultural awareness workshops for this purpose. (2) Increase client awareness regarding mental health issues and the importance of compliance in keeping their appointments and adhering to treatment planning. The Consultation and Education component of the program is directed at helping the Mecklenburg County and surrounding communities through on-going workshops and media presentations to acculturate the mainstream society, and to help them understand mental health issues, substance abuse issues and referral sources available in the community for dealing with these problems. UC provides cross-cultural advocates for needed behavioral health services by presenting community needs to area businesses, providers and funding sources. The advocacy network is accomplished via the UC Board of Directors membership, and UC employees as well as through the various funding sources.
- I. When an auxiliary device or service is requested, UC will give primary consideration to the choice expressed by the individual with disabilities. The request will be honored unless:

1. It can be shown that another effective means of communication is available;
 2. It can be shown that the use of the means chosen would result in a fundamental alteration in the service or support; or
 3. It can show that the use of the means chosen would result in undue financial burden.
- J. Emergency Situations-In the event that a client in the program has a disability which may interfere with his/her ability to leave the building in an emergency, this will be noted and reported at Intake to the assigned Qualified Professional. The QP then becomes responsible for the Client's well-being and safety at all times while the client is in the building
- K. Assessment and Referral
1. A thorough assessment of services must be done to evaluate and ascertain if there are any facets of the program which would not be accessible to the client or if there would be any endangering situations. As such, the appropriateness of client admission must be resolved during the intake evaluation.
 2. A Referral System is in place with a Resource Directory available to staff; this procedure is reviewed at least annually for any necessary changes.
 3. The *Client Satisfaction Survey*, which is conducted annually, includes questions related to service delivery. sdThis promotes identification of barriers/problem areas for clients in accessing services and programs at UC.
- L. When a consumer, visitor or stakeholder who is handicapped has made a request for accommodations and is dissatisfied, he/she can engage in the grievance process outlined in the UC policy *Rights of the Persons Served: Grievance*. Additionally, if the handicapped individual believes their rights have been violated, they can file a Recipient Rights complaint with the county of their residence or file a Medicaid Hearing (if they have Medicaid).

IV. QUALITY ASSURANCE / IMPROVEMENT

UC shall review and monitor adherence to this policy as one element in its management program.

1. The *Performance Improvement: Quality Performance and Improvement* policy includes measures for the monitoring and improvement of the program quality process described in this policy.

V. COMPLIANCE WITH ALL APPLICABLE LAWS

UC and its subcontractors are bound by all applicable local, state and federal laws, rules, regulations and policies, all federal waiver requirements, state and county contractual requirements, policies, and administrative directives, and/or as amended.

VI. LEGAL AUTHORITY AND REFERENCES

All UC policies refer to the most recent policy at the time of writing.

- A. UC Policies:
 1. *Leadership: Customer Service*

- B. Agency /UC or whatever the current acronym is Policies:
 - 1. Customer Service (Approval date January 1, 2019)
 - 2. Accommodations for Individuals with Diverse, Ethnic, and Cultural Backgrounds (Approval date December 20, 2019)
 - 3. Accommodations for individuals with Visual & Mobility Impairments (Approval Date December 20, 2019)
- C. UC policies:
 - 1. *Clinical Practice: Access, Eligibility, Admission, Discharge* (Approval date July 2, 2013)
 - 2. *Administration: Accessibility* (Approval date 12/7/04)
- D. *Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. 2000d et. seq.*
- E. *Title II, Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Public Law 101-336.*

VII. ATTACHMENT

Accessibility Plan 2019-2022