



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Options Counseling Opens Doors to Older Adults and People with Disabilities**

**(Malden, MA)**— Older adults and people with disabilities, and those who help to care for them, are often not aware of all the services and supports that are available to them mostly because they are not sure where to begin the search for information about such programs.

In partnership with the State, Mystic Valley Elder Services (MVES) responds to this need by providing a free resource to older adults, people with disabilities and their caregivers who have no idea how to gain access to services and programs when they need it. The service—options counseling—can be considered a one-stop resource to help guide these folks to obtain the supports they are seeking. The MVES Options Counseling team works with individuals and their families to help them decide what supports they need to live where they want with dignity and choice.

“Options counseling is an interactive short-term process to empower individuals in need of long-term services and supports to make an informed choice about the settings and services that best meet their needs,” explains Diane Glaude, options counselor at MVES. “Individuals and families receive unbiased information from us about relevant programs, services, housing options, and financial resources to help pay for services. We assist individuals to determine next steps and connect with relevant referral sources.”

A person-centered resource, options counseling is provided at no cost and to all income levels of people who want to remain at home but need supports to do so, after someone has been admitted to a long-term care facility following a hospital stay, or when a family caregiver needs help to continue providing care in the community. The program is built to objectively help guide referral sources, caregivers, other agencies, MVES consumers and their families, and individuals living in the community. It is a great “first call resource” for anyone with aging related service option questions.

According to MVES Options Counselor/Clinical Coordinator Jessica Phelan, options counseling is also offered to adults 18+ who identify with having a disability who want to know what different service and support options are out there.

“There are so many different options in Massachusetts and it is hard sometimes for a person to navigate the system. That’s where we come in. We provide counseling about the different options so community members and our consumers can make the best informed decision regarding their care,” says Jessica.

The MVES Options Counseling staff will explore options for housing, in-home supports, transportation, public benefits, nutrition, and caregiving. Together, they help make the best choice for the person’s unique situation.

Options counseling supports consumer-directed care where consumers are able to make their own decisions about what options they would like to explore and pursue, according to Meghan Brookes, options counselor at MVES.

“We can provide options counseling over the phone, at someone’s home, or in a community setting. I discuss the consumer’s needs, concerns, and goals to determine the appropriate options and provide them with information on these options,” says Meghan. “Then I can assist consumers in the decision making process once all options are presented as well as make the necessary referrals, if needed.”

The team make referrals to a variety of programs and inform consumers about many different types of options. “We often refer consumers to programs at MVES including home care services, clinical casework, home delivered meals, SHINE, and Money Management,” says Meghan. “We also meet with many consumers who are seeking housing resources, including completing housing applications, learning about subsidized housing options, emergency rental assistance options, and homeless services.”

As for government-funded programs outside of MVES, options counselors help individuals with information on fuel assistance, SNAP benefits, Social Security and MassHealth options. They also provide information on general community resources including transportation, medical equipment providers, and legal resources.

“We work with consumers with a variety of concerns, questions, and needs and explore many different options – each referral and each consumer is unique,” she says. If more long-term support is needed, the Options Counseling staff may refer the individual to the State Home Care program if home care services are needed.

Please call Mystic Valley Elder Services at **781-324-7705** to learn more about Options Counselling.

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### **About Mystic Valley Elder Services**

*For more than 45 years of giving older adults their independence, Mystic Valley Elder Services is a non-profit agency located in Malden, Mass., that provides essential home- and community-based care and resources to older adults, adults living with disabilities, and caregivers who*

*reside in Chelsea, Everett, Malden, Medford, Melrose, North Reading, Reading, Revere, Stoneham, Wakefield and Winthrop, regardless of their income level. Agency services include coordination of home care, transportation, Meals on Wheels, and information and referrals. For more information, please call (781) 324-7705 or visit [www.mves.org](http://www.mves.org).*