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Philosophy Handbook

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Brief History

Autism Services Association, Inc. was established in 1963 by a group of concerned parents and community leaders to serve the needs of persons with autism and other person with developmental disabilities in Central and Eastern Massachusetts.

Autism Services Association, Inc. is a private non-profit rehabilitation and human service agency which provides vocational, social and community employment services for young adults and adults with autism and/or developmentally disabled or present similar challenges in order to maximize vocational potential and self-sufficiency in the community. ASA has had much success in this area as evidenced by the number of program participants who obtained or were integrated into community employment. In addition, many of the employer and worksite relationship, which ASA enjoys have been sustained more than ten years.

The agency also serves as an information, education and advocacy resource to families, residences, day programs, and schools, to support those persons in need of service. This is especially relevant for those young adults who are transitioning from educational settings to adult life programs and employment.

ASA has a long history of providing services to young adults and adults with autism and other severely disabled individuals with the intent to increase a person's community presence to build long lasting relationships with people other than staff, and to afford the greatest amount of choice in the development and direction of their program. Staff consistently promote the dignity of persons served and treat them with the respect they deserve.

Commitment

At Autism Services Association, we recognize that people work for love or money. Given our wages, we know that persons come to **Autism Services Association** to help those we serve. There are times when our commitment may be challenged due to the struggles of the day. When that happens it is important to remind ourselves of our commitment to get through such difficult times. One of the things that aids everyone in understanding their own commitment to **Autism Services Association** is the fact that everyone is part of a team. We share both our successes and our failures. In fact, we must understand and experience our failures in order to fully experience and appreciate our success. We are only as strong as our weakest link, the person with the smallest commitment to **Autism Services Association**.

Therefore, it is important for each person to understand his/her own commitment; to renew their commitment on a regular basis and should that commitment wane to get in touch with the reasons that have been brought into question. Because of the strong commitment to **Autism Services Association**, you will find few secrets, few closed door meetings and you will experience open communications.

Your ideas are valuable and we want to hear them. We cannot act on all ideas, but we still want to know what people are thinking and want each person to participate in decisions. Your input is extremely valuable and it is appreciated.

High Standards and Professionalism

Autism Services Association (ASA) strives to provide the highest quality of services to the persons we serve. In order to do that, ASA aims to hire persons who possess a high degree of professionalism and will strive to meet high standards in a challenging field. Professionalism is how a person demonstrates respect for themselves and others, it is a willingness to learn, to grow and

change. Professionalism may be conveyed to others in many ways. It is demonstrated in how we dress, act, speak to others, listen and how we approach our job each day. It is about having pride in yourself, what you do and the company you work for. It is caring enough to want to make a difference and a desire to be the best in your position.

To help employees become professionals and develop their skills, **Autism Services Association** strives to provide on-going training and constantly make changes, paying attention to new ideas and regulatory changes in the field or community which will help the persons served. **Autism Services Association** continues to maintain licensed programs and accreditation from the highest sources such as the Commission on Accreditation or Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Although resources are often limited, particularly during times of statewide financial crisis, **Autism Services Association** maintains a commitment to quality services. In order to do that each person employed at **Autism Services Association** is held accountable for maintaining and providing quality care. We strive for and maintain these high standards because we realize few people are lucky enough to find work that appeals to the heart. Few pleasures are more wonderful than having a job we really enjoy and making a difference for others is why we have chosen to work here. We need to remind ourselves of our gratitude, humility and mission.

Accountability

We believe that everyone that works at **Autism Services Association** needs to be accountable for their actions as an employee. Because we work with those that requires our support in a variety of ways, it is essential that we be counted on to do what is in their best interests. It is our duty to the people we work with, both persons served and co-workers, that we act responsibly on their behalf, that we accept liability for our own actions. By acting in an accountable, responsible manner we ensure that our actions will reflect positively back on us as employees, caretakers and people who care about others.

Dignity, Respect and Equality

As employees of **Autism Services Association**, our attitudes and actions, with both the individuals we serve and our co-workers, will demonstrate a sense of quality, dignity and respect. We value this as an inherent right for everyone and essential for helping to improve quality of life. It means walking in another person's shoes and understanding their unique perspective and challenges without judging or criticizing.

Training

At **Autism Services Association** we believe that all employees should be trained and prepared to work with the persons we serve. As a result, we stress training and have developed orientation and training sessions. All staff members are required to take the training provided so that as a team, everyone has the same information and knows the expectations. You can only perform at your highest level if you have all the necessary tools to do your job. In the case of **Autism Services Association**, you are the primary tool. The way you interact and respond to persons on the job, in the community or in the development skills training session will determined your effectiveness. We are proud of our training program and our commitment to ensuring staff members are prepared to work with the persons serve.

Teamwork and Family

Generally, families that stick together have strong values.

Here at **Autism Services Association**, it is our strong values and our commitments to our ethical pillars and unique mission that holds us together. Teamwork means everyone knows their role and supports one another. It means always listening and showing empathy to one another.

Our organization goals must always take a precedence over our individual goals.

However, individual goals are very important. We want each person to be healthy and to grow professionally. You must be strong individually in order to be a strong team contributor. It is not what we do, but how we do it that will distinguish us here at **Autism Services Association**.

Another aspect of teamwork is communication. We ask that all your communication with both supported persons and your fellow co-workers always be respectful and purposeful. We also ask that you are a good listener and try to understand another person's perspective. With teamwork, you will always have a safety net and a sense of belongingness. By relying on others, your job will be much easier.

Our Ethics

Autism Services Association has four ethical pillars: Trustworthiness, Respect, Responsibility and Caring. All of our actions should always live up to the four pillars. Below is a description of each:

Trustworthiness: To be truthful in all our dealings; to be honest and forthright with one another and with the people we serve, their families and our community partners and stakeholders; to be sincere and candid; to have integrity in all our dealings; to be reliable by avoiding unclear or unwise commitments; and to avoid bad faith excuses.

Respect: To treat one another with dignity and fairness appreciating our diversity and uniqueness of the people we serve, our employees, our community partners and our stakeholder; to be civil, courteous and decent; to exercise authority in a responsible way; to tolerate differences of opinion and belief.

Responsibility: To be responsible for our choices; to be committed to excellence; to honor our commitment; to ensure that the people we serve have the highest quality of life possible; to produce and deliver person-centered services with expected outcomes in a timely manner; to be accountable; to be informed; to provide and exhibit leadership in our field; to ensure that we act with diligence in all we do; to look for ways to improve our work; to show self-restraint when necessary.

Caring: To show care, compassion and empathy toward the people we serve and their families; to have genuine concern about the welfare of our co-workers, community partners and stakeholders; to show gratitude and appreciation; to support each other; to admit our mistakes and to forgive.

Making it fun

We at **Autism Services Association** do not have to go to work but rather get to go to work. We are privileged to have the opportunity to be able to give something away that cannot be measured. Some would say that this must be really challenging and difficult work and they may not understand how we can possibly do it. The individuals we serve are our greatest motivation and yet sometimes our greatest challenge. Coping with day to day situations would not be achievable without the ability to have "fun." This is a fine line between professionalism and having fun on the job. Having fun on the job is being able to roll with the flow and share a story or laugh with each other without being at the expense of others. If one is not having fun doing this job, then there has been a wrong turn in the highway of life. Getting the job done in a professional manner and having fun in the process is very much attainable and a necessary component of who we are.