



# Southern Tier Independence Center

*Access your world.*

## Consumer Rights and Responsibilities

Southern Tier Independence Center (STIC) is a Center for Independent Living (CIL). Not only does STIC comply with the laws of both New York State and the United States of America, but also with its own commitment to human rights that are protected by law.

Centers for Independent Living (CILs) foster independence, help people with disabilities to develop networks/supports and promote self-reliance. CILs advocate for the inclusion and integration of people with disabilities in all aspects of community life. It is the responsibility of the staff of STIC to ensure that every person we work with knows his or her rights and responsibilities as a consumer. These rights and responsibilities reflect STIC's belief in the Independent Living Philosophy.

### Policy and Practice

As a CIL, STIC firmly believes that people with disabilities should be empowered to control the direction of their own lives. This means choosing their goals, plotting their course and taking responsibility for their actions and the results. It is STIC's Policy and Practice that every consumer:

- Is fully informed of his/her rights and responsibilities as a consumer.
- Is not deprived of any civil or legal right guaranteed to all citizens and/or legal aliens, solely because he/she has a developmental or other disability.
- Is treated with respect and dignity regardless of race, religion, national origin, creed, age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnic background, veteran status, cultural identity, disability, Marital status, genetic disposition or carrier status.
- Is free from physical, sexual or psychological abuse.
- Is protected from commercial or other exploitation from STIC staff or others affiliated with the organization
- Will receive services including assistance and guidance from staff who are trained to administer them competently, skillfully, safely, and humanely.

## **Consumer Rights**

Every consumer has the right to:

- Live, work, and participate in all other activities in the most integrated setting possible and desired.
- Be treated with consideration, respect and full recognition of his/her dignity and individuality.
- Make his/her own choices and decisions as well as the right to make mistakes and learn/benefit from those mistakes.
- Be involved in all aspects of his/her services, including an in-depth person-centered approach to planning, and service delivery.
- Make her/his own choices about services and to have control over the direction of those services to the fullest extent possible.
- A process for resolving objections, problems, or grievances relative to his/her rights and responsibilities, access to the Executive Director, Board President and government agency overseeing the services he/she is receiving.

## **Consumer Responsibilities**

Consumers of STIC are expected to:

- Choose, fully participate in, and direct their own services to the fullest extent of their abilities. STIC will not do anything for consumers that they are capable of doing themselves. STIC will, however, assist consumers to learn the skills needed to pursue their goals and dreams.
- Be responsible for the results and consequences of their actions and choices.
- To report any changes that affect their services, including but not limited to a change in address, phone number or insurance information.
- To respect the rights and dignity of other consumers, STIC staff and volunteers/interns.

## **Equal Access and Reasonable Accommodation**

As a disability rights organization, STIC strives to be a model of equal access and reasonable accommodation for both our consumers and staff. Toward this end, we provide the following:

Physical Access: Our facility, and all of our sponsored events, are accessible to people with all disabilities including mobility and sensory disabilities.

Communication Access: Upon request we provide sign language interpreters for Deaf consumers as well as materials in alternate formats such as: Braille, large print, tape, or computer diskette. Staff or volunteers will read program/ service related materials to consumers if such accommodation is needed and requested.

Program Access: STIC will provide services in an alternative manner, such as at an alternate site, if an individual's disability requires such accommodation.

### **Confidentiality of Consumer Information**

Southern Tier Independence Center respects the confidentiality of all consumer information. STIC will only use or share information about a consumer as allowed by law, is necessary for billing services, and/or required by funding sources, subpoenas and program audits. STIC complies with the confidentiality requirements of HIPAA, as well as those that are specific to people with AIDS or who are HIV positive, have substance abuse issues or receive Psychotherapy services.

### **Anonymous Reports**

Reports of fraud, abuse, or unethical activity and violations of STIC's Corporate Compliance Plan, can be made to STIC's anonymous hotline at 1-855-210-8495.

### **Grievance Procedures**

It is STIC's policy to provide quality services to all of our consumers in a courteous and respectful manner. If a situation ever occurs where you believe that you have been mistreated, abused or that your choices are not being respected, you have the right to file a complaint. During the period that a complaint is being reviewed or appealed, STIC will continue to offer and provide all mutually agreed upon services in accordance with your wishes or that of your legal guardian.

There are both informal and formal grievance procedures, which individuals may use to resolve a complaint or concern.

### **Informal Complaint Procedure**

Before a formal complaint is filed with the Executive Director, please communicate with the staff member who you are concerned about and give them a chance to resolve your complaint. You may also contact a staff member's supervisor to discuss issues with their performance. If a staff member is abusing you in any way, please report your concerns to any supervisor, the HR Coordinator, Assistant Director or Executive Director immediately.

### **Formal Complaint Procedure**

If you are unsatisfied with the staff's response to an informal complaint or the situation is serious enough to bypass the informal procedures and to file a formal complaint, you may file a written, electronic or taped complaint with the Executive Director. Within seven (7) business days of receiving a formal written, electronic or taped complaint, the Executive Director will contact you to discuss the complaint and collect information. The Executive Director may also conduct a further investigation into the complaint, as he/she deems

necessary to render a fair and informed decision. A written, electronic or taped response to your complaint will be sent to you within fifteen (15) business days of receiving your original complaint. If the Executive Director is not available, the Assistant Director will address the complaint as described in this policy.

If you are unsatisfied with the Assistant or Executive Director's decision, a formal written, electronic or taped objection may be made to Southern Tier Independence Center's President of the Board of Directors requesting a hearing before the Board of Directors or appropriate board committee. Within seven (7) business days of receipt of a formal written, electronic or taped objection, a hearing will be scheduled before the board president or designated committee with no less than ten (10) business days' notice. You will receive a written or taped response within ten (10) business days of the hearing. Be aware, that ordinarily, complaints will be heard on the date of the next regularly scheduled board meeting (unless the complaint is serious enough to warrant more immediate action).

If you are still unsatisfied, you may contact the governmental agency that funds the services that you receive from STIC to file an additional complaint. Please refer to page 5 for list of contact information.

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By signing this form, I agree that I have read and understand STIC's Consumer Rights and Responsibilities. I also understand that if I have any further questions or concerns regarding this document or any other policies and procedures at STIC I can contact the staff member who is working with me, or the Compliance Officer, at:

Southern Tier Independence Center  
135 E. Frederick Street  
Binghamton, NY 13904  
(607) 724-2111 (V&TTY)

This acknowledgement will be placed in your consumer file that is maintained at STIC.

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Consumer's Name (Please Print)

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Signature of Consumer or Representative

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Date

Representative Contact Information (If applicable)

Representative Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to Consumer: \_\_\_\_\_

## CONTACT INFORMATION

The following parties are available to receive complaints and concerns:

### **ACCES-VR**

Jack Lance  
District Office Manager ACCES-VR  
44 Hawley Street  
Binghamton, NY 13901-4470  
(607) 721-8400  
(607) 721-8408 (TTY)

Robert Gumson  
Manager of Independent Living Services  
ACCES-VR  
IL Services Administration  
NYS Building Annex, Room 580  
89 Washington Avenue  
Albany, NY 12234  
Phone: (518) 474-2925

### **CAP**

Disability Rights New York (DRNY)  
725 Broadway, Suite 450  
1 (800) 993-8982  
TTY: (518) 512-3448  
Email: [mail@DisabilityRightsNY.org](mailto:mail@DisabilityRightsNY.org)

### **DOH NHTD Program**

Carol Hodecker  
NYS Department of Health  
Bureau of Long Term Care  
NHTD Program  
One Commerce Plaza, Suite 826  
(518) 474-6580

### **DOH TBI Program**

Maribeth Gnozzio  
NYS Department of Health  
Bureau of Long Term Care  
TBI Program  
One Commerce Plaza, Room 724  
Albany, NY 12260  
(518) 474-6580

### **OPWDD**

Mark Lankes  
Director of Broome DDSSO  
249 Glenwood Rd.  
Binghamton, NY 13905  
(607) 770-0211

Lester Parker  
DDRO Region 2 Director  
2306 Euclid Ave.  
Syracuse, NY 13224  
(315) 473-5050

Kerry A. Delaney  
Acting Commissioner of OPWDD  
44 Holland Ave.  
Albany, NY 12229  
(518) 473-9689

### **Tioga County DSS**

Tina Lounsberry  
Tioga County DSS  
231 Main St.  
Owego, NY 13832  
(607) 687-8550

### **Broome County OFA**

Kathleen Bunnell  
PO Box 1766  
Binghamton, NY 13902-1766  
(607) 778-2411

### **CASA**

Barbara Travis  
Broome County CASA  
P.O. Box 1766  
Binghamton, NY 13902  
(607) 778-2420