



# CONSUMER HANDBOOK

## OUR PURPOSE STATEMENT:

To change the way the world defines and views disability by making profound, positive differences in people's lives every day.



Easterseals Central Alabama  
2185 Normandie Drive  
Montgomery, AL 36111  
334.288.0240  
info@eastersealsca.org  
www.eastersealsca.org

Dear ECA Consumer:

I want to take this opportunity to thank you for agreeing to participate in Easterseals Central Alabama's (ECA) vocational programs. Our staff is here to assist you with finding successful employment in the community. We are eager to see you succeed and will work with you to identify your skills and abilities and to motivate you to achieve greater independence.

Be assured that our staff will be here to support you and to assist you to gain the knowledge and skills to land that perfect job!

ECA has a rich history of serving this community since 1961. ECA looks forward to another 60 years of serving central Alabama and teaching consumers marketable skills to sustain their independence.

I wish you the best as you embark on this journey to achieve your goals, and I wish you much success!

Sincerely,

*Debbie W. Lynn*

Debbie W. Lynn  
Executive Director



## **Mission**

To provide a variety of quality life-enhancing programs and services to meet the individual needs of our consumers and families.

## **Vision**

All people will be able to actively participate in aspects of life and be seen for their abilities.

## **Core Values**

- **Compassion**  
We believe our staff displays a high level of compassion and genuine care towards our consumers.
- **Integrity**  
We believe in striving to uphold the highest standards of honesty, transparency, and ethical behavior in all we do both in the workplace and in broader community.
- **Inclusion**  
We believe in respecting diversity and value its importance in contributing to a strong community.

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## **CONSUMER HANDBOOK – PURPOSE**

This handbook is a good reference for all the information concerning the many different programs and services offered by Easterseals Central Alabama (ECA).

By becoming familiar with the contents of this handbook, you will better understand the different services and opportunities offered by Easterseals Central Alabama. Included also are the general rules and policies, which clearly state our commitment to you. Your responsibilities and your expected conduct while being involved in these programs.

## **INTRODUCTION**

In the early 1950s, a group of concerned people from the Central Alabama area met with representatives of the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services and the Alabama Society for Crippled Children and Adults. They discussed the need for a facility to house clinics conducted by the State Crippled Children's Service and to provide Rehabilitation Services to people with disabilities in this area. This group continued to meet to promote and investigate the need for a Rehabilitation Center in Montgomery. In 1964, Hill-Burton funds were secured and the Central Alabama Rehabilitation Center was built. Today, they renamed Easterseals Central Alabama accepts people with any disability who might benefit from services.

In the fall of 2008, the Janice Capilouto Center for the Deaf Easterseals (JCCD) merged with ECA. This ensured that services to the deaf and hard of hearing would continue in this area.

Together the continued organization offers a full range of services and employs a devoted staff to assist in enabling people with any disability to achieve their maximum potential. We are committed to helping people prepare for, secure, and maintain unsubsidized, competitive employment.

ECA is a non-profit agency owned by Easterseals Alabama, Inc. ECA is supported by the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services; county chapters of Easterseals Alabama, Inc.; the River Region United; and public and private contributions and fees for services provided.

## **OBJECTIVES OF ECA**

ECA exists to help people with disabilities live more independent lives. Reaching this objective depends on the ECA staff and you working together as a team to achieve your rehabilitation goal.

## **ADMISSIONS**

Requests for admission to ECA program services are made through the Workforce Development Director's Office. Acceptance for services depends on the consumers to be served satisfying the funding source requirements for services requested and depends on the determination that ECA services will meet the needs of the consumer. The final decision regarding accepting a person for services rests with the Workforce Development Director.

## **GOVERNING AUTHORITY**

The ECA Board is the governing body of the ECA. It is composed of representatives from the community. This board works under the authority of the Board of Directors for Easterseals Alabama, Inc. The ECA Executive Director is employed by the board to operate the facility under their general direction.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

ECA does not have any transportation services. You may drive yourself, ride the city bus, have a friend or relative drive you, or walk (if not too far) to ECA for services.

## **SCOPE OF SERVICES**

### **~POPULATION(S) SERVED~**

#### **AREA SERVED**

Alabama is covered by a network of community Rehabilitation Programs and Centers. Each Center serves surrounding counties. ECA serves residents of multiple Alabama counties. This can be influenced by various referral sources. We're glad you've chosen us to help to meet your needs.

#### **CONSUMERS**

All children and adults for whom there is a possibility of substantial benefits from ECA services are eligible for admission. ECA does not discriminate based on race, color, religious creed, ancestry, age, sex, national origin, mental or physical challenge, or ability to pay for all of the programs and activities we provide, nor in the admission and delivery of services to consumers.

## **SETTINGS**

Consumers can come to ECA to receive services, and they can receive services through community-based.

## **HOURS OF SERVICES/DAYS OF SERVICES**

ECA is open Monday through Friday, from 8:00 AM until 4:30 PM.

## **HOLIDAYS**

ECA observes and is closed for the following holidays:

- New Year's Day
- MLK, Jr. Day
- Good Friday
- Memorial Day
- Emancipation Day/Juneteeth
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving (2 days)
- Christmas (2 or more days)
- ECA may close for a Staff Retreat sometime during the year.

If you are working at a competitive employment site, then you must follow your employer's policies for holiday leave.

## **FREQUENCY OF SERVICES**

## **LENGTH OF SERVICES/EXIT CRITERIA**

How long you stay in a program at ECA depends on several things. Your case is open-ended for as long as you need it to be. As long as your VR Counselor supports your case, then you are allowed to receive services at ECA. If you come regularly to appointments and work at achieving your goals, then your length of service may be shorter. After you have maintained competitive employment successfully for at least 90 days, then your case will be closed as needed.

## **REQUEST FOR RE-ENTRY**

Requests for re-entry into program services are made on an individual, as-needed basis concerning funding source restrictions. Just as with initial admission for services, the Workforce Development Director will be responsible for making re-entry decisions after new intake information is gathered on potential consumers. One cannot be acutely ill or actively psychotic. You must be capable of self-care, and not have significant potential to be harmful to yourself or others.



## **OUTCOMES**

ECA tracks how well we are doing for all of the services that we offer. Our outcomes are available for you to see in many formats. Please take a look at our latest Annual Report, Outcome Measurement System Report, or website for details.

## **INPUT**

We value your input and opinion. Please feel free to tell us if we can make any service better. We will hold a periodic input and forum meeting that you will be invited to attend. ECA collects Services Satisfaction Surveys and makes improvements based on your suggestions.

## **ACCESSIBILITY**

You have the right to an accessible building and program. ECA conducts accessibility surveys to identify, minimize, or eliminate barriers to services. Your Employment Specialist will work with you to identify and remove any potential barriers that you may have on an employment site as well.

## **EMPLOYMENT SPECIALIST**

You will be assigned an Employment Specialist during the time that services are being provided at ECA. This person will coordinate your program of services and discuss the purposes and goals of the service with you. If you enter for Vocational testing only then you will be assigned a Vocational Evaluator.

## **PROFESSIONAL STAFF**

ECA employs qualified staff with the knowledge skills, and abilities to provide the services offered. All services are performed by professionally trained, registered, licensed, or certified personnel. ECA's Employment Services. Evaluation and Therapy staff hold degrees in their respective fields. Vocational Instructors are highly skilled in their specific subjects of instruction. The policy of ECA is to employ only individuals who possess the needed knowledge, skills, and abilities.

## **PAYERS AND FUNDING SOURCES**

### **ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

All persons considered for programs must meet the eligibility requirements. They can have a disability of any type and must live within our service area. Persons considered for admission do not pay for services. ECA works with several funding sources to arrange for payment of your services. At consideration for entry into services, consumers are familiarized with the eligibility criteria through their preferred mode of communication.

## **EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM & VOCATIONAL PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY**

All persons must have an open and active case with the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services.

### **INELIGIBILITY**

Easterseals Central Alabama does not assess consumers for eligibility for ECA programs. Eligibility is determined by the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation and discussed with consumers.

### **CRIMINAL OFFENDERS**

ECA does not discriminate and will provide services to consumers with a previous criminal background. If you have a record, then please disclose that to your employment specialist. We will ensure that confidentiality is maintained. This will help us better assist you in finding the appropriate employment.

Some competitive employment sites require a background check, which may limit the work options available.

\*Due to regulations of the clinical sites and consequently an inability to complete the total Certified Nursing Assistant requirements, consumers with a felony record would not be permitted to complete Nursing Assistant Training.

### **WAITING LIST**

If a waiting list for services is in effect at the time of consideration for admission, then persons will be admitted based on an order of referral, unless immediate action is needed. Waiting lists for each program of services are maintained and reviewed by the Workforce Development Director.

### **FEE POLICY**

The majority of consumers attending ECA receive Employment and Vocational Services. Almost all are sponsored by the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services (ADRS), which pays for the programs at ECA.

Charges are established for all services provided. These fees are kept at the lowest possible rate at which ECA, its personnel, services, and programs can operate. Consumer fees will vary according to the type, length, and frequency of services received. Since your needs are our primary concern, the services to meet these needs will be provided regardless of your ability to pay.

### **REFERRAL POLICY**

Anyone may refer someone to ECA for services. Referrals should be made to ECA's Workforce Development Director.

## **CONSENT**

Our staff will explain all policies and procedures to you and/or your legal guardian. We make sure that we have your consent in writing to participate in any services. You may revoke this consent at any time.

## **OUR COMMITMENT TO YOU**

ECA's professional staff is committed to helping you achieve your goal of obtaining and/or maintaining a job that is personally satisfying and that enables you to live as independently as possible. Our philosophy maintains the belief that everyone has a right to meaningful employment. ECA has developed high standards for employees to make sure all personnel are screened and qualified before they are hired and that they meet the minimum requirements outlined in their job description.

To maintain and promote the highest standard of professional conduct and integrity, the ECA staff are committed to the Code of Ethics and will adhere to all ECA policies. All programs are designed to provide you with the skills and information necessary to maximize your opportunities. By including all modes of communication in ECA programs, you are assured that your individual programs are comfortable and effective. A priority for staff is to provide information to you in the most understandable format.

A strong commitment to quality and excellence is shown throughout every ECA program. For over 50 years, ECA has combined experience and a large network of contacts to serve you well. Up-to-date training, equipment, relevant material, and professional trainers also ensure that you are prepared for today's and tomorrow's job market. Also, your desires and concerns regarding your program services at ECA are considered through the following:

- Allowing you to request meetings with staff as needed
- Scheduled program-wide quarterly meetings with you
- Quarterly reviews of individual program plans for continued effectiveness
- Monthly reviews of individual placement plans for continued effectiveness
- Weekly consultation with ADRS staff to ensure your progress
- Completion of Services Satisfaction Survey after involvement in any service

## **INDIVIDUALIZED SERVICES**

While participating in programs at ECA you have the opportunity to help plan your program, including accepting/refusing/changing program recommendations. You also have the opportunity to make decisions related to your program, including how and when to apply for services, and in evaluating the effectiveness of your program. ECA staff will assist all consumers in developing an individualized program that will maximize their potential. As necessary, ECA will cooperate with all Federal, State, and County laws in serving those consumers with a criminal history, and confidentiality will be maintained in accordance with these same laws.

## **THE SPECIFIC SERVICES OFFERED**

### **YOUR PROGRAM PLAN**

A Coordinated Individualized Service Plan will be developed and is based on your:

- Strengths
- Abilities
- Needs and non-work needs
- Preferences
- Desired Outcomes
- Cultural Background
- Other issues, as identified

Your plan will be developed with your input. It will include your goals, those responsible for implementing the plan, and specific measurable objectives and techniques to help you meet your goals, etc. Our staff will review your plan with you regularly, and revise it as appropriate based on your needs, input, and satisfaction. This individual plan for you will guide your program.

### **PROGRAMS & SERVICES**

ECA maintains a three-year accreditation from CARF International for our Community-Based Employment & Vocational Evaluation Programs.

Information about ECA's array of services can be obtained through several sources such as ECA Brochures, Newsletters, Annual Reports, Outcome Measurement System Reports, ECA Website, and the Consumer Handbook, to name a few. All persons requesting services are oriented, in the most understandable format, to ECA's services, and the information shared reflects any recent changes as needed. Especially helpful is the following information provided at intake/Assessment:

- Our vision and mission statements and core values
- Staff credentials to provide services
- Our ability to meet the needs of consumers
- Rights and responsibilities of consumers
- Responsibilities of staff
- Options for consumers to direct services' design and delivery
- ECA service outcomes

Once oriented to services, you and the staff have determined your career goals and service needs through Intake/Assessment, your individual service plan may include some or all of the following services:

- Work Experience – Paid Work Experience (PWE), Work-based Learning and Job Shadowing – Two-Week Extended Evaluations
- Employee Development Services/Job Preparation Training
- Personal, Social, and Independent Living Training as Needed
- Job Development Services/Employment Contacts
- Job Placement/Job-Site Training/Job Supports
- Follow-Up Services
- Vocational Evaluation Services
- Interpreter Services
- Technology Assistance
- Coordination of Support Services
- Referral for services provided by other agencies/organizations as needed

ECA works closely with a network of Rehabilitation and Human Service agencies. Should you need a service not available from ECA, referrals are made to access appropriate Services and include these services into your overall program plan

Because ECA is located in historic Montgomery, the Capitol City of Alabama, you have access to services needed to become employed and maximize independence. You can also enjoy local activities made accessible including local city festivals, interpreted dramas, captioned movies, and deaf community-sponsored athletic and leisure events. The ECA environment often reduces feelings of isolation and helps to build your confidence and self-esteem, which are so important to job success and maximum independence.

## **TYPICAL VOCATIONAL SERVICES PROGRAM**

A typical program might include:

- Intake/Assessment
- Vocational Evaluation
- Personal/Social Training and/or Job Preparation Training
- Employment Development Services/Community Employment Services
- Job Support Services

The actual program, however, is tailored to your individual needs and some of these services may not be applicable.

Vocational consumers are tested in the Evaluation Department by Professional Evaluators using standardized methods of testing. These tests help establish the areas of vocational potential and help you establish realistic vocational goals.

In a cooperative effort between ECA and the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services, Vocational Evaluation services are provided in our service area to meet the needs of consumers and Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors. Services are designed to discover an Individual's Vocational assets and learning style, determine

appropriate accommodations and compensatory strategies that minimize barriers to life and employment choices, and develop training and employment suggestions leading to enhanced career opportunities.

## **INTAKE**

Intake includes:

- Orientation to services
- Determining the appropriateness of services in meeting your needs
- Securing your consent to receive services
- Explanation of specific ECA policies including the staff and consumer agreement of services, drug policy, etc.

## **ASSESSMENT**

Assessment includes:

- Use of standard measures compiling your pertinent background information and close observation of you during real or simulated work to determine your personal, social, and work capabilities.
- Completion of a timely report, including reasonable recommendations/accommodations for you.

## **EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT SERVICES/JOB PREPARATION TRAINING**

These services include:

- Resources and Services
- Career Decision Making
- Labor Market Information
- Job Search Information
- Developing an Updated Resume
- Completing Job Applications
- Completing Job Interviews – Interview Knowledge and Skills
- Maintaining Employment
- Pre-employment Assessments
- Dress and Grooming

Upon your mastery of these topics, you are referred for Employment Development Services. We think it is very important to prepare you for work, which will aid in leading to your success on the job.

## **EMPLOYMENT DEVELOPMENT SERVICES**

These services include:

- Assistance with Career Exploration
- Employer Contacts
- Job Placement
- **EMPLOYMENT SPECIALIST SERVICES**
- Labor Market Analysis
- Assistance with the understanding of job site policies, rules, and benefits

Working together with business, industry, and referring agencies, ECA will benefit you and the employer by easing the transition period when entering the job market.

Employment Specialists are available to help you find the appropriate employment. Employment services and job placement services are tailored to fit your individual needs.

## **JOB-SITE TRAINING/JOB SUPPORT SERVICES**

These services include:

- Job Follow-Up
- Job Coaching/Job-Site Training
- Job Supports
- Referrals as needed for Adult Basic Education Services, Mental Health Counseling, Emergency Shelter, Financial Counseling, Getting Clothes, etc.
- Interpreter Services/Communication Assistance

## **EMPLOYMENT SPECIALIST SERVICES**

These services include:

- On-going communication between ECA Staff (including meetings with staff as requested by you), referral sources, and consumer
- Appropriate documentation of your progress
- On-going support and crisis intervention (unexpected needs which may affect your individual program). If the consumer has given the staff member permission to contact their employer, that conversation should be scheduled with the employer to help resolve any issues the consumer has. Having a short face-to-face conversation between an employment specialist and an employer can be the very thing that resolves an issue, which could have gotten out of hand if not handled in a positive way.
- Identification of appropriately useful community resources
- Coordination of ECA services and services from other Human Services agencies to maximize employment success

## **FOLLOW UP**

At some time after you have finished services at ECA, you will receive a follow-up phone call, visit, or satisfaction survey. This will help us decide how helpful our services have been to you. This will let us know if we might need to change to improve our work. Also, it will help us determine if we can help you further with anything. If we call you, or you get our survey, then please respond honestly. It will help us better serve people in the future.

## **COMMUNITY SERVICES**

These services include:

- Orientation to disabilities and deafness for employees and the community at large
- Assistance in screening/recruiting qualified applicants for employment
- On-going support and crisis intervention
- Assistance in facilitating cooperation between employer, co-worker, and consumer

## **INFORMATION & REFERRAL**

Anyone may call or visit ECA for referral information concerning disability issues or problems that people with disabilities may encounter. If assistance is not available at ECA, then every effort will be made to provide appropriate information or the proper resources to assist people in gaining the requested information or help. Please speak with your employment Specialist for assistance.

## **ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS**

- You must attend scheduled appointments and be on time
- You must actively participate in your program
- If an acceptable reason exists for missing an appointment, it is your responsibility to contact your ECA Employment Specialist before the scheduled appointment. (If you have a pre-arranged appointment with a doctor, dentist, etc., then please advise your Employment Specialist as far in advance as possible). Attending each time you are scheduled will enable us to help you reach your goals in the shortest period of time.
- If you are sick and believe that you are contagious, then please don't come to ECA. This could include a constant cough, sore throat, running nose, fever, rash, vomiting, diarrhea, lice, etc.
- Once employed you must follow the employer's policies in regard to attendance, appointments, and absences.



## **INFECTION CONTROL**

There are several things that you can do to help reduce or eliminate the spread of contagious diseases. This helps keep you and others from getting sick.

- Wash your hands frequently (including but not limited to: before handling food, before eating, after using the restroom, after petting animals, after sneezing or coughing, etc.
- Don't eat with the same utensils as someone else
- Don't drink from the same cup as someone else
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze
- If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow, not your hands
- Throw used tissues in the trash

## **ACCIDENTS AND INJURY**

If you get injured while at ECA, then notify a staff member immediately. A critical incident report must be completed. We make every effort to make this a safe environment for you. If you get injured while at an employment site, then notify your supervisor immediately.

## **WAGE PAYMENT PRACTICES/FRINGE BENEFITS**

You do not earn wages or benefits for attending ECA. However, our Vocational Evaluation Department does provide a \$15/day stipend to those consumers completing a two-week work evaluation.

Also, the paid work experience/work-based learning programs do allow consumers to earn money. These programs are temporary only, and may or may not result in competitive employment upon completion, based on the company's needs.

Wages for both of these programs are paid twice monthly by direct deposit into the bank account of the consumer. Should Friday fall on a holiday, then the check will be deposited to the account on the last business day before the holiday.

All deductions from a check will be listed on the check stub. The deduction includes Federal and State Income taxes as well as social security (FICA) taxes. Gross pay, net pay (money received after deductions), and hours worked will also be listed on the check stub. The amount prescribed by Social Security laws will also be withheld from each paycheck. ECA will pay an equal amount to Social Security.

The opportunity to participate in program areas that may result in earning money is provided at no charge to you. If your program ends, then you are not eligible to file for unemployment benefits.

## **OTHER AVAILABLE SERVICES AT ECA**

### **Speech Therapy:**

Our Speech-Language Pathologists treat language disorders related to aphasia, articulation, cerebral palsy, delayed language, laryngectomy, stuttering, and voice disorders.

### **Occupational Therapy:**

Occupational Therapy helps children and their families improve their participation in their daily lives by increasing their skills in fine motor, and gross motor, self-care, play, and self-regulation. These improvements help children succeed at home, school, and within the community.

### **Autism Spectrum Disorders Diagnostic Clinic:**

ECA provides a clinic that features a multi-disciplinary approach to providing a clinical diagnosis for children on the Autism spectrum. This clinic serves ages eight months to seven years.

### **Learning Disabilities Program:**

This program offers a comprehensive assessment to identify strategies and accommodations for individuals who have learning disabilities. A College/Career Prep Program is available to assist those who have a learning disability and are entering college or the world of work.

### **Nursing Assistant Training Program:**

This program includes both classroom and clinical training in the skills necessary to become a Certified Nursing Assistant.

### **Interpreter Services Program:**

Interpreter Services are available for a variety of settings, including Medical, Legal, Educational, Post-Secondary Employment, Community Access, Social Services, Professional Organizations, and more. Please call Vickie Wood, the Interpreter Coordinator, at (334) 387-3252 to schedule an interpreter for an appointment or other needs that you may have.

## **SAFETY PRECAUTIONS/EMERGENCIES/INCLEMENT WEATHER**

Safety in the maintenance and operation of ECA is extremely important. If you observe any unsafe conditions while at ECA, please notify any staff member. Immediate corrective action will be taken.

Drills, practice evacuations, or actual emergencies will occasionally make it necessary to leave the building. You must know that red EXIT signs are easily visible pointing toward exit doors or located over the exit doors throughout ECA. When alerted, you are to act according to the instructions below:

- **IN CASE OF FIRE (CODE RED)** – Follow the instructions of ECA staff. If none is available, then leave your work area, leave the building through the closest door, and go to the parking lot. A very loud buzzer is sounded to alert ECA occupants of a fire.
- **IN CASE OF SEVERE WEATHER (CODE WIND)** – Follow the instructions of ECA staff. If none is available, then go to the Job Lab/Computer Training Room.
- **IN CASE OF MEDICAL EMERGENCY** – Ask a staff member for help. If someone has a seizure or needs medical attention of any kind, take no action yourself, but immediately alert the nearest staff member.
- **IN CASE OF BOMB (CODE BLACK)** – Follow the instructions of ECA staff. If none is available, then leave your work area exit the building through the closest door, and go to the parking lot.
- **IN CASE OF A FIGHT OR POSSIBLY DEVELOPING FIGHT (CODE YELLOW)** – Not involving weapons, get away from the situation and alert a staff member. Staff will go to the area to calm the situation and tell you when it is “all clear” to resume your activity.
- **IN CASE OF AN INCIDENT INVOLVING A WEAPON** – Get away from the area and if not possible, hide in a secure, locked area. If you choose, you may leave the campus at any time.
- **IN CASE OF UTILITY FAILURE** – Staff will direct you to appropriate action depending on the type of utility failure and the urgency of the situation.

You must learn where all exits in the building are located. ECA staff will inform you of the appropriate exit routes for an emergency.

You should know who to call in the event of an emergency. ECA keeps contact information on you, in case we have to notify someone. If this information changes, then please let a staff member know.

## COVID-19 PRECAUTIONS

- **PRACTICE GOOD HYGIENE:** Cover coughs and sneezes; don't touch your face and wash your hands.
- **AVOID CLOSE CONTACT** with people who are sick, even inside your home.
- **MAINTAIN A DISTANCE** of at least six feet from others not in your household.
- **USE A MASK** when in public and the ECA building.
- **DON'T COME TO SCHEDULED APPOINTMENTS IF YOU ARE SICK** or someone in your family is sick or has been sick within the last seven days.

If you are meeting away from the ECA office, your Employment Specialist will instruct you on what to do in case of any emergency.

Closing of ECA is a management decision, which is determined in accordance with weather conditions. Please access local news/weather reports as to closing. You are expected to report to ECA for appointments unless a decision is made ahead of time to close.

If you have any questions as to the proper procedure or exits to use in emergencies, then please ask any staff member.

## HUMAN AND CIVIL RIGHTS POLICY

ECA values the dignity and rights of every person. You will be treated with respect. Your privacy will be preserved at all times, and no information regarding you will be disclosed without your permission. You will be allowed to decide if information is to be released, to whom it may be released, and in what form.

You will not be criticized in the presence of others. When verbal correction is necessary, it will be done in a private, non-threatening manner. Non-restrictive correction (counseling, discussion) will be used.

Each person enrolling in one of ECA's programs will be informed of your rights as a citizen and participant. Designated staff will inform you of these rights during the Orientation of ECA Programs and Services. Receipt of this information will be acknowledged by you and become part of your record. Again, information is presented in understandable formats as dictated by your needs. This Handbook is yours to keep. If in the future you need access to the rights policy or grievance procedure, then please ask your Employment Specialist.

Each person participating in a program shall have the freedom to exercise the same human and civil rights enjoyed by all citizens. These rights will be limited only when documented that you are not able to exercise a specific right. ECA does not restrict the rights of consumers.

Each person enrolled in an ECA program has the right to a life that enables you to:

- Receive services appropriate to your needs.
- Be free from mental, physical, verbal, psychological, and financial or other exploitation such as corporal punishment, the withholding of food, and forms of punishment by other persons served, staff, or your guardian. Abuse in any form will not be tolerated.
- Be free from retaliation, humiliation, and neglect.
- Be free from exploitation for personal gain.
- Be free from chemical or physical restraint.
- Be free to go and come from ECA as you choose. You will not be forcibly detained if you choose to leave your program. You will be asked to wait long enough for staff to make proper arrangements for your departure to ensure your safety and well-being.
- Be free to terminate services at any time you see fit.
- Be fully informed, at the time of entering a program, of the services available within the program, and staff including the service delivery and design of the team.
- Be fully informed by professional authorities or consultants of your need for specific programming and to participate in planning said program.
- Express choices regarding the release of information.
- Change your mind and request that any program initially consented to be amended or terminated.
- Revoke your consent to suggested/recommended program services.
- Be free to play a very active part in planning the services you receive.
- Be assured that your preferences and goals will be considered when a plan is written for the services you will receive.
- Be free to be referred to other agencies or programs if you have legal issues, need self-help or advocacy services, or want to participate in activities beyond the scope of ECA's program.
- Be assured of privacy and confidentiality during service delivery.
- Be assured of confidential treatment of records.

- Voice grievances, suggest input, or recommend changes in policies and services to staff or other persons of your choice in a manner that is free from restraint, interference, coercion, discrimination, or reprisal.
- Be treated with consideration, respect, and recognition of your dignity and individuality.
- Retain your personal possessions.
- Refuse to have your picture taken or a sketch made in your likeness.
- Participate in religious, social, and recreational activities of your choice.

## **COMMUNICATION RIGHTS**

Each person who is enrolled in an ECA program has the right to:

- Associate and communicate with people of your choice and be assured of confidentiality of any communications if requested.
- Receive mail addressed to you unopened.
- Make and receive local telephone calls at reasonable times and have a telephone/videophone available for your use. The videophone is also available for public use.

## **FINANCIAL RIGHTS**

Each person who is enrolled in an ECA program has the right to:

- Manage your financial affairs unless your rights are restricted by law.
- Request assistance in managing your financial affairs.

## **LEGAL RIGHTS**

Each person who is enrolled in an ECA program has the right to:

- Own and dispose of property.
- Register and vote in elections.
- Enter into contracts.
- Apply for a Driver's License.
- See a lawyer, if so desired.
- Be considered legally competent unless adjudicated incompetent through due process of law.
- Be fully informed, by a physician, of your medical condition and participate in the planning of medical treatment.
- Access or be referred to legal entities.
- Access or be referred to self-help support services.
- Request advocacy services.
- Receive investigation and resolution of alleged infringement of rights.

## CONSUMER RESPONSIBILITIES

Each person who is enrolled in an ECA program has the responsibility to:

- Be held accountable for my actions should I not follow instructions.
- Be familiar with and follow rules governing ECA and my participation in services.
- Be considerate of the rights of others.
- Be respectful of the property of others, the ECA Facility, and other authorized areas served by ECA.
- Be active in planning for my program and employment.
- Obey laws that apply to all citizens.
- Provide to the best of my knowledge, accurate and complete information regarding my background which may impact service delivery.

## GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

If you have a complaint or a problem with ECA services, the responsibilities and rights of each party will be discussed and you should follow the procedure outlined below. Any consumer making a complaint regarding services will not be retaliated against by our staff, nor will you encounter barriers to receiving ECA services. If you feel that you need to make a formal written complaint, please send it to the Workforce Development Director. At any point in time during your program, you may request a referral to other resources or assistance programs that are available to your needs. Each of the following steps must be followed in the order listed to ensure that the problem is correctly addressed and corrected.

1. Discuss the problem with your Employment Specialist. Your Employment Specialist will respond to the grievance in writing within three working days. If the problem is not resolved;
2. Discuss the problem with the Workforce Development Director. The Workforce Development Director will respond to your grievance in writing within three working days. If the problem is not resolved;
3. Discuss the problem with the Executive Director. The Executive Director will respond to your grievance in writing within three working days. If the problem is not resolved;
4. \*For a Consumer of the Alabama Department of Vocational Rehabilitation Services, your Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor will respond to your grievance in accordance with Rehabilitation Services procedures. As part of the State of Alabama ADRS procedures, ADRS consumers may access the Client Assistance Program to speak with an Advocate or to receive other assistance regarding any grievance. The State of Alabama Client Assistance Program is located at 400 South Union Street, Suite 465; phone number is 263-2749. If the above-listed procedures do not provide a solution,
  - If the above-listed procedures do not provide a solution, the consumer will be referred to an Advocacy Program and/or other resources for advocacy on their behalf.

\*If you do not have an ADRS Counselor, your concern will be addressed by the Easterseals Human Rights Committee. This Committee will respond to your grievance in writing regarding actions to be taken to address the complaint within three working days.

## **CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

Should any conflict arise between you and your family and ECA staff or representative, an effort will be made to resolve the problem as quickly and fairly as possible before issuing a formal complaint. Let your Employment Specialist know of the problem as soon as possible, and ask for their assistance. If the conflict is with him or her, then ask the Workforce Development Director for assistance in solving the problem. Most problems are minor ones that can be resolved quickly.

## **CONSUMER REVIEW MEETINGS**

Your progress while involved in ECA programs will be monitored monthly and should be reviewed every three months. Review meetings may include you, your Employment Specialist referral source, and other involved parties as needed and as you request.

## **ACCESS TO RECORDS**

You may have access to your ECA case record. You may request in writing to review your record from your Employment Specialist or the Workforce Development Director. Your record may be viewed in any authorized area served by ECA; however, the record must be viewed in the presence of your Employment Specialist or Workforce Development Director. You may have someone else with you when you view this information if you sign a release form, and give that person permission to do so. Reports and information generated by ECA regarding you and your program will be kept in a master file and a locked filing cabinet. Any information contained in the record remains the confidential property of ECA and is only divulged (written or verbally) if you sign a release form permitting to do so. ECA does not release any information that we do not generate ourselves.

## **POLICY ON MEDICATIONS**

It is the policy of ECA that no staff member administers, handles, or stores medications of any kind for consumers, be it prescription or over-the-counter. Further, ECA staff do not play a role in managing or monitoring medications for consumers at all. Consumers who are prescribed medication by their physicians are encouraged to comply with their physician's orders.



## **GENERAL RULES OF CONDUCT**

You are expected to abide by the following rules:

- Be on time for appointments.
- Cursing/profanity or use of vulgar language, signs, or gestures is not permitted.
- Horseplay or tampering with/abuse of ECA equipment is not allowed. If you damage ECA Equipment, then you are responsible for paying for repair/replacement.
- Do not fight, talk loudly, push, wrestle, or otherwise physically play with other consumers, center staff, building tenants, or visitors.
- On-going communication with your assigned Employment Specialist is expected.
- Public physical displays of affection considered socially inappropriate are not allowed.
- Staff members are not allowed to date you.
- Stealing is unacceptable.
- ECA is a smoke-free environment. There is no smoking on ECA property, including the parking lot.
- Enter staff offices only with permission.
- Keep the ECA building clean and litter-free. Place all trash in the proper receptacles or containers.
- Copy machines must be used only with permission from a staff member. Unauthorized copies will be charged to you.
- Cassette players, CD players, iPods, or radios are generally not allowed at ECA. In some isolated areas, with special approval from staff, these may be allowed.
- If you drive to ECA, then do not park in the marked handicapped parking spaces, unless you have a legal license plate or placard to do so.
- Cell phones should be turned off during your training time here. If you must make or take an emergency call, do so in a private place where your conversation will not disturb others. You may be requested to leave your training area if this rule is not followed.

## **DRESS POLICY**

- Dress appropriately for the activities you are engaged in at ECA. Staff may ask you to change into more appropriate clothes for safety reasons or a specific purpose, such as a job interview.
- The length of dresses, shorts, and skirts is at the discretion of your Employment Specialist.
- At no time will vulgar/obscene or suggestive words or pictures or anything related or alcohol or drug use be allowed on clothing.
- The following items are also not allowed at ECA: bandanas or rags, halters or cut-off shirts/blouses/shorts, sunglasses inside the building, flip-flops or shower shoes, or pants/shirts with holes.
- Shoes must be worn at all times.
- Pants must be worn above the hips with a belt if necessary.
- Overalls and other clothing straps must be fastened at all times.
- Clothing must be the appropriate size.
- Clothing must be worn right side out.

Failure to abide by these rules may result in disciplinary action. This action is under the discretion of your Employment Specialist or appropriate staff. If you break any of the rules, the following steps will be taken.

1. You will be verbally warned and counseled by staff.
2. The next violation will result in being written up for your file.
3. The next violation will result in additional counseling and possible suspension from ECA.
4. The next violation will result in the termination of your program from ECA.

The following overly restrictive disciplinary procedures are prohibited:

- Withholding food
- Removal of personal property
- Use of mechanical or chemical restraints
- Restricting movement

## **REASONS FOR AUTOMATIC TERMINATION**

You must obey the rules listed on the previous pages. You risk immediate arrest or termination from ECA for any of the following violations. Failure to follow these rules will result in an immediate termination of program services.

- Possession of or engaging in the use of alcohol and/or illegal substances/drugs on the premises of ECA or an employment site.
- Possession of knives, guns, or other weapons while on the premises of ECA or an employment site.
- Physically threatening, fighting, or striking another consumer, volunteer, Intern, visitor, tenant, or staff on the premises of ECA or an employment site.
- Sexual harassment on the premises of ECA or an employment site.
- Possession of stolen property or theft of any item on the premises of ECA or an employment site, whether it be from another consumer, staff member, or property belonging to ECA.
- Participating in gang-related activities, including, but not limited to the wearing of gang colors on the premises of ECA or an employment site.

## **POLICY REGARDING UNSAFE BEHAVIORS OF CONSUMERS (EMPLOYMENT SERVICES)**

Consumers in Employment Services demonstrating unsafe behaviors while at ECA such as threatening others with violence or possessing and utilizing a weapon will be terminated from services. Law enforcement will be contacted immediately. If necessary to avoid injury, trained staff may utilize therapeutic physical intervention (physical control and restraint) or seclusion until police arrive. Consumers demonstrating such unsafe behavior may be referred to another community program such as Mental Health or Family Guidance Center.

## **SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY**

It is the policy of ECA that employees, consumers, and the Board of Directors should refrain from any type of sexual harassment of board members, employees, consumers, volunteers, interns, tenants, or visitors. Sexual harassment may be defined as any conduct which is unwelcome in the sense that the individual did not solicit or invite it, and in the sense that the individual regarded the conduct as undesirable or offensive, regardless of the intent of the one acting. Sexual harassment may include inappropriate verbal, visual, or physical conduct, such as:

- Sexual propositions or advances
- Touching, pinching, patting
- Insulting or suggestive sounds
- Comments about a person's body or body parts
- Sexually explicit cartoons, pin-ups, magazines, and other paraphernalia of a sexual nature
- Calendars or pictures of nude or partially clothed men or women
- Repeated flirtatious or sexual comments
- Sexually suggestive displays or objects
- Repeated insults
- Subtle (or not-so-subtle) comments that a subordinate needs to "play along with" or he/she will be demoted or fired
- Comments or behavior that promises benefits for sexual favors
- Gender-specific comments regarding work tasks

Any staff, volunteer, consumer, visitor, Intern, tenant, or board member should report sexual harassment to the Executive Director (unless the claim is filed against the Executive Director, (at which time the report would be made to the Board of Directors Chairperson). The report will be kept in strict confidence; however, it will be investigated promptly and thoroughly by the Executive Director or Board Chairperson. All victims and reporters of sexual harassment will be protected against retaliation of any kind.

Anyone found guilty of sexual harassment will be disciplined as determined appropriate. All findings will be documented in the individual's file.

## **PERSONAL TELEPHONE CALLS**

Personal, local calls may be made on ECA property using a telephone/videophone available for your use. The videophone is also available for public use. Long-distance phone calls are not allowed on ECA phone lines.

## **USE OF ECA COMPUTERS**

Easterseals Central Alabama has computers for the consumers we work with to use for computer training and job searching. Easterseals computers are not to be used for any fraudulent activity, harassing, defamatory, or illegal, and no software is to be downloaded onto any public Easterseals technology device. Please speak with your Employment Specialist to learn more.

## **MEALS**

You are responsible for your meals. A microwave, refrigerator, and vending machines are available for your use.

## **CONCLUSION**

This handbook was designed to give you an overview of all services at ECA. Your success is very important to us. If you have any questions about this handbook or any services at ECA, please let a staff member know. Thank you and we're glad you are here!

CONTACT INFORMATION

Easterseals Central Alabama

2185 Normandie Drive

Montgomery, Alabama 36111

(334) 288-0240 (Voice)

(334) 239-3748 (Videophone) – available for public use

Debbie Lynn Executive Director, Easterseals Central Alabama (334) 387-3260

Shelinda Mahone

Workforce Development Director, Easterseals Central Alabama

(334) 387-3279

Jennifer Coleman Senior Transitional Specialist (334) 387-3272

Lyona Robinson Employment Specialist (334) 387-3278

Aniya Mathis Employment Specialist (334) 387-3273

Robert Prater Employment Specialist (706) 656-5436

OTHER IMPORTANT NUMBERS

Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services (VRS)

(334) 293-7500

State of Alabama Client Assistance Program (SACAP)

(334) 263-2749

## CONSUMER HANDBOOK AGREEMENT

**I HAVE RECEIVED A COPY OF THE HANDBOOK, AND IT HAS BEEN EXPLAINED TO ME. MY RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES, ALONG WITH ECA STAFF RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES, HAVE BEEN EXPLAINED. THIS HANDBOOK WILL BE REVIEWED WITH ME INITIALLY AND ANNUALLY IF I AM STILL IN AN ECA PROGRAM. IT WILL BE AVAILABLE AT ALL TIMES FOR CLARIFICATION AND REVIEW. THIS CONTENT CAN BE REVOKED AT ANY TIME IN WRITING.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
CONSUMER SIGNATURE

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

\_\_\_\_\_  
ECA STAFF SIGNATURE

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

REVIEWED; (at least annually)

\_\_\_\_\_  
CONSUMER SIGNATURE

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

\_\_\_\_\_  
ECA STAFF SIGNATURE

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

**\*This handbook will be explained to you and is available in written format, enlarged print, and Braille. A printable copy of this handbook can be found on our website at [www.eastersealsca.org](http://www.eastersealsca.org), or digitally through our YouTube channel (Easterseals Central Alabama) where you will find a read-aloud version accompanied by American Sign Language interpreting and closed captioning.**

**Please feel free to ask if you have any questions.**