

Options for Structuring Provider Relationships

1. List of Recommended Providers

Definition: The intentional community distributes a list of vetted providers to its members.

Considerations:

- What are the criteria that a recommended provider must meet?
- How many providers should be included on the list?
- How will quality be monitored? How will problems be resolved?
- When would a provider be removed from or added to the list?
- What promise does the list imply?

2. Preferred Provider Relationship

Definition: The community designates one or more companies as its preferred provider(s).

Considerations:

- Should there be a formal contract or memorandum of understanding? What terms should the community seek? Should they receive a discount for their members?
- How will referrals be handled? Will the members call the provider directly or will they call organization staff first?
- Selection criteria, quality assurance, problem resolution, implied promise to members (same as recommended provider issues).

3. Strategic Partnership

Definition: The preferred provider and the intentional community collaborate to promote their shared interests. The provider is invested in the success of the community and considers the partnership an important element of the company's brand.

Considerations:

- Is there a provider with which the community would like to be publicly identified?
- Is there a suitable provider with PR and other resources that could benefit the community and help it drive membership?
- Is there a good fit between the provider's management and the community's leadership? Are their goals aligned?
- Are the provider's attitudes toward aging and consumer empowerment consistent with the mission of the intentional community?

(Options for Structuring Provider Relationships, cont.)

4. Provide Services Directly

Definition: The intentional community provides member services directly through its own staff or by acquiring or starting a provider agency.

Considerations:

- What are the cash requirements associated with start-up or acquisition?
- Can the community generate sufficient volume to support the responsiveness, reliability, flexibility, and financial viability of the service?
- Will the organization be distracted from its primary mission by taking on the responsibility of running a direct-service agency?

5. The Neighbor-to-Neighbor Approach

Definition: Organization members exchange home care services on a volunteer or timebanking basis.

Considerations:

- Organization members can offer one another assistance to meet a variety of needs, *e.g.* transportation, minor home maintenance jobs, companionship, telephone reassurance, help with shopping and errands, medical escort, *etc.*
- Volunteer programs can be a powerful means of building community among members.
- Volunteer coordination requires significant time and attention.
- A volunteer network cannot provide the necessary reliability and back-up to meet the home care needs of frail members or those who are recuperating following a hospitalization, illness, or accident.