



EMPOWER

WELCOME PACKET
FOR
PEOPLE WE SUPPORT
& THEIR FAMILIES

WELCOME

Welcome to Empower! It is our pleasure to get to know you and to work with you in developing a plan of services and supports that is customized to your needs, interests and goals. This booklet is intended as a supplement to the personal touch of our staff. Please read through it and let us know if there is anything additional we can do for you to support you in living the life you choose.

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MISSION

Empowering the people we support to live the lives they choose.

VALUES

Inclusion: We support people to live as full members of our community.

Dignity: We honor the value of each person we support.

Excellence: We create a culture in which everyone continuously raises the bar.

Accountability: We honor the commitments we make to people, families and partners.

Leadership: We initiate transformative solutions and collaborations to meet community needs.

VISION

People living their best lives, contributing to our community, supported by a trusted and efficient agency.

OVERVIEW OF SERVICES AND SUPPORTS

Empower Children's Academy

Empower provides preschool programming for children up to five years old, including evaluations, specialized therapies, special classes for preschoolers with a disability and integrated preschool classrooms where preschoolers with and without disabilities learn side-by-side.

Preschoolers With a Disability can attend a special education class that has 6 students per one teacher and one teacher's aide or learn alongside preschoolers without a disability in an integrated class. Specialized therapies are also available according to their individualized education plan. See page 9 for information on how to enroll.

Preschoolers Without a Disability are offered a phenomenal Pre-K experience that prepares them for kindergarten. Students will learn alongside preschoolers with disabilities, learning empathy and acceptance of all abilities.

Class Options:

- Operates year-round
- Classes are held Monday through Friday
- Full-day classes (8:40 am to 2:30 pm)
- Half-day classes, either in the morning (8:40 am – 11:10 am) or afternoon (noon-2:30 pm)
- Daycare is available between 8-8:40 am and between 2:30-3:30 pm

Cost:

- \$24 per day for full day enrollment
- \$12 per day for half day enrollment
- \$5 per hour for daycare

Contact Information:

(716) 297-1478, ext. 160 or rpanattoni@empower-wny.org.

Autism Family Support Group meets the first Monday of almost every month at Empower Children's Academy to provide families a chance to meet, share experiences, ask questions and receive support. For more information, please contact Elizabeth at (716) 297-0798, x173, or ecardamone@empower-wny.org.

Spectrum Theater Program is a theater program for children with autism spectrum disorders to improve their social skills. Currently, the program is being redeveloped, and will be offered again soon. For more information, please contact Robin at (716) 478-9528 or rstevens@empower-wny.org.

Community Housing

Empower helps people with disabilities throughout Niagara County to live as independently as possible, with the support that they need to reach their goals. Whatever the level of support, our goal is to empower people to live their best lives. *Funding for each of these services is provided through New York State Office for People with Developmental Disabilities, so individuals must be eligible to receive OPWDD services in order to utilize these programs.* Please speak to a care coordinator about how to access housing supports by calling Person Centered Services at 1-888-977-7030.

Through the **Community Habilitation** program, individuals learn skills such as grocery shopping, personal finance and using public transportation to live as independently as possible. A trained direct support professional who has gone through a thorough background check will provide this training on a one-on-one basis, usually in the person's home.

Home or Environmental Modifications are physical changes to make a person's home more accessible such as ramps or handrails.

Housing Subsidies offset the cost of your home or apartment.

In-Home Respite is for people with intellectual or developmental disabilities who live at home with family or other caregivers. It gives parents and other caregivers of people with an intellectual or developmental disability time for themselves. A trained respite worker who has gone through a thorough background will spend time with the person at home. This frees up caregivers to run errands or take a break.

Community-Based Respite takes place in a fully-accessible, modern hotel. Trained respite workers who have gone through a thorough background check will spend time with a group of individuals in a hotel suite. They also will spend time in the community, doing fun, safe group activities. This program usually takes place over a weekend. It frees the caregiver up to run errands, take a break or even go out of town.

Geri Rose Garden Apartments, located in the Town of Niagara, offer comfortable, modern and fully-accessible living environment for people with any type of disability. The 11-unit building is funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. There are currently no vacancies. To learn more or to be placed on a waiting list, please contact Empower's Community Housing Division at (716) 297-0798, ext. 134.

11 Certified Housing Sites located throughout Niagara County are operated by Empower to provide people with intellectual or developmental disabilities with more structure and support. There is usually a wait for admission to these homes, and beds are offered based on urgency of need.

Job Training and Day Programs

Empower supports people with disabilities in becoming active members of their community and in achieving their personal and/or professional goals. We provide training and skill-development to help people get or keep a job, gain valuable life skills and have meaningful experiences. Our programs help people improve their self-image, quality of life and independence.

In 2018, Empower completed the integration of its work programs into community settings. The fact that this process was completed three years ahead of the New York State deadline is a testament to Empower's commitment to ensuring people with disabilities are active participants in their communities.

Please speak to a care coordinator about how to access job training and day program supports by calling Person Centered Services at 1-888-977-7030.

Community Pre-Vocational Programming provides paid job training, classes, volunteer opportunities, identification of work skills and interests and work-readiness instruction. It is the stepping stone that prepares people with intellectual or developmental disabilities for the world of work.

Empower operates two redemption centers, called **Empties for Empower**, that are located in the Town of Niagara and in the Town of Wheatfield. At these facilities, workers learn on-the-job skills and earn a wage. They run just like regular redemption centers with the added benefits of free bottle sorting for customers and job training for people with disabilities. Workers greet customers, sort bottles and help

to run the facilities. Empower earns 3.5 cents for each container it processes which pays for overhead costs not covered by reimbursement from OPWDD.

At the Town of Niagara Empties for Empower location, **Document Shredding** also is offered, providing another service to customers and another skill-set to workers.

Pathways to Employment is a one-year career discovery program in which participants determine a career goal or objective through job experience, computer class and work with an employment specialist. Observations and interviews help to determine employable skills and employment outcomes. Following these interviews, participants get hands-on work experience through an internship, apprenticeship or volunteer experience. At the same time, employment specialists introduce participants to important employer expectations such as appropriate workplace behavior, acceptable dress and travel training. At the conclusion of the Pathways to Employment program, participants will have a stated career objective, a detailed plan to achieve that objective, and experience to include on a resume.

Employment Training Program offers paid internships with potential employment at the conclusion of the internship. Interns typically work 4 to 12 hours per week, with the length of the internship varying by business. Monthly classes that enhance the intern's work skills and improve job retention, such as time management and conflict resolution, are included. This program is designed to develop relationships and experiences that give interns a competitive edge in the workforce.

Empowered to Work Job Placement Program helps people with any New York State disability that serves as a barrier to work meet their job goals, and improve self-esteem and friendships through job experience. Some of the services provided include development of job opportunities in the community, job placement and job coaching before-, during and after job placement. Empowered to Work is certified by OPWDD, NYS Office of Mental Health, and Offices of Adult Career and Continuing Education Services (ACCES-VR). For more information, please contact Mike Marra at (716) 299-0851, ext. 402 or mmarra@empower-wny.org.

Family Support Services supports people with an intellectual or developmental disability who live at home with their families who are age 21 and up in developing independence, promoting choice and advocating for personal/community needs. Social skills building, training groups meet twice a week, and three community integrated outings per month are provided. For more information, please contact Angela at (716) 260-1791, ext. 202 or agantt@empower-wny.org

For people who are more interested in getting involved in their community but not in obtaining employment, Empower offers **Day Habilitation and Day Habilitation Without Walls**. These programs provide opportunities for volunteer work, and community outings such as shopping and

visits to parks. The Joseph O. Mineo Day Center is a site-based day program located at 7425 Buffalo Ave in Niagara Falls. Empower's Day Habilitation Without Walls program is a community integration program with hubs at 3571 Niagara Falls Blvd. in Wheatfield, and 8962 Porter Rd. in the Town of Niagara. Participants spend as much time as possible in the community.

Community Health Programs

Empower for Elders is an adult day program for older adults who live at home with family. It offers social activities and assistance with personal care in a fun and safe setting with attentive paid staff. While their loved ones are at this program, caregivers get a break. Participants do not need to have an intellectual or developmental disability. A morning snack, lunch and afternoon snack are provided. Financial assistance, some of which is not based on income, often is available through Niagara County's Office for the Aging. Empower for Elders accepts Medicaid through Kalos Healthcare and Elderwood Health Plan.

For more information, please contact (716) 371-0728 or ksmith@empower-wny.org

Empower's Healthcare Clinic offers 4 specialized clinics at 9812 Lockport Rd. in the Town of Niagara. For more information, please contact (716) 297-1468, ext. 189 or jarchie2@empower-wny.org.

Podiatry Clinic offers general foot care, and wellness and maintenance exams for at-risk patients, such as those with diabetes or circulation problems. The clinic is open two to three Thursdays a month from 9 a.m. – 3 p.m., and appointments are strongly recommended. Medicaid and Medicare are accepted.

Audiology Clinic provides hearing evaluations, as well as hearing aid evaluations, dispensing, cleaning, adjustments and general maintenance. Early Intervention Services for children are also offered. Patients are seen by appointment only. Medicaid, Medicare and many other insurances are accepted.

Wheelchair/Seating and Mobility Clinic offers comprehensive seating and positioning evaluations for individuals who require the use of a power and/or manually-operated wheelchairs. Referrals from the patient's primary care physician are required for the first visit, and may be required for subsequent visits. Medicaid and Medicare are accepted. Patients are seen by appointment only, usually on Friday mornings.

Physical Therapy Clinic provides evaluation and treatment for a variety of conditions. Physical Therapy treatment typically includes hands-on therapeutic intervention to restore joint motion and to improve strength. A Physical Therapist evaluates the individual's ability to perform gross motor skills (such as sitting, walking, running), postural assessment, muscle strength, joint range of motion (flexibility),

balance and coordination. Medicaid and Medicare and a variety of other insurances are accepted. The Physical Therapy clinic is held on Wednesday and Friday afternoons by appointment.

GETTING THE SERVICES YOU NEED

YOUNG CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

For families who suspect that their child has a disability, please contact Empower Children’s Academy at (716) 297-1478, ext. 160 or rpanattoni@empower-wny.org. Empower Children’s Academy is approved by New York State Education Department, and specially designed for children ages birth through five, who have speech and language delays, and/or other learning or physical disabilities. We will put you in touch with your school district, who will mail you information on getting your child evaluated. Within 60 days, your child will be evaluated on learning, social/emotional development, communication skills, physical development and adaptive living skills. Following the evaluation, you will be part of a discussion with the professional staff outlining your child’s strengths and needs. If it is determined that your child has a disability and is therefore eligible for special education services, the cost of Empower Children’s Academy program will be covered by **New York State Education Department through Niagara County**. If it is decided that your child does not qualify for special education services, please contact Empower as we can recommend next steps through other programs, including our own private-pay preschool program.

ADOLESCENTS & ADULTS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

Through the New York State Educational Department, Adult Career and Continuing Education Services-Vocational Rehabilitation (ACCES-VR) is available for people with disabilities who are at least 14 years of age and who need supports to get or keep a job. To receive ACCES-VR services, please contact ACCES-VR at 888-652-7062 or inquire about a referral from your child’s school. Once ACCES-VR registration is complete, you can choose a disability service provider such as Empower through which to receive job training services.

The New York State Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) is responsible for coordinating services for more than 126,000 New Yorkers with developmental disabilities, including intellectual disabilities, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, autism spectrum disorders and other neurological impairments. It provides services directly and through a network of not-for-profit service providing agencies including Empower.

Everyone seeking services from OPWDD must go through a process called the Front Door. The Front Door provides information on OPWDD and available service options, and determines individual eligibility with an emphasis on person-centeredness and self-determination. To begin the front-door approval process,

please contact OPWDD at 1-800-487-6310. Assistance with the front door process is also available through care coordination organizations.

People receiving services through OPWDD are assigned a Care Coordinator to help them manage their services.

Empower is affiliated with Person Centered Services Care Coordination.

To learn about or to sign up for Care Coordination, please call:
Person Centered Services Care Coordination Organization
1-888-977-7030

To email a care coordinator at Person Centered Services:
First initial of first name with full last name @personcenteredservices.com
Example: Mary Jones would be mjones@personcenteredservices.com

To learn about Person Centered Services Care Coordination and what it offers, please visit <https://www.personcenteredservices.com>. There is an excellent question-and-answer page at <https://personcenteredservices.com/your-answers/>.

Prime Care Coordination is the other Care Coordination Organization that supports our region. Empower is a participating provider with Prime Care. You can learn more about Prime Care at www.primecareny.org, or you can call Prime Care at (844) 347-3168.

New York State ABLE Program

New York State Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) is a program that allows individuals and families to save private funds that are exempt from taxes on earnings or distributions for things that help people with disabilities maintain health, independence and quality of life. It is intended to supplement benefits provided through Medicaid, SSI, SSDI, private insurance and other sources. For more information, please visit www.mynyable.org or call (855) 569-2253.

Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)

Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) is a Federal disability income program for adults who have worked and now find themselves unable to work due to a disability. There is no online SSI Application. Schedule an appointment with a local Social Security office to file an application. Call 1-800-722-1213

Social Security Insurance (SSI)

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) is Federal program for adults and children who meet the definition of disabled and have limited income and resources. It is designed to help aged, blind, and disabled people, who have little or no income; and it provides cash to meet basic needs for food, clothing, and shelter. To apply for SSDI, visit: <https://www.ny.gov/services/apply-federal-disability-benefits> or call (800) 772-1213

Special Needs Trusts

A trust is a legal agreement through which you give money or assets to another person or entity-such as a bank-called a trustee-to manage it for the benefit of the person-the beneficiary. These trusts can provide supplemental needs for the beneficiary throughout his/her lifetime while maintaining eligibility for public

benefits or other sources of support. Cerebral Palsy Associations of New York State is one provider of a community trust program. For more information, please contact David Seay at (212) 356-1224 or dseay@cpofnys.org.

REPORTING A CONCERN

Appeal and Grievance Procedure

Any person receiving supports from Empower, or advocate for a person receiving supports, may object to decisions that Empower makes about the person's services. Empower has a 5-step process to make sure that all appeals are fairly considered.

1. State your concern informally to your case manager or the person who supervises the site.
2. If the concern is not resolved, contact, by phone or in writing, one of the following people:

The Division Director:

William Krays, Director of Community Housing, at (716) 297-0798, ext. 135 or wkrayss@empower-wny.org.

Kim Kiely, Director of Job Training and Day Programs, at (716) 2260-1791, ext. 207 or kkiely@empower-wny.org.

Sherri Kaminski, Director of Empower Children's Academy, at (716) 297-0798, ext. 166 or skaminski@empower-wny.org.

Jeannette Archie at (716) 297-0798, ext. 189 or jarchie2@empower-wny.org.

Director of Program Operations and Quality Assurance, Diane Baehre, at (716) 297-0798, ext. 155 or dbaehre@empower-wny.org.

Chief Executive Officer Jeff Paterson at (716) 297-0798, ext. 126 or jpaterson@empower-wny.org.

3. If you are not satisfied with the Agency's decision, you may make an appeal to the Regional Director of OPWDD:

Director
Western New York DDRO
1200 East and West Road
West Seneca, NY 14224
(716) 674-6300

4. If the Director's decision is also unsatisfactory, you may make further appeal to the Commissioner of OPWDD:

Commission
Office of People with Developmental Disabilities
44 Holland Avenue
Albany, NY 12229
(518) 473-1997

5. You may contact the Statewide Commission on Quality Care at any time if the process above is not occurring satisfactorily:

The New York State Justice Center for the Protection of People with Special Needs
161 Delaware Avenue
Delmar, New York 12054-1310
(518) 549-0200

REPORTING ABUSE OR NEGLECT

Empower has a Quality Assurance team that is dedicated to ensuring the safety of the people we support. We proactively monitor all Empower programs, ensuring services and care are of the highest quality. All sites are surveyed annually by a trained independent team. Data gathered from these efforts is analyzed and used to identify trends and to develop preventive strategies.

If it is believed that abuse or neglect has occurred, Empower's Quality Assurance team oversees the reporting, investigation, review, and correction of the incident. You are welcome to contact Empower's Quality Assurance Department with any concerns at (716) 297-0798, ext. 155.

All allegations of abuse and neglect are reported to the Vulnerable Persons Central Register through New York State's Justice Center for the Protection of People with Special Needs. Anyone can make a report to the Justice Center. Mandated reporters include custodians, which are people who have regular and substantial contact with individuals who receive services, and human service professionals who by the nature of their job must report allegations of abuse and neglect. The phone number for the Justice Center is 1-855-373-2122.

PRIVACY AND RECORDS

At Empower, we understand that information about you and your family is personal. We are committed to protecting your privacy and sharing information only with those who need to know and are allowed to see the information to assure quality services to you.

All people who work for Empower in our service/programs and in our Empower administrative offices will follow this notice. This includes employees, persons Empower contracts with (contractors) who are authorized to enter information in your clinical record or need to review your record to provide services to you, and volunteers that Empower allows to assist you.

All information we create or keep that relates to your health or care and treatment, including your name, address, birth date, social security number, your medical information, your individualized plan, and other information about your care in our program is kept strictly confidential.

1. Empower will inform each individual it provides services, care, or treatment for of their privacy rights and the privacy practices.
2. Empower shall provide each individual, and/or their personal representative, with the “Notice of Health Information Privacy Practices”
3. The content of the “Notice of Health Information Privacy Practices” shall include:
 - a. The notice describes how medical information about you may be used and disclosed and how you can get access to the information.
 - b. Description of Personal Health Insurance (PHI) uses and disclosures made for treatment, payment, and health care operations.
 - c. Description of other instances of PHI use or disclosure permitted without authorization.
 - d. Statement that other PHI use and disclosure require authorization.
 - e. Statements regarding appointment reminders, fundraising activities, and health-related information.
 - f. Statement regarding the individual’s rights with respect to PHI and how to exercise them.
 - g. Empower’s legal duties with respect to PHI, including a statement that Empower is required by law to maintain the privacy of PHI.
 - h. Information on how to file a complaint or seek more information, including whom to contact.
 - i. An effective date on which the notice is first in effect.

If you have a concern about the privacy of your records, please contact Empower’s Quality Assurance Department at (716) 297-0798, ext. 155.

TERMS YOU MAY HEAR:

ABA	Applied Behavior Analysis	A method of using behavioral science to improve behavioral issues. Often used with people on the autism spectrum.
ACCES-VR	Adult Career and Continuing Education Services	The state program that helps people with disabilities to find and keep jobs.
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act	Landmark 1990 federal law that prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in all parts of public life.
ADL	Activities of Daily Living	Essential activities that most people do without help, including eating, bathing, getting dressed and toileting.
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder	A neurological and developmental condition that affects the way people communicate, interact and behave.
BOCES	Board of Cooperative Educational Services	Public organizations across New York State that provide shared educational programs to school districts.
BPC	Bureau of Program Certification	The division of OPWDD that determines if a facility or program meets state requirements to operate. BPC is part of DQI (see below).
CAS	Coordinated Assessment System	OPWDD's new assessment tool to determine a person's needs.
CCO	Care Coordination Organization	An organization designated by OPWDD to help people and families obtain and manage all of the services they need.
CP	Cerebral Palsy	A neurological condition caused by damage to the brain before, during or after birth, affecting body movement and muscle coordination.
CPSE	Committee on Preschool Special Education	The group of professionals within a local school district who determine a child's (age 3-5) eligibility for special education services and coordinate those services.
CQL	Council on Quality and Leadership	An international organization that promotes best practices in human services through accreditation and training. Empower is accredited by CQL.
CSE	Committee on Special Education	The group of professionals within a local school district who determine a student's (age 5-21) need for special education services and recommend appropriate services.

CSS	Client Service Specialist	A manager who helps the Program Coordinator to support people who live in an Empower ICF.
DD	Developmental Disabilities	A group of chronic conditions that start at birth or during childhood, continue throughout life, and affect the person's major life activities. These may include cerebral palsy, autism, brain injury, down syndrome, and intellectual disabilities.
DDAWNY	Developmental Disabilities Alliance of Western New York	A group of service providers who share information and advocacy in Western New York.
DDP-2	Developmental Disabilities Profile	An assessment used by OPWDD to determine a person's needs in the medical, sensory/motor, cognitive/communication, behavior, self-care/daily living skills, and clinical areas. The DDP2 will eventually be replaced by the CAS.
DDRO	Developmental Disabilities Regional Office	Regional offices of OPWDD that help people apply for services and work with providers to coordinate and improve services. Empower is in Region 1, and the Region 1 DDRO is in West Seneca.
DDSO	Developmental Disabilities Services Office	What used to be called the DDSO is now the DDRO (see above). See also DDSOO.
DDSOO	Developmental Disabilities State Operations Office	While many OPWDD services are contracted to not-for-profit organizations such as Empower, OPWDD also directly provides services through its state-operated programs. State-operated programs are run through the DDSSOs in each region of New York State.
DME	Durable Medical Equipment	Non-disposable medical equipment and supplies for extended use, such as wheelchairs, walkers, and oxygen equipment.
DOH	New York State Department of Health	The department of New York State government that is responsible for public health.
DQI	Division of Quality Improvement and Performance Management	The division of OPWDD that monitors quality and regulatory compliance of OPWDD-funded services operated by not-for-profit providers and OPWDD state operations.
DSP	Direct Support Professional	Staff who work with people with disabilities to achieve personal goals and be as integrated as possible into the community.
E-Mod	Environmental Modification	Changes made to a person's home to ensure his/her health and safety. The cost of E-Mods can be covered by OPWDD; information is available from care coordinators.
EI	Early Intervention	Supportive services to help infants and toddlers with developmental delays or disabilities.

G-Tube	Gastrostomy Tube	A tube that delivers nutrition directly to the stomach, for people who have difficulty eating by mouth.
HIPAA	Health Information Portability and Accountability Act	A 1996 federal law that mandates the protection of private, protected health information.
I/DD	Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities	Intellectual disabilities arise before age 18 and result in an IQ of 70-75 or lower. Intellectual disabilities are included in the broader group of developmental disabilities (see DD above). "I/DD" is a term used to include all intellectual and developmental disabilities.
ICF	Intermediate Care Facility	A type of 24/7 group residence for people with I/DD. ICFs generally support people with a higher level of medical and/or behavioral needs than those who live in IRAs or in the community.
ID	Intellectual Disabilities	See IDD above.
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act	A 1975 federal law, updated in 1990, that guarantees a "free, appropriate public education" that is individualized to the needs of each student with a disability.
IEP	Individual Education Plan	A document that lays out the services and supports that a child needs to succeed in school. It is tailored to the individual student.
IPOP	Individual Plan of Protective Oversight	A document that lays out the risks and safeguards for a person receiving services.
IRA	Individual Residential Alternative	A community-based, 24/7 residence that provides room, board and individualized services.
IRC	Incident Review Committee	A state-mandated group of Empower board members, staff members and community representatives who review cases of abuse and neglect, and make recommendations for corrective action.
IRMA	Incident Reporting Management Application	A web-based database that service providers such as Empower use to report and track allegations of abuse and neglect.
ISP	Individual Service Plan	A document that acts as a blueprint for a person's services and supports. The ISP will be replaced by the Life Plan over the next year.
LPN	Licensed Practical Nurse	A nurse who provides more basic nursing care and comfort than an RN.
MHLS	Mental Hygiene Legal Service	A New York State agency that represents, advocates and litigates for people receiving care in state-funded facilities.

MOLST	Medical Orders Life Sustaining Treatment	A doctor's order for people with life-threatening medical conditions, spelling out the person's wishes for end-of-life care.
MSC	Medicaid Service Coordination	Before Care Coordination Organizations were formed, Medicaid service coordinators working in not-for-profit organizations helped people to arrange their OPWDD services. MSC was replaced by Care Coordination in 2018.
NYSED	New York State Education Department	The New York State department that oversees all public schools, colleges and universities, cultural institutions, and licensing of professions.
OCFS	New York State Office of Child and Family Services	The New York State agency that oversees and provides various services to children, youth, families and vulnerable adults – including daycare licensing, child protective services, foster care and adoption.
OPWDD	New York State Office for People with Developmental Disabilities	The New York State agency responsible for services and supports for New Yorkers with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
OT	Occupational Therapy/Therapist	A type of therapy that helps people with disabilities, illnesses and injuries to improve or maintain their daily living skills such as dressing, cooking and eating.
PC	Program Coordinator	The lead Empower associate responsible for the operation of an ICF.
PCP	Primary Care Provider	A health practitioner, usually a doctor but sometimes a nurse practitioner or physician assistant, who oversees a person's general, routine health services.
POCA	Plan of Corrective Action	A set of actions to be taken to respond to a Statement of Deficiencies issued by a regulatory agency.
POMs	Personal Outcome Measures	A set of 21 measurements of a person's quality of life developed by the Council on Quality and Leadership.
PT	Physical Therapy/Therapist	A type of therapy that helps people with disabilities, illnesses and injuries to improve movement and manage pain.
QA/QI	Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement	Empower's Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement Department includes a professional staff and a set of policies and procedures to ensure people are receiving the best possible services and supports. Generally, quality assurance looks backward to identify and respond to specific cases of abuse or neglect. Quality improvement looks forward to identify corrective actions and ways to

		improve performance, to avoid future cases of abuse and neglect.
QIDP	Qualified Intellectual Disabilities Professional	A staff member responsible for integrating, coordinating and monitoring people’s services in certain OPWDD-funded programs. A QIDP must meet federal and state educational and training standards.
RN	Registered Nurse	A nurse with a nursing diploma and other educational background, who provides medical care, educates people about their health, administer medication, and monitor people’s medical conditions.
SCIP	Strategies for Crisis Intervention and Prevention	Now properly called “SCIP-R” (the “R” stands for “Revised”), SCIP is a proactive intervention model for people with I/DD, including prevention and calming strategies.
SCIS	Special Education Class in an Integrated Setting	A preschool model practiced at Empower and other organizations, that integrates children who have disabilities and delays into the same classroom as “typically developing children.”
SED	New York State Education Department	See NYSED above.
SEMP	Supported Employment	A program that matches people receiving services with paid, competitive jobs that match their skills and interests. A job coach often provides ongoing support.
SIB	Self-Injurious Behavior	A type of repetitive behavior in some people with I/DD, where the person hits, bites or otherwise physically abuses his/her own self.
SSDI	Social Security Disability Insurance	A federal benefit that allows workers with disabilities to receive Social Security benefits early; to be eligible, a person must have paid into the Social Security system through previous employment.
SSI	Supplemental Security Income	A benefit provided through the federal Social Security Administration to meet the basic needs of people with disabilities as well as older adults and people who are blind, who would otherwise be unable to pay for food and shelter.
TBI	Traumatic Brain Injury	An acquired brain injury that happens when a sudden trauma, such as being jolted or hit in the head, causes damage to the brain.

LOCATIONS

EMPOWER ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES

9812 Lockport Road
Niagara Falls, NY 14304
(716) 297-0798
(716) 297-0998 (fax)

EMPOWER CHILDREN'S ACADEMY

9812 Lockport Road
Niagara Falls, NY 14304
(716) 297-1478, x160
(716) 205-0044 (fax)

COMMUNITY HOUSING DIVISION

9812 Lockport Road
Niagara Falls, NY 14304
(716) 297-0798, x134
(716) 297-0998 (fax)

EMPTIES FOR EMPOWER – TOWN OF NIAGARA

4701 Military Road
Niagara Falls, NY 14305
(716) 545-0023

EMPTIES FOR EMPOWER – TOWN OF WHEATFIELD

3571 Niagara Falls Boulevard, Suite 12
North Tonawanda, NY 14120
(716) 260-1791

JOSEPH O. MINEO DAY CENTER (DAY HABILITATION)

7425 Buffalo Avenue
Niagara Falls, NY 14304
(716) 283-4818
(716) 283-4816 (fax)

DAY HABILITATION WITHOUT WALLS

3571 Niagara Falls Boulevard, Suite 14
North Tonawanda, NY 14120
(716) 260-1791

8962 Porter Road

Niagara Falls, NY 14304
(716) 371-0728

EMPOWERED TO WORK JOB PLACEMENT PROGRAM

4701 Military Road
Niagara Falls, NY 14305
(716) 299-0851
(716) 524-2802 (fax)

EMPOWER FOR ELDERLY

8962 Porter Road
Niagara Falls, NY 14304
(716) 371-0728

COMMUNITY HEALTH PROGRAMS

(AUDIOLOGY/HEARING, PODIATRY, PHYSICAL THERAPY AND WHEELCHAIR CLINIC)

9812 Lockport Road
Niagara Falls, NY 14304
(716) 297-1478, ext. 154

THE STORY OF EMPOWER

In the Beginning

In 1954, United Cerebral Palsy Association of Niagara County, Inc. was incorporated by the community to provide care and treatment to children with cerebral palsy who would otherwise have to travel to Buffalo for services. Over time, the agency grew to provide a wide range of services to individuals of all ages with disabilities, and to the broader community.

In an effort to create a stronger brand identity, the agency began doing business as Niagara Cerebral Palsy in 2000. In 2015, the agency unveiled an entirely new identity: Empower. This new name was meant to broaden the agency's appeal and make it easier to expand services among individuals without disabilities.

Clinical Services

Clinical services for children with cerebral palsy started with physical therapy and soon expanded to include speech and occupational therapy services. In 2001, the clinic began accepting non-disabled patients from the community. Podiatry, wheelchair and audiology clinics were added next, and all of the services are now provided at the Lockport Rd. campus in the Town of Niagara where they continue to operate today.

Educational Programs

Beginning in 1960, UCPA began offering special education classes at Niagara Falls City School District locations until they were moved to a multi-purpose facility on a 12-acre former farm at 9812 Lockport Road in the Town of Niagara. This 23,000-square foot facility would house the agency's administrative offices, clinic and preschool.

In 2005, the agency began offering special classes for preschoolers with a disability, as well as integrated preschool classrooms, in collaboration with the North Tonawanda Pre-Kindergarten Program and Niagara County Head Start. The Niagara Falls Universal Pre-Kindergarten Program was added later.

Today, the Empower Children's Academy educates approximately 100 three-and four-year-olds each year, with a renewed focus on expanding private pay preschool opportunities to integrate non-disabled children into the program. Before- and after-school care is also offered to help out working families.

Job Training and Day Programs

In 1961, Empower added a Handy Cap Workshop to provide employment and training opportunities for adults with disabilities. Over the next 20 years, the program's name changed to Community Vocational Rehabilitation Center (CVRC) and its enrollment and revenue grew, leading to the addition of permanent staff and relocation to two buildings in Niagara Falls: 2103 MacKenna Avenue and 245-30th Street building. Job placement service were added in 1980.

A certified group day habilitation program opened in 1995 and is now located at 7425 Buffalo Avenue in Niagara Falls. In 2017, the building was renamed the Joseph O. Mineo Day Habilitation Program in honor of Empower's longtime chief executive officer. It is for individuals with disabilities who prefer to volunteer and to go on community outings.

In 2013, as part of its Olmstead Act compliance agreement with the federal government, the New York Office for People with Developmental Disabilities announced that all workshop programs would be phased out by 2020 – including programs housed at both CVRC locations. By the end of 2017 (3 years ahead of the state's deadline), the agency had completed its workforce transformation plan by moving all of its job training and job placement services to sites that were more integrated in the community.

In 2016, the agency opened Empties for Empower in the Town of Niagara, which is a bottle/can redemption center where the public drop off cans to be sorted by workers with disabilities. A document shredding job training service which opened in 2018 and the job placement offices are also located there.

In 2018, a second redemption center was opened in the Town of Wheatfield that also serves as the hub for day habilitation without walls, a program for individuals with disabilities who prefer to volunteer and to go on community outings. These integrated businesses fulfill three important goals: comply with state mandates, promote community integration instead of segregation for people with disabilities and produce additional revenue for the agency.

Community Housing

In 1986, Empower began offering residential supports throughout Niagara County for people with disabilities and their families. Between 1986 and 1992, it opened four Intermediate Care Facilities (ICF) to house individuals with developmental disabilities that are severe enough to prevent independent living. Between 1994 and 2005, the agency opened six Individual Residential Alternative (IRA) houses, which offer room, board and individualized service options.

In cooperation with the United States department of Housing and Urban Development, the agency built the 11-unit Geri Rose Apartments in 2002 at 3445 Tuscarora Road in the Town of Niagara, directly behind the administrative offices, preschool and clinic. The apartments were built for individuals with physical and developmental disabilities who can live independently.

In the 2000's, the agency began to offer other residential supports for people with disabilities, such as in-home and overnight respite and community habilitation.

LEADERSHIP

Staff Leadership Team

Jeff Paterson
Chief Executive Officer

Diane Baehre
Director of Program Operations & Quality
Assurance Administration

Rita Tweedie
Chief Financial Officer

Elizabeth Cardamone
Director of Communication & Development

Eric DesSoye
Director of Managed Care Readiness

Sherri Kaminski
Director of Empower Children's Academy

Kim Kiely
Director of Job Training & Day Programs

William Krayss
Director of Community Housing

Kristin Minervini
Director of Human Resources

Board of Directors

Tom Caserta, Esq., President

Patricia Wrobel, First Vice President

Daniel Vitch, Second Vice President

Stanley Fera, Treasurer

Russell J. Petrozzi, Corresponding Secretary

Patrice Wells, Recording Secretary

Susan Kuznik, Immediate Past President

Kevin Burgess, LMSW

Gary Damon

Robert DiFrancesco

Alice Kozen, PHD

Marcus Latham

Ernest C. Palmer

Richard Sawicki, DPM

WORKING FOR EMPOWER

Empower is always looking for dedicated and caring people to join its 300-person strong workforce. If you like to help people and want to make a difference, please visit our website for a list of current openings and to complete an online job application: <http://empower-wny.org/about/careers/>.

A job application also can be obtained by contacting our Human Resources Department at (716) 297-0798, ext. 175, or by stopping our administrative offices at 9812 Lockport Rd. in the Town of Niagara.

GET INVOLVED/DONATE

There are a few special people who volunteer their time to Empower programs. Their presence enhances the quality of services provided to the people Empower supports. If you would like to donate your time by volunteering, please visit our website and complete a volunteer inquiry form: <http://empower-wny.org/connect/volunteer/Empower>. You may also get in touch by contacting us at (716) 297-0798, ext. 120 or kdaloise@empower-wny.org.

Another way to support Empower is by making a contribution. Empower depends on the generosity of its donors to pay for experiences or capital improvements for the people its supports that are not covered by OPWDD. If you would like to make an online donation, please visit our website: <http://empower-wny.org/donations/>. You can also contact us at (716) 297-0798, ext. 172 or ecardamone@empower-wny.org. Thank you for your support.

AFFILIATIONS/ ACCREDITATION

At the state level, Empower is an affiliate of the Cerebral Palsy Associations of New York State (CP of NYS), which is a broad-based, multi-service organization encompassing 24 affiliates that provide services and programs to more than 100,000 people with cerebral palsy and developmental disabilities, as well as resources for families.

Empower also is affiliated with Person Centered Services Care Coordination, an organization that helps people manage services that are received through OPWDD.

Locally, Empower belongs to the Developmental Disabilities Alliance of Western New York (DDAWNY), which is a collaborative group of member voluntary agencies that provide services to people with developmental disabilities. While honoring individual agency missions, it is the intent of the Alliance to assist agencies to develop relationships, promote unified strategies and share risks for the mutual gain with and for the benefit of people with developmental disabilities. Members of each agencies' senior leadership teams serve on DDAWNY committees, and work together to improve the lives of people with disabilities in Western New York.

In 2018, Empower earned basic assurances accreditation from the Council on Quality and Leadership. The Council on Quality and Leadership is an international not-for-profit, virtual organization dedicated to the definition, measurement and improvement of personal quality of life. CQL's vision is a world of dignity, opportunity and community for all people.

CQL's prestigious Basic Assurances Accreditation confirms that Empower embraces person-centered solutions to improve the quality of life for people receiving supports and services.

When Empower decided to pursue CQL accreditation, we undertook a rigorous process to review and improve supports and services. Throughout the process, we have worked to empower people who receive supports to pursue what really matters in their lives, and achieve their personally defined outcomes. CQL accreditation is a journey, not a destination — we will always be working to become a better organization.

Empower has been awarded accreditation by committing to excellence in 46 specific areas of practice, within 10 broad Basic Assurances categories:

Rights Protection and Promotion

The organization implements policies and procedures that promote people’s rights.
The organization supports people to exercise their rights and responsibilities.
Staff recognize and honor people’s rights.
The organization upholds due process requirements.
Decision-making supports are provided to people as needed.

Dignity and Respect

People are treated as people first.
The organization respects people’s concerns and responds accordingly.
People have privacy.
Supports and services enhance dignity and respect.
People have meaningful work and activity choices.

Natural Support Networks

Policies and practices facilitate continuity of natural support systems.
The organization recognizes emerging support networks.
Communication occurs among people, their support staff and their families.
The organization facilitates each person’s desire for natural supports.

Protection from Abuse, Neglect, Mistreatment and Exploitation

The organization implements policies and procedures that define, prohibit and prevent abuse, neglect, mistreatment and exploitation.
People are free from abuse, neglect, mistreatment and exploitation.
The organization implements systems for reviewing and analyzing trends, potential risks and sentinel events including allegations of abuse, neglect, mistreatment and exploitation, and injuries of unknown origin and deaths.
Support staff know how to prevent, detect and report allegations of abuse, neglect, mistreatment and exploitation.
The organization ensures objective, prompt and thorough investigations of each allegation of

abuse, neglect, mistreatment and exploitation, and of each injury, particularly injuries of unknown origin.

The organization ensures thorough, appropriate and prompt responses to substantiated cases of abuse, neglect, mistreatment and exploitation, and to other associated issues identified in the investigation.

Best Possible Health

People have supports to manage their own health care.

People access quality health care.

Data and documentation support evaluation of health care objectives and promote continuity of services and supports.

Acute health needs are addressed in a timely manner.

People receive medications and treatments safely and effectively.

Staff immediately recognize and respond to medical emergencies.

Safe Environments

The organization provides individualized safety supports.

The physical environment promotes people's health, safety and independence.

The organization has individualized emergency plans.

Routine inspections ensure that environments are sanitary and hazard free.

Staff Resources and Supports

The organization implements a system for staff recruitment and retention.

The organization implements an ongoing staff development program.

The support needs of individuals shape the hiring, training and assignment of all staff.

The organization implements systems that promote continuity and consistency of direct support professionals.

The organization treats its employees with dignity, respect and fairness.

Positive Services and Supports

People's individual plans lead to person-centered and person-directed services and supports.

The organization provides continuous and consistent services and supports for each person.

The organization provides positive behavioral supports to people.

The organization treats people with psychoactive medications for mental health needs consistent with national standards of care.

People are free from unnecessary, intrusive interventions.

Continuity and Personal Security

The organization's mission, vision and values promote attainment of personal outcomes.

The organization implements sound fiscal practices.

Business, administrative and support functions promote personal outcomes.

The cumulative record of personal information promotes continuity of services.

Basic Assurances System of Accountability

The organization has policies and procedures that monitor the presence of each basic assurance.

If you have feedback or suggestions on Basic Assurances, you may contact Eric at (716) 297-0798, x194 or edessoeye@empower-wny.org.