Lambs Farm Health Services

Lambs Farm serves a mission of empowering people with developmental disabilities to lead personally fulfilling lives. A critical step toward achieving that mission is providing the best possible care for the Lambs Farm Participants’ health and well-being.

The Washington Square Health Foundation granted funds to support a new health care delivery system at Lambs Farm. As they age, the health and nursing needs of the men and women Lambs Farm serves have been dramatically increasing in both number and complexity, and that trend is expected to continue. The new health care delivery system was developed in an effort to maximize the effectiveness of the Lambs Farm Health Services department, and includes on-site appointments with physicians and other medical providers, training Direct Service Providers (DSPs) to perform first aid and other simple procedures, and preventative health education for Participants.

Lambs Farm has established relationships with a number of providers who are willing to come to the Lambs Farm campus, near Libertyville, IL, to treat Participants. Since on-site appointments do not require additional travel time, the potential number of appointments that could be completed in one day increased; up to forty Participants can be seen in the time it would take for less than five off-campus appointments. The men and women of Lambs Farm required over 4,000 medical appointments in the past year, so on-site appointments will significantly streamline the process. The on-site appointments take place in a recently opened treatment room, equipped in part through the grant from the Washington Square Health Foundation. The familiar on-campus setting helps reduce the Participants’ anxiety levels, and gives them a greater sense of ownership with regard to their health care. Anecdotal evidence shows that many Participants feel more empowered to seek medical treatment when it is available on the Lambs Farm campus. Of course, choosing a physician is a personal decision made by each individual Participant and/or their guardian; while on-site appointments are available, they still have the option of going to a provider off-campus.

Lambs Farm also emphasized the importance of Direct Service Providers (DSPs) using the skills taught in their health and safety training classes instead of relying on a nurse for assistance. All of Lambs Farm’s staff members are trained to provide first aid and CPR. DSPs, who work directly with the Participants, are further trained and empowered to perform certain health-related tasks, such as checking blood glucose levels and taking blood pressures. Practical components of the training classes give DSPs the opportunity to practice their skills and demonstrate their competence. By emphasizing the role of the DSP in performing first aid and other minor procedures, Lambs Farm has increased its nurses’ availability to attend to more advanced, nurse-necessary procedures.

With support from the Washington Square Health Foundation, Lambs Farm has improved its ability to provide for the health and well-being of the men and women it serves, so that its Participants may continue to define their individual paths to fulfillment. For more information about Lambs Farm, please visit www.lambsfarm.org.