



OPTIONS

TRANSITIONS TO INDEPENDENCE

Frequently Asked Questions

➤ **What does OPTIONS stand for?**

Optimizing Potential Through Individualized, Ongoing, Nurtured Successes

➤ **Where are the OPTIONS facilities?**

OPTIONS is located in Carbondale, Illinois, 350 miles south of Chicago and 114 miles from St. Louis. Carbondale is the home of Southern Illinois University.

➤ **What are the components of OPTIONS?**

- Academic – Classes developed and taught by OPTIONS staff; support for participation in community college classes
- Employment Readiness – Classes developed and taught by OPTIONS staff; partnerships with over 100 businesses in the community that provide supervised internship opportunities
- Independent Living – Support and instruction across a wide spectrum of skills needed to lead healthy, content adult lives
- Communication skills – Integrated across all areas; also individual and small group (pragmatic) Speech & Language therapy

➤ **What is the typical student profile?**

- Primary diagnosis of a Learning Disability, ADD/ADHD or Executive Functioning Deficits
 - Many with one or more comorbid diagnoses
- Most between ages of 18 to 25
- High school graduates or in transition before college or employment
- Committed to participating in OPTIONS

➤ **How did OPTIONS come to be?**

Brehm Preparatory School alumni, parents and staff identified the need for a transitional program, recognizing that students with learning disabilities are often not equipped with academic, independent living, social and employability skills needed to lead successful lives after high school graduation

➤ **How long has OPTIONS been providing services for post-secondary students?**

Formerly known as the OPTIONS Program at Brehm, OPTIONS has been providing services for post-secondary students with learning disabilities since 1989.

➤ **What instructional options are there at OPTIONS?**

- ◆ College Transition
- ◆ Certificates of Completion
- ◆ Arrowsmith Cognitive Exercises

➤ **How does a student progress through OPTIONS?**

Students transition through three phases of programming, gaining privileges and responsibilities as they demonstrate competencies and become more independent.

➤ **What areas are addressed through the College Transition Program?**

Assessing college readiness; registering for community college classes; following curriculum guidelines; purchasing textbooks; finding classrooms; organizing materials; reading syllabi; working with professors; disclosing disability; accessing resources and accommodations; breaking down assignments; completing course work; communicating with faculty members, instructors and OPTIONS staff

➤ **What are Certificates of Completion?**

These certificates indicate a student's readiness for competitive employment in seven of the fastest growing industries in the 21st Century: Business and Office Technology; Retail Sales; Social Services; Medical Services; Animal Care and Services; Food Services; and Janitorial Services. The Certificates also indicate the student's successful completion of academic preparation, coupled with hands-on employability training.

➤ **What areas are addressed through the Internship Experiences?**

OPTIONS instructors match the student's skills, abilities, and interests with a valuable internship experience. These internships help students develop relationships with employers and gain meaningful work experience, moving them toward greater independence. Students learn new job skills that increase their employability, help them develop more self-confidence and allow them to explore potential career paths.

➤ **Where do students live?**

OPTIONS students live in community apartments with three students per apartment. The Program's apartment building is located within a larger apartment complex where most residents are college students. Each student has his or her own bedroom and bathroom. The building has keyless entry and alarm systems for security, a washer and dryer in every apartment, an in-ground pool, a workout room, and a computer room.

➤ **Does staff supervise the living environment?**

Yes. At least one full-time staff person – an Independent Living Counselor or Supervisor – is present when students are in the apartments. Auxiliary staff members are also present to assist with direct instruction of competencies within the apartments. Transportation to activities is provided by the staff in OPTIONS vehicles.

➤ **What skills are taught through the Independent Living experiences?**

- Activities of Daily Living (personal hygiene, laundry, maintenance of personal living space)
- Culinary instruction from menu planning to grocery shopping to preparation & cleanup
- Fiscal management and responsibility
- Social strategies – managing interpersonal relationships
- Study skills – regularly scheduled study hours and academic coaches
- Medical management – nurses are on staff to administer, instruct and train
- Recreation and leisure planning and participation

➤ **How long do students typically stay at OPTIONS?**

OPTIONS is not time limited. The phases of programming allow for a student to continue working with OPTIONS through the most independent level, which is living in his or her own apartment. Most students are at OPTIONS for a minimum of two years.

➤ **What do students do when they leave OPTIONS?**

OPTIONS alumni have found success in many walks of life. Alumni have completed Associate's, Bachelor's, and Master's degrees and certificates in specified fields. Many OPTIONS alumni are successfully employed.

➤ **What do you do if you want to apply to OPTIONS?**

- Contact Scott Donovan, Director of OPTIONS
 - 618-549-4201
 - admissionsinfo@experienceOPTIONS.org
- Programs begin each year during the second week of August. Acceptance begins as early as one year in advance; students are accepted throughout the year.