



Family Residences and  
Essential Enterprises, Inc.

Reach High | Achieve More

# Family Residences and Essential Enterprises, Inc. (FREE)

2025/2026 QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

# INTRODUCTION

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The FREE Network offers a comprehensive range of services to children and adults with I/DD, mental health, traumatic brain injury and substance abuse disorders. FREE is committed to seeing beyond disability, providing opportunities for people to live, work, and learn in their communities.

FREE provides comprehensive services to people with disabilities:

## **Office of People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD)**

- Residential services
  - IRA
  - ICF
  - Supportive IRA
- Day habilitation services at site-based and without walls programs
- Pre-vocational services/Employment services
- Community habilitation services
- Respite services (including Free Standing Respite)
- Mobile Crisis & Crisis Respite
- NYSTART/CSIDD
- Family Care
- Self-Directed Services

## **Office of Mental Health (OMH)**

- Residential services
  - Community Residences (CRs)
  - Apartment Treatment Programs (ATP/Enhanced ATP)
  - Supportive Housing
- PROS Programs & Employment Services
- HCBS/CFTSS
- Hospital Diversion & Crisis Respite
- Mobile Residential Support Teams (MRST)
- Article 31 Mental Health Clinic
- Critical Time Intervention (CTI)

## **Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Waiver Program**

- Service Coordination
- Nursing Home Transition and Diversion Waiver Program (NHTD)
- Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support Services (PBIS)
- Structured Day Program
- Independent Living Skills Training (ILST)
- Community Integration Counseling (CIC)

## **Office of Addiction Services and Supports (OASAS)**

- Substance Use Outpatient Treatment

## OVERVIEW

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FREE implements an ongoing Quality Improvement System that involves all departments and every level within the organization. Assisting each person supported to live the life they choose is the focus when developing quality improvement initiatives, person-centered activities, staff development, and program assessments. This focus is infused within the FREE culture. Shared values, beliefs and expectations about people determine the way we provide services, supports and resources. A variety of activities including: targeted interviews, document reviews, focus groups, site visits and person-centered conversations are conducted or explored to ensure quality services are being offered.

The people involved in the development of the Quality Improvement Plan and person-centered initiatives includes, but not limited to:

- People supported by FREE, families, and natural supports
- Direct Support Professionals
- Agency Senior Leadership
- Quality Improvement and Incident Management Department
- Corporate Compliance Department
- Operations Departments
- Training and Professional Development
- Nursing/Healthcare
- Behavior Support and Clinical Staff
- Employee Engagement Committee
- Human Resources staff
- FREE Board of Directors

Quality initiatives are embedded throughout FREE and involve all facets of the organization. They include continual analysis of agencywide systems, trends and practices and evaluation of the effectiveness of agency wide procedures. The Quality Improvement Department works alongside each division providing ongoing support and training to program staff and ensure compliance with state and federal regulations.

Direct Support Professional (DSP) Core Competencies are fully utilized within the organization's programs. DSP Core Competencies align with the mission, vision and goals of the I/DD system, and lead to enhanced quality of life for the people who receive supports. Annual performance evaluations for direct care workers are based on core competency indicators that identify areas of strength and areas of improvement.

The agency participates in several provider associations which discuss topics related to person-centered practices and ways to provide high quality services given limited resources and staffing challenges. Training and education will be delivered through various means, to deliver information to program staff quickly and at regular intervals.

## OVERVIEW

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FREE's Training Department continually evaluates its practices and develops training initiatives as regulations change and need areas are identified. The Training Department provided ongoing staff development and support to ensure team members have access to innovative trainings and solutions to best support the individuals we are privileged to support.

FREE uses the feedback received from the people FREE supports, their families, and staff as a way to identify areas for improvement and improve the quality of services we provide. FREE conducts annual staff satisfaction surveys to receive feedback for improvements from team members. FREE also conducts annual satisfaction surveys for the individuals supported, and their family members.

### **2025/2026 Goals and Objectives**

FREE has a constant focus on providing person-centered, high-quality services to the individuals provided and their families. Through continually evaluating the organization's service delivery methods, training curriculums, staff recruitment and retention practices, monitoring of compliance and quality standards, and feedback from the people we support, their families and staff, the agency continues to evolve and improve the lives of the people we support.

Throughout 2025/2026, certified residential and day habilitation settings in New York have focused on full implementation of the HCBS Settings Rule to ensure the services being provided are person-centered and of the highest quality possible. Supporting people while living in the least restrictive settings possible and receiving individualized, person-centered services remains FREE's priority.

Policies are reviewed and are developed as needs arise, and in response to items addressed through regulatory guidance. Current policies are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure the agency continues to comply with state and federal regulations.

In 2025/2026, FREE will be working on the following initiatives:

- **New Managers Training** – The New Managers Training series will provide essential skills for leaders, and presentations from support departments. This training is offered monthly for all new managers.
- **HCBS Settings Rule Committee** – This committee was created in 2024 to ensure compliance with all HCBS Settings Rule requirements. The committee is also creating a training for all staff on the requirements, and a marketing plan to spread awareness and increase buy-in.

- **Policy Portal** – The agency wide policy portal ensures streamlined access to policies and ensuring compliance with organizational policies and procedures.
- **Program Specific Training Plans** – Every program has a specific training plan assigned to them within our training software, Relias. These trainings are tailored to the specific program population (dementia, diabetes, etc.) which are assigned on the date of hire or if a team member is transferred into the program. FREE, Inc. has also launched the E-Badge academy which is a credentialing program for Direct Support Professionals and Supervisors.
- **Abuse and Neglect Prevention** – Every employee must complete Abuse and Neglect Prevention training. The training includes that all employees are mandated reporters for abuse. This training assists in maintaining the health and safety of the individuals supported, while preventing abuse and neglect.
- **Electronic Health Records** - The organization is working to identify a new electronic health record system to maximize efficiency and improve access to data that will improve the quality of our services.

### **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion**

With the assistance of the Employee Engagement Committee, FREE, Inc. continues its efforts to ensure equity amongst team members and the individuals we support. FREE, Inc. has adopted the best practices for diversity and inclusivity by incorporating the National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) across the FREE Network. Throughout 2025, diversity, equity, and inclusion activities will include:

- Continuing to offer training and awareness of DEI initiatives
- Expand training with a focus on cultural competence and intersectional existence
- Incorporate the CLAS standards across all divisions
- Continue offering Pride Ability advocacy meetings for staff and the individuals supported
- Translation services offered agency wide
- Continued education and training on the Trauma Informed Care model.

## QUALITY IMPROVEMENT GOALS FOR 2025/2026

The Quality Improvement Goals are indicated in the charts below. In addition to the goals listed below, the organization continues to work on agency-wide initiatives and goals identified in the Strategic Plan. The goals and initiatives for the organization continue to evolve and may be altered due to the needs of the individuals supported, identified risk areas and organizational change.

### AUDIT OUTCOMES

Activity/Indicators	Metrics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Create a system to track deficiencies noted during external audits</li><li>• Utilize this data to create audit trends</li><li>• Share audit trends with operations to bring awareness and identify training needs.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Quality Improvement will create a mechanism to track all deficiencies noted</li><li>• Data to be shared on a quarterly basis</li></ul>

### INCIDENT MANAGEMENT

Activity/Indicators	Metrics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Create Incident Trend Reports on a quarterly basis</li><li>• Maintain a 95%-100% compliance rate with Incident Reporting Regulations.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Analyze incident data on a quarterly basis</li><li>• OPWDD Compliance Percentages</li></ul>

### WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Activity/Indicators	Metrics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ensure all staff are in compliance with mandatory trainings</li><li>• Improve retention and recruitment percentages</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Quarterly training reports will be generated</li><li>• Retention and recruitment data will be reported and analyzed quarterly</li></ul>

## **SATISFACTION SURVEYS**

### Activity/Indicators

- Explore ways to improve response rates for family satisfaction surveys
- Develop and implement a system to track and report outcomes of satisfaction surveys
- Develop a goal rating for satisfaction surveys

### Metrics

- Increased participation from family members
  - Satisfaction survey percentages
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## **COMMUNICATION**

The agency Quality Improvement Plan will be posted on the agency website for unrestricted viewing.

Through the development and continual evaluation of the agency's Quality Improvement Plan, FREE demonstrates its ongoing commitment to provide high quality supports and services that enable people of all abilities to receive services that align with their personal goals and aspirations, and live the life of their choosing. FREE team members, senior executive leadership, and the Board of Director's continually support the agency's mission to see beyond disability and provide opportunities for people to live, love, work, and learn in their communities.