



## **Verland North Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Why is Verland moving to provide services in Venango County?**

Since the Pennsylvania Office of Developmental Programs announced in 2019 the intention to close Polk State Center, Verland has been in discussions regarding the best way to serve current Polk Center residents. In the last few weeks, funding has been made available through a Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program and ODP transition funding to support Verland building new homes and services in Venango County for Polk Center residents.

### **How many homes will Verland build?**

Verland is approved to build up to four Community Living Arrangement homes to accommodate up to eight residents in each home. This limits the number of residential placements with Verland in Venango County to thirty-two residents.

### **Where will my loved one live while the homes are being built?**

We estimate that it may take up to one and a half years for Verland to build the four community homes. During this time, Verland will be leasing space at the Polk Center from ODP and providing a very similar experience for the residents while they are in transition. Our intention is to minimize the disruptions to their daily lives while the homes are under construction.

### **What is the difference in the level of care between Community Living Arrangement (CLA or Group Home) and an Intermediate Care Facility (ICF)?**

The main difference is that CLA homes are integrated into the community and often appear as a rather large ranch style home. This will be a transition for residents who are familiar with the large campus style environment of the Polk Center. Verland and all providers of services under the CLA regulations are responsible for meeting the health and safety needs of those we serve.

### **How will the Verland CLA homes be staffed?**

CLA homes will be staffed based on the needs of the individuals who are accepted to live there. If an Individual Support Plan (ISP) requires 24/7 nursing support, then Verland will be staffing that home with the necessary nursing staff.

When residents need advanced supports such behavior specialists, physical therapist, psychologists, or psychiatrists, those services will be provided by contract care rather than on-site like at Polk Center. Verland is committed to meeting the health and safety needs of the individuals we serve, whether they are cared for in one of our ICF or CLA homes.



### **What is the deadline to be considered for placement with Verland?**

Verland must submit the names of all selected residents by February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023. Before we can add an individual's name to that list, Verland must receive and review their ISP. In addition, Verland must secure enough staff to support the individuals that are chosen.

### **What happens to the individuals who are not one of the 32 selected for placement with Verland in Venango County?**

Verland has limited space available in Allegheny County. Currently, Verland can accept three females and one male resident in our CLA homes and three to four residents in our Reaghard ICF home in Cheswick, and four residents in our Sewickley ICF campus.

Individuals that are not selected for Verland's Venango or Allegheny County placements will remain in the care of Pennsylvania ODP and will likely be moved to Ebensburg.

### **Will I be notified if our family member is selected for the new homes?**

The current plan is for families to be notified by February 14<sup>th</sup>, a date chosen by the Office of Developmental Programs, if an individual is selected for an opening at the Verland Venango homes. After notification, conversations about other Verland CLA or ICF openings may continue depending on availability.

### **Where will the homes be built?**

The funding provided limits the homes to Venango County. Due to fire suppression and water testing regulations, Verland prefers to build homes with access to municipal water supplies. It is likely the homes will be built in the Franklin area.

### **My loved one is already scheduled to be transferred to Ebensburg, but I didn't realize Verland was an option. How can I keep our options open while we consider Verland?**

As their designated decision maker, it is important to reach out to your loved ones Polk Social Worker immediately. Moves are scheduled while Verland is assessing. We suggest families request a pause in their loved one's relocation until February 14<sup>th</sup> while they consider placement with Verland. .

### **Will Polk Center staff be retained to work with the residents transitioning to Verland?**

Verland is actively recruiting current Polk Center staff to care for the Individuals as they become Verland residents. We anticipate hiring 100 to 125 staff in all areas including nursing, residential care, therapy, management, information systems, human resources, dietary, and custodial services.

### **Will the homes be segregated by gender?**

Typically, Verland homes with eight residents include a mix of male and female residents. It is important that we find the right mix of residents that share interests, abilities, and are comfortable sharing living spaces.



**Will my loved one be allowed to ride his bike?**

Verland signature homes do include a large driveway, but bike riding might be more enjoyable as an outing or group activity. The homes may be built in neighborhoods, and the state of those sidewalks and streets will also impact the space available for bike riding.

**Are there any conditions or needs that will automatically disqualify my loved one from consideration?**

No. All placement decisions will be made based on finding the right mix of individuals who will be comfortable living together and recruiting the levels of staffing needed to provide appropriate care.

**Will staff be able to handle residents with colostomy bags?**

Yes. Verland staff are trained and qualified to manage colostomy bags and feeding tubes.

**Will Verland be able to handle individuals with profound or severe disabilities?**

Yes. Verland's specialty is in caring for individuals with complex physical and intellectual disabilities.

**How does Verland address behavior challenges?**

Verland Signature Homes are designed with multiple living areas to allow individuals the space they need to work through any behavior challenges. Staff are trained to redirect residents from behaviors that may lead to injury or escalation of anxiety. Staff working in the homes are trained in helping residents with their individual behaviors as directed in the ISP

**How are individuals selected for one of the spaces at Verland?**

Once Verland becomes aware of a request for placement, the ISP is reviewed by Verland's Interdisciplinary Team, including the Director of Residential Services, ICF, as well as our VP of Clinical Services. If the team feels that based on the information provided, that the person is a good fit, Verland will arrange a virtual meeting with the family and transition team. Verland will then visit the Individual to introduce ourselves to them, spend some time with them and observing their care.

**Will there be a cost to moving to Verland for care?**

While Verland is still leasing space at Polk Center, individuals will still be under the ICF payment arrangement where they keep \$45 a month from their SSI income and all care and services are including.

Once Verland moves residents into the CLA homes, they will be required to pay monthly room and board, Medicaid co-pays, and incidental costs, such as a portion of the cable bill or community activities. The fee for room and board as set by the Office of Developmental Programs, at this time is \$674.11 per month. Any SSI funds above that amount are then deposited into their fund accounts.

There is no family obligation to cover costs in either the ICF or the CLA residential setting. The resources of the individual resident is what determines their contribution to their care.



**Who will manage the fund accounts for my loved one?**

Verland will need to be designated the Rep Payee on the fund accounts for all Polk Center residents transitioning to a placement with Verland. Verland’s individuals’ funds are audited annually by Social Security and ODP.

**Will residents be active in the community?**

Community participation is a key element in Community Living Arrangements including employment supports.

**Is there any chance you could build more homes based on demand?**

ODP has limited Verland’s new homes in Venango to four.

**If my loved one is moved to a different facility, but then would like to come back to one of the Verland Homes, is that possible?**

Certainly, however, admission to a Verland Home after the February 14<sup>th</sup> deadline would depend on availability and compatibility with other residents.

**How do I contact the Verland team about my loved one?**

Please email [info@Verland.org](mailto:info@Verland.org) or complete the Contact Us form at [www.Verland.org/polk](http://www.Verland.org/polk) . Those emails and messages will be routed internally to the appropriate staff leader.