

Get

EQUAL!

Do you live in an Adult Care Facility in New York?
Do some of the residents receive Supplemental
Security Income (SSI) or Medicaid?

If so, your home can apply
for money to improve your
quality of life—and you decide
how the money is spent. This
guide explains how it works.



**PUBLIC
ACCESS
DESIGN**

What's EQUAL?

The money comes from a program called **Enhancing the Quality of Adult Living (EQUAL)**. EQUAL is run by the New York State Department of Health. The amount of EQUAL money your facility can get is divided in two equal parts:

LOCAL ASSISTANCE PROJECTS



Money for personal things
(Like clothes or day trips)



Money to improve physical spaces (Like new furniture or appliances for the common area)



CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS



You and other residents decide how to spend EQUAL money.

As a group, it's your job to create a list of priorities, called a spending plan. To participate, join your Resident Council.

If you don't have a Resident Council at your facility, look into starting one yourself. Go to ciadny.org/resources and check out the Adult Home Resident Council Toolkit.



Three steps of EQUAL

Whose job is it?



= Facility Operator



= Resident Council

1. APPLY



The New York State Department of Health will ask the facility operator how many residents receive SSI or Medicaid. The higher the number, the more money your facility can get. **The facility operator submits the application.**

2. CREATE THE SPENDING PLAN



A. The New York State Department of Health sends an award letter that says how much money your facility will get, and when the spending plan is due. **The facility operator communicates this to the Resident Council.**



B. The Resident Council creates a list of priorities for:

- personal things (called “Local Assistance projects”)
- things to improve the physical space of the home (called “Capital Improvement projects”)



C. The facility operator submits the spending plan. The New York State Department of Health reviews the application and approves it or asks for changes.

3. GET YOUR MONEY!



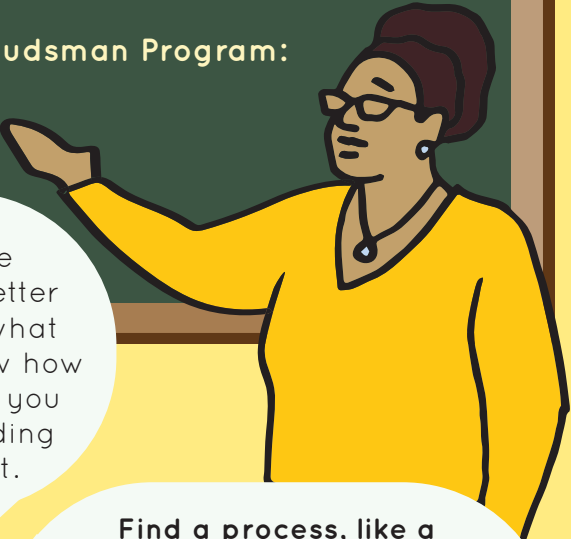
The New York State Department of Health sends the money to your facility operator. **The facility operator tells the Resident Council that the money has arrived, and spends the money on everything listed in the spending plan.**

KEEP IN MIND...


Throughout the process, if it's not going like it's supposed to, the Resident Council can hold the facility operator accountable. Reach out to the:

Coalition of Institutionalized Aged and Disabled (CIAD):
(866) 503-3332


New York State Ombudsman Program:
(855) 582-6769



Start talking early! You don't have to wait for the award letter to start talking about what you want. Once you know how much money you'll get, you can change your spending plan to fit the budget.



Find a process, like a vote or a survey, to come up with a list of priorities as a group. Take meeting notes to document your process and decisions! For help getting started, call CIAD.



EQUAL money is for residents, not facility operators. Facility operators are supposed to respect the Resident Council's priorities, but they may have other ideas. Taking their ideas into consideration can be an opportunity to get the things you want and need AND build a good relationship with your facility operators.

Decide what you want for yourselves



Record how you make decisions as a group, like what people said and how they voted. Keep notes in a safe place in case you need them later to hold your facility accountable.



Gift cards could be for a specific store, like Target, or prepaid gift cards, like VISA or Mastercard. Gift cards cannot be used to buy alcohol, tobacco, or firearms.



Decide what you want for your facility



What kind of building improvements could we get with **Capital Improvement** money?



Something to make our building nicer, maybe a washer/dryer we can use? Or a sofa, TV, or fresh coat of paint for the common area? Or build a deck outside...



That's right. **Remember, Capital Improvement projects should not be used to maintain health and safety—that's the facility operator's job.**



But the facility operator may have their own ideas for how to improve our physical space and enhance the quality of our lives.

You get to decide if you want your facility operator at your Resident Council meeting, and they should respect your wish.



Hi gang! Just thought I'd stop by to help prioritize building improvements. Management has a few projects in mind, and it would be helpful to use EQUAL money to get them done!

OK, I hear you. I'll just leave this list of ideas here.

You know as well as I do that **EQUAL isn't for the facility operator to make necessary repairs!** It's up to the Resident Council to decide how to spend EQUAL money. We'd like to hold this meeting in private.

The list says build an awning at the building entrance and get a new AC. How do we feel about this?

It would be nice to have a new AC in the dining room to make it more comfortable.

An awning isn't a bad idea, but the Resident Council has another priority supported by more residents.



The Resident Council can consider the facility operator's priorities alongside their own priorities.

EQUAL Spending Plan

EQUAL money awarded: \$12,000

When you fill out the spending plan, be as specific as you can!

Item	Quantity	Cost
LOCAL ASSISTANCE PROJECTS (\$6,000)		
\$150 prepaid VISA gift cards	32	\$4,800
Baseball tickets: Yankees vs. Red Sox	32	\$800
Uber XLs to and from the stadium	8	\$400
CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS (\$6,000)		
LG Stackable Washer/Dryer set	1	\$1,500
Contribution to new AC	1	\$4,500
GRAND TOTAL: \$12,000		

Resident Council President or representative:



(signature)

If there is no Resident Council, this application must be signed by three residents to show they were part of the decision-making process.

(signature)

(signature)

(signature)

Hold your facility accountable

IF THE PROCESS ISN'T GOING LIKE IT'S SUPPOSED TO, GET SUPPORT

WHEN TO GET SUPPORT

Your facility operator should update the Resident Council every step of the way: when they submit the application, receive the award letter, receive the money, and spend the money. If they're not updating you, get support.

Only sign the spending plan if you understand and agree with it. If you feel pressure to sign, say no. If the situation gets worse, get support.

Your facility can only spend EQUAL money on the items listed on the spending plan. If they're spending the money on other things, get support.

HOW TO GET SUPPORT

1. Talk to your facility operator. You can say:
 - "We need you to update us."
 - "We need you to respect the Resident Council's decisions."
 - "Can you provide receipts for what you bought with EQUAL money?"
2. If that doesn't resolve the issue, call CIAD: (866) 503-3332 or the New York State Ombudsman Program: (855) 582-6769
3. If you're still struggling, call the New York State Department of Health to submit a complaint: (866) 893-6772. Use your meeting minutes to show where the spending plan doesn't match the Resident Council's priorities.



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The Center for Urban Pedagogy (CUP) is a nonprofit that uses the power of design and art to increase meaningful civic engagement in partnership with historically marginalized communities.

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Coalition of Institutionalized Aged and Disabled (CIAD) supports the pride, purpose, and self-determination of residents of adult care facilities. CIAD is dedicated to empowering people, protecting their rights, and improving the quality of their lives and care. ciadny.org

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