



P INT

Pursuing **O**ur **I**Ndependence Together

A non-sectarian, independent living community in White Plains, NY for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities

Empowered
by **wjcs**
Westchester Jewish
Community Services

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Director's Welcome

Thank you for your interest in POINT. As Director, it's my great pleasure to introduce you to one of the most innovative models of a supportive, independent living community for adults with disabilities. **Our community is designed to serve those who too often fall through the cracks – individuals who possess the skills needed to live independently but also benefit from oversight, guided social activities, and a dependable safety net.**

"Few places *in the world* offer what we do... We warmly invite you to discover if POINT is the right fit for your family."

With an exceptional team of POINT Program Specialists who provide targeted and compassionate support, we strive to uplift and guide individuals toward their fullest potential. Participants in POINT are active, contributing members of their communities: holding jobs, forming lasting friendships, and embracing feedback as an opportunity for growth.

Few places in the world offer what we do, which is why we see participants from across the US make the move to White Plains, NY, seeking the support, independence, and community that define POINT. It brings me great joy to connect with participants and their families, to celebrate milestones and achievements, as well as to be there during times of need.



Since our founding in 2008, POINT has remained steadfast in its commitment to fostering independence through community and guidance. I am deeply proud to carry forward this legacy, and I warmly invite you to discover whether POINT is the right fit for you and your family.

Suzanne Wallach

Suzanne Wallach

POINT Director

Families' Perspectives

For the parents who created POINT, the community of families was almost as important as the community for our children. We sought partner organizations who would allow parents to stay involved in developing and evolving the community, and we created a framework for families to build meaningful relationships among themselves. Families support each other through: empathy for the challenges and victories, the exchange of practical information (navigating government benefits and finding medical and service providers), and social gatherings.

For many of us, the network we form with other families provides a comfort – folks who “get it” and can share both strategies and hugs.

What POINT families have to say:

I am SO grateful, a little astonished and proud too, that an idea a few of us had in 2007, born of a desperate need and desire to create a fulfilling, enjoyable, and rewarding life for their child, has grown and evolved to today's POINT community. I am in awe of the original group, many of whom are still as involved today as they were almost two decades ago. Thank you is not enough, especially when I see the life my son is living today and think of what the alternative might have been...

New York-Based Founding POINT Parent, *Son Joined POINT in 2008*

Being 3,000 miles away from my daughter leaves a hole in my heart, but seeing her growth over the years fills me with joy. What was unexpected, was the parental friendships that developed despite the distance. I've never felt as embraced with so little time we are able to actually spend together.

California-Based POINT Parent, *Daughter Joined POINT in 2021*

We are so grateful – really pinching ourselves – to be part of such an amazing and supportive community. Our daughter LOVES it and is growing in ways we never could have imagined!

New Jersey-Based POINT Parent, *Daughter Joined POINT in 2024*



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Community Overview

Based in White Plains, NY, POINT is a non-sectarian community run by WJCS — *the largest human services agency in Westchester County* — that **empowers adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities to live independently** by providing individualized support services, *without on-site supervision*.

POINT participants lead *enviable, community-filled lives*; building meaningful connections through our robust activities calendar, receiving ongoing life-skills training, and making contributions to the broader community through employment and volunteerism.

Empowering enviable,
community-filled
and independent lives —
without on-site supervision

Participants are accepted on the basis of **demonstrated capability and potential to live independently**, not diagnosis.



Designing Our Model

Founded by families, for families

Like many courageous, innovative solutions, POINT was created by a group of caring parents who faced a very real need – their children with developmental disabilities were aging out of post-secondary residential programs, **and there were few, if any, good alternatives for what happened “next.”**

Existing group homes, while critically important for many, felt overly supportive and potentially restrictive for their children who had developed the skills and demonstrated the capability to live independently. **On the other hand, living completely independently, without any supervision, did not feel safe or sustainable.**

Like many courageous, innovative solutions, POINT was created by a **group of caring parents who faced a very real need**

In 2008, our 15 founding families designed **a unique, community-driven solution that celebrates participants' capability to live fully and independently**, while also providing individualized support, 24/7 emergency response, and robust social activities to ensure safety, well-being, and connection.

Why White Plains

When designing POINT, our founding families sought a small city that could **support a strong, tight-knit community** of participants living independently in apartments across multiple buildings within walking distance of each other.

White Plains was identified as the ideal location, as it met the following criteria:

- ✓ Ample housing at various price points
- ✓ Walkable, with extensive public transit
- ✓ Employment and educational opportunities
- ✓ Shopping, leisure, and dining
- ✓ Access to major transit hubs (NYC)

Families need not live in NY State.
Each family is responsible for finding and paying for *their participant's housing* in White Plains.*

**Once POINT members establish NY State residency, they become eligible to apply for NY State benefits. Some housing subsidies are available for participants who meet NY State criteria.*

Newly accepted participants receive additional helpful information on White Plains housing options as part of the onboarding process.



How It Works

Core Services

POINT participants are empowered to live independently with a supportive safety net provided by their POINT team. Participants receive individualized life skills coaching and support that meet them and their needs “where they are.”

Support is tailored to each participant’s capabilities and developmental needs, and *adjusts to changes* in their circumstances and life events.

Individualized Support

POINT participants meet with their assigned POINT Program Specialist 1:1 each week.

Each participant is assigned a Master’s-level mental health professional with whom they meet regularly to discuss personal goals, life skills development, and problem-solving needs.

Social & Community

Participants enjoy a robust social calendar of events and activities that cater to a wide range of interests, led by Program Specialists.

Participants are regularly asked to share activity suggestions – often related to the arts, nature, and sports.

Safety & Wellness

While we do not provide on-site supervision, participant safety is supported by:

✓ **24-Hour Emergency Hotline**

✓ **Ongoing Safety Training:**

- Coordinated by POINT
- In partnership with White Plains, NY Fire and Police Departments

How It Works

Supplemental Support

While the following services are not POINT-provided, **these NY State benefits and services are integral to the successful independence** of our participants:

Community Habilitation

Participants are expected to receive 1:1 Community Habilitation (Comm Hab) training as needed to support their success. Comm Hab trainers meet with participants in their homes to support independent living skills. This can be billed via **NY State benefits** if eligible, or paid privately.

Employment & Education

We support employment, education, and volunteerism within the broader community. Vocational agencies provide coaching, training, and job placement support.

Housing & Subsidies

POINT participants live in apartments across multiple buildings in White Plains, all within walking distance of our POINT Community Center. Some housing subsidies may be available for those who meet NY State criteria.

Transportation

Most POINT participants utilize public transportation and **ParaTransit,** and some drive. Travel training can be coordinated as needed. POINT provides group transportation for certain events and activities.

Meet Our Team

Our Community Governance Model is built on the **thoughtful, effective collaboration** among skilled, Master’s-level WJCS staff, JCCA and other partner agencies, and our network of enthusiastic families and friends.

POINT Director

Responsible for day-to-day community operations, with a Master’s and significant experience working with people with disabilities. An important member of each participant’s team, communicating with families, coordinating program events, and serving as primary liaison to our community partners.

POINT Coordinator

Licensed Social Worker providing supervision and guidance to POINT Program Specialists. The Program Coordinator also carries a small caseload of participants whom they see individually, coordinates safety trainings and materials, as well as staff coverage and emergency response.

Program Specialists

Social Worker / Mental Health Counselor assigned to each participant with whom they meet regularly to discuss independent living goals and challenges. Program Specialists: liaise with parents, Care Managers (for navigating government benefits), and Comm Hab Workers; facilitate POINT activities; assist in crisis management; provide 24/7 emergency coverage.

Community Habilitation

These trainers provide hands-on instruction based on individual needs both at home and in the community. Tasks may include laundry, food shopping and prep, cleaning, etc. Comm Hab is funded either via NY State benefits, if eligible, or private pay.



JCCA

Vocational agency supporting participants with job placement, coaching, and vocational skills. [JCCA](#) supports our internships and vocational empowerment groups. Some participants get additional vocational services from JCCA or other agencies through [ACCES-VR \(NY State Vocational Rehabilitation\)](#).

POINT Families & Friends

POINT Families and Friends (PFF) and its Steering Committee work collaboratively with POINT staff to impact the community’s sustainability. PFF sponsors socials, fundraisers, and recognition events throughout the year to foster community.

Our Forever Community



At POINT, community takes on many different forms — community among our participants, their families and friends, and Westchester County at large. These communities are dynamic and ever-changing, especially as we grow — it is critical that services remain flexible and continue to meet the needs of our participants and their families not only today, but also tomorrow. **Families and staff intentionally review and adapt our model to support participants' independence and sense of community as they age.**



A Community for Participants

All POINT participants are invited to participate actively in the community's **robust calendar** of opt-in social activities. These activities are thoughtfully curated and designed to enrich the community experience.

- Programming caters to a wide range of interests.
- Participants are polled regularly for suggested activities to ensure inclusion and variety.



A Community for Families

POINT's success is supported by family involvement. Families benefit from a community of their peers — sharing important services and benefits information and enjoying social events.

- **POINT Families and Friends (PFF):** Families lend their time and expertise to this advocacy forum.
- **Family Mentorship:** New families are paired with a mentor family for support throughout onboarding.



Our POINT Community Center

Conveniently located within walking distance of all participants' apartments, our Community Center hosts both social events and ongoing safety training.

This central gathering place serves as a "home away from home" where participants make and sustain important social connections and experience feelings of belonging and pride as valued community members.

Admissions Process

POINT participants are accepted on the basis of demonstrated capability and potential to live independently, not diagnosis. POINT serves adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (such as autism, learning disabilities, traumatic brain injuries, Down Syndrome) who meet the following admissions criteria.

Candidates must:

- Be at least 21 years old, with a documented intellectual and / or developmental disability.
- Be able to live independently with supports and have had some experience with independent living, e.g., post-secondary program.
- Be able to manage medication independently.
- Be in reasonably stable health.
- Demonstrate positive social behaviors towards self and others.
- Have no history of criminal behavior.
- Demonstrate stable mental health prior to applying, and disclose the status of treatment for any psychiatric diagnosis or history of drug or alcohol abuse.
- Meet the Expectations of POINT Participants.
- Be willing and able to work, volunteer, and / or enroll in an educational or vocational program.
- Be able to pay the annual community fee and other expenses by participant and /or family.
- Be willing to actively participate in POINT Community activities.

Admissions Process

Community Costs

POINT is a private pay community. The annual fee (available upon request) covers our core services: individualized support, social activities, and safety. Fees do not include the cost of housing, food, and other individual needs. Families are responsible for finding and paying for housing in White Plains. (Housing subsidies may be available for those who meet NY State criteria.)

Partial scholarships are available on a limited basis. To learn more, please visit [Helping Hands for Independent Living](#).

Admissions Process Overview

Application

After initial phone screening, submit **Candidate Application** with required documentation; all candidates must also pay an application fee.

Family Intake Interview

After reviewing your application and receiving your application fee, we will invite you to schedule a **Family Intake Interview**.

Social History & References

Following the Family Intake Interview, candidates deemed an appropriate fit for POINT will be asked to schedule a **Social History Meeting** as well as provide at least three references.

Trial Participation in Social Activities

Candidates are then invited to attend at least four social events from our [Social Activities Calendar](#) for a better feel of our community and candidate fit.

Acceptance & Onboarding

Accepted candidates receive an **Acceptance Letter**. At that time, the participant will be asked to submit a **Background Check Form** and commitment fee.

Helpful Resources



»»» [Expectations of POINT Participants](#)



»»» [Sample Activities Calendar](#)

»»» [More About White Plains](#)



»»» **POINT in the Press**

[Summer Fun with WJCS POINT](#), featuring our annual Theater for Action production

[Preparing Special-Needs Kids for the Future](#), written by founding parent, Marion Morgenthal

[Get to Know POINT Participant Logan Mensch](#) (see page 9), spotlighting the independence of one of our founding participants



»»» **Contact Us**

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