

*Understanding the Connecticut
DDS Home and Community
Based Services Waivers:*

Making Good Choices
About Your DDS
Supports
and
Services



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Making Good Choices About Your CT DDS Supports and Services

DDS provides the opportunity for you to live and work in your community and make choices about your supports and services. The first steps to obtaining supports from DDS are:

- 1** Become eligible for DDS Services
- 2** Complete a Level of Need Assessment Tool (LON) with your case manager so that the right level of funding allocation for you can be determined
- 3** Become eligible for Medicaid Waiver Services by saying that you want to live in the community and not in an Intermediate Care Facility for the Mentally Retarded (ICF-MR) and by applying for Medicaid Title XIX. *(Remember that you must maintain Medicaid eligibility to keep your services.)*
- 4** Identify the supports that will best meet your needs in your Individual Plan.
- 5** Budget funds allocated to you based upon your LON

Once this is done, you and your family can choose who you want to hire to provide supports to you and how you want to be involved in the management of your supports. DDS's "portability process" explained on page 15, also provides you with the option of changing your mind and changing your supports whenever the needs identified in your Individual Plan change, and as long as you keep within your LON allocation!



You Can Choose The Type of Service You Want To Receive

You decide what supports will best meet your needs!

You can use your funds to purchase the supports that you think will best help you to accomplish the goals you have identified in your Individual Plan. An extensive set of services and supports is available through DDS's Waivers. Your case manager can provide you with information about these services and help you to choose the supports that will work best for you. You can also learn about these supports and services by reading the waiver service information found on the DDS website at <http://www.ct.gov.dds>.



You Can Choose How You Want Your Supports and Services To Be Managed

You decide how much you want to be involved in directing your supports!

You can also decide how much control you want to have in managing the supports and services you receive. You can use your funds to purchase supports from the qualified provider you choose, or you may use your funds to hire your own staff. You can choose from a number of different options, including:

Self-Direction: If you select this management option, you become the employer of the people you choose to hire to provide supports to you. As the employer, you are responsible for the training, supervision, and management of the people you hire. This option gives you the most control over your supports, but also the most responsibility.

Agency With Choice: An Agency With Choice is an agency provider who agrees to hire the individual you choose to provide supports to you. This individual becomes an employee of the provider agency and the agency agrees to help you train and manage the staff. This is a shared management model.

Provider Agency: A provider agency is a traditional provider that is the employer of the staff that will provide supports to you. The provider agency is responsible for hiring, training, and managing the staff that support you.

Or, you can use a combination of the above approaches to meet your individual needs!

It is important that you think carefully about these hiring options. Each option provides you with a different amount of control, authority, and self-determination. Keep in mind that you can also change the way you arrange your supports and who delivers them at any time.



Strategies You Can Use to Make Good Choices

Listed below are some things you can do and questions you can ask to help you make good decisions about your supports and services.

General Things To Do:

- Become familiar with your rights as a consumer, and continue working to learn even more.
- Learn terms that describe supports and services, such as IHS (individual home supports), IL (independent living), CRS (community residential supports), CCH (community companion home), ISE (individual supports Employment, IDS (individual day supports), GSE (group supported employment), DSO (day support option), Personal Support, Adult Companion, Respite, etc.
- Learn terms for how supports are paid for, such as Medicaid, HCBS Waivers, Comprehensive Waiver and Individual and Family Support (IFS) Waiver, Employment and Day Service Waiver.
- Talk to people who receive different types of supports, and who direct their own supports. Talk to people who have jobs and who are happy with the supports they receive to find and keep employment.
- Learn various support options available in other parts of the state, and with other providers.
- Visit homes, employment services and other service sites, including those of people who direct their own supports.
- Decide what types of supports you want at this time, and possibly in the future.



If you think you want to hire your own staff:

- Become familiar with Rewarding Work (www.rewardingwork.org) and Connect-Ability online recruitment services.
- Think about family members who live outside of your home, friends, neighbors and other people you know who might be good people for you to hire. Which of these people can help you to expand your support system?
- Talk to other people who hire their own staff and find out where and how they found their employees.
- Become familiar with the Fiscal Intermediary services and choose the one that you think will work best with you.
- Think about whether your case manager, a DDS broker, or independent broker, is the right person to help you hire and manage employees. You can also hire an IDGS Supervisor to assist you.
- Ask the regional Self Determination Directors, or other regional technical assistance staff to provide you with more detailed information about hiring and managing your own staff.

! FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT HIRING YOUR OWN STAFF, READ THE ORANGE DDS GUIDE "AN INTRODUCTION TO YOUR HIRING CHOICES".



If you think you want to hire an Agency with Choice, or a traditional provider:

- List possible providers; check for qualifications, qualified provider status, licensing citations
- Talk to others who receive supports from that provider and ask:
 - ❓ Are you satisfied, and do you have control over the supports you receive?
 - ❓ Do support staff treat you with respect? Do they listen to you?
 - ❓ Did you participate in developing your plan? Does your plan say what is important to you?
 - ❓ Are you kept informed about progress on your plan? About problems that arise?
 - ❓ Have you had any problems with your support staff? What did you do? How did it work out?
 - ❓ Did you choose where you live or did the provider make this decision?
 - ❓ Do you like where you live? What do you do for fun?
 - ❓ Did you choose where you work or did the agency make this decision?
 - ❓ Do you get the support you need and want both at home and at work?
 - ❓ Are you getting the support you need to pursue your future goals?
 - ❓ Do you get the support you need to try new things?



**Visit, or try out activities the provider offers.
While you are there, look and listen to learn:**

- ① How does the agency view the people they support?
Are they clients, consumers, or people?
 - ② Do they use the person's name when addressing him or her?
 - ③ Is the provider's work based on preferences of the individual?
 - ④ Does the agency staff speak to the person, or defer to family or paid staff?
 - ⑤ How does the provider respond to individual needs outside of programs they currently offer?
 - ⑥ Does the provider only talk about the services they currently offer, or are willing to personalize their services for you?
 - ⑦ Do they ask the person what they want?
Are they really trying to learn and understand?
 - ⑧ If you know what kind of supports, staff, or experiences you want, does the provider listen?
 - ⑨ How much control do people or families have in hiring/scheduling of support staff?
- Ask someone you trust to review the agency's policies



Planning My Individual Future:

- ? Describe your agency's planning process.
- ? How do you make sure your plans are person-centered?
- ? Do people attend all of their own meetings?
- ? Who decides who attends planning meetings?
- ? What if you are not chosen to be involved in my circle?
Could you support me if I did not want your participation at my planning meetings?
- ? Who can call or schedule a meeting?
- ? Will meetings ever be held without me?
- ? How will you help me prepare for my meetings?
- ? What happens if my circle and/or I make a decision that conflicts with your decision?
- ? How do you ensure that supports agreed upon at planning meetings are implemented?
- ? How do you ensure that things get done in the time we decide upon?
- ? How will you provide the supports I need when I need them, and change them when I need or want them changed?
- ? How do you promote "The DDS Principles of Self Determination"?
- ? How many people have you worked with who self direct their supports?
How many of these people have left your agency in the last year?
- ? What is your most creative support situation?
How did it happen?



Schedule interviews with potential providers.
Some questions you can ask providers include the following:

Respect

- ?** How will you help me to have more control and dignity in my life?
- ?** How will you help me learn about and exercise my rights?

Safety

- ?** How do you ensure my personal safety?
- ?** Do you do background checks, if so, what type? (National, State)
- ?** Do you check the abuse registry? How often?
- ?** Describe the training your staff have.
- ?** What happens if someone gets hurt in my home?
- ?** Can your staff assist me in taking my medication?
- ?** Can you provide nursing services or help to obtain it?
- ?** How are emergencies covered?
- ?** If something goes wrong with my supports, what back-up support does the agency offer (direct support staff, behavioral, medical)?

Working with people important to me

- ?** How will you work with me, my family, my friends, and my circle or network?
- ?** Can people visit me at my home whenever they want?
- ?** How would you help me to be involved with my family, friends, co-workers, and others in my community?
- ?** How can you help me keep the friends I have, find new friends, and reestablish relationships?
- ?** Provide examples of how you have networked, assisted in relationship building, etc.?

Employment

- ? Where are the people you support working and how long have they worked there on average?
- ? How much money do they make at these jobs?
- ? Do people receive their paychecks from the agency/provider or from the employer/company?
- ? What employment/career support services do you offer consumers?
- ? How do you assess a person's career interests, strengths and skills?
- ? Does your agency provide a variety/range of supported employment opportunities?
- ? Does this include individualized supported employment? (a job of ones own, hired by the company at competitive wages)
- ? Does your agency know how to help employers customize jobs so that people with intellectual disabilities have jobs that fit who people are and what they have to offer?
- ? How does your agency help individuals to use the natural supports available to them at their place of employment?
- ? How many Job Developers/Job Coaches do you have and what is their average caseload?
- ? What would be your response if I wanted to change jobs? How would you support me to get a new job or to advance at my job?
- ? Will your agency help support me to learn and use alternative types of transportation? Does your agency offer transportation?
- ? How do you measure consumer satisfaction?
- ? Do you have references from consumers, family members or employers?

Community Presence and Participation

- ? How will you support me to get where I need or want to go?
- ? Who decides the priority for transportation needs/requests?
- ? Will supports and/or transportation be available on weekends, evenings, or holidays?
- ? What social, religious, ethnic, volunteer, or hobby groups do people you support attend?
- ? Describe your relationships with your neighbors.
- ? What relationships do you have with employers in your community?

General /Administrative

- ? Do you have any geographic limitations?
- ? Will you work with other agencies or individuals to meet my needs/wants? If so, give examples.
- ? Can you break down your hourly rate? (% for direct services, % for administrative costs, etc.)
- ? Specify staff pay rates (residential vs. day)
- ? If I decide that I no longer want to use your services, what would I do?
- ? How will you assist me during a transition, and have you done this before?
- ? May I see your personnel policies?
Are the personnel policies flexible?

DDS provides the opportunity for you to live and work in the community and make choices about your supports and services.

Additional Questions for an Agency With Choice

- ? Will you hire someone I refer to your agency?
- ? Will I have a choice of my support person(s) if a new staff is needed, and will I be a part of the interview process?
- ? How are absences covered? How do you provide consistent support or fill-in staff?
- ? Could I meet and pick my own substitute staff?
- ? Do I have a say in firing of my support staff?
Who has the final decision?
- ? How and when will I be able to develop the job description and staff schedule?
- ? How will I be involved in training my staff?
- ? How will I give evaluations of my supports?
- ? How does your agency address complaints?
- ? Can you give me examples of complaints from other consumers and how they were resolved?
- ? If something goes wrong with my supports, what back-up support does the agency offer (direct support staff, behavioral, medical)?
- ? How will you help me to become less dependent on you and your services?

Hiring My Own Staff

When hiring your own staff it's important to ask the right questions in order to choose the best staff to meet your needs. The book, "Find, Choose & Keep Great DSPs: A tool kit for people with disabilities looking for quality, caring and committed direct support professionals" is an excellent guide for people who want to hire and manage their own staff.

This guide provides ideas on how to find the right staff to meet your needs. It includes tips on recruiting, interviewing, selecting, training and managing staff. You can get a copy of this book from your case manager.

In Summary

The questions in this guide are just examples of good questions you can ask to make sure you make good choices about your support services. Your case manager, DDS support broker, independent support broker or someone else you trust, can assist you to decide what supports are best for you. Remember you can change your mind about what you want. The important thing is to ask questions and learn as much as you can.

And once you've made a decision and are receiving supports . . .

Things You Can Do to Get the Most Out of Your Supports

- Stay in regular contact with your case manager, support broker or independent broker.
- Stay informed about your support options and your rights.
- Participate in your personal planning process as much as you can.
- Keep notes about your plan, what you want or need, what was decided, and when it will be done.
- Talk to others who receive supports, share ideas for working with your provider.

Learn About Your Choices! Be An Educated Consumer

- If you are not satisfied with your supports, tell people. Ask for help to improve your supports.
- If things really aren't working or meeting your expectations, shop around for your supports-interview other providers, you might find a better match. Continue to expect high quality.
- Thank the people who work for you. Tell them when they do things you appreciate.
- Take care of yourself and pat yourself on the back for a job well done!



Portability: You Really Do Have a Choice!

“Portability” means that you have control over your supports and the money used for the services you receive. You have the right to be satisfied with the services you receive, and if you are not satisfied you can move your funds to another provider, or use your funding to purchase different services. Your case manager, your DDS support broker, or your independent broker will help you if you want to change your services. Remember, when you do choose to change your service, you will want to do so in a responsible way. It’s always best to try and maintain good relationships with others and leave on good terms.

**DDS Medicaid Waiver Services and Portability
allow you to be creative in designing the supports
and services that will work best for you!**

Live Well!





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