

# A Guide to Self-Direction



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# A Guide to Self-Direction

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# A Guide to Self-Direction



## I. INTRODUCTION

What is this Guidebook?

This Self-Direction Guidebook explains the self-direction models and how to make self-direction work for you. If you choose to self-direct you may control some or all of your services. This guidebook will show you each of the steps in developing your own plan by creating your own vision of what you need and want, overseeing your service budget and hiring and paying providers.

What does Self-Direction mean?

- Making your own decisions about goals you want to achieve and how you want to live life and receive the support necessary to do so.
- Having control over resources, including your budget.
- Taking responsibility for your decisions and actions.

## II. GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF SELF-DETERMINATION



- **Dignity and Respect**

All people have the right to be treated with dignity and to be respected as a person.

- **Freedom**

Freedom to decide how one wants to live his or her life.

- **Authority**

You have authority over a targeted amount of dollars.

- **Responsibility**

Be responsible for the careful use of state funding.

- **Choice and Control**

People have a right to choose what they will do with their lives and with whom they will do it with. Self-determination means that people have the power to make decisions and truly control their lives. This includes controlling your budget for supports services and the authority to hire the people who will provide the chosen supports.

- **Relationships**

It is important that each person have a circle of friends and family chosen by him or herself to provide strength and assistance.

- **Dreaming**

All people have hopes and dreams, which guide the actions that are most meaningful to them. It is important that people listen to and respect those dreams and help you make them come true.

- **Contribution and Community**

Community membership helps us establish a sense of belonging and identity. This includes having a job, a place to live, and friends, to be truly involved in our community and to make a difference in the lives of others.

### III. SERVICE PLANNING



How to Create my Self-Direction Plan. Once you have decided that you would like to self-direct your services you should contact your service coordinator and schedule a meeting. My plan is worked on through “a person centered plan” based on my ideas and vision.

## **STEP 1:**



### **MY VISION**

Dare to Dream!

Your Vision should guide your team throughout the entire self-direction planning process. Like your ISP Vision this means MY IDEAS, MY DREAMS, MY THOUGHTS and MY GOALS to learn to have a full and meaningful life.

- How I want to live my life
- What I would like to do for work
- Who are important people in my life who can help me make my vision come true
- How I want to be involved in my community, like volunteering
- What I like to do to have fun and be social
- How I can be healthy
- How I can have an active lifestyle
- Where and with whom I live
- What are my gifts and talents
- How best to share my gifts and talents
- How I am striving to become an independent member of my community

## STEP 2:

### CREATING A PLAN FOR SERVICES

The first step in creating a plan for services is to think about your short-term goals and your dreams for the future.



- Do you want a job?
- Do you want to find a hobby?
- Do you want to spend more time with friends?
- Do you want to take a vacation?
- Do you want to have your own apartment or share a home with others?

## STEP 3:

### HOW TO TRANSFORM MY VISION TO MY SERVICE PLAN

- My support team and I meet with my DDS service coordinator.
- As ideas and needs are discussed we review all service options.
- Each part of my vision will be talked about and will decide what services are needed.
- A thorough plan will be developed that links my vision, my services and my budget.



## STEP 4:

### INDIVIDUALIZED SUPPORT PLAN

Now that you have discussed your personal goals, needs and preferences for support, it is time to make a plan for how you will get support or services. First start by developing with your support team a “person centered plan” which will help guide you as you discuss your vision and ideas.

- List all of your services, including those you plan to buy and the names of the individuals or agencies that will provide the support.



- Next to the support services you will list any costs associated with each of the supports.
- The section on budgeting will describe how your individualized budget is developed from your service plan.

## EXAMPLES:

**Service:** Supportive Home Care (laundry, housecleaning, grocery shopping)  
Provider: Neighbor, Bill Cooper  
How Often: 8 hours a week  
Cost: \$10.00 per hour

**Service:** Transportation  
Provider: Transit Express  
How Often: 8 round trip per month  
Cost: \$15.00 per round trip

**Service:** Fitness  
Provider: Planet Fitness  
How Often: Annual fee  
Cost: \$150.00 per year



- Your support plan should list services that match your needs and goals in the most effective and cost effective-way.
- Your support plan must also address any issues to your health and safety, including emergency back-up plans. For example, what happens if your personal care worker is scheduled to get you out of bed in the morning, but he or she is sick? Make sure you've got someone else to call as a back-up.

- Your support team is responsible for working together to insure that your services are meeting your needs and helping you achieve your goals.
- I am responsible to:



- To make my needs know and communicate to my support team what is working and what part of my plan should be changed.
- To work closely with my DDS Support Broker or personal agent who will provide me with assistance in developing services and hiring of staff.
- To manage my budget with the help of your support broker you review your spending adding services and supports or removing some supports.

## IV. CHOOSE A MODEL TO SELF-DIRECT YOUR SERVICES

### Choosing Providers



There are two ways to choose the people that will provide your supports and services.

1. Through an agency. This model is called **Agency with Choice**.

- **The provider agency and you** are responsible for hiring and supervising the staff, for all duties of an employer. The provider agency is responsible for the appropriate purchasing of all goods and services. You are responsible for developing a budget with the assistance of the provider agency if needed. The provider agency is responsible to assure the supports in the ISP are provided.
- You select the employees he/she recommends or employees made available through the agency, sets work hours and terms of employment, provides daily supervision and management of employees, and determines when that staff person is no longer needed.
- The provider agency and you share in training and evaluating employees.

## 2. Participant Directed Model (PDP)

- The Participant Directed Program (PDP) option offers you the most flexibility and control to arrange and customize supports based on your needs and preferences. You can hire your own support staff, design their schedule, and make other decisions about how to use your DDS funded allocation.
- **The person and/or family** self-directing makes their own decisions, determines how their DDS funding is spent for services, supports and goods (within DDS guidelines), and takes responsibility for the decision he or she makes.



- **DDS Support Broker** usually a DDS Service Coordinator helps you:
  - Describe my needs and vision
  - Create and manage my budget
  - Arrange for my needed services
  - Provides me with information
  - Recruit and hire staff with you
- **A fiscal intermediary (FI)** serves as the agent for you and is responsible for all payments. The FI pays support staff and all bills.



## V. BUDGET PLANNING

### Developing a Service Budget

It is very important to make your needs come first. That is why it is important to know the difference between your **needs** and your **wants**.

- A **need** is something you must have to survive, like a place to live and enough food to eat.
- A **want** is something you might like to have, but you don't have it right away. You can save to have it later.

### *Organize your Monthly Income*

To make a budget you need to know how much money is coming in (income) and how you are spending it, how much money you have to pay bills. Then you can make a budget.

- **Income:**

There are two types of income, earned income and unearned income.

- **Earned income** is the wages or salary you receive from a job. You may be paid weekly, every other week or monthly.
- **Unearned income** is money you receive that does not come from a job.
  - Social Security (SSI)
  - Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)
  - Workers compensation
  - Public Funded Supports
    - Food Stamps
    - Fuel Assistance
    - Section 8 Housing
    - PCA
    - AFC
    - DDS Allocation

## Organize Monthly Income

In this activity you create a list of where your income comes from.

**STEP 1:** Write down the name of each type of income you get monthly.

**STEP 2:** Enter the total monthly amount for each one.

**STEP 3:** Add up your total monthly income.



**EXAMPLE:** Monthly income for January

| Item Description                   | Amount            |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Supplemental Security Income (SSI) | \$600.00          |
| SNAP (Food Stamps)                 | \$130.00          |
| Part-Time Job                      | \$300.00          |
| <b>Total Monthly Income</b>        | <b>\$1,030.00</b> |



## Organize Cash Expenses

In this activity, you list your cash expenses and decide whether each one is a need or a want. You'll use this information later when you put together your budget.

Step 1: Name each expense category and check either need or want for the expense.

Step 2: Write the amount you spent in each category next to the item.

### EXAMPLE: Monthly Bills for January

| Item Description              | Need | Want | Amount          |
|-------------------------------|------|------|-----------------|
| Rent                          | X    |      | \$400.00        |
| Utilities (heat, electricity) | X    |      | \$75.00         |
| Telephone and Cable           | X    |      | \$50.00         |
| Public transportation pass    | X    |      | \$35.00         |
| <b>Total Bill Expenses</b>    |      |      | <b>\$560.00</b> |

### EXAMPLE: Monthly Cash Expenses for January

| Expense Description                 | Need | Want | Amount          |
|-------------------------------------|------|------|-----------------|
| Personal care items from drug store | X    |      | \$45.50         |
| Meals eaten out                     |      | X    | \$12.50         |
| Groceries from Supermarket          | X    |      | \$280.00        |
| Social activity (Movies etc.)       |      | X    | \$12.00         |
| Concert Tickets                     |      | X    | \$50.00         |
| <b>Total Cash Expenses</b>          |      |      | <b>\$400.00</b> |

|                                 |  |  |                   |
|---------------------------------|--|--|-------------------|
| <b>Total Bills and Expenses</b> |  |  | <b>\$960.00</b>   |
| <b>Total Income</b>             |  |  | <b>\$1,030.00</b> |

Do you make more than you spend or do you spend more than you make?



In the example on the previous page, after expenses (spending) of \$960.00 are subtracted from income (money in) of \$1,030 there is \$70.00 left over. This is great news you can decide to save the money for a trip and vacation, or you can use the money to buy something like a new TV or furniture.

If you're spending is higher than your income than you need to go back to your budget and look at your spending and decided what items in your **WANTS** list you can really do without.

### **What am I saving for?**

- For special occasions like birthday or vacations.
- For unexpected emergency like a broken refrigerator or a computer repair.
- For entertainment like a concert or tickets to a sporting event.

## VI. HIRING STAFF



As you begin to think about hiring staff and shopping for services ask yourself these questions:

**1. Who** will provide my services?

Be aware of costs. It may cost more to hire staff from a provider agency because of the agencies administrative costs. It may be cheaper to hire a friend or neighbor instead.

**2. What** do you want my providers to do?

Do you just need a ride to the grocery store, or do you also need help putting groceries away at home? Try to be specific when thinking about the type of assistance you need.

**3. When** do I want my services delivered?

Think about your daily routine. Do you need to wake up at a certain time for work? Do you like to eat lunch at 11:00 instead of noon? Do you prefer mornings or evening baths?

**4. Where** do I want to receive my services?

Do you want services in your home, or do you prefer to receive them in another setting, such as an activity such as horseback riding? If you work, do you need support at your job site?

**5. How** do I want my services delivered?

Make sure your providers understand your needs, and are comfortable doing the work you expect. If you need help with personal care, are your providers properly trained? Are you willing to train your providers to perform tasks the way you prefer?

The next step is to think about who will provide your supports.

Are any of these people willing and able to assist you?

- Family members or other relatives
- Friends
- Neighbors
- Church groups
- Co-workers
- Roommates
- Provider agencies
- Community volunteer organizations



## **Hiring and Paying Your Own Staff**

1. Agency with Choice (AWC) an agency and you share the duties of an employer. The agency pays bills and pays your staff.
2. Participant Directed Program (PDP): Acts as the employer while the fiscal agent Public Partnerships Limited (PPL) helps you hire your staff by completing all required paperwork and background checks, pay your staff and other bills and makes sure that staff taxes are paid.

## So which is the best option for you? You Decide

- Here is an overview of each option. Both options offer assistance with employment tasks. The Participant Directed Program model requires that take most of the responsibility for these tasks.

### Agency with Choice

- If you choose the **Agency with Choice** model you will work closely with your service coordinator and the provider agency that you select. In **Agency with Choice** you discuss with the agency the design of your services as well as choose and direct your staff. The agency helps provide those supports and hires your staff.

### Participant Directed Program

- If you choose the **Participant Directed Program** you will be assigned a Support Broker who is typically a DDS service coordinator. The support broker acts on your behalf to arrange for needed services, to provide information on resources and to support you in evaluating the effectiveness of supports. You also can have help from your family or other trusted person in your circle of support.

## WHO IS RESPONSIBLE

**Options:**

Agency with Choice (AWC)

Fiscal Intermediary (FI)

You

| <b>Employment Related Task</b>  | <b>Agency with Choice(AWC)</b> | <b>Participant Directed Program (PDP)</b> |
|---|--------------------------------|---|
| Writing a job description, screening, interviews, hiring providers                    | You and AWC                    | You                                       |
| Completing background checks  | AWC                            | FI  |
| Deciding wage amounts for your provider within guidelines                             | You                            | You                                       |
| Deciding on benefits such as health/dental insurance, vacation, holiday and sick time | AWC                            | You                                       |
| Orientation and training for your provider  | You and AWC                    | You                                       |
| Supervision and work performance evaluation of your provider                          | You                            | You                                       |
| Staff ending work. You have the option of not working with a staff                    | You and AWC                    | You                                       |
| Emergency back up   | You or AWC                     | You                                       |
| Signing off on provider timesheet   | You                            | You                                       |
| Sending Provider time sheets  | AWC                            | You                                       |
| Issues paychecks  | AWC                            | FI  |
| Responsible for Payroll deductions  | AWC                            | FI  |

## Hiring Staff: Provider Standards



### Agency with Choice:

When hiring staff to provide services, you may choose your own employee candidates provided those candidates meet agency requirements, or you may choose from available staff people who are employed by the agency. The provider agency is responsible for hiring the staff and for all duties of an employer.

### Participant Directed Program:

DDS completes the process to qualify staff hired by the individual. All staff employed in this model must:

- Be at least 18 years of age
- Have a CORI (Criminal Offender Record Information)
- National Background Check
- Have a high school diploma or GED(General Education Development) Certificate
  - A driver's license is frequently required.
  - Other education, credentials, and or experience may be required for some services (e.g. nursing and other therapeutic services).



## **HIRING YOUR OWN EMPLOYEES**

If you are hiring your own employees, there are lots of different ways to find staff that you can use to find employees for your child, including the following:

- Often the best ways to find employees is by “word of mouth.” Ask your family, friends and co-workers if they know someone who is available, reliable, and might be interested in working with you.
- You can also **create a flyer** that describes who you are looking for and **post it in local areas** such as your church, supermarket, bookstore, or library.
- **Calling your local library or university/college** to see if they have a place you can post your information is another strategy you could use.
- You can also **place advertisements in your local newspaper(s)**. If you don’t know the right paper to use (usually the most widely distributed in the area), or what to place in the advertisement, you can call your Support Broker for advice.
- **Rewarding Work Resources, Inc.** developed the Rewarding Work website which gives individuals with disabilities the choice of hiring staff directly and allows them control of the process of hiring personal assistants. The site also provides private agencies a resource to assist in recruitment of direct support professionals and other staff. To find out more information go to [www.Rewardingwork.org](http://www.Rewardingwork.org)



## INTERVIEW TECHNIQUES WHEN HIRING YOUR OWN STAFF



Your Support Broker can assist you with recruiting and interviewing activities. However, you will want to take a lead role in finding and interviewing employees so that job candidates know right from the start that you are the boss!

**Interviewing potential employees** is an important step to complete to determine the ability of the person to meet your service provision needs. Your Support Broker can provide you with **useful tips for phone screenings and face-to-face interviews**. He/she can also provide you with some advice about how to answer questions that may come up in the interviews, such as requests to be paid “under the table,” or requests to be paid “as an independent contractor.”

It is also a good idea to **pause and take a break** after you’ve finished your recruitment and interviewing activities, so that you can stop and reflect before you offer someone a job. During this pause, ask yourself, “Is this the person I REALLY want to hire?”

## VII. EVALUATING YOUR PLAN/SERVICES



- Am I happy with the services I receive?
- Do my providers do what they were hired to do?
- Are my needs being met?
- Are my providers reliable and trustworthy? Do they come to work on time?
- Am I getting my money's worth from the providers I employ and the services I buy?
- Do I feel happy and respected when this person is working with me?

Ask yourself these questions as you continue to receive services.

- Think about the personal outcomes and goals that you identified in your individual service plan (ISP)
- Are your providers and services helping you meet those outcomes?

If not, please remember that your support team is available to assist you in problem solving to find other ways to make sure your needs and goals are met.

If you have a conflict with one of your service providers, try to discuss the problem openly.

- Make sure your provider understands exactly what you're asking them to do.
- It is important to have reasonable expectations for your provider.
- Good relationships involve respect and trust.
- Chances are a provider will treat you respectfully if you praise and respect them in return.
- It helps if you and your provider are honest with each other.

- Everyone deserves a chance to do their very best.
- There are many reasons why a staff can no longer work with you such as changes in their lives, moving to another part of the state or medical issues are just a few reasons. As with all of us our lives can change and it is no one's fault.
- It is also ok to find a new staff person if you are just not happy with the one you've hired.

If you would like to discuss your DDS allocation because of changes or the need for additional services or resources you should contact your service coordinator and ask for a team meeting.

- You can talk about why you are requesting a change.
- You can present information about why the change in your allocation will be helpful for you to fulfill your vision.
- You can discuss with your team how you will use an increase in your allocation.

## VIII. Where Do I Start



- If you would like to find out more about self-direction you should contact your DDS service coordinator.
- Your service coordinator will meet with you to explain self-direction and what your responsibility would be if you choose to self-direct.
- If you are still interested your service coordinator will have the support broker begin working with you to develop a vision and person centered plan.
- Your support broker will help you identify important support needs and develop a budget.
- Now the fun part. You begin to hire staff and get other supports in place. Once again your support broker will help you.

## What I Can READ and Search To Learn More

Person Centered Thinking at [www.ilr.cornell.edu/edi/pcp](http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/edi/pcp) - a Person Centered Planning Education site at Cornell University

Mass Advocates Standing Strong- the Massachusetts statewide self-advocacy organization at [www.mass-advocates.org](http://www.mass-advocates.org)

Cents and Sensibility- A guide to money management for people with disabilities [www.fliconline.org/documents/patffinancialeducationbooklet-final.pdf](http://www.fliconline.org/documents/patffinancialeducationbooklet-final.pdf)

Find choose & keep great DSPs- A toolkit for people with disabilities looking for quality, caring and committed direct support professionals, [https://ici.umn.edu/index.php?products/view\\_part/375/](https://ici.umn.edu/index.php?products/view_part/375/)

Department of Developmental Services Self-Determination policy and information: [www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/dds/self-determination.htm](http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/dds/self-determination.htm)

Massachusetts Building Blocks for Person Centered Planning: My Person Centered Plan, a Person centered Planning Tool- Available through DDS Central Learning and Development Office [jannet.stevens@massmail.state.ma.us](mailto:jannet.stevens@massmail.state.ma.us)

Self-Advocates Becoming Empowered (SABE) at [www.sabeusa.org](http://www.sabeusa.org) the self-advocacy organization of the United State, working toward full inclusion of people with developmental disabilities in the community