

Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services

Aging Consultation Program



Welcome and Introduction

Thank you for your interest in the Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services (DDS) Aging Consultation Program - a consultative service dedicated to the evaluation of aging adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). Consultations are performed by Julie A. Moran D.O., a board-certified internist and geriatrician specializing in aging adults with I/DD.

The common theme seen in patients assessed in consultation is **change**, particularly changes observed as a function of growing older. Common concerns may include changes in physical health, cognition/memory, daily functioning, behavioral and emotional health, or any combination of these factors. Individuals undergoing a consultative visit will have a comprehensive assessment of the questions and concerns that prompted the referral, with impressions and recommendations provided to the primary team supporting the individual.

The Aging consultation program **encounters are entirely virtual**, held on a secure web-based platform using a video connection. Access to a computer or other device with a camera is required, and any concerns about technical assistance should be addressed in advance of the visit so that a plan can be made in collaboration with the individual's DDS team. Other necessary accommodations are requested to be brought forward in advance of the meeting [including translator services, or any accommodations for hearing or vision deficits], to ensure that these needs are properly met.

The Aging assessments involve extensive history-taking and discussion with both the individual and with the other participants on the virtual call who know the individual well. The program follows a consultative model, thus all recommendations, impressions, and suggestions are offered for consideration to the individual's primary care provider and other members of the care team. There are no diagnostic tests, orders, or prescriptions that are directly generated from this encounter.

Referrals for consultation are facilitated through the individual's DDS Area Office nurse and the service coordinator that serves the individual client. The Aging program is a statewide service available to any client served by MA DDS with concerns related to growing older. *Please note that appointment availability is limited, so DDS teams are asked to use discretion for identifying aging individuals most in need of consultation. **Completed referral forms are submitted electronically to Allyson Carter at DDS-Agingiddclinic@mass.gov**, who will coordinate the next steps of booking a consultation visit.

Requests **appropriate** for referral to the Aging and Developmental Disabilities Program generally include the following:

- a) Adults with Down syndrome older than age 35 with concerns about memory or functional changes
- b) Adults with I/DD older than age 50 with active concerns about cognitive/memory impairment, functional decline (progressive inability to perform daily tasks or skills per usual),

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polypharmacy (multiple medications with concern for adverse effects or drug-drug interactions), or mood/behavior disturbances for whom a medical evaluation is being sought to assess for other potential contributing factors.

Requests that are **not typically appropriate** for referral:

- a) "Baseline" proactive assessments of older adults without Down syndrome
- b) Assessments predominantly for behavioral management or for 'second-opinion' recommendations specifically about psychopharmacologic or seizure management.
- c) Assessments on any client for an urgent concern. Any patient who is experiencing an acute or sudden change in status is advised to seek out guidance using appropriate channels for patients with urgent health concerns or with psychiatric/behavioral crisis.

New consultation encounters are commonly 120 minutes long, and often it is necessary to have a follow-up visit several months after the initial consultation as part of the comprehensive diagnostic process. Please note there is no capacity in this program to provide ongoing routine follow up or oversight of individuals on a recurring basis.

If there are any questions or concerns, please contact Allyson Carter at DDS-Agingiddclinic@mass.gov

We look forward to working with you!

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