



Direct Support Certificate Program Program Participation Checklist

Background

DDS is proud to sponsor the Direct Support Certificate Program, a challenging, accessible, and rewarding program that allows Direct Support Professionals to gain knowledge, skills, and inspiration to enhance their work with the individuals they support and their careers.

For DDS employees and DDS-approved provider employees who have worked full time in good standing (no disciplinary action) for at least 6 months. The program provides the opportunity to receive college credit and a professional certificate from one of eight community colleges in Massachusetts at only \$50 per class. More information about the program is available at mass.gov/lists/direct-support-certificate-program.

Program Participation Checklist

- ☐ Research participating community college of your choice to get information on location, the Direct Support Certificate required classes, pre-requisites, and anything else you may find important to deciding where to attend classes.
- ☐ Complete your choice community college's application.
- ☐ Submit high school or GED transcripts or diploma (whichever is required) to the college.
- ☐ Contact Direct Support Certificate Program coordinator at college of choice to inform that you have applied and discuss next steps for enrolling in courses. You may also ask them any additional questions that you have about the program. You can find their contact information on our website: mass.gov/lists/direct-support-certificate-program.
- ☐ Register for courses. You may have to complete prerequisites before certain courses; your Program Coordinator can help you with this process.
- ☐ You will pay the \$50 fee per class directly to the college through the Student Accounts Office. Your Program Coordinator will be able to assist if you have questions on how to do this.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ):

1. What is the Direct Support Certificate Program?

- A. The Direct Support Certificate Program (DSCP) was created to support and enhance the careers of Direct Support Professionals in DDS-funded programs, while allowing staff to obtain college credit at a reduced cost.
- B. The DSCP is based on the National Community Support Skill Standards, which include twelve skills and competencies. These standards are woven into the DSCP courses providing an appropriate balance between academic and career skills.

- C. The courses focus on skills used by Direct Support Professionals in their work and include effective communication, facilitating community membership, and supporting person-centered decision making.
 - D. Direct Support Certificate courses are college-level and course credits can be applied to an Associate's degree at Massachusetts community colleges, if you wish to continue your education.
- 2. Who is eligible for the Program?**
- A. Anyone who is employed by the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) or a DDS-approved agency.
- 3. How do I apply for the Program?**
- A. Contact Amanda Davis at Amanda.I.davis@mass.gov and she will direct you to the appropriate college coordinator.
- 4. Where can I find more information about the Program?**
- A. Learn more on our website: mass.gov/lists/direct-support-certificate-program
- 5. Why is DDS offering this program?**
- A. DDS offers this program as a way for our employees, especially our Direct Support Professionals, to obtain a quality education at an accessible cost. The Direct Support Certificate Program allows our employees to gain knowledge and skills that will allow them to grow their human services careers while also getting college credit.
- 6. Where am I able to go to school?**
- A. The DSCP is currently offered at eight community colleges across Massachusetts:
 - i. Bristol Community College
 - ii. Holyoke Community College
 - iii. Massasoit Community College
 - iv. Mass Bay Community College
 - v. Middlesex Community College
 - vi. Northern Essex Community College
 - vii. North Shore Community College
 - viii. Quinsigamond Community College
- 7. How many people can get admitted to the program?**
- A. Enrollment is open as long as you have a high school diploma or GED and are in good standing with DDS or the DDS-approved provider where you are employed (no disciplinary actions).
 - B. Some pre-requisites may be required for some courses, please check with the college for these requirements.
- 8. How will I continue working in my position while attending the Direct Support Certificate Program?**
- A. The program is flexible, and many colleges offer virtual classes so that you can do classwork around your work schedule. You can also complete your practicum work at your place of

employment.

9. What will I have to pay?

- A. Each course is \$50. This fee is paid directly to the college. There are no other fees charged to the student for the program.
- B. The approximate cost for the entire program is \$350-450, depending on the college you choose to attend.

10. Will I have to pay taxes on the paid tuition by DDS?

- A. Yes, a portion of the education assistance program is considered taxable. Federal tax law allows employers to offer up to \$5,250 of tuition payments tax-free per calendar year per employee. This means any educational assistance received from DDS or your provider employer over \$5,250 will be included as income in your yearly tax filing. Please consult with a tax professional to determine your tax implications.

11. What is my post program obligation to DDS?

- A. Currently, there is no post-program obligation to DDS, but we encourage you to use your certificate to apply for higher-level positions with DDS or your DDS-approved provider employer. The certificate is a great step in a Human Services career ladder.