



COMMUNITY BASED DAY SUPPORTS GUIDANCE FOR WITHOUT WALLS PROGRAMS

Updated April 2026

Overview:

This guidance document outlines the program requirements, pre - qualification process, and service planning process for the newly established Community Based Day Supports (CBDS) “Without Walls” service model. Effective January 1, 2022, rate regulation *101 CMR 415.00: Rates for Community-Based Day Support Services* has published with a new rate level “W” to support this service model. Approved Without Walls programs will be reimbursed at this rate level.

In order to pre-qualify, provider agencies must already be licensed and qualified for Community Based Day Supports under the EmpDay20 RFR. Agencies not currently qualified to provide CBDS must complete the EmpDay20 RFR qualification process prior to submitting a Without Walls application. Please refer to the [EmpDay20 RFR in Commbuys](#).

I. Without Walls Program Requirements

Staffing Ratio:

Community-based activities under this service will be provided in groups up to 4.

Location:

Without Walls programs are provided exclusively in the community and do not involve the use of a licensed site, including as a transportation hub. Without Walls may be provided in a variety of community settings with activities that promote opportunities for increased independence and inclusion. Through the person-centered planning process, all opportunities should be explored based on the person’s preferences and support their desired outcomes and goals. These activities should not isolate or segregate; if the individual chooses any disability specific classes, activities, events or programs, the choice must be documented in the individual support plan.

Social groups: We acknowledge that individuals participating in Without Walls would like opportunities to meet up with friends who participate in traditional CBDS programming. We encourage cultivating these relationships in community settings. For example, if CBDS participants meet up with Without Walls participants at a local YMCA, library, or coffee shop, it would be considered acceptable service delivery within the parameters of the Without Walls program.

Transportation:

Participants in Without Walls can access transportation for programming in a variety of ways:

- 1) Transported directly to/from home at the beginning and end of the service by CBDS staff member’s personal vehicle or agency vehicle.

There should be careful planning by the provider to avoid extended time in transportation to and from community locations and activities, and extending hours beyond the authorized hours, not to exceed six total hours per day.

- 2) Drop off/pick up from family member/caregiver at the designated meeting spot in the community.

Providers may begin to bill the service at the time that they pick the individual up or when the individual arrives at the predetermined community location.

- 3) Public transportation such as MBTA, Uber, Lyft, etc.

II. Pre-Qualification Process

Program Service Plan

Providers that wish to provide CBDS Without Walls must submit a Program Service Plan (PSP) to DDS and receive written approval for the program. PSP's must be submitted using the provided template and include the following components. Additional evidence may be required upon request such as individualized schedules.

- **Rationale:** Discussion of the provider's philosophy for the provision of services
- **Scope:** Discussion of the specific services to be provided; the process for identifying compatible grouping of individuals
- **Staffing and training:** Description of the direct support professionals (DSPs) necessary to provide the services and a description of any additional staff training beyond that for other CBDS staff.
- **Setting and location:** Description of where the services are to be provided and the number of individuals expected to be served.

Review Process & Timeline

1. Provider Submits PSP in email to Ingrid Flory ingrid.flory@mass.gov
2. DDS will acknowledge receipt of submission within 2 Business Days.
3. DDS will review PSPs on quarterly basis
4. If applicable, DDS will communicate any requested clarifications to the provider. Provider will have 10 business days to respond.
5. DDS renders a decision. If denied, DDS can provide technical assistance opportunities and providers can resubmit next cycle.

III. Authorization and Service Planning Process

Service Authorization

Providers will work with Area Offices to identify people interested in accessing this model of service. At the individual level, through the person-centered planning process, Service Coordinators and Providers will support the development of community-based outcomes and goals that will be identified in the Individual Support Plan.

Individuals who are authorized for Without Walls programs may access other service levels of CBDS on separate days. Individuals may still split their day/week with a supported employment program but may not transition between Without Walls and center based CBDS programs. Special events and opportunities (guest speakers, demonstrations, holiday parties) that are being offered at a CBDS site, will be considered exceptions up to 3 hours per month.

CBDS should not exceed a maximum of six (6) hours per day including in combination with any of the Supported Employment services unless authorized.

CBDS can be authorized with other day services within the same week for up to a total of 30 hours of combined services.

Service Planning

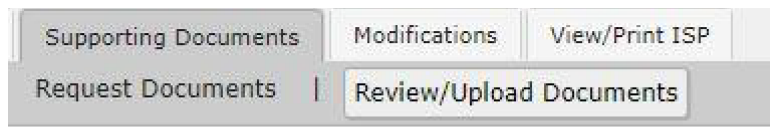
An outline of a weekly individualized schedule will be developed with the person to provide an estimate of the activities and community locations that the person will access based on the individual support plan. The schedule should ensure that individuals have opportunities:

- to make choices about how they spend their time.
- to build community and relationships
- and, if they are interested, to explore employment.

Support services that enable the person to learn, develop, and maintain skills related to community integration, volunteering, or performing a paid or unpaid internship must follow the Department of Labor guidelines. To read more about these types of paid and unpaid situations, go

to: <https://employmentfirstma.org/files/DDS-Unpaid-Work-and-Volunteer-November-2015.pdf>

Updates to the schedule should be made as needed to meet the changing needs, desires, and circumstances of the person. The individualized schedule will be based on an ISP that clearly outlines how this time would be used. The individualized schedule should be uploaded by provider using the Supporting Documents tab and selecting “Other Documents” within the ISP module. *(Documents can be uploaded in the other documents category in HCSIS at any time by both the provider and DDS staff)*



Frequently Asked Questions:

- If there is an emergency while out in the community with the group, such as: inclement weather, unforeseen medical or personal care issue, unforeseen closure of community site, etc., can the Without Walls group go to a CBDS licensed site for the remainder of the day and bill at the W rate?

YES. If this situation arises, the direct support professional should be communicating with their supervisor about implementing the appropriate safety protocol. For example, if an individual needs an unexpected change of clothes, the direct support professionals can work with their supervisor to see if a new pair of clothes can be brought to them in the community or if they need to go back to the CBDS site, while the remainder of the group stays in the community.

- What hours of the day can without walls services be provided?

Typically, Without Walls services can be provided anytime between the hours of 8am-5pm. Scheduling should be driven by individuals' preferences and may vary from group to group. Without Walls does not have to be 5 days per week. If an individual has a preference to participate in volunteer opportunities that originate at a licensed CBDS site, they are able to do so and join Without Walls groups alternative days of the week by working with their area office to set up a split schedule. The maximum number of hours billed in a day should not exceed 6 hours.

- Can individuals participating in Without Walls begin their day out in the community and attend guest speakers, demonstrations, and holiday party celebrations at their CBDS licensed site on the same day?

YES. This cannot exceed more than 3 hours per month and should be documented in the individuals service plan and weekly schedule that is uploaded into HCSIS.

