

# A QUICK GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING THE LICENSURE AND CERTIFICATION PROCESS

## DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES



### Introduction

Since its inception in 1994, the Department of Developmental Services' (DDS) Licensure and Certification process has periodically been revisited to refine and strengthen the system. This improvement has been guided by input from individuals, families, providers, DDS's Office of Quality Enhancement, and a review of national trends in quality management and improvement. The current tools and processes reflect the collective wisdom of these stakeholders, with recommendations to the Commissioner provided by a joint workgroup of providers and DDS staff.

The licensure and certification tools are continuously revised to enhance transparency, objectivity, and measurability, while keeping the focus on achieving positive outcomes for individuals.

### Process Overview

The DDS uses an integrated process for all services, with indicators tailored to the specific services being reviewed. Findings are reported separately for licensure and certification.

- **Licensure:** Reviews essential safeguards considered baseline requirements for providers serving adults with intellectual disabilities in Massachusetts. Separate licenses are issued for Residential/Home Supports and Employment/Day Supports. Agencies offering both types of services receive two licenses.
- **Certification:** Focuses on assessing the quality of a provider's supports, with service-specific indicators designed to promote quality and responsiveness. These indicators, essential for continuous quality improvement, contribute to positive individual outcomes. Certification results for each service type are combined, and agencies receive a certification level for both Residential/Home Supports and Employment/Day Supports if they offer all services.
- **Sample Selection:** A prescribed number of audits are conducted to review supports for different individuals across indicators. The number of sites and individual audits is determined based on factors like the number of people served, service type differences, and DDS administrative regions where the agency operates. Audits are randomly selected.

### Steps in the Process

1. **Off-Site Pre-Survey Review:** The process begins with off-site pre-survey activities, during which surveyors review various available information, such as data in the Home and Community Services Information System (HCSIS), to inform many of the indicators.
2. **Administrative Review:** This focuses on the agency's internal quality assurance systems, often with on-site validation. The agency is notified of the sites and individuals selected for review, including site-less services like employment supports.
3. **On-Site Review:**
  - a. **Physical Site Review** for site-based services like 24-hour residential services.
  - b. **Documentation Review** to assess individual and site-based information.
  - c. **Observation** where feasible, especially for community-based services such as supported employment.

d. **Interviews and Discussions** with key staff, caregivers, and individuals.

The goal is to limit on-site review activities to no more than five days.

### **Licensure and Certification Tools**

There are two distinct tools for licensure and certification, each containing specific indicators to promote clarity and transparency in expectations.

- **Licensure Tool:** Contains sections on:
  - Personal Safety
  - Environmental Safety
  - Communication
  - Health
  - Human Rights
  - Competent and Skilled Workforce
  - Goal Development, Skill Acquisition, and Individual Service Plans

The licensure tool also includes eight critical indicators, each essential for licensure.

- **Certification Tool:** Identifies service-specific expectations, universal service expectations, and organizational standards. Domains include:
  - Planning and Quality Improvement
  - Communication
  - Supporting Relationships
  - Choice, Control, and Growth
  - Career Planning and Development
  - Meaningful Day Activities
  - Community Access and Integration

### **Licensed and Certified Services**

- **Residential / Individual Home Support Services:**
  - 24-Hour Residential Supports
  - ABI 24-Hour Residential Supports
  - Placement Services
  - ABI Placement Services
  - Individualized Home Supports (over 15 hours/week)
  - Respite (not certified)
- **Employment / Day Supports:**
  - Employment Supports (individual and group-supported employment)
  - Community-Based Day Supports
- **Remote Supports and Monitoring Services**

### **Survey Results**

Survey results are shared in two ways:

1. **Service Enhancement Meeting:** Involving the DDS team and key agency managers.
2. **Agency Report:** Posted on the DDS website to support consumer choice and self-direction.

### **Levels of Licensure and Certification**

- **Licensure Levels:**

- **Two-Year License:** Awarded when an agency meets 80% or more of the indicators, including all critical indicators.
- **Two-Year License with Mid-Cycle Review:** Granted if the agency meets 60-79% of the indicators or has at least 60% met, with corrected critical indicators.
- **Deferred License:** Applied when less than 80% of critical indicators are met; correction is required for licensing.
- **Recommendation for Non-Licensure:** Assigned when less than 59% of the indicators are met.
- **Certification Levels:**
  - **Certified:** Granted when an agency meets 80% or more of the indicators, including all critical indicators.
  - **Certified with Mid-Cycle Progress Review:** Assigned if less than 80% of certification indicators are met.

### **Additional Information**

There are four regional Quality Enhancement Offices, each with survey teams coordinated and managed by a QE Director as follows:

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