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Quick Guide to Self-Directing Your Support and Services

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Introduction

The Connecticut Department of Developmental Services (DDS) is committed to helping people with intellectual disabilities live and work in their communities and to have full and satisfying lives. This guide is for individuals and families who want to self-direct their supports through DDS. Once you are determined eligible for supports and your needs have been assessed, you will be able to choose how your supports are provided. Self-direction is a way of managing your supports that gives you more choice and control.

Use this guide to learn about the different people who can help you, like case managers, independent support brokers, and support staff. It also gives tips on how to hire and manage your staff, and how to handle your budget. Keep this guide handy so you can refer to it whenever you need help or information.

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Your Hiring Choices	This section explains the choices you have for hiring employees and managing your DDS supports.
Support for Self-Direction	This section talks about resources and supports that can help you with self-direction.
Paying for Your Supports and Services	This section has information about the tools DDS uses to help you plan for your future and manage your budget.
Becoming an Employer	This section will help you to better understand what you have to do if you choose self-direction.
Recruiting Employees	This section has information on how to find employees.
Hiring Employees	This section has information on making sure employees are allowed to work for you and paying them.
Maintaining Quality	This section has tips on making sure your supports and services meet your needs and DDS standards.
Other Safeguards and Your Rights	This section describes ways DDS protects your rights and keeps you safe, healthy, and satisfied with your supports and services.

1. Your Hiring Choices

Once DDS confirms you are eligible for services, DDS will assign you a case manager. Your case manager can help you apply for funding. If DDS approves funding, you can use it for self-directed supports. You will decide what supports will work best for you. Then you and your family can **choose who you want to hire to provide your supports. You will also choose how to manage your supports.**

Remember, you can always adjust your choices as your needs change.

Hiring Options	Responsibilities	Employer	Control	Staff Wages
Self-Direction This option gives you the most control and responsibility over your supports.	You, or your designee, trains, supervises, and manages your staff.	You are the employer.	Full control over employees, schedules, and pay.	You decide how much to pay your employees. DDS and the Collective Bargaining Agreement have guidelines.
Agency With Choice This is an option of self-direction.	You find the person to hire. You work with the agency to train and manage your staff.	You partner with a qualified provider agency. The qualified provider agency is the employer.	You help set schedules and routines. The agency makes the final decisions.	The agency receives the DDS agency rate and decides how much to pay your staff.
Provider-Led	The agency hires, trains, and manages your staff.	Traditional agency is the employer.	You have less control. The agency sets hours and employee assignments based on when you tell them you need supports.	The agency decides how much to pay your staff.
Combination Approach	You can mix and match options to suit your needs. For example, you can use provider employment supports and hire your own staff for in home supports.			

It is important that you think carefully about these hiring options. Each option provides you with a different amount of control, authority, and self-determination. Your case manager and circle of support can help you decide what is best for you.

2. Support for Self-Direction

So, you've **looked at all your hiring choices** and decided to hire and manage your own employees, or to use an Agency With Choice. **Congratulations on choosing to self-direct your supports and services!**

Hiring and managing your own employees is a big step. You have different support options when you choose self-direction. Here is more information on people who can help you in your new role.

Compare your support options.

Support Type	1 DDS Case Manager	2 Independent Support Broker	3 Individual Goods and Services Supervisor
Cost	This service is provided at no cost by DDS.	Paid from your budget funds.	Paid from your budget funds.
How they help	DDS Case Managers focus on assisting individuals with building a budget, managing supports and connecting you to resources for hiring employees.	Independent Support Brokers help you find and supervise employees. You can work with an Independent Support Broker just to get started or for a long time.	Individual Goods and Services Supervisors help you supervise staff and keep your support organized. They provide training and help with timesheets and documentation. They create back-up staffing plans and help you access community services.
Where you find them	If you are eligible, DDS will assign you a Case Manager to help with self-direction after your needs are assessed and you are working on an annual budget.	Hire an Independent Support Broker directly or through a company. Your case manager can connect you.	Your Case Manager can connect you to resources for finding Individual Goods and Services Supervisors.

You can also choose a person to be your **Representative** who will sign formal self-direction documents on your behalf. They can assist you in hiring and managing your staff. See section 4. becoming an employer for more information.

Fiscal Intermediary (FI) When you hire your own employees, you must use a Fiscal Intermediary (FI). A Fiscal Intermediary helps you to manage individual budgets and all financial responsibilities of being an employer. This includes paying employees and managing taxes.

3. Paying for Your Supports and Services

Your **Individual Plan** and your **Individual Budget** are the tools DDS uses to help make sure you get the services you need and use the money for your supports in the best way possible. **Your case manager or independent support broker can help create and use your Individual Plan and Individual Budget on time and correctly.**

Individual Plan (IP): Your case manager helps you create your individual plan. If you have an independent support broker, they can help too.

- Everyone who receives supports and services from DDS has an individual plan that describes their goals, supports, and services.
- Your individual plan will have different information based on your needs, the resources you have, and the supports and services you get.
- Your case manager will contact you and your family before your planning meeting to help you prepare. They will make sure you have all the important information you need.
- Your individual plan will also need to include a plan for what to do if your employees don't arrive to work as planned. This is called your emergency back-up plan.

Every Individual Plan includes the following sections:
• **The Information Profile** • **The Personal Profile** • **The Future Vision** • **Current and New Assessments** • **The Action Plan** • **A Summary of the Supports and Services provided** • **Provider Qualifications & Training** • **A section on how your plan will be evaluated and monitored.**
Learn more about Individual Plans on the DDS Website

Individual Budget: DDS will use the Level of Need (LON) tool to figure out how much money goes in your budget. After you create your individual plan, your case manager and/or independent support broker will help you make an individual budget. The budget must include each waiver service listed in your individual plan, employee wages and taxes, and additional expenses such as recruitment, training, or insurance. Check with your case manager if you aren't sure if an expense can be included in your budget. Here is more information on your budget:

Financial Report: Depending on the FI capability, you may be able to access your FI portal online to view your financial report. This report has information about how much you have spent, your account balance and your annual budget. If you have questions about these reports, please ask your FI or case manager. It's important that you work closely with your FI to make sure the people who provide your supports get paid on time and that you don't spend more than your budget. You may be responsible for paying your staff or bills if you spend more than your budget. Contact your case manager if your needs change. Know your budget and check it often!

Remember your case manager or Independent Support Broker and your FI are available to answer any budget questions you have.

4. Becoming an Employer

When you hire your own employees, you need to have an "employer of record." This is listed on employee taxes. The employer of record also has responsibilities. The EOR can select a representative to help with these responsibilities. **Your FI will help you to manage all the paperwork that comes with being an employer.** The Department of Labor (DOL) and Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) recommend that the individual receiving supports be the employer of record.

Representative: You can pick someone else to sign the self-directed Support Agreement and related paperwork. This is called "designating a representative." The representative will support you to hire and manage your staff. If you or a representative do not sign the Self-Directed Support Agreement, then you cannot self-direct your services and hire employees. **Self-Directed Support Agreement (SDSA):** This document is an agreement between DDS and you and your supporting team. It explains your responsibilities as an employer in self-direction. Review this document carefully with the Fiscal Intermediary. For more assistance contact your case manager.

Employer State and Federal Registration: Your FI will assist with completing paperwork Connecticut and the United States requires employers to complete. This paperwork makes sure you and your staff follow labor laws and pay employee taxes correctly. The FI handles the details for you.

For more detailed information, please refer to refer to the SDSA overview and FI Quick Guide or contact your case manager.

5. Recruiting Employees

You can hire people that you know, or you can recruit new employees. **Your Independent Support Broker or Individual Goods and Services Supervisor, if you have one, can assist you to find qualified employees to provide your supports**. **Your Case Manager can connect you to resources for hiring employees**

It's a good idea to learn some basic employment laws and DDS hiring rules. Your Fiscal Intermediary (FI) can provide useful information about what you can and cannot say in interviews, rules for paying employees, and how to avoid discrimination.

DDS Hiring Rules
You cannot hire: • Yourself • Your Employer of Record • People on the DDS or Abuse and Neglect registry for abusing, neglecting, or exploiting individuals who receive supports
If the person you want to hire has a felony, contact your case manager to assist you with the proper approval process

Writing a job description can help you look for staff. A job description describes what you want your employee to do. It states what you expect and is useful to create advertisements and interview questions. Your Case Manager, Independent Support Broker, or Individual Goods and Services Supervisor can help you write a job description.

You can pick from lots of different recruitment strategies to find employees. For example:

- Ask family, friends, and co-workers if they know anyone they think would be a good employee.
- Make flyers and post them in local areas like churches and libraries. Call your local college to see if they have a place you can post your flyer.
- Post recruiting ads on social media and other online platforms.
- Use the "Rewarding Work" website from DDS to find people looking for work in Connecticut. Your case manager can help you access this tool.

Worker Benefits!

In Connecticut, employees of people who self-direct are in a union. The collective bargaining agreement (CBA) is a document that sets rules for pay, work hours, benefits, and job conditions. For example, the CBA guarantees that employees can earn Paid Time Off (PTO). It also sets some wage increases.

The CBA also requires a worker's compensation policy for your employees. This means you are both protected if they get hurt while working for you. You do not need to include Worker's Compensation in your budget. **You can tell people about these benefits when you interview them!**

Interviewing potential employees can be tricky. Trust your feelings and ask good questions to see if they can do the job. Your case manager or independent support broker can help with tips for phone and face-to-face interviews. Take your time to reflect before offering someone a job. Make sure they are the right fit for you. **For more detailed information, contact your case manager.**

6. Hiring Employees

Congratulations! You found an employee you want to hire! You did a great job recruiting and interviewing potential employees and found a job candidate you think will meet your needs. **You're ready to offer someone a job!**

- **Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) wage increases:**
  - Don't worry, DDS has you covered! When it's time to give your employee a raise required by the CBA, DDS will add the needed funds to your budget. You won't lose any support hours because of the CBA raise. However, if you decide to give a raise not covered by the CBA, you will need to work with your case manager to adjust your services.
- **Employee Qualification and Background Checks:**
  - Your Fiscal Intermediary (FI) will help check qualifications and complete necessary background checks. This makes sure potential employees meet the required standards for safe, quality services.

Hiring Checklist

✓ Work with the FI to confirm that the potential employee is not listed on the DDS Registry for abuse, neglect, or exploitation.
✓ If the employee will provide transportation, complete a motor vehicle check.
✓ Check that the potential employee meets DDS waiver qualifications for the services they will provide.
✓ Collect the potential employee's background information.
✓ If the employee will provide transportation, complete a motor vehicle check.

Remember you will work with your Fiscal Intermediary (FI) to check staff qualifications and complete background checks.

Hiring Responsibilities
The EOR will work with the FI to provide necessary forms to the employee and explain what they are for.
Approve your employee's submitted electronic timecards by the deadline each week.
Submit receipts and invoices for employee and program expenses to the FI for reimbursement.
Confirm that the FI sends paychecks and reimbursement checks according to the schedule.
Make sure employees are paid on time for their work.

7. Maintaining Quality

It is important to regularly think about the quality of the services you are receiving and if you are satisfied with them. **You are the expert in what you need and what you expect from your services!**

A Strong Circle of Support:

- Surround yourself with a supportive **Planning and Support Team (PST)**.
- Include people who know you well that you trust like family, friends, neighbors, and community members.
- Use the self-direction option to hire people who know you well.
- Utilize a flexible budget to help you meet your goals in your individual plan.
- Seek help from your DDS case manager or independent support broker for team-building activities.

Individual Planning:

- Actively participate in your planning process.
- Communicate your needs and expectations clearly.
- Bring ideas of what you want in your plan to meetings.
- Update your case manager on your progress on your Individual Planning Goals.

Case Management:

- Work with your case manager to track supports.
- Connect with your case manager regularly based on your living setting and support types.
- Contact your case manager for assistance in maintaining or improving service quality.

Quality Service Review: DDS regularly reviews all providers. This is called Quality Service Review. DDS reviews provider agencies and people you hire directly. Your case manager and members of the quality review team will be part of the review of the services and supports you receive. They will gather information in several ways which may include:

- Interviewing you and your family
- Interviewing your employees
- Observing your employees while they provide your supports.
- Reviewing your individual plan, budget, and other paperwork
- Looking at documentation of your employees' work like time sheets and daily logs

8. Other Safeguards and Your Rights

DDS has safeguards to help keep you safe at home, work and int the community.

DDS Policies, Procedures, and Administrative Processes:

DDS has policies and procedures to keep your supports safe. One is incident reporting. These incident types need to be reported to DDS:

- Severe injury
- Unexpected hospitalization
- Being lost or missing with police involvement
- Fire incidents requiring fire department intervention
- Arrests Victim of theft or physical assault
- Vehicle accidents with moderate or severe injury
- Need for restraint
- All deaths
- Suspected abuse or neglect

DDS uses this information to address incidents and prevent future occurrences.

DDS coordinates two committees to ensure effective quality supports:

Program Review Committee (PRC): Reviews behavior programs and medications that may restrict your rights or be harmful if misused.

Human Rights Committee (HRC): Makes sure DDS, providers, or employees do not restrict your rights unless necessary for safety.

You can request copies of PRC and HRC policies and procedures from your case manager.

Your Rights and Responsibilities: As someone who is receiving HCBS Waiver Services, you have some Basic Rights and Responsibilities.

You have the right to:	You are responsible for:
• Be safe. • Be treated with respect. • Have your service options explained to you in a way you understand. • Express your personal desires. • Privacy. • Be free from physical and mental abuse. • Speak up and complain if you don't like something without fear of negative consequences. • Be informed if there are changes that affect you. • Appeal a decision about your service options (see below).	• Actively helping make your Individual Plan. • Letting your case manager know if your situation changes (for example, you moved, are no longer eligible for Medicaid, or your supports needs change). • Respecting others, as you want to be respected.

Appealing Decisions

If you do not agree with service decisions made by DDS, there are a number of ways you can have a decision reviewed.

If you do not agree, you can:

- Call your **Regional Office** and ask to have a Supervisor or Division Director review your concerns
- Request a **Programmatic Administrative Review** (PAR) by the Regional Director. Your case manager can assist in getting this process started.

- Complete and return a **Fair Hearing Request** through Department of Social Services (DSS) if one is sent to you when a decision is made about waiver services you wanted
- Contact the Independent Ombudsperson at: (860) 418-6047 (Hartford) or (866) 737-0331 (Toll Free)

Your case manager can help you arrange these options if needed. We want decisions to be fair and equitable so talk to someone at DDS if you don't agree with something about your supports.

Summary

Hiring and managing your own staff may seem confusing or overwhelming at first, but you can count on lots of people to assist you.

- **Case Manager:** Helps create your future vision, participate in individual plan meetings, and track waiver, individual plan, and budget documentation.
- **Fiscal Intermediary (FI):** Assists with paying employees and managing your budget.
- **Independent Support Broker:** Assists with recruiting, hiring, and managing employees.
- **Individual Goods and Services Supervisor:** Helps manage employees and their daily activities.

Self-direction offers many opportunities to create the lifestyle you want. We hope you enjoy your self-direction experience! For more information, contact your DDS case manager.