



**Central Administrative Offices**  
77 Landau Avenue, Floral Park, NY 11001-3603

**Regina M. Agrusa**  
*Superintendent of Schools*

**Mallory Poledro**  
*Director of Special Education*  
**516-488-9853**  
**Email: MPoledro@sewanhakaschools.org**

January 2025

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Attached and included in this email is important transitional information as your child leaves high school and prepares for employment and adult services.

The Office of Adult and Continuing Education Services (ACCES-VR) is an agency that can offer support to your child after high school. If you are interested in meeting with an ACCES representative, please complete the attached application and return it to the Special Education Chairperson of your home school. An ACCES representative will meet with you and your child to discuss services.

ACCES-VR Application process:

<http://www.acces.nysed.gov/vr/apply-vocational-rehabilitation-services>

ACCES-VR Application

[www.acces.nysed.gov/common/acces/files/vr/vr04.pdf](http://www.acces.nysed.gov/common/acces/files/vr/vr04.pdf)

The Office of People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) is another agency that offers a host of services such as respite support, counseling, recreational opportunities and referral information. Please see attached information regarding applying for services and eligibility.

OPWDD Transition Planning:

<https://opwdd.ny.gov/community-involvement/school-transition-students-developmental-disabilities>

Front Door/OPWDD:

<https://opwdd.ny.gov/access-supports>

Family Services Grant Programs are another resource from the Long Island Developmental Disabilities Service Office. There are many agencies that can further support your child as they transition into adult services. Please refer to their website:

<https://www.lifssac.com/grant-program-list>

If you have any questions, please call the Special Education chairperson of your building or the district's transition coordinator, Megan Stokes, at 516-488-9861.

Sincerely,



Mallory Poledro  
Director of Special Education

MP:ja

**Additional helpful resources:**

Office of Civil Rights: Transition of Students with Disabilities to Postsecondary Education  
<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/transitionguide.html>

Transition Handbook U.S. Department of Education  
<https://sites.ed.gov/idea/files/postsecondary-transition-guide-august-2020.pdf>

ACCES-VR Brochure and website:  
<http://www.acces.nysesd.gov/vr>

Client Assistance Program:  
<http://www.acces.nysesd.gov/common/acces/files/vr/capbrochure.pdf>

National Technical Assistance Center on Transition  
<https://transitionta.org/>

### Who is served by the ACCES-VR program?

People with all types of disabilities, who want to go to work.

**Note:** Individuals who are legally blind obtain vocational rehabilitation services from the NYS Commission for the Blind: <http://ocfs.ny.gov/main/cb/>

## ACCES-VR Makes a Difference!

### Here are some comments regarding ACCES-VR services:

*"I was stressed out and very upset that I could no longer be a nurse's aide due to my injury. My counselor assured me I would be able to complete a computer class. She was RIGHT! Her compassion was unbelievable. I am working now. Thank you so much for your program."*

*"For me to be out of work for over ten years and then to go back to school made me feel good. Work is great! With help from ACCES-VR, I DID SUCCEED."*

*"Your organization does a great job of aiding people who need a little help to make positive changes in their lives. Thank you for all your help."*

*"I still do not know how to thank my counselor. She has been, and still is there for me."*

*"I cannot say enough good about my counselor's professionalism, efficiency and effectiveness. She made it possible for me to be retrained for work that I love and that provides a good living"*

### What are the ways to contact an ACCES-VR local office and start services?

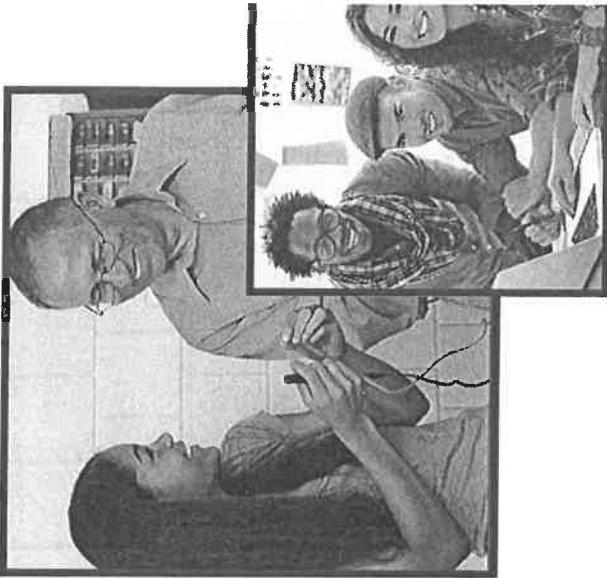
- Go to [www.acces.nyseed.gov/vr/](http://www.acces.nyseed.gov/vr/) or [www.acces.nyseed.gov/vr/do/doindex.html](http://www.acces.nyseed.gov/vr/do/doindex.html). Click on the ACCES-VR District Office nearest you.
- Call 1-800-222-JOBS (5627) and ask how to contact the office nearest you.
- Go to [http://www.acces.nyseed.gov/vr/apply\\_for\\_services/apply.html](http://www.acces.nyseed.gov/vr/apply_for_services/apply.html) and download an application. Bring the completed application with you to an ACCES-VR group orientation.

An individual with a disability who applies for ACCES-VR services should want to work and be ready to participate in training or other efforts that will lead to employment.

If an individual with a disability is concerned about losing disability-related benefits by going to work, he/she should obtain information from the following resources:

- A Local Independent Living Center - locations can be found at: [www.acces.nyseed.gov/vr/lscn/about.html](http://www.acces.nyseed.gov/vr/lscn/about.html)
- Social Security Administration [www.ssa.gov/ny](http://www.ssa.gov/ny)

## Introduction to Service



The University of the State of New York  
The State Education Department  
Adult Career and Continuing Education Services  
Vocational Rehabilitation  
89 Washington Avenue  
Albany, NY 12234

The State Education Department does not discriminate on the basis of age, color, religion, creed, disability, marital status, veteran status, national origin, race, gender, genetic predisposition or carrier status, or sexual orientation in its educational programs, services and activities. Portions of this publication can be made available in a variety of formats, including braille, large print or audio tape, upon request. Inquiries concerning this policy of nondiscrimination should be directed to the Department's Office for Diversity, Ethics, and Access, Room 530, Education Building, Albany, NY 12234.

# ACCES VR

## What is ACCES?

The Office of Adult Career and Continuing Education Services (ACCES) is part of the New York State Education Department and is comprised of three primary areas: Vocational Rehabilitation (including Independent Living Program Administration), Adult Education, and the Bureau of Proprietary School Supervision.

## ACCES-VR:

- Administers vocational rehabilitation and independent living programs
- Provides a wide array of services to assist eligible individuals with disabilities in obtaining employment
- Provides transition services to students and youth
- Provides individual consultation, recommendations and training to assist with maintaining a job
- Provides information and support to employers

## How does the VR program work?

There are some rules for the program that are established in Federal and State law and regulations. A few of the basics include:

- The person with a disability has to apply for services
- The person must be legally able to work in the United States
- The person must meet the eligibility requirements
- The person must work with a qualified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC) employed by ACCES-VR to determine eligibility

The more information a person has to verify a physical or mental impairment and describe how that impairment affects the ability to work, the faster the process will go.

## What are the eligibility requirements?

- The person has a physical or mental impairment
- The impairment makes it difficult for the person to work
- The person can benefit from VR services to achieve employment

## What is vocational rehabilitation?

Vocational Rehabilitation agencies, often referred to as "VR", are managed by every state, but are overseen by the federal government. VR is designed to help people with disabilities meet career goals, from entry-level to professional. It helps people with disabilities get jobs, whether the person is born with a disability, develops a disability or becomes a person with a disability while working.

- Training at a vocational school, community college, or on the job
- Supported Employment
- Information on the Americans with Disabilities Act and reasonable accommodations
- Job placement and job retention
- Other services necessary to achieve the employment goal

Some ACCES-VR services are based upon a review of financial need.

## How does ACCES-VR fit into the community?

ACCES-VR works with school districts, community rehabilitation programs, NYS Department of Labor Career Centers, Independent Living Centers, colleges and vocational schools, the business community and any other community resource that could provide goods and services that enable an individual with a disability to work.

## What is Independent Living?

A network of 39 Independent Living Centers across the State provide peer counseling, independent living skills training, information and referral, individual and systems advocacy, benefits assistance, housing assistance and many other services that support and advance life in the community. Services are based on local availability.

To find the ILG in your area or to learn more about independent living go to: [www.acces-vr.ny.gov/independent-living-centers](http://www.acces-vr.ny.gov/independent-living-centers)

## What services can ACCES-VR provide?

- Assessment to help identify skills, abilities, interests and limitations
- Career counseling and guidance
- Benefits Assessment



Scan our QR Code to visit  
the ACCES-VR website:  
[www.acces-ny.org/vr](http://www.acces-ny.org/vr)

**www.acces-ny.org/vr**

**Please return the completed form to:**

**The University of the State of New York  
THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT  
Office of Adult Career and Continuing  
Education Services-Vocational Rehabilitation  
(ACCES-VR)**

**Application for VR Services**

VR-04 (7/14)

*Please print or type all entries*

<b>NAME</b>	Last	First	Middle Initial	<b>GENDER</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female	
If you have been known by <b>another name</b> , enter here: Last First Middle Initial						
<b>HOME ADDRESS</b>		Street	Apartment Number			
City	State	Zip +4 Code	County	<b>SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER</b> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> - <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> - <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>		
If your <b>MAILING ADDRESS</b> is different than your home address, please complete the mailing address information below.						
<b>MAILING ADDRESS</b>		Street	Apartment Number			
City	State	Zip +4 Code	County			
<b>PHONE NUMBER(S)</b> where we can reach you or leave a message:				<b>Best time to call</b>	<b>DATE OF BIRTH</b>	
Area code 1. ( )	Area code 2. ( )	1. 2.		Month	Day	Year
Home <input type="checkbox"/> Cell <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/>	Home <input type="checkbox"/> Cell <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> - <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> - <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>		
Email: _____						
Race/Ethnicity-Choose <b>ALL</b> that apply. If left blank ACCES Will complete. If Hispanic or Latino is checked, please check additional box.		<input type="checkbox"/> American Indian or Alaska Native <input type="checkbox"/> Asian (includes Indian Subcontinent) <input type="checkbox"/> Black or African American			<input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic or Latino <input type="checkbox"/> Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander <input type="checkbox"/> White	
What is your disability?		Who referred you to us?		MARITAL STATUS: (Check Box) <input type="checkbox"/> Married <input type="checkbox"/> Widowed <input type="checkbox"/> Divorced <input type="checkbox"/> Separated <input type="checkbox"/> Never Married		
<b>I hereby apply for rehabilitation services:</b> Date _____		Signature of applicant, parent, or legal guardian.				
<b>X</b> (Sign here.)						

• • • Please answer the questions below and on the back of this form. • • •

You do not have to answer these questions now, but your answers will help ACCES-VR process your application.

Have you ever received services from ACCES-VR or its former name, the Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID)? .....  Yes  No

Are you now receiving services from one or more agencies? .....  Yes  No  
If you answered yes, indicate agency names(s), address(es) and contact person(s):

(1)

(2)

Describe how your disability limits your ability to work.

What services are you seeking from ACCES-VR?

Are you disabled because of a work-related injury?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Are you a veteran?
Do you use any assistive devices or aids?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Do you have a NYS driver's license?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Are you a citizen of the United States?
Do you have a driver's license from a state other than New York?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Do you have Access to a motor vehicle?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	If no, are you legally permitted to work in this country? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Do you use public transportation?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Check the benefits you now receive:
Are you able to leave your home?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> SSI <input type="checkbox"/> SSDI <input type="checkbox"/> Workers Compensation
		<input type="checkbox"/> Other, specify _____

Do you regularly see a doctor or clinic about your disability?  Yes  No If yes, indicate date of last visit: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Please provide the name and address of doctor(s) and clinic(s):  
 (1) \_\_\_\_\_ (2) \_\_\_\_\_

List the highest grade you have successfully completed: \_\_\_\_\_  
 and check the applicable box(es)

GED or High School Equivalency Diploma  Yes  No  College  Graduate School  Doctorate

Special Education  Yes  No Do you now attend high school?  Yes  No Indicate college degree(s) earned:

Name and address of school you last attended: Name of School \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

**List below other people in your household**

Full Name	Age	Their Relationship to You

**List below the people ACCES-VR can contact if we are unable to reach you using the information on page 1.**

Name	Address	Phone

**List below your work history (include attachments for additional Jobs, if necessary)**

Employer Name and Address	Dates Employed From - To	Weekly Earnings	Job Title and Duties, and Reason for Leaving

**Persons applying for or receiving rehabilitation services have the right to have any actions or decisions of this Office reviewed. A description of the review process and form can be obtained from any ACCES-VR District Office.**

***All information will be kept confidential and is subject to verification.***

The State Education Department does not discriminate on the basis of age, color, religion, creed, disability, marital status, pregnancy, veteran status, national origin, race, gender, genetic predisposition or carrier status, or sexual orientation in its recruitment, educational programs, services, and activities. Portions of any publication designed for distribution can be made available in a variety of formats, including Braille, large print or audiotape, upon request. Inquiries regarding this policy of nondiscrimination should be directed to the Office of Human Resources Management, Room 528 EB, Education Building, Albany, NY 12234. Request for publications should be made to the Department's Publications Sales Desk, Room 309, Education Building, Albany, NY 12234.

# Apply for Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Adult Career and Continuing Education Services-Vocational Rehabilitation (ACCES-VR) provides services to individuals who have a disability, or disabilities, that interfere with getting, keeping, or advancing in a job.

To apply or be referred for ACCES-VR services you must be:

- A person with a disability or disabilities that impact your ability to get, keep or advance in a job
- Currently present in New York State
- Available to participate in the vocational rehabilitation process
- At least 14 years old
- Able to work in the United States
  - Note: If you are not a United States Citizen, you must provide proof from the United States Department of Immigration and Naturalization Services that you are allowed to work in the United States.

ACCES-VR has 15 District Offices and 10 Satellite Offices located across New York State. ACCES-VR's administration office is located at the New York State Education Department in Albany, NY.

- [ACCES-VR Orientation Sessions](#)
- [Applying for ACCES-VR Services and Documentation Needed for Eligibility](#)
- [Confidentiality](#)
- [Eligibility Process](#)
- [What else can I do to get started?](#)
- [Publications](#)

## ACCES-VR Orientation Sessions

Completing an Orientation session is not required but offers the best way to learn about ACCES-VR services and the vocational rehabilitation process. ACCES-VR has three (3) Orientation recordings to help you decide if ACCES-VR services may be right for you:

- [Overview of ACCES-VR Services: Your Journey to Employment Begins Today](#)
- [How to Apply For ACCES-VR Services](#)
- [Do You Want A Job That Requires A College Degree?](#)

## Applying for ACCES-VR Services and Documentation Needed for Eligibility

### Application for Services VR-04

Below are links to the ACCES-VR application for services in six (6) languages:

- [English](#) 
- [Spanish](#) 
- [Italian](#) 

- [Russian](#) 
- [Haitian-creole](#) 
- [Simplified Chinese](#) 

Please complete the ACCES-VR Application for Services available above as a fillable PDF or by contacting your local [ACCES-VR District Office](#) for a paper version of the application.

- When completing the ACCES-VR Application for Services, please complete as fully as possible. You must minimally provide:
  - Your Name
  - Address
  - Date of Birth
  - Gender
  - Your Disability(ies)
  - Your signature and date on the application. **Only signed applications will be accepted.**
    - Note: For individuals under the age of 18, or for individuals with legal guardians, the Application for Services must also include the signature of a parent or legal guardian.

## Documentation Needed for Eligibility Determination

When you send ACCES-VR your application, please also consider including the following documentation that will be needed to determine if you are eligible for ACCES-VR services:

- **Documentation from your doctor, treatment program, or school about your disability.** This information is used to determine the degree your disability interferes with your ability to get, keep, or advance in a job. If you do not have documentation, ACCES-VR may be able to help obtain this information with your written consent.
  - Note: If this application is a referral, the referring agency, school, or doctor should provide you with information about your disability, functional limitations, and how this information relates to your employment needs.
- **Consent Forms:** ACCES-VR will need permission from you to be able to obtain information about your disability for eligibility determination and for the vocational rehabilitation process. Please complete the consent form that applies to you:
  - [VR-21](#)  (for general health impairments), and/or
  - [VR-22](#)  (substance use disorders or mental health conditions)
    - For individuals under the age of 18, or for individuals with legal guardians, the Consent Form must also include the signature of a parent or legal guardian.
    - Note: Any referral to ACCES-VR **must** include your signed consent, in addition to a signed application, to verify that you agree to a referral to ACCES-VR.
- **Confidential Health Assessment:** Please complete, to the best of your ability, information about how your disability impacts you.
  - [VR-26](#)  - Confidential Health Assessment

## Confidentiality

Requesting personal information about you carries with it the obligation for ACCES-VR to fully inform you about what personal information is gathered, how it will be used, and to safeguard against sharing it unnecessarily or inappropriately. ACCES-VR's Confidentiality Policy outlines its responsibilities and the policy can be found at [102.00 Confidentiality Policy](#).

## Submitting Your Application

You can submit your application, and eligibility documentation you wish to share, to ACCES-VR either by email or mail:

- **Email:** [accesvrapplications@nysed.gov](mailto:accesvrapplications@nysed.gov)
  - Save, scan or take a picture of the ACCES-VR application and any other documents or forms that you are sending for ACCES-VR eligibility determination
  - In Email's Subject Line: Write your full name and "ACCES-VR Application"
  - Make sure your application has your phone number and email
  - Verify all documents/pictures are attached to the email before sending
- **Mail:** To the address of your Local District Office
  - District Office Locations may be found at the [District Office Locations webpage](#)

After your application is submitted, a member of the ACCES-VR team will contact you to begin the eligibility determination process.

## Eligibility Process

To be eligible for ACCES-VR services you must:

- Have a disability that interferes with getting, keeping, or advancing in a job, and
- Be able to benefit from vocational rehabilitation services

Eligibility for ACCES-VR is made without regard to age, color, religion, creed, disability, marital status, veteran status, national origin, race, gender, genetic predisposition or carrier status, sexual orientation, the type of service needed, cost of the service, or the income level of the individual or family.

**Presumed Eligibility:** If you provide proof that you currently receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) that is based on a Social Security Administration (SSA) determination of your disability, ACCES-VR will presume you are eligible for vocational rehabilitation services.

**Assessment/Evaluation:** In some cases, ACCES-VR may need additional information to be able to determine if you are eligible for services. Should this happen, ACCES-VR will ask you to participate in an assessment or evaluation. ACCES-VR will pay for any needed assessment or evaluation and this will be at **no cost** to you.

## What else can I do to get started?

Career Exploration - At the **Career Zone** site you can assess your own interests and begin to explore careers that are related to your strengths, skills, interests and abilities.

Create a Resume - At **Job Zone** you can find employment resources and begin to create your resume.

## Publications:

- [Introduction to Services](#) 
- [What can I do if I disagree with decisions about my case?](#) 
- [Client Assistance Program \(CAP\) Brochure](#) 
  - [CAP Brochure in Large Print](#) 



New York State Education  
Building  
89 Washington Avenue  
Albany, NY 12234

## CONTACT US

NYSED General Information: (518) 474-3852  
ACCES-VR: 1-800-222-JOBS (5627)  
TASC (formerly GED): (518) 474-5906  
New York State Archives: (518) 474-6926  
New York State Library: (518) 474-5355  
New York State Museum: (518) 474-5877  
Office of Higher Education: (518) 486-3633  
Office of the Professions: (518) 474-3817  
P-12 Education: (518) 474-3862

© 2015 - 2019 New York State Education Department



**Office for People With  
Developmental Disabilities**



# **Front Door**

## Access to Services





# Table of Contents

<b>I. Welcome to the Front Door</b>	
What is the Front Door?.....	4
What is this guide for?.....	4
Where do I begin?.....	5
About the Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD).....	5
How OPWDD is structured .....	5
<b>II. Eligibility.....</b>	<b>6</b>
The OPWDD eligibility review.....	6
OPWDD eligibility determination frequently asked questions .....	7
<b>III. Medicaid and OPWDD Services .....</b>	<b>11</b>
How to enroll in the home and community based services waiver .....	11
Medicaid and the HCBS waiver frequently asked questions.....	11
<b>IV. Planning .....</b>	<b>14</b>
The assessment process .....	14
Person-centered planning .....	15
Student transitioning from school to OPWDD.....	15
<b>V. Care Management .....</b>	<b>16</b>
What is care management?.....	16
Care managers promote and support informed choice .....	17
The Circle of Support: developing individualized services using person-centered planning .....	17
Your life plan .....	17
<b>VI. Services .....</b>	<b>18</b>
OPWDD supports and services.....	18
Self-Direction of supports & services .....	19
Employer and budget authority .....	19
The self-directed lives of people with Developmental disabilities: stories and insights .....	19
Independent living in the community – apartments & housing .....	20
Community residential settings.....	20
Employment and day supports .....	20
Family support services .....	22
Assistive technology and medical and behavioral health .....	22
Charting your course .....	23
Contact information.....	23
Information line .....	24
Developmental disabilities regional offices map .....	25
<b>VII. Appendix, Detailed Information on the OPWDD Eligibility Determination .....</b>	<b>26</b>
Required documentation for eligibility determination requests.....	26
Diagnostic evaluation .....	29
Acceptable measures of intellectual and adaptive behavior.....	29
Acceptable measures of intellectual functioning .....	29
Acceptable measures of adaptive behavior.....	29
The 3-Step eligibility determination process.....	29
<b>Process Flow Chart .....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Notes .....</b>	<b>30</b>



## Welcome to the New York State Office for People With Developmental Disabilities Front Door!

### What is the Front Door?

The Front Door is how you access services.

Helping you opening the door to a richer, fuller life is the goal of the New York State Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD). Our Front Door offers a person-centered approach to planning supports for people with developmental disabilities.

The Front Door process will guide you through the steps involved in finding out if you are eligible for services offered by OPWDD, identify your service needs, and help you work on a plan for getting those services.

The goal of the Front Door process is to provide supports and services that help individuals and family members in ways that are respectful of their abilities, language and cultural values and traditions.

#### Purpose of this Guide

The purpose of this guide is to explain OPWDD's Front Door process. This detailed guide will help you understand the services that OPWDD offers and how they might fit into your life. The guide also tells you what you will need to become eligible for OPWDD supports and services, including:

- Findings related to your developmental disability,
- Medicaid eligibility, and
- Enrollment in the Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) waiver program. Most OPWDD supports are funded through this waiver program.

This guide will also outline the choices available to you and/or your family member.

#### Mission Statement:

We help people with developmental disabilities live richer lives.



## Where Do I Begin?

To help you get ready to plan for OPWDD services, you will be asked to attend a Front Door Information Session. The information session is a way for you to learn valuable information about:

- The supports and services that may be right for you, and how to access them
- The choices that OPWDD offers for helping individuals and families
- How the Front Door process works

## About the Office for People With Developmental Disabilities

The New York State Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) is responsible for coordinating services for New Yorkers with developmental disabilities, including intellectual disability, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, neurological impairment, autism, familial dysautonomia and Prader-Willi Syndrome. It provides services directly and through a network of not-for-profit provider agencies.

OPWDD is proud of our strong working partnership with families and individuals. This partnership has shaped the way the system has grown to assist increasing numbers of individuals to live with greater independence in their communities.

Supports and services are provided in community settings across the state and include long-term care services such as habilitation and residential supports. Individuals and their families can also choose to manage their own services and manage their own staff by self-directing any or all of their services. OPWDD also provides employment supports, including ongoing job coaching, job matching and vocational training.

In addition, OPWDD offers family support services designed to help families provide care for their loved ones who live full-time in their family home.

## How OPWDD is Structured

Five Developmental Disabilities Regional Offices (DDROs) coordinate and oversee not-for-profit provider services, and manage the Front Door process. Most of your interaction with OPWDD will be through your local DDRO. You may also interact with not-for-profit agencies funded by OPWDD.

OPWDD also operates six regionally-based State Operations Offices that manage services run directly by New York State.

OPWDD works in partnership with Care Coordination Organizations (CCOs) to support people in developing and maintaining service plans.

## Ways to contact and stay connected to OPWDD

OPWDD website:  
[www.opwdd.ny.gov](http://www.opwdd.ny.gov)

OPWDD Facebook page:  
[www.facebook.com/NYSOPWDD](http://www.facebook.com/NYSOPWDD)

Commissioner's Email Address:

Commissioners.Correspondence.Unit@opwdd.ny.gov

Any inquiries you have may be directed to OPWDD's Information Line at 1-866-946-9733.

See pages 24-25 in this guide for further details.



## Eligibility

### The Key to Accessing Supports

To be able to access the majority of OPWDD services, most individuals will need to:

- Provide evidence that they have a developmental disability
- Enroll in Medicaid (if needed), and
- Enroll in the OPWDD Home and Community Based Services waiver (if needed)

### The OPWDD Eligibility Review

**The eligibility review process is the way OPWDD determines if you have a developmental disability and are eligible for OPWDD supports and services.**

**The eligibility review process begins at one of OPWDD's five Developmental Disability Regional Offices (DDROs) located throughout New York State.** You and your family submit materials and records to the DDRO, such as reports of assessments conducted by medical professionals. A Care Manager may help you with this process.

Qualified DDRO staff review this information to see if your disability meets requirements specified in New York State law. If it meets the requirements, you are deemed to have a developmental disability and become eligible for OPWDD services. (Please note: additional steps, such as enrolling in Medicaid, are needed to gain access to most supports and services.)

Depending on the complexity of your condition, the process for obtaining an eligibility determination may require reports from multiple specialty assessments. A face-to-face interview may also be part of this process.

The request for TABS ID and Transmittal for Determination of Developmental Disability form must accompany all requests sent to the DDRO for eligibility determinations. Eligibility requests and supporting documentation must be sent to the Eligibility Coordinator at the DDRO where you live.

For detailed information on how the eligibility determination works, please see the Appendix at the end of this guide.

You can find the Transmittal for Determination of Developmental Disability Form on the OPWDD website.

Go to **“Resources”** on the homepage, choose **“Forms,”** and scroll down to **“Eligibility Form and Information.”**

Or, just type this address into your browser:  
<http://www.opwdd.ny.gov/node/1018>



## OPWDD Eligibility Determination Frequently Asked Questions

### What is the Eligibility Determination?

Each person who wants OPWDD supports and services has the right to an individual eligibility review. That review will determine whether he or she has a condition that qualifies – or makes the person “eligible” -- for services and supports from OPWDD.

### Who may ask for a review of eligibility for OPWDD supports or services?

Individuals or their caregivers, guardians, advocates or Care Managers may apply to get supports and services provided or paid for by OPWDD. The application and review process is called the Eligibility Determination Process.

### Who decides whether a person is eligible for OPWDD services?

OPWDD determines whether a person has a developmental disability and meets all the conditions of eligibility for OPWDD-funded services.

### What is required for a person to be eligible for OPWDD services?

In order for a person to be eligible for OPWDD services, New York State Mental Hygiene Law requires:

1. The presence of a developmental disability that is described by certain qualifying diagnoses or conditions,
2. The disability occurred before the person reached age 22,
3. The disability can be expected to continue indefinitely or permanently, and
4. The disability causes a substantial handicap to a person’s ability to function normally in society.

### What are developmental disabilities?

Developmental disabilities are special conditions that may occur anytime from before a baby's birth up until the age of 22. A developmental disability may take different forms. Developmental disabilities are different from “developmental delays” that show up as a lag in one or more areas of growth or skill. Developmental delays can be reduced by providing Early Intervention services and Special Education services, including special help in the classroom. A developmental disability may cause a child to develop more slowly, or to have physical difficulties and limitations, or have trouble learning and growing, and continues throughout the person's life. Sometimes a person has more than one condition or disability that qualifies as a developmental disability.

Developmental disabilities that qualify a person for OPWDD eligibility include, but are not limited to, intellectual disability, autism, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, familial dysautonomia, Prader-Willi syndrome, and neurological impairment (injury, malformation or disease involving the central nervous system).

### What is NOT considered a developmental disability?

- Mental illness (e.g., bi-polar disorder or depression)
- Loss or absence of senses, motor skills or physical abilities
- Mild forms of conditions such as cerebral palsy, seizure disorder or brain injury, if there is no evidence of “substantial handicap”

An individual may qualify for OPWDD eligibility if they have one of the conditions listed above as well as a qualifying developmental disability.





### **What does “substantial handicap” mean?**

For OPWDD eligibility, “substantial handicap” means that a developmental disability is so serious that it makes it very difficult for a person to live everyday life independently. Qualified professionals are trained to evaluate individuals for developmental disabilities and difficulties with everyday life and functioning.

### **What kinds of records are needed to show that a person meets all the requirements for OPWDD eligibility?**

In general, the records for an OPWDD eligibility review would include reports of current or recent psychological testing of the person’s intellectual functioning, a standardized evaluation of the person’s “adaptive” behavior functioning, a social/developmental (or psychosocial) history, and medical reports indicating the person’s health status. For children or adults with special medical conditions, genetic disorders, or neurological impairment, medical records that confirm the diagnosis of these conditions or disorders are required. Educational records (the student’s Individualized Education Program, also called the IEP, and report cards) can be helpful, too. The DDRO staff can answer additional questions, explain the records requirements in more detail, and advise applicants and their representatives about giving permission and requesting copies of evaluations and other records.

### **How is eligibility determined for children?**

For children between birth and eight years of age, the eligibility review requirements are the same as those for adults, although the qualifying condition requirement leaves room for flexibility. Sometimes children are given provisional eligibility for OPWDD supports or services.

### **What is “provisional eligibility”?**

In some cases, based on clinical judgement of a child’s disability and needs, the DDRO may grant a child provisional eligibility. Provisional eligibility means that a child may get OPWDD supports and services for a limited period of time. Before the end of the time period, OPWDD must review updated information about the child’s condition and functioning to see if the child is still eligible for supports and services. The reason that some children have provisional eligibility is that they may have qualifying levels of delays in development that can still change or improve as they grow older. All children with provisional eligibility must be reviewed again before their eighth birthday, but some may be reviewed earlier. The DDRO will decide when the child should be evaluated again, and whether a child who has had provisional eligibility is still eligible for OPWDD supports and services.

### **What is a “qualifying level of delay in development” for children?**

New York State Education Law has standards that explain how to measure the possible kinds and levels of delay that a child under eight years of age may have. These rules help to determine how much the child’s delay affects the child’s ability to live a normal life. This information about the kind and level of delay in development is usually contained in a report that is reviewed for OPWDD eligibility.

### **Is there any age limit for applying for OPWDD eligibility?**

There are no age limits for requesting OPWDD eligibility. Eligibility status can be reviewed from infancy throughout a person’s life. It is important to be aware, however, that a person’s age can affect the ability to find proof that the disability was present before the person reached age 22. As a person gets older, it may become more difficult to find the records and reports from schools, clinics, hospitals, and other settings that could show how a person’s condition met the age requirement for OPWDD eligibility.



**How does OPWDD work with children who are approaching the age when they will no longer be eligible for school or social service programs and may need adult services?**

OPWDD works closely with schools, foster care agencies, and other programs that provide services to children to plan for the transition from these services once the child becomes too old to receive them. Usually, individuals become too old for children's services when they turn 21 years old. The school should begin working with the child and family to plan for this transition before the child is age 15.





## Medicaid and OPWDD Services

Most OPWDD services are provided through New York State's Medicaid program, jointly funded by the federal and state government. OPWDD also offers limited services with state funding.

OPWDD's largest Medicaid program is the Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) waiver, discussed on the next page.

OPWDD expects each person asking for services to apply for available benefit programs (like Medicaid) that help pay for the services they want. For example, if a person is asking for OPWDD's HCBS waiver services, the individual will need to apply for those services. If they are deemed eligible they need to enroll in Medicaid and in the OPWDD HCBS waiver so that the government will pay for these services. Individuals may also pay for the cost of services with their own funds instead of enrolling in a benefit program.

**Medicaid pays for the following OPWDD supports and services:**

- The OPWDD Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) waiver (includes most OPWDD services, such as respite, supported employment, community habilitation, day habilitation and residential services)
  - Care coordination
  - Residential care
  - Additional health-related items and services

Most OPWDD services are funded through Medicaid. **Therefore, in most cases, it is necessary that individuals seeking services from OPWDD enroll in Medicaid.** You must be eligible for and enrolled in Medicaid to enroll in the OPWDD HCBS waiver, or Care Coordination programs.

If you are not already enrolled in Medicaid, you can apply in a variety of ways:

- You can apply directly to the Medicaid office in your county.
- Adults can apply through New York State of Health by calling **1-855-355-5777**
- If you currently work with a community services agency, staff at that agency may be able to help you with the Medicaid application process. The agency can help you complete the Medicaid application and explain what documents will be needed.
- OPWDD's Front Door will refer you to a Care Coordination Organization that will assist you with the Medicaid enrollment process.
- You can also get help with completing the Medicaid Application by calling **1-800-541-2831**.

Please see the frequently asked questions section on pages 11-13 for detailed information about applying for Medicaid.



The Medicaid Program has special provisions for people with developmental disabilities:

- Individuals can work and still qualify for Medicaid (although depending upon their income, a person may need to contribute to service costs)
- Parental income and resources may be waived (not be considered) for children living at home and seeking enrollment in the OPWDD HCBS waiver program, and
- Financial resources can be put into a Medicaid qualifying supplemental needs trust and be exempt for Medicaid purposes

## How to Enroll in the OPWDD Home and Community Based Services

### Waiver

The OPWDD Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) waiver offers several different services to support individuals in the community so that they do not need to live in institutions. The HCBS waiver is one of many waivers that the federal government approves to allow states to be more flexible with the use of Medicaid funds. Under these special agreements, the federal government sets aside certain Medicaid rules to allow states to use Medicaid funding for services that will support individuals to live at home with their families or independently in the community .

Individuals who want to receive the supports and services offered through OPWDD's HCBS waiver need to enroll in the HCBS waiver program.



To ask for enrollment in the OPWDD HCBSwaiver, you must fill out and submit an Application for Participation. At the time of enrollment, you must live at home or in a certified Family Care home, community residence or Individualized Residential Alternative (IRA).

You will need to provide evidence of:

- A developmental disability
- An appropriate level of need for these services
- Eligibility for Medicaid enrollment
- An appropriate living arrangement
- Other information as necessary

## Medicaid and OPWDD HCBS Waiver Frequently Asked Questions

### How do I apply for Medicaid?

When you come to OPWDD's Front Door, our staff will explain the Medicaid application process, and will either give you information about the CCOs you can choose to help you or will link you with a Family Support Services (FSS) service access program to help you gather the materials you need and apply for Medicaid.

You can also apply directly to Medicaid. In order to apply, you will need your personal records, for example: your birth certificate; proof of where you live, such as a rent receipt or utility bill; proof of income, such as a Social Security check; and proof of your resources, such as bank records. You will need to show proof of your disability. You can use many of the same documents used to prove OPWDD eligibility.

You can request an application for Medicaid by phone, by mail or in person through your local department of social services (LDSS) or by contacting a Facilitated Enroller (FE).

An FE is a community agency trained to assist with Medicaid applications. An FE may have hours or a location that is more convenient for you than the LDSS. While FEs are available to provide application assistance, you do not have to use a one in order to apply for Medicaid.



**Assistance with completing the Medicaid Application can be obtained by calling 1-800-541-2831 or 1-855-355-5777.**

You also can contact your local OPWDD Revenue Support Field Office (RSFO). RFSO staff who will help you locate the appropriate Medicaid Office to apply for benefits. Ask your Front Door team representative for more information.

**Who is eligible for Medicaid?**

Individuals with disabilities who are age 18 years or older are eligible for Medicaid if their income and resources (bank accounts, life insurance, etc.) are below a certain amount. Programs like the Medicaid Buy-In for Working People with Disabilities can help working adults keep more of their income and resources and still get Medicaid. Children under age 18 with developmental disabilities who live at home with their families may be eligible for both Medicaid and OPWDD's HCBS waiver based on their own income and resources or their family's overall income and resources. In some cases, family income and resources are not considered by Medicaid when a child applies for OPWDD's HCBS waiver. This is called a "waiver of parental deeming." Your Front Door team representative will have more information if you qualify.

**What other benefits does Medicaid provide?**

In addition to funding many OPWDD services, Medicaid provides health insurance that will pay for medical care and for specialized medical care that is not covered by other types of insurance. For example, Medicaid can pay for home health aides and transportation for medical services.

An individual can have other insurance coverage and still apply for Medicaid.

**How does someone find out what type of Medicaid to apply for?**

Individuals or families should talk to the Front Door, the local OPWDD Revenue Support Field Office or their Care Manager to get help with applying for the right Medicaid coverage. Each will know what type of Medicaid coverage is needed.

**What if an individual wants a new Medicaid or OPWDD HCBS waiver-funded service?**

If an individual wants a new service, the person or their family should talk to their Care Manager. The individual and the Care Manager can then talk to the agency they want the service from to ask if the agency can provide the service to the individual and to confirm that the individual has the right Medicaid coverage to pay for the service. If the individual does not have the right Medicaid coverage, they work with their Care Manager to enroll in the right coverage before new services will be provided.

If the individual or family does not apply for the Medicaid coverage needed, the agency can deny the request for service. However, in cases where the person's health or safety would be in danger without the service, the agency may choose to provide the service before the individual has enrolled in Medicaid.

**What if an individual or family decides not to apply for Medicaid?**

If an individual or family does not apply for Medicaid coverage or does not complete the application process, the individual or family will be responsible for paying the full cost of the service. The agency the individual wants services from will tell him or her how much has to be paid for the services.

However, if an individual is not eligible for Medicaid because of a reason other than income or resource level, then that person or their family should ask the agency for assistance in getting support.

**What if Medicaid finds that an individual is not eligible?**

If Medicaid finds that an individual is not eligible for coverage, Medicaid will send a letter stating that Medicaid coverage has been denied. If an individual or family receives a denial letter, the individual or family should save the letter and show it to the CCO or FSS service access program they are working with to see if they should appeal the decision. The CCO or FSS agency can help with the appeals process.

**I still need help! What do I do?**

If you have more questions about Medicaid, our Revenue Support Field Offices can help. There are nine OPWDD Revenue Support Field Offices located throughout New York State. Revenue Support Field Office staff share their expertise with voluntary provider agencies, individuals with disabilities, their families, advocates and other representatives. To contact the Revenue Support Field Office for your area, ask your Front Door representative for more information or go to the OPWDD website at

[https://opwdd.ny.gov/sites/default/files/documents/revenue\\_support\\_field\\_offices\\_2\\_0.pdf](https://opwdd.ny.gov/sites/default/files/documents/revenue_support_field_offices_2_0.pdf)





## Planning

- OPWDD will learn about your needs, strengths and abilities through an assessment process.
- A Care Manager will work with you and your family to develop a Life Plan. The Life Plan is a roadmap to your personal goals and includes the supports and services that will help get you there.
- Your “Circle of Support” (the people in your life and the staff you want involved in helping you choose services), your Care Manager and treatment team will be there to help you figure things out and help you make informed choices.
- You are at the center of the planning process!

### **The Assessment Process**

Once your eligibility to receive OPWDD services has been determined, you will start the assessment process. The purpose of the assessment is to identify your current strengths and needs and the natural or community supports you have or can get. This information is used to plan for services you need and to develop your person-centered plan.

OPWDD uses two tools when assessing your service needs:

1. The Developmental Disabilities Profile (DDP-2) is a brief assessment used by OPWDD to identify your challenges and your service needs. OPWDD staff will work with you and your family to complete the DDP-2 during the initial assessment process. To do this, OPWDD staff will ask you questions about your life in order to more fully understand your strengths and needs.
2. The Coordinated Assessment System (CAS) is a comprehensive assessment tool used by OPWDD to identify your strengths, needs and interests and to assist in person-centered planning for your care. The CAS asks many questions about you, your living situation, your needs and interests, and your challenges so that the services that will best meet your needs can be identified.



## Person-Centered Planning

### What is Person-Centered Planning?

Person-Centered Planning is the way you and your Care Manager explore your needs and wants---what is important to you, how you want to live, and how OPWDD can provide the support to help you get there.

The Person-Centered Planning process is directed by you and the people important to you, usually including your family members. The focus is on your abilities, capacities, interests and what you are looking for in your life. By providing supports and services planned around your needs and goals, OPWDD can help you reach your potential and live a fulfilling life.

### Focus on Outcomes!

The results of the planning and services provided—the outcomes—are what really matter. Outcomes are not goals, but tell us whether a person's goals are being achieved.

The planning and supports provided should work for you and your family. To find out if they do, we look at the results and ask questions like:

- Are you connected to activities that are important to you?
- Are the supports helping you develop and maintain relationships that are important to you?
- Do you feel safe and stable?

Developing a plan for your supports and services is only the first step. We continually work with you to make sure the plan meets your needs and revise it as necessary.

### Students Transitioning from School to OPWDD

OPWDD wants families to know that we need your help to make sure there is no break in service for children finishing their school program. Local school districts provide special education services until a student graduates or completes their school program at the end of the school year in which they turn age twenty-one (21). Schools are expected to help plan the student's transition to adult services before their 15th birthday. Families also should begin the process of determining OPWDD eligibility and planning for services ahead of time.

If your child is older than fifteen, you are encouraged to start the process as soon as possible. This allows time to find the best supports, develop a plan, and do so at a more relaxed pace.

OPWDD's Front Door staff, working with Care Managers, will help students at local schools plan for the OPWDD supports they may need as adults. Please ask your Front Door team representative for more information.

If your child attends a residential school (as a result of a school placement, and is graduating or completing their school program at the end of the school year in which they turn 21), OPWDD's Residential School Transition Coordinators help you and your child work with not-for-profit service provider agencies to plan for and carry out your child's transition.

### Assessment Tool Checklist

Preparing for the assessment may be helpful. You can think about these topics and have the following information available:

- Your strengths
- Goals you want to achieve
- Changes you would like to make in your life
- Areas where you need help to complete everyday activities
- Cognitive, sensory, motor and communication needs
- Medical history
- How often you see medical/behavioral professionals (e.g., doctor, psychologist, speech therapist)
- Supports you have now (e.g., family, friends)

**TIP:** When preparing for an assessment, it may be a good idea to create a seven-day (week-long) calendar reflecting your current base of activities, needs and supports. This will help in the assessment and in planning services.



## Care Management

### What is Care Management?

Care management is the service that helps you and your family get the services and supports you need. Care management is provided by Care Managers who work for Care Coordination Organizations (CCOs), organizations that were formed by developmental disability service providers (and are staffed by Care Managers with training and experience in the field of developmental disabilities). Your Care Manager will coordinate a variety of healthcare, wellness and developmental disabilities services to meet your needs. You will need to choose the CCO that you want from the list of CCOs that provide services in your region. Your CCO will help you with the OPWDD eligibility determination process, the Level of Care Eligibility Determination process and the process of enrolling in Medicaid. To enroll in a CCO and receive the services of a Care Manager, you will need to successfully complete those processes.

Once you have enrolled in your CCO, you will choose the care management plan that best meets your needs. The two care management choices are:

- Health Home Care Management - the more robust, comprehensive care management service which provides:
  - Coordination of the developmental disability services that you and your family need or are currently receiving, AND
  - Comprehensive coordination of other health and behavioral health care services you need or receive.
- Basic HCBS Plan - focuses on planning related only to HCBS waiver services and does not coordinate any other health or behavioral health services. With this service, your Care Manager will work with you to:
  - Develop, review and update your Life Plan (service plan),
  - Ensure that your annual, needed Level of Care Eligibility Determination (LCED) is completed.

### Comparison of Health Home Care Management & Basic HCBS Plan Support

	Health Home Care Mgmt.	Basic HCBS Plan Support
Coordinates OPWDD supports and services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Coordinates access to behavioral health services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Coordinates access to medical and dental services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Identifies community-based resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Uses technology to link your services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Connects your care providers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Takes burden of navigating systems from families	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



A specialized team, made up of a Care Manager working together with other professionals, will work with you and your family to develop your individualized Life Plan (plan of services). This team will make sure that your services are provided the way they are supposed to be and make changes when you need them.

### **Care Managers Promote and Support Informed Choice**

Informed choice: a choice that a person makes based on a good understanding of the options available to him or her, and how each option may affect his or her life.

Your Care Manager provides information to you so you can make informed choices about your life and services. You may be supported to make an informed choice on your own, or may have assistance from family members, friends or other people important to you.

### **The Circle of Support: Developing Individualized Services Using Person-Centered Planning**

You, the person receiving services, are at the “center” of your Circle of Support. Your Circle of Support includes the people you choose, and may include family members, friends, or other people important to you. Your circle can be as small as you and your Care Manager, or can be larger. Your circle meets regularly to work with you to develop a plan for the supports and services you want, to evaluate the success of your current plan, and to make changes to your plan when necessary.

Your Care Manager focuses planning on your needs and interests, drawing input from you and your Circle of Support. Everyone works cooperatively to develop a personalized plan of services for you.

### **Your Life Plan**

Your Care Manager will work with you and your family/Circle of Support to develop your Life Plan, an individualized service plan designed just for you. Your Life Plan is a roadmap to your personal goals and describes the supports and services that will help get you there.

#### **Developing Your Life Plan**

Your Care Manager:

- Develops your Life Plan using a person-centered approach, working with you, and other people you and your family think should be involved
- Helps you make informed choices and develop a personal network of activities, supports, services, and community resources based on your needs and desires
- Documents the supports, services and community resources needed and chosen by you, and details how you will access them in your Life Plan
- Helps you identify the additional care coordination activities and interventions that you want and need to meet your individualized goals and valued outcomes as described in your Life Plan

### **Implementing Your Life Plan**

#### **To implement your Life Plan, your Care Manager:**

- Shares his or her knowledge of the community and researches available resources to help you make informed choices about how to achieve your valued outcomes
- Makes referrals and facilitates visits and interviews with family members, service providers, housing options, and other alternatives so that you can make informed choices
- Coordinates access to and delivery of supports and services identified in your Life Plan, including both natural supports and funded services



## Services

- OPWDD services and supports can help you live in a home of your choosing, find employment and other meaningful activities, build relationships in the community, and support your good health
- OPWDD offers an array of supports and services providing different levels of assistance
- You are in control of your supports and services

### OPWDD Supports and Services

OPWDD is committed to providing a wide variety of support and service options to meet your needs. OPWDD supports and services include:

- Help to live independently in the community with rent subsidies, community habilitation and other services
- Help for your family to support you in the family home with respite and family support services
- Help with employment training and support, volunteer opportunities and other types of community activities you choose, and
- Intensive residential and day services, if needed

OPWDD is committed to helping you obtain the supports and services that most closely match your preferences. Please keep in mind that OPWDD serves individuals in the most community-integrated setting possible.

The supports and services you choose may come from several different sources. You may get help from family, friends and neighbors, and you may participate in programs that help you to be part of your community. This kind of assistance is referred to as "natural and community supports". OPWDD's goal is to provide services that add to those natural and community supports to help you accomplish your goals and valued outcomes.

### What is the difference between supports & services?

a **support** can refer to any help an individual with disabilities receives from any source, while a **service** more generally refers to a type of support that is provided by a service agency. To make things easy, it's best to think of OPWDD supports and services as simply **help provided to an individual with developmental disabilities to address needs which stem from his or her disability.**

### Self-Direction of Supports & Services

You may choose to self-direct your supports and services. Self-Direction empowers you and your family to choose the supports and services that best fit your needs. Self-Direction can provide you with more flexibility and gives you the maximum amount of control over your supports and services. Through Self-Direction, services are paid for with funds from your **Personal Resource Account (PRA)**. The PRA is a budget amount based on your assessed needs. The dollar amount varies for each person. You can self-direct some or all of your services.

If you self-direct your services, you will be helped by your Circle of Support, the group of people you choose who work with you to help you make your best decisions and support your success. Remember, Circles of Support can be as small as a few people, or they can



be large. You are at the “center” of your circle, and members connect on an ongoing basis to discover, discuss and help you plan the best way to meet your needs and fulfill your personal goals.

## **Employer and Budget Authority**

You may choose to exercise decision-making authority over some or all of your services. By exercising this choice, you also accept the responsibility for taking a direct role in managing these services. You will be helped to do this by your Circle of Support.

**Employer Authority** allows you to be responsible for hiring staff who will provide your supports and services. You co-manage staff with a provider agency that can help you with recruiting, supervising and directing support workers, or you can handle some or all of these responsibilities yourself. The provider agency also supports you by providing functions such as screening potential employees and handling payroll. These are some, but not all, of the potential responsibilities.

**Budget Authority** allows you to take responsibility for managing your individualized Self-Direction budget. This authority lets you make decisions about the supports and services included in your Life Plan, who is paid to provide them, and how they are purchased. Budget authority also allows you to self-hire your staff and gives you control over how much your staff are paid. If you choose to have Budget Authority, your Fiscal Intermediary will help you by billing and making payments for approved self-directed supports and services, and by providing fiscal accounting and reporting and general administrative supports.

## **The Self-Directed Lives of People with Developmental Disabilities: Stories and Insights**

**Dennis “Denny” Pullen** might not be able to move his body or breathe on his own, but that doesn’t stop him from directing his own services and living his life to the fullest. Denny is an artist who paints with his mouth by carefully holding a paintbrush in his teeth to create beautiful works of art.

He currently resides in a house specifically adapted to his needs, owns his adapted van, and enjoys many strong and loving relationships with both his blood relatives and chosen family. This family includes his nurses, some of whom who have supported and stood by him for decades. Thanks to Self-Direction, Denny is able to hire his own staff and live independently.

Denny enjoys spreading his love of art at local elementary schools. He shares his life story and painting technique with students, and directly involves them in this activity by encouraging them to try mouth-painting themselves. He plans to continue to paint, to add middle schools to his school engagement calendar, and continue to show and sell his works of art.

**Kristin Ahern and Todd Begore** have followed their dream of getting married and living on their own in an apartment. By using self-direction, they achieved their dream. Todd now works competitively 15 hours per week and would like to get a new job in the future. Kristin has participated in the Special Olympics. Self-direction gave them the skills and services they needed to find an apartment and live on their own. They are responsible for their own cooking, laundry and pet-care. Kristen also participates in an art and writing group. Together, the couple enjoys spending time with family, bowling and going out to eat.

**Kayla McKeon** is making history! Kayla has been sworn in by the White House to serve on the President’s Committee on People with Intellectual Disabilities (PCPID). At just 31 years old, she has also become the first registered lobbyist in Washington D.C. that happens to have Down Syndrome. Kayla will continue to make her voice heard far and wide. When not



advocating for change, Kayla has used Self-Direction to achieve a job as a manager of grassroots advocacy for the National Down Syndrome Society and attends Onondaga Community College. When not working hard, she enjoys reading and learning loom knitting.

### **Independent Living in the Community – Apartments & Housing**

OPWDD offers housing supports and services based on the goals and needs of each person, supporting people to live in the most integrated community setting possible. While it is often seen as more common for people with milder disabilities to live independently in the community, individuals with moderate to very severe disabilities have also been successful at living in apartments and their own homes in the broader community with the right supports and services.

Community living can be extremely rewarding and can help you reach your potential. Staff, family and friends may help you live successfully in the community.

The **Individual Supports and Services (ISS)/Housing Subsidy** helps adults with developmental disabilities live in their communities by providing funds to help you pay for rent and utilities in your own apartment in the community. Housing subsidies are available to help individuals live independently – you can share an apartment with one or more people who are not your parents or legal guardians. For more information, go to: [https://opwdd.ny.gov/opwdd\\_community\\_connections/housing\\_initiative/opwdd-housing-subsidy](https://opwdd.ny.gov/opwdd_community_connections/housing_initiative/opwdd-housing-subsidy).



### **Community Residential Settings**

Community residential settings in the OPWDD system are certified homes that offer different levels of support to individuals with developmental disabilities who have high needs.

**Family Care** provides community-based housing in private homes that are approved and certified by OPWDD. The Family Care program offers a caring and stable home environment in a family-like setting.

**IRAs (Individualized Residential Alternatives, or group homes)** provide room, board and individualized services and supports in a home-like setting where individuals with developmental disabilities can gain the skills they need to live as independently as possible. Some people who live in IRAs need help 24/7 to meet their medical and behavioral needs. Other people who live in IRAs need less support.

### **Employment and Day Services**

OPWDD values the abilities and talents each person contributes, and supports people with developmental disabilities in preparing for working and volunteering in integrated community settings. In addition, OPWDD provides supports and services for individuals so that they can participate in community activities that interest them. Individuals who participate in day services can also participate in employment services.

### **Prevocational Services**

OPWDD prevocational services offer people with developmental disabilities an opportunity for career exploration and volunteer experiences to identify their skills, abilities and interests.

**Pathway to Employment** is a time-limited service that helps you develop a plan for employment success using Person-Centered Planning to identify your job interests and goals, try various jobs to determine which tasks and work atmosphere you like best, and



learn work-related social and communications skills. The outcome of this service is a Career and Vocational Plan that identifies the next step in your path to employment.

You may be eligible for Pathway to Employment if you are receiving day habilitation or community prevocational services, or are a student leaving high school, or someone who is interested in creating a career and vocational plan.

**Community Prevocational Services** help people with developmental disabilities learn social and communication skills related to work as well as other work-related skills such as task completion, time management, problem solving, following directions and safety skills that will increase their independence in the community.

## Employment Services

OPWDD employment services can help people with developmental disabilities obtain and maintain competitive employment. People with developmental disabilities work in all types of community businesses including banking, education, technology, health care, hospitality, food service, retail, not-for-profit corporations and government. Some people have also started their own businesses.

OPWDD offers several employment services to assist individuals with varying support needs. All employment services provide employment staff or job developers and coaches to help individuals with developmental disabilities be successful at work.

**Supported Employment (SEMP)** supports people in getting and keeping paid competitive jobs in the community. Once a person-centered career plan is developed through Pathway to Employment, Community Prevocational Services or another method, OPWDD service provider agencies offer job development services.

OPWDD service provider agencies also offer services to assist with maintaining employment. These services include helping the individual adapt to the workplace, retraining when job requirements change, and travel training.

The **Employment Training Program (ETP)** offers people an opportunity to work in a paid internship in a community business. ETP participants receive enhanced job coaching and attend job readiness classes that cover topics like conflict resolution and how to dress for work.



## Day Services

OPWDD day services help people with developmental disabilities increase their independence, gain self-confidence and develop relationships in their community.

**Community Habilitation (CH)** helps people who live independently or at home with family learn about and experience community-based activities. Community Habilitation is a service available at home and in the community. It can be either self-directed or agency-sponsored. Community Habilitation staff help the person learn and keep the skills they need to live safely and more independently, maintain or improve their health, work toward other personal goals, meet people and make and keep friends, take part in community activities, and be part of their community.

**Day Habilitation** services help people learn and keep the skills they need to live safely and more independently, participate in community activities, identify interests, develop talents and skills, make and keep friends, learn basic life skills, and be a valued member of the community. Day Habilitation activities take place at a set location or within the community (referred to as Day Habilitation Without Walls).

**Respite** services help families who care for their loved ones in the family home, even if the individuals have more serious health issues or more challenging behavioral needs. These services give caregivers needed breaks. The kinds and locations of respite service available include in-home, camp, recreational and site-based.



## Family Support Services

Family Support Services help families who care for their loved ones at home. These services can provide needed breaks to caregivers, provide training and moral support, recreational and social activities, sibling services, parent-to-parent networking and support in times of crisis.

### Family Support Services include:

- Respite (provides relief to individuals who are responsible for the primary care and support of an individual with a developmental disability)
- Family member training
- Support groups
- Training in how to manage challenging behaviors
- Reimbursement
- Parent-to-parent networking
- Information and referral
- Sibling services
- After school programs
- Recreation/social activities

## NY Paid Family Leave may be able to help your family!

As of January 1, 2018, Paid Family Leave provides job protected, paid time off to eligible, working New Yorkers to bond with a new child; assist loved ones when their spouse, domestic partner, child, or parent is called to active military service abroad; or care for a family member with a serious health condition.

In 2019, eligible employees can take up to 10 weeks off at 55% of their average weekly wage, capped at a maximum of \$746. Benefits will continue to increase until 2021, when Paid Family Leave is fully phased in, at which time eligible employees will be able to take up to 12 weeks off at 67% of pay, up to a cap.

Along with strong benefits, Paid Family Leave has strong protections against discrimination and retaliation. Most employees who are employed in New York State for private employers are covered for Paid Family Leave, and neither citizenship nor immigration status is a factor in employee eligibility. For complete details, visit [PaidFamilyLeave.ny.gov](http://PaidFamilyLeave.ny.gov) or call the Helpline at (844) 337-6303.

## Assistive Technology and Medical and Behavioral Health

Assistive Technology is a category of services that encompasses both environmental modifications (e-mods) and adaptive technology.

OPWDD is not a primary provider of medical services or durable medical equipment, but offers supports designed to foster behavioral health. OPWDD also operates clinics with limited services.

### Environmental Modifications (e-mods) and Adaptive Technology

Environmental Modifications include physical changes to the home such as a ramp, and can include modifications that address the individual's sensory deficits or promote a safer environment for individuals with challenging behaviors.

Adaptive technology include communication aids and adaptive devices, including aids for feeding, dining and meal preparation as well as other tools to help a person live as independently as possible. Van modifications to meet specialized transportation needs are also included.

**Intensive Behavioral Services** are short-term services of about six months that focus on developing effective behavior support strategies for people whose challenging behavioral issues put them at risk of placement in a more restrictive residential setting (such as a group home or hospital). This program teaches individuals, family members and other caregivers how to respond to challenging behaviors. To be eligible for these services, the individual must live in his or her own home, their family's home, or a Family Care home, and be enrolled in the Home and Community-Based Services waiver.

**NYSTART** is a community-based program that provides crisis prevention and response services to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities who have complex behavioral and mental health needs, and to their families and others in the community who provide support to them.

The NY START program offers training, consultation, therapeutic services and technical assistance to help individuals remain in their home.



## Clinic Services

OPWDD is not a primary provider of medical services, but does operate clinics with limited services.

OPWDD clinics were established to meet the needs of individuals with developmental disabilities in areas where there are not enough generic providers of medical services. OPWDD clinics also provide services to individuals with very complex needs.

## Charting Your Course

- You will need to supply documentation to establish eligibility for OPWDD services. You will likely need to complete three processes to get services. Those are:
  1. The OPWDD eligibility determination that you have a qualifying developmental disability
  2. The determination of eligibility for Medicaid
  3. Enrollment in the Home and Community Based Services waiver
- Your documentation will be reviewed. OPWDD may ask for additional information from you. If you do not agree with the eligibility decision that OPWDD makes, you may appeal the decision.
- After eligibility is established, OPWDD will assess your needs, wants and strengths using a standardized survey to create an individualized profile of your abilities, wants and needs.
- Next, a CCO Care Manager will work with you, your family and others who are important in your life to make decisions about what supports and services best fit your needs.
- A Life Plan (plan for services) will be agreed to and services and supports will be identified to carry the plan forward.
- Services will be authorized and begin.

OPWDD is committed to making sure the process to get services is easy to understand and runs as smoothly as possible. The process may seem challenging at times, but we would like you to know that OPWDD is available to help. Please contact your Regional Office Front Door team with questions or concerns.

Now that you know more about what we have to offer, the next question to think about is where you want your life to take you, and how OPWDD can help.

Chart your own course—the first step is going through OPWDD's Front Door!





## Front Door Contact Information

### Region 1

Finger Lakes: 855-OPWDDFL (679-3335) (Counties: Chemung, Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Schuyler, Seneca, Steuben, Wayne, Wyoming, Yates)

Western New York: 800-487-6310 (Counties: Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Erie, Genesee, Niagara, Orleans)

### Region 2

Broome: 607-771-7784 press 0 (Counties: Broome, Chenango, Delaware, Otsego, Tioga, Tompkins)

Central New York: 315-793-9600 Ext. 603 (Counties: Cayuga, Cortland, Herkimer, Lewis, Madison, Oneida, Onondaga, Oswego)

Sunmount: 518-536-3480 (Counties: Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Hamilton, Jefferson, St. Lawrence)

### Region 3

Capital District/Taconic: 518-388-0398 (Counties: Albany, Columbia, Dutchess, Fulton, Greene, Montgomery, Putnam, Rensselaer, Saratoga, Schenectady, Schoharie, Ulster, Warren, Washington)

Hudson Valley: 845-947-6390 (Counties: Orange, Rockland, Sullivan, Westchester)

### Region 4

Brooklyn: 718-642-8576

Manhattan: 646-766-3220

Bronx: 718-430-0757

Queens: 718-217-6485

Staten Island: 718-982-1913

### Region 5

Long Island: 631-434-6000 (Counties: Nassau, Suffolk)

**Individuals with hearing impairment: use NY Relay System 7-1-1**

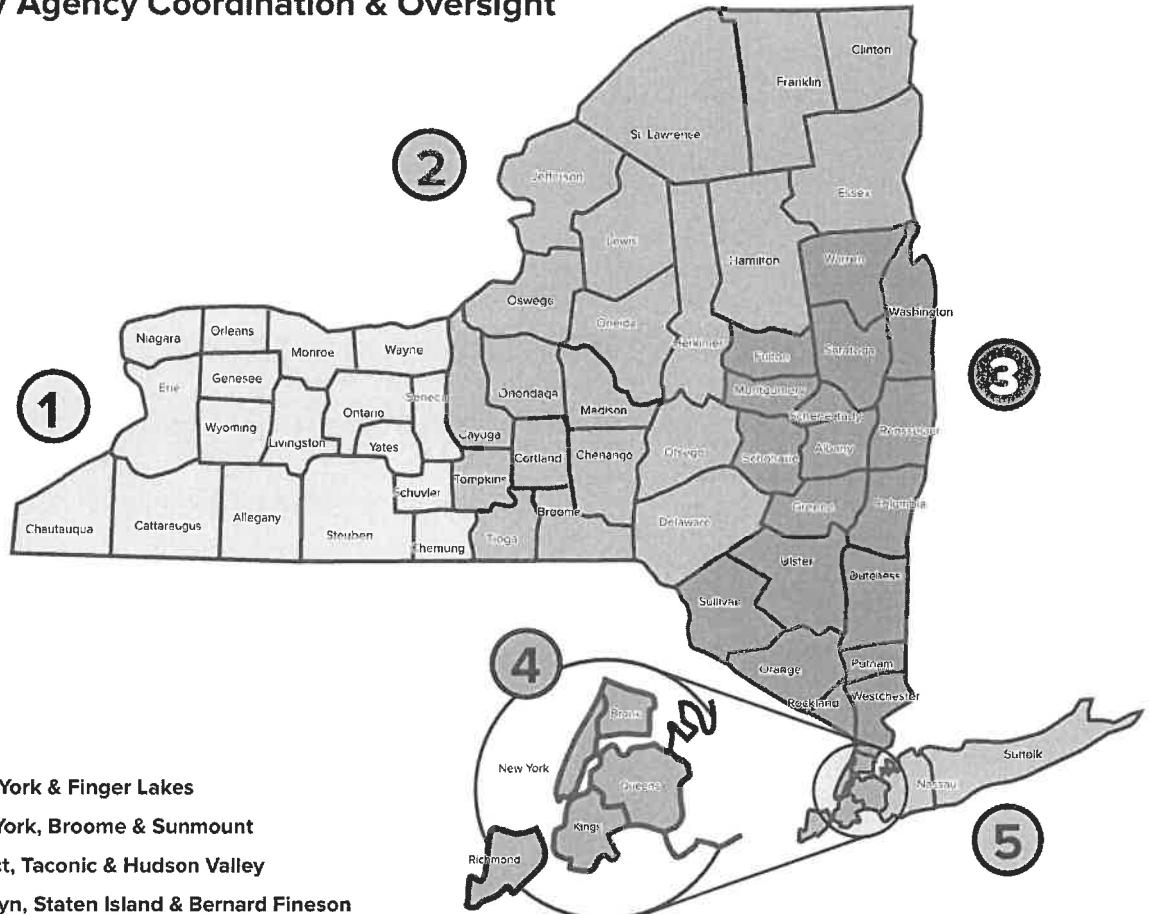
### Information Line

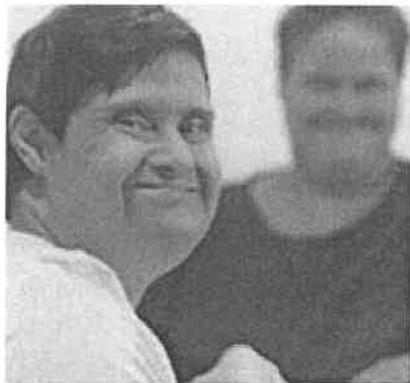
Call OPWDD's toll-free Information Line at 1-866-946-9733 if you need answers to questions about supports and services for individuals with developmental disabilities in New York State. You can also call OPWDD's Information Line if you have concerns about alleged misconduct, fraud, waste and abuse in the OPWDD service system.

If you speak a language other than English, representatives are prepared to assist you or connect you with an interpreter. Translated written information is available upon request.

# 5 Developmental Disabilities Regional Offices

Voluntary Agency Coordination & Oversight





## Appendix: Detailed Information on the OPWDD Eligibility Determination

### Required Documentation for Eligibility Determination Requests

In order to determine if you are eligible for OPWDD services, the following information must be submitted to your local Developmental Disabilities Regional Office (DDRO) Eligibility Coordinator for review:

- A psychological report within three years which includes an assessment of intellectual functioning ("IQ test"). This report should include all summary scores from the assessment (Full Scale, Index, Part and Subtest scores).
  - For people with **IQ scores above 60**, an interpretive report of a standardized assessment of adaptive behavior, including summary, composite, scale, and domain scores is required.
  - For people with **IQ scores below 60**, an adaptive assessment may be based on an interpretive report using information gathered from interviews with caregivers, records review and direct observations.
  - For **young children**, an Early Intervention Multidisciplinary Core Evaluation may be acceptable provided it includes standardized test scores relevant to cognitive, language and communicative, adaptive, social, and motor functioning.
- For conditions other than intellectual disability, a medical or specialty report that includes health status and diagnostic findings to support the diagnosis.
- A recent general medical report (within the past 365 days) should be included in all eligibility requests. This is required for all eligibility requests.
- A social/developmental history, psychosocial report or other report that shows that the person became disabled before age 22.
- A social evaluation (within the past 365 days) prepared by a Care Manager/supervisor who meets Care Manager educational and experience requirements, or by a Qualified Intellectual Disability Professional (QIDP), social worker (LMSW or LCSW), psychologist or a person with a Master's Degree in psychology, and who is familiar with the individual.

In some cases, the DDRO may require additional information or further evaluation. The DDRO may recommend where additional assessments can be completed.

We recommend that you work with the Eligibility Coordinator at your local DDRO to ensure that you have submitted a complete eligibility packet when requesting an eligibility determination.

### Eligibility Determination Checklist

The DDRO Eligibility Coordinator will need this information to establish if a person is eligible for OPWDD services:

- Psychological report(s) identifying intellectual functioning
- Psychosocial report documenting developmental/social history
- Recent general medical report, for individuals thought to have an intellectual disability
- For a person with a condition other than intellectual disability, a medical specialty report that includes health status and diagnostic findings will be needed to support the diagnosis
- Interpretive report of adaptive behavioral assessment results



## Diagnostic Evaluation

The most critical component to determining eligibility is the diagnostic evaluation. A diagnostic evaluation is done to determine the nature and significance of an individual's developmental disability (i.e., his or her diagnosis.)

A Guide to Eligibility Assessment Resources in New York State, which includes OPWDD-certified clinics and the services they offer, can be found on the OPWDD website or by contacting your Eligibility Coordinator. To find the guide online:

- Go to "Services & Supports" on the homepage and click on "Eligibility," then choose "Finding Testing/Assessment Services" from the left menu and select "Guide to Eligibility Assessment Resources in New York State" or
- Type the following web address in your internet browser:  
<http://www.opwdd.ny.gov/node/1024>.

## Acceptable Measures of Intellectual and Adaptive Behavior

The following measures provide information about an individual's intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior, which is needed for eligibility to be determined. You may wish to share this information with your doctor, or clinicians who will conduct these assessments.

### Acceptable Measures of Intellectual Functioning

- The Wechsler series of intelligence scales
- The Stanford-Binet Scales
- Leiter International Performance Scale
- The Kaufman Series of Intelligence Scales

### Considerations for Measures of Intellectual Functioning:

- Brief or partial administration of comprehensive intellectual measures may only be used in circumstances where standardized administration is impossible
- Abbreviated measures of intelligence (WASI, K-BIT) are not acceptable as the only measure of intellectual functioning
- Language-free instruments (Leiter, CTONI) in combination with the performance items of a comprehensive IQ test will be considered for individuals who do not speak English, are deaf, or are non-verbal
- Intelligence tests standardized in English cannot be administered in a different language and then be used for eligibility determinations

### Acceptable Measures of Adaptive Behavior

- Adaptive Behavior Assessment System
- Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales
- The Motor Skills Domain only of the Scales of Independent Behavior

Other intelligence tests and/or adaptive behavior measures are acceptable if they are comprehensive, structured, standardized and have up-to-date general population norms. Results from a measurement that is not on this list, but was given prior to the person reaching age twenty-two (22), can be used to establish a history of adaptive deficits during the developmental period. Adaptive behavior measure ratings should reflect the person's



actual, typical behavior, not their best behavior under ideal circumstances or with assistance.

Please note: it is expected that current/updated evaluations of intellectual or adaptive functioning are based on the most recent editions of the standardized instrument used.

### The 3-Step Eligibility Determination Process

The process for determining eligibility may involve multiple review steps, and is designed to make sure that every person receives a fair and thorough review.

At the First Step, DDRO staff review the eligibility request to make sure it is complete.



After this first review, the DDRO notifies the requestor in writing that:

- (a) Eligibility or Provisional Eligibility has been confirmed; or
- (b) The request is incomplete and requires additional documentation; or
- (c) The request is being forwarded for a Second Step Review

If your eligibility request is forwarded for a second step review, a committee of clinicians will evaluate the materials in your request file, and any additional information that you provide. If you are found to be ineligible, you will be able to schedule a meeting with staff to discuss that decision and to request a third step review. You can also request a Medicaid Fair Hearing at this point if you are seeking Medicaid-funded services.

When the Second Step Review is complete, the DDRO will send the requestor a written notice of the determination (also called a Notice of Decision or NOD). If the committee determines that the person does have a developmental disability, that person is deemed eligible for OPWDD services. If the committee determines that the person does not have a developmental disability, the person is deemed ineligible for OPWDD services. In that case, you will be able to:

- (a) Meet with OPWDD staff to discuss the determination and the documentation reviewed; and
- (b) Request a Third Step Review; and
- (c) Request a Medicaid Fair Hearing (if seeking Medicaid-funded services)

The person may choose any or all of these options. If a Medicaid Fair Hearing is requested, a Third Step Review will happen automatically. **Please note:** The Notice of Decision will only offer a Medicaid Fair Hearing if the person has requested Medicaid-funded services on the Transmittal for Determination of Developmental Disability Form.

Third Step Reviews are done by an independent Eligibility Review Committee of licensed practitioners not involved in the First and Second Step Reviews. The committee reviews



the eligibility request and provides recommendations to the DDRO Second Step Review coordinator. The Third Step recommendations are considered by the DDRO Director (or designee) and the requestor is informed of the results, including any changes in the DDRO's determination. Third Step Reviews are completed before Medicaid Fair Hearing dates.

# FRONT DOOR

Contact your DDRO to enter  
OPWDD's Front Door



## Get Information

First you will learn about OPWDD  
and the process to get services

## Eligibility Determination

To access most OPWDD supports and services, you will need to qualify for:

- 1 OPWDD services, by proving you have a developmental disability
- 2 Medicaid services, by meeting eligibility requirements for Medicaid.
- 3 HCBS Waiver services, through an evaluation of your level of need

You will gather information and work with an Eligibility Coordinator for the determination to be made.

## Qualify\*

\*Qualifying for eligibility is not guaranteed

### Learning and Planning



Assessment and discussion of  
services through your DDRO

### Life Plan



Contains selected  
services and providers



Developed with the help  
of a Care Manager

### Services & Support Cycle

an ongoing process of evaluation of  
service effectiveness as goals are met  
and new needs are identified

### Evaluation

of effectiveness of services  
and personal satisfaction



### Outcomes

Goals ✓  
Health ✓  
Happiness ✓

### Services are Provided

