

Maryland Developmental Disabilities Administration

Easy-to-Understand Guide to October 2025 Waiver Changes and You

What is this guide about?

This guide has important information about changes made to the Developmental Disabilities Administration Medicaid waiver programs. The Developmental Disabilities Administration is also called the DDA.

This “Easy-to-Understand Guide to October 2025 Waiver Changes and You” was written to be understandable to everyone. It has important information you should know.

The DDA also has a guide with more details. That guide is called “The Guide to October 2025 Waiver Changes and You”. Click [here](#) if you want to read it.

What information is in this guide?

This guide will help you understand:

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Important words are in **bold**.

They are also at the end of this guide in a list called Important Words to Know. You can go there if you want to see what something means.

Want more information?

There is a lot more to know about the DDA and its services that is not in this guide. If there is something in this guide you do not understand or you want more information, you can talk to:

- Someone you know and trust. This might be a family member, friend, or someone else who knows about the DDA.
- Your Coordinator of Community Services.
- Someone at the DDA. The DDA has offices in four (4) different parts of Maryland. They are called Regional Offices. Click [here](#) for information about the Regional Office closest to you. That information is also at the end of this guide.

If you cannot find someone to help you, try the DDA's main office at:
410-767-5600 or 844-253-8694

October 2025 Waiver Changes and You

Waiver Program Changes: What you Need to Know

New Combined Waiver Program

- **What's changing:** Two programs – the Family Supports Waiver and the Community Supports Waiver – are being combined into the Community Pathways Waiver. This change starts on **October 6, 2025**.
- **Do You Need to Do Anything? No.** You will be automatically moved into the Community Pathways Waiver. You do not need to fill out any forms or take any action.
- **What Does This Mean for You?** You will still get the same services you do now.
 - You will get a letter from Medicaid confirming that you are now enrolled in the Community Pathways Waiver. **You should keep the letter.**

Changes to the Services the DDA Provides

The DDA pays for three (3) kinds of services. The DDA calls them:

- Day and Employment Services
- Support Services
- Residential Services

As part of the changes to the waiver, the DDA made changes to some of the services in the Community Pathways Waiver. These changes apply to you if you get services from a provider or if you self-direct your services.

Day and Employment Services

To get Day and Employment Services, you must be:

- 18 years old or older, and
- No longer in high school

Day and Employment Services are services that support you during the daytime. The DDA refers to these services as Meaningful Day.

Keep reading for more information about each service and what changed.

Career Exploration

This is a short term service to help you learn the new skills you will need to work.

What Changed?

- **Career Exploration** is now **limited to 720 hours per year**. The year is based on your Person-Centered Plan year.

Community Development Services

These services provide direct support so you can be more connected to your community. Staff will support you to develop or maintain social and other skills you need.

What Changed?

- **Dedicated support**, also known as one-on-one staff support or two-to-one staff support, can be approved temporarily, for up to 6 months.
- If you currently get Dedicated support, you will continue to receive them. You will need to ask for dedicated support every year when you do a new Person-Centered Plan. You have to provide information to show why you need them.

Day Habilitation:

This is a service you can get during the day when you are not working. You can get support to build skills and participate in social and community activities. Support is provided in small and large groups of people. It is provided in provider programs or in the community.

What Changed?

- **Dedicated support**, also known as one-on-one staff support or two-to-one staff support, can be approved temporarily, for up to 6 months.
- If you currently get Dedicated support, you will continue to receive them. You will need to ask for dedicated support every year when you do a new Person-Centered Plan. You have to provide information to show why you need them.

Employment Services

These services help you think about what kind of job you want, get a job, and keep a job in the community. There are different kinds of supports included in Employment Services.

What Changed?

- **You can get Employment Services while you look for a job.**
- The job you do must meet **Competitive Integrated Employment** standards. That means the job must pay at least minimum wage, include opportunities to work with people without disabilities, and offer the same benefits and chances for advancement as other workers.
- **Discovery Services** are **limited to once every two years**. Discovery Services help you identify your job interests and what you are good at.
- **Job Development** services are limited to **90 hours per year**. The year is based on your Person-Centered Plan.
- **Co-Worker Employment Supports** (extra help from a co-worker at your job) are only available for the **first three months** of your employment.

Medical Day Care

This service helps you participate in a group program that provides health care, nursing, therapies, personal care, and other support.

What Changed?

- You can now get **Behavioral Support Services** while you get Medical Day Care services.

Support Services

Support Services are services that support parts of your life that are not supported with Meaningful Day or Residential Services. These services can provide you with:

- Access to Assistive Technology.
- Opportunities to learn about, assess the need for, and develop positive behavioral support strategies.
- Support your family or caregivers through training, mentoring or respite.
- Access nursing supports.
- Access personal supports to help you participate in your home and community life.

Keep reading for more information about each service and what changed.

Assistive Technology

This service supports you to stay safe and maintain or improve your independent skills. This service includes an assessment of your technology needs and helps you choose, get, use, and maintain the technology.

What Changed?

- **Monthly service fees** for Assistive Technology are now **included and covered** in the waiver. For example, if your device has a monthly subscription or service fee, that can now be paid for through the waiver.
- **Personal Emergency Response Systems (PERS) are no longer covered by this waiver.** Instead, they are now covered by the Maryland Community First Choice Program.

Behavioral Support Services

These services support you if you are experiencing, or are likely to experience difficulty at home or in the community as a result of behavioral, psychological, social or emotional challenges.

What Changed?

- **Virtual appointments are now allowed** for assessments and consultations. This means you can meet with your provider online instead of in person, if that works better for you.
- **Brief Implementation Support Services** must be done **in person**.
- You can have one **Behavioral Assessment per year**. The year is based on your Person-Centered Plan year.

Environmental Assessments

This service is an assessment with you at home to see if changes to your home or technology would help support your independence, health, or safety.

What Changed?

- The assessment must be done by a **licensed Occupational Therapist** who is in good standing with Maryland rules.

Environmental Modification

This service includes small changes to your home like grab bars, ramps, railings, warnings on walking surfaces, alert devices, and changes to electrical, phone and lighting systems. These changes are based on the Environmental Assessment.

What Changed?

- **Smart home devices** that need to be attached to your home are now **covered**.

Examples include:

- Voice activated door openers
- Blinds and shade openers

Family and Peer Mentoring Supports

This service connects you and your family to mentors with experiences like yours. They explain community services, programs and strategies they have used to achieve goals.

Family Mentoring is specifically for your primary unpaid caregiver, like a parent or family member who helps you without being paid. **Peer Mentoring** is for you.

What Changed?

- Family mentors must have **lived** experience. That means they are a parent or family member and have gone through similar things themselves.
- Peer mentors are **people with disabilities** who also have **lived experience**. They support others by sharing what they have learned.

Family Caregiver Training and Empowerment Services

These services cover educational materials, training programs, workshops, and conferences that help your unpaid family caregiver understand your disability; get better at providing supports; identify community resources and supports; develop or improve parenting skills; develop advocacy skills; and support your caregiver in developing advocacy skills.

What Changed?

- **Organized Health Care Delivery System (OHCDs) Providers** can now provide this service. An Organized Health Care Delivery System Provider is an organization approved by the state to help deliver and pay for certain services in the waiver.

Housing Support Services

Housing Support Services are a short-term service that helps you find and keep your own home.

What Changed?

- **You can now get Housing Support Services virtually (online).** You do not have to meet with someone in person.

Individual & Family Directed Goods and Services (IFDGS)

This is only available to people who use the Self-Directed Services model.

These are services, activities, or supplies that you cannot get through the Community Pathways Waiver or through other Medicaid services.

What Changed?

- **Recruitment and Advertising:**
 - You can still get help with the cost of finding staff. You can get up to **\$500 a year** for recruitment and advertising.
- **Other Goods and Services:**
 - Starting **October 6, 2025**, there is a **new yearly limit of \$5,000**.
 - If something was already approved **before** that date, you can keep using it.
 - But **new requests after that date** cannot go over the \$5,000 yearly limit.
- **Day-to-Day Administrative Supports:**
 - You can request up to **10 hours per month**.
 - This must be approved in the Person-Centered Plan.
 - After October 6, 2025, you will have to use a **Decision Tree Checklist** to help decide if this support is needed.
- **Some items are no longer allowed. That means the Waiver cannot pay for them:**
 - Educational tuition like the cost of school or college classes.
 - Commercial-use items or things meant for business or making money.
 - Diversional or recreational items and activities. These are things used just for fun like events, sports, games, or toys.
 - Goods, services, equipment, and supplies that a household that does not include a person with a disability would pay for as household expenses. Examples include what you pay every month for internet services and TV subscriptions.

Live-In Caregiver Supports

A live-in caregiver is someone who provides support to you and lives with you in your home that you own or rent.

What Changed?

- This service is only available **if the person (caregiver) lives in your home**. It cannot be your family's home, the caregiver's home, or a home owned or rented by a provider.
- There must be a **written agreement** in place and followed between you and your live-in caregiver.

Nursing Support Services

This service supports a registered nurse licensed in Maryland to provide Nursing Consultation, Health Case Management, and Nursing Delegations services.

What Changed?

- These services must now be provided by **an employee or DDA provider**. It can no longer be provided by a relative. These changes help make sure Nursing Support Services are used when needed and are provided by qualified professionals that are not related to you.
- **Nurse Consultation** and **Nurse Health Case Management** services are now limited to **no more than 4 hours every 3 months**.

Participant, Education, Training, and Advocacy Supports

This service covers the cost of a training program, workshop, or conference you need to attend to learn more about how to develop self-advocacy skills, exercise your civil rights, and develop skills needed to control and be responsible for your services.

What Changed?

- **Organized Health Care Delivery System (OHCDs) Providers** can now provide this service. An Organized Health Care Delivery System Provider is an organization approved by the state to help deliver and pay for certain services in the waiver.

Personal Supports

This service helps you with different kinds of support needs if you live in your own home or your family's home and would like to improve your independent living skills.

What Changed?

- **Dedicated support**, also known as one-on-one staff support or two-to-one staff support, can be approved temporarily, for up to 6 months.
- If you currently get Dedicated support, you will continue to receive them. You will need to ask for dedicated support every year when you do a new Person-Centered Plan. You have to provide information to show why you need them.

Remote Support Services

This service supports your independence in your home so that you don't have to rely on staff. Staff can be available to you as needed and check on you through technology instead of being where you are.

What Changed?

- You have to be able to turn off the technology if you want to.

Respite Care Services

This service is short-term support that gives you and your family, or other primary caregiver, a break from daily routines.

What Changed?

Service may only be provided in:

- Your own home;
- The home of a respite care provider;
- A licensed residential site; and
- An overnight camp or a youth day camp that is certified by the Maryland Department

of Health. This means the camp must meet **State health and safety standards** and be officially listed and approved by the Maryland Department of Health.

Support Broker Services

If you self-direct your services, you can choose this service. A Support Broker is a person who helps you with the employer side of self-directing your services. They provide information and advice for you to help you make informed decisions related to managing the staff who provide your services and help you stay within your budget.

What Changed?

- You **must hire a Support Broker** if any of the following apply to you:
 1. You have chosen a relative, legally responsible person (like a parent or spouse), or legal guardian to be your designated representative. That means they are helping you manage your services.
 2. You're receiving waiver services from a relative, legally responsible person, or legal guardian. That means they are getting paid to provide you support.
 3. You have hired someone (anyone) to provide you Day-to-Day Administrative Supports.
- New requirements for Support Brokers. To be a Support Broker, a person must:
 1. Sign and follow a code of conduct, and
 2. Successfully finish training and meet all the requirements set by the DDA.

Transition Services

This service provides funding for certain expenses if you move from an institution to a group home or from a provider operated home to your own home in the community.

What Changed?

- Now you can use Transition Services for the **cost of training staff** before you move.

Transportation Services

This service helps you independently get to community activities. Your community is where you live, work, shop or spend your days. The service is provided based on the assessed need for this service in your Person-Centered Plan. That means you have to show why and when you need transportation.

What Changed?

Nothing.

Vehicle Modifications

This service covers the cost to you to modify (change) your vehicle so that it is more accessible.

What Changed?

- Clarifies that this service **does not include the cost of charging electric vehicles.**

Residential Services

To get residential services, you must be 18 years old or older.

Residential Services support you to live as independently as possible in the community. There are different kinds of Residential Services. You and your team decide what works best for you.

Residential supports can help you find:

- A place to live.
- Roommates.
- Support staff to help you learn and use skills you need to take care of yourself and your home and be a part of your community.

Keep reading for more information about each service and what changed.

Community Living - Enhanced Supports

This service supports you to develop and keep skills needed for everyday life, spending time with others, and keeping you and others safe. It does this by providing additional behavioral supports, observation, and supervision in a home rented or owned by a provider.

What Changed?

- **Dedicated support**, also known as one-on-one staff support or two-to-one staff support, can be approved temporarily, for up to 6 months.
- If you currently get Dedicated support, you will continue to receive them. You will need to ask for dedicated support every year when you do a new Person-Centered Plan. You have to provide information to show why you need them.

Community Living - Group Home

This service supports you to build and keep skills you need for everyday life, including spending time with others. This service supports you in a home rented or owned by a provider.

What Changed?

- **Dedicated support**, also known as one-on-one staff support or two-to-one staff support, can be approved temporarily, for up to 6 months.
- If you currently get Dedicated support, you will continue to receive them. You will need to ask for dedicated support every year when you do a new Person-Centered Plan. You have to provide information to show why you need them.

Shared Living

This service supports you to build and keep skills needed for everyday life, including spending time with others. The service supports you to share a home and life experiences with another person, a couple, or a family in the community that you choose. The service is based on trust and commitment you and the person, couple, or family have with each other.

What Changed?

Nothing.

Supported Living

This service supports you to use or develop new independent living skills in your own home. It includes help finding an apartment or house, roommates, and supports based on what you want and need.

What Changed?

- **Dedicated support**, also known as one-on-one staff support or two-to-one staff support, can be approved temporarily, for up to 6 months.
- If you currently get Dedicated support, you will continue to receive them. You will need to ask for dedicated support every year when you do a new Person-Centered Plan. You have to provide information to show why you need them.

New Visit Requirements for Coordinators of Community Services

Your Coordinator of Community Services (CCS) is your main point of contact for making sure your services are working well for you. They help update your Person-Centered Plan.

- Your Coordinator of Community Services must meet with you at least once every three months (quarterly) to check in on your services.
- Your Coordinator of Community Services should visit you in person at the place where you're receiving services. If you get services at different places, they should visit you at a different place for each visit.

What Changed?

- When your Coordinator of Community Services visits, they will now ask some questions during their visit to make sure you are getting the support you need and want. These include:
 - Do you feel like your **privacy** is being respected?
 - Are your **health and safety** needs being met?
 - **If you receive virtual (online) supports:**
 - Do you get **hands-on help** when you need it?
 - Do you get help using **technology**, if needed?
 - Are you **happy** with the virtual (online) supports, or would you rather have in person supports?

- **If a relative, legally responsible person, or legal guardian provides any services to you:**
 - Do you want to find more people to support you? If so, what can we do to find more people?
 - Is it still your choice to receive services from this person?
 - Do you want to find other people to help you make decisions?

New Orientation Required for Self-Directed Services

Starting October 6, 2025, anyone who wants to use the self-directed service model must first complete a new orientation process.

- **Who needs to Complete the Orientation?**

You need to complete orientation if:

- You are new to DDA waiver services and want to self-direct your services OR
- If you are using the Provider Managed model and want to switch to Self-Directed Services.

- **What is the Orientation Process?**

- The Orientation will be led by your Coordinator of Community Services.
- You will go through three training modules from the DDA's Self-Directed Services Training Series:
 - 1. Module 1: Self-Direction Overview** (What self-direction is and how it works)
 - 2. Module 2: The Self-Directed Services Team** (Who is involved and how they support you)
 - 3. Module 3: Person-Centered Planning** (How to create a plan that reflects your goals and choices)
- You will also complete an Orientation Checklist to help show you understand what you have learned and review a Frequently Asked Questions tool to help answer any questions.

- **When does the Orientation need to be done?**
 - If you start self-directing your services before the end of the year (before December 31, 2025), you must complete the orientation by **March 2026**.
 - If you start self-directing your services in 2026 (January 1, 2026 or later), you must complete orientation **before you start to get services**.

New and Updated Forms for Self-Directed Services

If you use Self-Directed Services, you will need to use some new or updated forms.

Updated Forms for Self-Directed Services (For Use On or After October 6, 2025)

Participant Agreement *(Self-Directed Services only)*

What Changed?

- Required for all people who self-direct their services.
- **If you are under 18, you must name a Designated Representative** to help manage your services. (Option 2 on the form)
 - You'll need to use the new form during your next plan year or if something changes in your situation.

Self-Directed Services Budget Sheet *(Self-Directed Services only)*

What Changed?

- This form was updated to be easier to understand and use.
- Use the new form next time you need to **create or change your budget**.

Budget Modification Form *(Self-Directed Services only)*

What Changed?

- This form was also updated to be clearer.
- It now shows that the Individual and Family Directed Goods and Services are limited to \$5,000 per year.
- You have to use the updated form next time you make a budget change.

Family as Staff Form *(for Self-Directed Services only)*

What Changed?

- This form must be used when relatives, legally responsible persons, and legal guardians provide waiver services to you.
- You must use the updated form during your next plan year, or if something has changed.

New Forms for Self-Directed Services (For Use On or After October 6, 2025)

Day-to-Day Administrative Supports Decision Tree *(for Self-Directed Services only)*

- This new form helps you and your team decide what kinds of help you may need from Day-to-Day Administrative Supports. The new form is required during the next plan year if you are requesting Day-to-Day Administrative Supports.

New Rules Starting October 6, 2025

- **Relatives, legally responsible persons, and legal guardians cannot work and get paid to provide more than 40 hours of support per week.**
 - If currently approved to work more than 40-hours, they may continue until the end of the Family as Staff Overtime Request Form approval.
 - Remember: If you have staff that are **not** relatives, legally responsible persons, or legal guardians, they can work more than 40-hours a week. If you want them to work more than 40-hours a week, you have to make sure you have funding and hours in your budget to pay them.

- **The new definition for relatives includes:** natural or adoptive parents, step-parents, grandparents, step-grandparents, children, stepchildren, siblings, step-siblings, aunts, uncles, nieces, and nephews.
- **Substitute Judgment:** Legally responsible persons, legal guardians, and certain relatives must use substitute judgment. Substitute judgement means someone makes decisions based on what you would want, not what they want for you.

Important Words to Know

These are important words that are in this guide.

Use this list if you want to remember what something means.

The page numbers tell you where to go in the guide to read more.

Brief Implementation Support Services (page 6): This is a short-term service that helps the family, staff, and other caregivers learn how to better support you. It provides hands-on help and real-life examples (modeling). It focuses on supporting your behavioral needs, emotional needs, and psychological (mental health) needs.

Competitive Integrated Employment (page 4): This means the job must pay at least minimum wage, include opportunities to work with people without disabilities, and offer the same benefits and chances for advancement as other workers.

Decision Tree Checklist (page 8): This is a new form that helps you and your team decide what kinds of help you may need from Day-to-Day Administrative Supports. The new form is required during the next plan year if you are requesting Day-to-Day Administrative Supports.

Dedicated Support (pages 3): One-on-one and two-on-one staff support.

Legal Guardian (page 11): This is a parent if you are under the age of 18; or someone appointed by the court to be your guardian.

Legally Responsible Person (page 11): Someone (like a parent or spouse) who the law says must take care of you.

Occupational Therapist (page 6): This is a licensed healthcare professional who helps people improve their ability to perform everyday tasks.

Organized Health Care Delivery System (OHCDs) Providers (page 7): This is an organization approved by the state to help deliver and pay for certain services in the waiver.

Personal Emergency Response Systems (PERS) (page 5): These are devices, also called medical alert systems that include a base unit and a wearable button. They let a person quickly contact emergency services.

Relatives (page 9): These are parents, step-parents, grandparents, step-grandparents, children, step-children, siblings, step-siblings, aunts, uncles, nieces, and nephews.

Temporary: (page 3): This means for a short period of time.

Virtual Supports (page 6): This means someone provides your supports virtually (online) instead of in person. Virtual supports are online supports that help you learn new things, like career planning or taking classes. They can also help you do things more independently, such as getting job coaching from a distance.

Do you need help understanding something in this guide
or have questions?

**Your Coordinator of Community Services can help.
DDA Regional Offices can also help!**

These are the DDA Regional Offices:

If you live in Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Howard or Harford County, or Baltimore City

Central Maryland Regional Office

410-234-8200

Free long-distance call: 877-874-2494

Maryland Relay: 800-735-2258

If you live in Caroline, Cecil, Dorchester, Kent, Queen Anne's, Somerset, Talbot, Wicomico, or

Worcester County

Eastern Shore Regional Office

Telephone: 410- 572-5920

Free long-distance call: 888-219-0478

Maryland Relay: 800-735-2258

If you live in Calvert, Charles, Montgomery, Prince George's, or St. Mary's County

Southern Maryland Regional Office

Telephone: 301-362-5100

Free long-distance call: 888-207-2479

TDD: 301-362-5131

If you live in Allegany, Carroll, Frederick, Garrett, or Washington County

Western Maryland Regional Office

Telephone: 301-791-4670

Free long-distance call: 888-791-0193

Maryland Relay: 800-735-2258