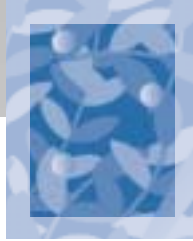


Services in Maryland



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HERE ARE SEVERAL STATE AGENCIES THAT PROVIDE OR FUND SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES. KNOWING WHAT SERVICES EXIST, WHO IS ELIGIBLE, HOW TO APPLY, AND WHAT TO EXPECT WILL HELP YOU AND YOUR SON OR DAUGHTER AS YOU PLAN.

“You don’t just luck into things... you build step by step, whether it’s friendship or opportunities.”

— Barbara Bush

There are several state agencies in Maryland that provide support to people with disabilities. Some are available to anyone who qualifies, while others have waiting lists. Eligibility varies. The following is a brief overview to assist you in determining which programs might work for your child. Advocacy organizations and service provider agencies can often times help you identify and access resources. Call for more information.

Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE)

Maryland Infants and Toddlers Program

The Maryland Infants and Toddlers Program (MITP) coordinates early intervention services for children with developmental delays and disabilities from birth until age three, regardless of family income. Children and families are eligible if the child:

- has a delay of 25% or more in development, or
- is developing in a way that is considered atypical for most children his or her age, or
- has a condition that is likely to affect development.

Services are intended to enhance a child's potential for growth and development before he or she reaches school age.

MITP operates under authority of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Part C. MSDE administers the program in collaboration with the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Department of Human Resources, and the Office for Children, Youth and Families.

MITP awards grants to local Infants and Toddlers Programs to support the coordination and provision of early intervention services in each county and Baltimore City. These local programs are composed of local departments of education, health, social services and other entities identified by each county. A multi-disciplinary team comprised of the family and involved professionals develops an Individualized Family Service Plan, which defines the team's recommendations for services.

Early intervention services may include such things as audiology, therapies (speech-language, occupational, physical), health services, transportation, service coordination, special instruction, and assistive technology.

The MITP also coordinates the Family Support Network (FSN). The FSN operates through a network of local coordinators in most areas of the state and provides information about available services, links families with similar experiences, and provides workshops and seminars.

For more information and referrals to local programs and staff, contact: Maryland Infants and Toddlers Program & Family Support Network, 800-535-0182.

Educational Services

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) works in partnership with the 24 local school systems to ensure that a free and appropriate public education is provided to all students, ages 3 to 21, with disabilities. It is the responsibility of MSDE to ensure compliance with the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in all school districts. This includes the right to be educated in the “least restrictive environment.” This is usually defined as the student's neighborhood school, if appropriate, with the student's same age peers in a regular education classroom with needed supports.

The focus of special education is on the development and implementation of an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for the student. A team consisting of the parents and involved professionals develop the IEP for the student. Services in the plan must be educationally related and may include curriculum modifications, speech-language, occupational and physical therapy, audiology, adapted physical education, and assistive technology for communicative disorders and physical impairments.

For more information, contact: Maryland State Department of Education/Division of Special Education, 410-767-0244. See “Education Advocacy” in *Appendix B* for assistance.

Partners for Success: Resource Centers for Families and Schools **(formerly Parent Information Training Centers — PITCs)**

Partners for Success: Resource Centers for Families and Schools provide families, professionals, and the community with information, training, and support. The purpose is to enable families of children with disabilities, age 3 to 21, and professionals to function as equal partners in the educational decision making process and to assist families in accessing services for their children.

Services may include: special education resources, information and referral, assistance with IEPs, seminars and workshops, consultation, a lending library, and facilitation of parent support groups.

MSDE provides financial assistance to these centers and the local school systems support them financially and/or through in-kind services. A parent of a child with a disability and an educator work as a team to operate the center. All counties, the Maryland School for the Deaf, and the Maryland School for the Blind have a center.

For more information and referrals to a local center, contact: Maryland State Department of Education/Division of Special Education, 800-535-0182.

Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA)

The Developmental Disabilities Administration is the principle state agency in Maryland that provides funding for supports and services to children and adults with developmental disabilities. To be eligible for most services, a person must have a severe, chronic disability that:

- is attributable to a physical and/or mental impairment, other than a sole diagnosis of mental illness;
- manifested before age 22;
- is likely to continue indefinitely;
- results in an inability to live independently without external support or continuing and regular assistance; and
- reflects the need for special, interdisciplinary or generic care, treatment or other services that are individually planned and coordinated.

What Types of Services Does DDA Fund?

Day and Vocational Services and Supported Employment:

These services teach skills for daily living and/or skills necessary to enter the workforce and provide supports to work in competitive employment.

Residential Supports in various settings:

Group Homes: Support provided to 4-6 people living in a house or apartment owned or rented by a service provider.

Alternative Living Units (ALU): Support provided to 1-3 people living in a house or apartment owned or rented by a service provider.

Community Supported Living: Support provided to a person in a house or apartment he or she rents or owns.

Residential supports range from drop-in support to 24-hour awake overnight staff in these various settings.

Individual Support Services (ISS):

These are lower cost, lower intensity services that assist adults to maximize independence, productivity and integration within the community. Examples include support with activities like grocery shopping and budgeting, purchase of services and equipment, and assistance accessing community services.

People with a severe, chronic disability who do not meet the definition of developmental disability listed above because they were not disabled before age 22, may be eligible for Individual Support Services.

Family Support Services (FSS):

These are supports and assistance provided to families with children under age 22 who have developmental disabilities. Services are flexible and uniquely tailored to each family's needs. Examples include information and referral, advocacy, parent support, respite care, and purchase of therapies, equipment and services.

Behavioral Support Services:

These are services designed to assist people with challenging behaviors acquire skills, gain social acceptance and adapt their behavior, as appropriate. Services include consultation, staff support, training, and respite services.

Service Coordination/Case Management/Resource Coordination:

This is professional staff who help individuals with developmental disabilities and their families plan, locate, coordinate and monitor community services. The DDA service system is moving toward having resource coordinators assist individuals and their families to coordinate the funding that is available to meet their needs.

How and When Do I Apply for DDA Services?

Contact DDA's regional offices for an application for services. The eligibility process can take many months so let regional office staff know if your situation requires more immediate attention. Don't wait until your child needs services to apply. There are differing opinions about how early to apply for DDA services that you foresee needing. We suggest applying at least several years ahead. There are usually waiting lists for services. If in doubt, ask for guidance from other parents and advocacy organizations and consult with DDA regional office staff. For specific information on DDA service providers, including mission and services offered, go to: www.dhmd.state.md.us/dda

When are Services Provided?

DDA services are not an entitlement. This means that not everyone who needs or wants services receives them. Whether your child waits for services, and for how long, depends on many factors. These may include the amount of new funding DDA receives each year; how critical your needs are; the needs of other people in your area; the types of services requested; and the area of the state you live in, among other factors. In 1998, DDA began a five year initiative to eliminate its waiting list. This will significantly affect who gets services and when. Contact your region's DDA office or advocacy organizations for updated information.

How are Services Provided?

DDA funds private, non-profit agencies to provide services and supports in communities throughout Maryland. As DDA funded services evolve and change over time to become more flexible and responsive to the unique needs of each individual served, the terms used to refer to services may change also. What services are called is not important. What is important is whether the services meet your child's individual needs and are provided in the way your child wants.

You may choose to talk with a few providers in your area who may help you envision the possibilities for your child. Which service providers do you and your child feel best about? Who can help you be more creative and bring your child more independence, while addressing health and safety issues? Even if you cannot access any, or all, desired services now you can start gathering information and planning. Service providers should be willing to help you do this now. If you meet resistance, this could tell you something about a provider.

For more information, to apply for services, and/or for a list of agencies providing community services, contact a DDA regional office:

Central Maryland	410-902-4500	Western Maryland	301-791-4670
Eastern Shore	410-334-6920	Southern Maryland	301-362-5100

The Division of Rehabilitation Services

The Maryland Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) is a federal-state funded program whose primary emphasis is on helping individuals with disabilities to become employed, within the Vocational Rehabilitation program. DORS also assists individuals with disabilities to become more independent, within the smaller Independent Living program. There are 22 DORS offices located throughout Maryland.

Eligibility for the Vocational Rehabilitation Program (VR)

To be eligible for vocational rehabilitation, an individual must 1) have a disability that results in difficulty getting or keeping a job; 2) be able to benefit from rehabilitation services; and 3) require services in order to get or keep employment.

Eligibility for the Independent Living Program (IL)

To be eligible for independent living services, 1) an individual must have a severe disability that limits independence at home or in the community; and 2) delivery of independent living services will improve the ability of the individual to function more independently at home or in the community. Eligible people can be served in the IL Program if they do not have an employment goal. Funds for this program are very limited.

Who Receives Services?

Individuals with severe disabilities are the highest priority for services and funding. If funding is not sufficient, individuals with less severe disabilities are placed on a waiting list. In general, a person is considered by DORS to have a “severe” disability if he or she has a physical or mental impairment which seriously limits one or more functional capacities relative to employment (such as mobility, communication, self-care, self-direction, interpersonal skills, work tolerance or work skills). A person is considered to have a “most severe” disability if the disability seriously limits *three* or more of these areas.

Some conditions are automatically considered to be at least “severe”. They include:

1. People receiving Supplemental Security Income or Social Security Disability Insurance;
2. People with “moderate” or “severe” mental retardation;
3. People who are blind or deaf; and
4. People with epilepsy, if not seizure-free for two years.

Individuals whose families are financially able to contribute to the cost of rehabilitation are required to do so based on a sliding fee scale. This only applies if the parents claim the child as a dependent on their federal income tax return. The individual or family is not required to pay for 1) assessment or evaluation services, 2) accommodations such as sign language interpretation and reader services, 3) vocational rehabilitation counseling, guidance and referral, or 4) placement services, including job coaching.

DORS Services

DORS works with individuals on a *time-limited basis*, until the rehabilitation goal is achieved or it is clear that progress is not being made toward the goal. Length of service varies from several months to several years depending on the individual’s needs and types of services required.

Rehabilitation services are based on the needs, capabilities, interests, and choice of the individual. These may include:

Independent Living Services:

IL Services are focused on rehabilitation technology. A modification to a van, for example, may make it possible for a person to get out into the community. A ramp added to a home may make it possible for someone to increase independent activities. Other examples include counseling, advocacy, information and referral, and independent living skills training.

Vocational Rehabilitation Services:

- Vocational rehabilitation counseling and referral.
- Job search, placement assistance and job retention services. The counselor remains available for at least 90 days to assist with problem resolution as the individual begins employment.
- Physical and mental restoration services. These are time limited services such as short- term psychotherapy, special visual aids, occupational therapy, and prosthetics.
- Vocational and other training services. This includes personal and vocational training, books, tools, and other training materials.
- Supported employment services. This is assistance to work in integrated employment settings for competitive wages. The individual is provided a job coach who assists in teaching and reinforcing the job duties and relating appropriately to others on the job. DORS funds the initial intensive period of job coaching, after which continuing support is funded for the remainder of the individual's work life by an "extended service provider" such as the Developmental Disabilities Administration.
- Rehabilitation technology services. This includes architectural modifications like building a ramp into a home, vehicle modifications like installing hand controls or a lift into a vehicle, and modifications to computers for people with visual impairments or learning disabilities.
- Support services. In support of the services listed above, DORS may provide limited assistance to cover related costs such as transportation and personal assistance services.

For a referral to a local DORS office where you can apply for services and obtain more information, contact: DORS Headquarters, 888-554-0334 or 410-554-9411 (TTY)

Transition Planning for Students with Disabilities

(Inter-agency collaboration)

What is Transition Planning?

Transition planning is intended to assist students with disabilities as they prepare to leave school and move to employment, post-secondary education or training, independent living, adult services and community participation. Transition planning is designed so that the necessary services are in place and the student has developed the skills he or she needs to be successful upon leaving school. It involves collaboration between the student, family, school, adult service providers, various state agencies, and others as may be appropriate.

Upon leaving school, entitlement to services ends. In other words, a child moves from a system that assures educational services for **all** students with disabilities through the age of 21 to a system that serves only **some** people based on the availability of services. Students may want to access various services from adult service providers, all of which may have different application procedures, funding, and eligibility requirements. These applications should be completed well before necessary services are needed so that programs can make eligibility decisions about the child and families can make appropriate plans. Therefore, comprehensive and cooperative planning while the child is still in school is very important.

When Does Planning Occur?

The law requires that formal transition planning should begin in the calendar year the student turns 14. The individualized education plan (IEP) should identify the student's transition goals and service needs. A coordinated set of activities, based on these needs, should be developed — this is the transition plan. At this age, it focuses on a course of study in the school system.

By age 16, the IEP is required to expand to include linkages in the community to meet the employment, post-secondary education and independent living needs of the student. Each year after, the IEP must identify the student's current transition service needs and those anticipated to be needed after graduation. These may include, but are not limited to:

- job development and support
- public transportation
- living arrangements and support
- health services
- mental health treatment services
- independent living skills
- rehabilitation services
- recreation options
- career exploration and development
- self-advocacy and self-determination
- case management
- post-secondary education and supports

Governor's Initiative for Transitioning Youth

In support of the transitioning process, the Governor's Initiative for Transitioning Youth was created to coordinate the State's programs and services to students with developmental disabilities who are transitioning from local school systems at age 21 and who are likely to require supported employment services in order to maintain employment during the course of their working lives. Since its inception, the Initiative has expanded to include students who need day habilitation services.

Who is eligible?

To be eligible, students must:

1. meet DDA's eligibility criteria; and
2. be between the ages of 21 and 22 when leaving school.

If the student is likely to require supported employment services, he or she must also meet DORS eligibility criteria, be determined to be an individual with the "most severe" disability, and be determined through a comprehensive assessment as needing supported employment services.

Who is funded?

DDA funding for all students exiting school is not always assured because it is based on funding provided in the State's budget which can fluctuate year to year.

What services are students supposed to receive?

The Governor's Initiative for Transitioning Youth specifies that:

The Local School System (LSS) should:

- Provide educational services to transitioning youth that assist with job preparation and identify specific transition services as described above.
- Identify potential students for the Governor's initiative and refer them to DORS.

The LSS and DORS should:

- Place students in youth summer employment programs, as appropriate.

DORS should:

- Assist students to apply for SSI and other benefits for which the student is eligible.
- Fund supported employment services during the student's final school year.
- Assist students and parents in applying for DDA services.
- Refer students to supported employment providers when notified by DDA that the student is eligible for DDA supported employment services (the LSS shares this responsibility).

The DDA should:

- Provide ongoing funding for supported employment services as well as other follow-along services.

It is important for parents to note that the transition process (which can be anything from transition planning to application for adult services) does not typically happen as a matter of course. Parents and families must make it happen by initiating and participating in student meetings, networking with other parents, asking questions, and following up to ensure that all parties carry out their responsibilities.

For more information, contact:

The transition coordinator for your local school system and regional staff of the Developmental Disabilities Administration. Inquire at your school about the designated transition coordinator or call MSDE at 410-767-0231. DDA phone numbers are listed in *Appendix B*.