

Simplified Frequently Asked Questions for Self-Advocates and Families About Participant-Directed Services During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Regional centers can pay for more types of services using the Participant Directed Services model so that individuals and families have more choice and flexibility during the COVID-19 Pandemic. These Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) explain Participant-Directed Services and how they may help individuals and families during COVID-19.

1. What Are Participant-Directed Services?

Participant-Directed Services let the consumer or family choose who to hire, schedule, and supervise the work for some types of Individual Program Plan (IPP) services. The services can be used by individuals who live in their own home, their family home and some community living arrangements.

2. How Can Participant-Directed Services Help Me?

Sometimes it may be hard for individuals or families to find providers. Participant-Directed Services let you use providers or individuals you already know, or who speak in your language. You can also have the provider work for you when you need them.

3. Which IPP Services Can Be Participant-Directed?

Some Participant-Directed Services were available before COVID:

- Respite
- Day care
- Non-medical transportation
- Day Services
- Nursing

These Participant-Directed Services will continue after COVID.

Because of COVID-19, Participant-Directed Services temporarily includes:

- Personal assistance
- Independent living skills
- Supported employment services

These services give individuals and families more options during COVID

4. Who Can I Hire to Provide Participant-Directed Services?

- You must use a Financial Management Services (FMS) agency. Your regional center has information about how to do this.
- The FMS you select helps you hire and pay staff.
 - The person must be 18 years old or older.
 - The individual must be eligible to work.
 - The individual you hire **does not** need to be a regional center vendor.
 - The individual has the needed job skills.

You may hire a family member, friend, or another qualified person. A spouse or parent generally cannot provide respite, day care, personal assistance, or independent living skills.

5. What Steps Should I Take If I Want to Use Participant-Directed Services?

Contact your service coordinator and tell them you want to use Participant-Directed Services. Discuss which IPP services you want to get this way.

1. Your service coordinator can help you find a Financial Management Service (FMS) to handle payroll, taxes, and reporting.
2. Ask your FMS what rules you must follow as an employer.
3. Identify the individuals you want to hire.
4. Ask those individuals to submit the required information to the FMS. The worker cannot start work or be paid until these forms are provided and approved:
 - Verification of age
 - Verification of qualifications
 - Eligibility for employment
 - Federal disclosure information
 - CPR/First Aid certification is required for in-home respite. It must be provided within 30 days of starting work.

6. How Are Participant Directed Services Approved?

The regional center will approve these services with the FMS for the amounts specified in your IPP.

7. How Does the Worker Get Paid?

The FMS pays the worker and the taxes after you approve the worker's timesheet. The regional center will tell you the set rate. The rate includes payroll taxes and other costs. For example, the minimum hourly rate for personal assistance, supported employment, and independent living skills services is \$22.80 an hour. The minimum hourly rate for respite is \$17.03 per hour. Nursing services are paid at a higher rate.

8. What Happens to My Services That Aren't Provided Through the Participant-Directed Model?

All other services in the consumer's IPP will continue to be provided by regional center vendors.

9. Can I Use A Combination of Vended and Participant-Directed Services From My Regular Respite Agency?

You may use both vended and Participant-Directed Services for your respite services. For example, if your regular respite agency is not able to provide a respite worker, you may use Participant-Directed Services for the "unused" hours that have been approved. This may help you if you have more respite hours because of COVID. You can use your

respite agency as your FMS agency. This is sometimes called “employer of record”. If the same respite worker, works more than 40 hours per week for you, this will count as overtime pay. Your FMS or Service Coordinator can assist you with overtime questions.

10.What If I Need Additional or Different Services?

Because of COVID-19 you may need more services or want a different kind of service. school, or work may be closed. Or you may need home-based independent living skills training for safety. You can talk to your service coordinator or your IPP team to assist you or to help you find generic services or more support from your current program.

11.Where Can I Find More Information?

Go to DDS issued [guidance](#) for providing Participant-Directed Services.

If you want to know more about the types of Participant-Directed Services, Attachment 1 provides a description of each service.

Attachment 1

Description of Services That Can Be Provided Through Participant-Directed Services

Ongoing Participant-Directed Service Types

California allows the following services to be provided through a Participant-Directed model on an ongoing basis: respite, day care, non-medical transportation, skilled nursing, and day services.

All services must be provided by someone who is at least 18 years of age and the individual must have the skills, training or education needed to provide the services. They must also meet any additional qualifications identified below.

Respite Services give family members who care for a consumer, a break from the care. In-home respite is provided in the family home. Family members, friends, or other qualified individuals may provide respite services. The family member who provides care for a consumer and needs a break from that care, cannot be the respite worker. A respite provider must be familiar with the consumer's daily routines and needs and be trained in any specialized supports. If First Aid or CPR is required, the individual must be certified. Because of COVID-19, DDS waived the requirements for in-home respite workers to have First Aid and CPR training before beginning work. Training must be obtained within 30 days of starting work. Participant-directed out of home respite may be provided in a relative's own house.

Day Care provides care for a child while a parent is working. Participant-directed day care services generally may only be provided for day care costs beyond the cost of day care services to a child without disabilities. Day care may also be authorized when a family shows a financial need and when payment for the day care will allow the child to remain in the family home. Day care services may be provided by a family member, friend, or other qualified individual. Day care cannot be provided by the child's parent as it is for care provided while the parent works.

Non-Medical Transportation is transportation provided by a family member, friend or other qualified individual to help the consumer get to services in their IPP. The individual providing the transportation must have a driver's license that is valid in California, and have the amount and kind of insurance coverage required by the regional center. For minor consumers, participant-directed transportation generally is allowed only when it costs more than the transportation cost a family would have for a minor child without disabilities. Transportation for a minor consumer can also be authorized when a family shows a financial need and when the payment for transportation helps the child to remain in the family home.

Skilled Nursing are services provided by a Registered Nurse, or Licensed Vocational Nurse. When using a Licensed Vocational Nurse, the plan for the individual's care must be developed by a physician or Registered Nurse. Before using participant-directed skilled nursing services, consumers and families must first use available generic services

including nursing services available through the Medi-Cal State Plan home health benefit and for consumers under 21, Medi-Cal EPSDT State Plan benefits. Nursing services may be provided by a family member, friend or other individual who meets the licensing requirements.

Day Services are individually designed services that provide opportunities to support or develop employment, volunteer activities or post-secondary education. Day services may assist with self-help, social or other adaptive skills. The services must be provided in natural environments in the community, separate from where the consumer lives. During COVID-19 the requirement that the services be provided outside of the consumer's home does not apply. A family member, friend or other qualified individual may provide these services.

Temporary Additional Participant-Directed Service Types Allowed During COVID

To help consumers and families access services they need during COVID-19, DDS temporarily added three additional services to the participant-directed service model: personal assistance, independent living services and support employment services.

All services must be provided by someone who is at least 18 years of age and the individual must have the skills, training or education needed to provide the services. They must also meet any additional qualifications identified below.

Personal Assistance helps adult or children who are regional center consumer to be successful in their own home and in the community. Participant-directed services allow personal assistance services to be provided by a qualified family member, friend, or other individual. They cannot be provided by the consumer's parent or spouse.

Independent Living Services helps adult consumers get or keep skills so they can live in their community. These include, for example, meal planning and budgeting, mobility, safety awareness, accessing community resources, or help identifying a home, moving to a new home, and keeping the home safe. Participant-directed services allow independent living services to be provided by a qualified family member, friend, or other individual. They cannot be provided by the consumer's parent or spouse.

Supported Employment Services are supports and training to help an adult consumer get and keep employment or self-employment and support for job discovery, if that service is not available through another agency such as the State Department of Rehabilitation. Examples of supported employment services are: work skills such communication, following directions, problem solving, achieving desired results, money management and income reporting, use of job supports, self-advocacy training, job coaching, assessment of needed job-related technology. These services can be provided by a qualified family member, friend or other individual.