# Participant Guide for Self-Direction

## How to work with independent providers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTENTS</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purpose and Other Resources</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction to Self-Direction</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is self-direction?</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is different about self-direction?</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can I self-direct services?</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What services can be self-directed?</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Expectations for Self-Direction</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are my rights?</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are my responsibilities?</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do I choose services and supports?</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the risks of self-direction?</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What if I think I am being abused or neglected?</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are my ISP team’s responsibilities?</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding a Provider</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is important to me?</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who can I hire?</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How can I find a provider?</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do I choose a provider?</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do I get my provider approved to start?</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training My Provider</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does DHHS train my provider?</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why do I need to train my provider?</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What should training include?</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervising My Provider</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do I schedule services?</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring My Plan</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who monitors my services and providers?</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paying for Self-Directed Services</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much can I spend on services?</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How are services authorized?</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do I monitor my IBA?</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What if my IBA runs out before my year is over?</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What if I do not spend all the money in my IBA?</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is Share of Cost?</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Provider’s Billing</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dismissing My Provider</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When do I have to dismiss my provider?</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Links</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"Helping People Live Better Lives"
PURPOSE AND OTHER RESOURCES

This Guide for Self-Direction is written for participants who want to self-direct Medicaid home and community-based services (HCBS) developmental disabilities waiver services. It should be read when deciding if you want to self-direct your services. Your team should also read and understand the information in this guide, as it will help them to support you as you self-direct.

The Guide for Self-Direction includes:
- General information about how self-direction works;
- Rights and responsibilities of participants who self-direct services;
- Information on how to find, hire, supervise and dismiss independent providers; and
- How billing and payment occurs.

When you have a person in mind to become an independent provider, there are many resources available on the DHHS-DD website. A good place to start is the two-page handout How to Become an Independent Provider for Developmental Disabilities Services. Your Service Coordinator can give you paper copies of any resource you want for your provider.

INTRODUCTION TO SELF-DIRECTION

WHAT IS SELF-DIRECTION?

Self-direction is how you manage your Medicaid HCBS developmental disabilities waiver services when you choose to work with an independent provider. Self-direction gives you the responsibility for managing all aspects of service delivery in a person-centered planning process. Self-direction is not a service, but allows you to have control over which services you receive. There are many options to help you be successful.

It is up to you to determine the services you need to be as independent as possible. You have the right and responsibility to participate to the greatest extent possible in the development and implementation of your plan.

Self-directed services are based on self-advocacy and self-determination:
- Self-advocacy means speaking or acting on your own behalf.
- Self-determination means you have the amount of control you want over the areas of your life which are important to you.

Some of the benefits you may experience when you self-direct:
- Increased independence and self-esteem;
- Choosing who comes into your home to work;
- Increased community access;
- Increased support to maintain your personal lifestyle and preferences; and
- Increased satisfaction with services.

WHAT IS DIFFERENT ABOUT SELF-DIRECTION?

You are responsible for self-directing your developmental disabilities services when you choose to work with an independent provider.

An independent provider is a person or vendor enrolled as a Medicaid provider and employed by you.
- You are responsible for hiring, training, scheduling, supervising and dismissing your provider.
- An independent provider can be any qualified person you select.
- You can choose anyone who is not legally responsible for you and meets the requirements of the service you choose. People who are legally responsible for you:
Your parent when you are under age 19;
A guardian;
Your spouse;
A conservator; or
A power of attorney.

- You can choose a neighbor, a friend or a family member.
- Independent providers are not certified by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

When you self-direct services, you may choose to use only independent providers or select some developmental disabilities services provided by:

- A developmental disabilities agency provider, which is a company enrolled as a Medicaid provider and certified by DHHS to provide developmental disabilities services. The agency provider is responsible for hiring, or contracting, and supervising employees and contractors who work with you, and other administrative functions.
- A vendor, which is a company or agency enrolled as a Medicaid provider, but not certified as a developmental disabilities service provider.

**CAN I SELF-DIRECT SERVICES?**

You may self-direct services when you:

- Are eligible for services from DHHS-DD;
- Are age 19 or older (your parents can self-direct for you when you are under age 19);
- Meet the level of care for home and community-based waiver services;
- Are eligible for and receive Medicaid;
- Have an individual support plan (ISP) which says you want to self-direct; and
- Are willing and able to accept increased responsibility for managing your services.

If you are deciding if you want to self-direct, you may want to answer the following questions with your team to decide if self-direction is right for you:

- Can your medical, behavioral and safety needs be met by an independent provider?
- Can you tell when you are receiving adequate support?
- Will you be more isolated and vulnerable to abuse/neglect?
- Do you understand what abuse and neglect are, and are you capable of reporting abuse or neglect?
- Would you be afraid to report abuse, neglect, exploitation or fraud because you do not want to lose an independent provider or damage a relationship?
- How will you find and hire providers to help in your home or the community?
- How do you plan to train and supervise the providers who work with you?
- When your regularly scheduled provider calls in sick, how will your needs get met?
- Do you know how to make changes to your plan or services?
- Do you understand money, including your benefits and your budget to purchase services?
- Can you tell your provider what you like or do not like about his/her work?
- Do you understand the risk if you choose not to share all medical information with your provider?
- Will you be afraid to dismiss a provider because you do not want to lose a provider or damage a relationship?
- What do you do when you are home alone and there is an emergency?
- Are you willing to accept help from your Service Coordinator?
- Do you want to appoint someone to help with self-direction?
WHAT SERVICES CAN BE SELF-DIRECTED?

The following services may be self-directed:

- Assistive Technology
- Consultative Assessment
- Environmental Modification Assessment
- Habilitative Community Inclusion*
- Home Modifications
- Homemaker
- Independent Living*
- Respite
- Supported Employment – Follow-Along*
- Supported Employment – Individual*
- Supported Family Living*
- Transitional
- Transportation

Services with a star (*) are habilitative and include teaching. For provider requirements, see “Who can I hire?”

PARTICIPANT EXPECTATIONS FOR SELF-DIRECTION

Self-directed services allow you to build on your strengths. You determine the services and supports you need to maximize your independence. You have the right and responsibility to participate as much as possible in developing and implementing your plan. You are responsible for hiring, training, scheduling, supervising and dismissing your independent providers.

WHAT ARE MY RIGHTS?

You have the same rights as anyone receiving developmental disabilities services. These include the rights to:

- Be safe;
- Be treated with courtesy, consideration and respect;
- Trust your instincts;
- Agree or disagree with others;
- Make decisions about your services and providers, within the limits of services;
- Ask questions until you understand;
- Change services at any time;
- Appeal a DHHS decision which affects you; and
- Be free from neglect and abuse.

WHAT ARE MY RESPONSIBILITIES?

You must actively direct the ISP planning process and communicate with your team when you need help with self-direction. When your guardian or family helps you self-direct, your team will monitor any possible conflicts of interest to make sure that your best interests are prioritized in decision making.

You accept all employer responsibilities. This includes finding, interviewing, hiring, training, scheduling, supervising, monitoring and dismissing your independent providers.

You are responsible for managing the use of your annual individual budget amount (IBA):

- You negotiate the hourly rate each independent provider is paid, up to the maximum rate;
You must monitor services billed;
You must report any billing concerns to your Service Coordinator; and
When Medicaid is paying for a community based waiver service, you cannot pay additional money for your
developmental disabilities waiver services.

**HOW DO I CHOOSE SERVICES AND SUPPORTS?**

You should identify your needs by thinking about what you want in life. What will it take to make those things happen? What natural supports do you have? Natural supports include family, friends, neighbors, co-workers and community services which are available for free or for an affordable charge. What needs are not being met by your natural supports?

Your ISP team will discuss and document a plan to address your needs. Health and safety needs should be identified and discussed. If health and safety needs cannot be met, you may not be able to self-direct.

Once you identify your needs, your Service Coordinator will review the developmental disabilities services available. Your Service Coordinator may also recommend services available from other resources. You will decide which services can help you meet your goals. You may identify more services than your budget allows. If you cannot meet all your needs, you will need to decide what is most important to you.

Once you identify the services you need, your Service Coordinator can help you decide how and when those services will be provided. You must estimate how many hours of service you need per day, week and month.

**WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF SELF-DIRECTION?**

To be successful, you must recognize risks. You must decide how to meet your needs when things do not go as planned. Your Service Coordinator can help. Talk to your Service Coordinator when change is needed.

**HEALTH AND SAFETY RISKS**

Consider your needs for health and safety. You may have a need best met by someone with medical knowledge or training. You may be able to train your provider on your health and safety needs, or your provider may need training from a professional. With self-direction, you are responsible for your health and safety.

**ABUSE AND NEGLECT**

If you receive services in your home, you may be isolated and vulnerable to abuse or neglect. Do not hesitate to report a complaint or an allegation. You may not recognize abuse. Do not worry about losing a provider or be afraid someone will be mad at you. You need to tell someone when you suspect abuse or neglect.

**PROVIDER RELIABILITY**

You might have a hard time finding a provider. Your provider may quit or not show up. Your provider may not meet your needs in the way you want.

With an independent provider, there is not a “pool” of workers to fall back on when your provider is unavailable. It is your responsibility to resolve any issues about how services are scheduled and provided. If you are unable to resolve an issue, you may stop using a provider at any time, but it is up to you to find a new provider. You may ask your Service Coordinator to help. Your Service Coordinator may know of another provider who is looking for hours and you can contact and interview.

Your back-up plan should include:
- What happens when my provider does not show up?
- Can I use a phone to notify someone?
- Do I need a personal emergency response system (PERS) to get help?
- Who will be available when I need to call for help?
- Do I have family or friends to help when none of my providers are available?

**WHAT IF I THINK I AM BEING ABUSED OR NEGLECTED?**

If your provider makes you uncomfortable, talk to someone about why. Abuse and neglect may result in physical injury, unreasonable confinement, cruel punishment, sexual abuse, exploitation or denial of essential services. Abuse or neglect can be intentional or as the result of carelessness.

If you think you might be the victim of abuse or neglect, tell someone! If you are not sure, talk to your Service Coordinator, a trusted friend or a family member. Your Service Coordinator will monitor your services and report any abuse or neglect witnessed. Your Service Coordinator may ask you if you feel uncomfortable or if your needs are being met.

You never have to wait on someone else to make a report. You can call the Abuse/Neglect Hotline or your local police.

**EXAMPLES OF ABUSE AND NEGLECT**

**Physical Abuse:** Hitting, pushing, hair-pulling, kicking, biting, overuse or improper use of medications, using restraints.

**Sexual Abuse:** Touching you in ways which make you feel uncomfortable, talking sexually or showing sexual material or body parts you do not want to see, making you touch or talk in a way which makes you uncomfortable, taking nude pictures or asking you to take pictures which make you uncomfortable.

**Emotional/Verbal Abuse:** Threats, name-calling, denying the right to express wants and needs, cyberbullying, isolating from friends or family.

**Neglect:** Denial of food, clothing, shelter, or transportation; not providing supervision; not providing medical treatment.

**Exploitation:** Taking money or personal belongings, charging more hours than worked, not completing job duties.

**WHAT ARE MY ISP TEAM’S RESPONSIBILITIES?**

Your ISP team should support you throughout the person-centered planning process. Team members can assist you with most parts of self-direction; you just need to ask.

Members of your team should be talking to you about your services regularly to make sure your needs are being met. The team may question if your needs are being met when:

- Your health or skills decline;
- Services are not occurring as outlined in your ISP;
- You do not understand when actions by your independent provider may be abuse or neglect;
- You are refusing services, for example, canceling services or not allowing the provider in your home;
- You are not directing or supervising your provider, for example, not telling the provider when you are not happy with services, not training your provider, or not making expectations clear; or
- You are not following your back-up plan when needed.

**REPORT ABUSE AND NEGLECT:**

Abuse/Neglect Hotline
24-hour - Toll Free
1-800-652-1999
Or contact local law enforcement
When a member of your team is concerned that your needs are not being met, he/she will talk to you about the concerns. If you are not willing to talk about his/her concerns, the person will talk to your Service Coordinator. When changes are needed to your plan, a team meeting will be held. You should be willing to accept feedback from your team and make changes as needed. Your team should have your best interest in mind.

**FINDING A PROVIDER**

You are responsible for finding your provider. Your Service Coordinator can help you with the process. He/she may know a provider looking for additional work. You can also ask for help from family or others. There is not a public list of independent providers.

**WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO ME?**

It is helpful to think about what is important to you before you select a provider:

- What do I need a provider to do for me?
- What kind of person do I trust to work with me?
- Does my provider need to have specific skills to meet my needs?
- How will I know if a provider has the skills needed?
- Will I need different providers to meet different needs?
- What does my provider need to know about me in order to support me?
- Are there provider “musts” for me? For example, being fluent in sign language, being a non-smoker or having a driver’s license.

**WHO CAN I HIRE?**

You can hire any person as an independent provider when the person:

- Meets general Medicaid HCBS developmental disabilities waiver provider requirements;
- Is not legally responsible for you; and
- Meets your expectations.

The best way to find a provider is to consider the people you know, including friends, neighbors and family. If you ask, someone may be able to be your provider. You do not have to choose a person who has worked in human services. Tell people you are looking for a provider and what you need. If a person cannot be your provider, he/she may know someone who could be.

An independent provider must:

- Meet general Medicaid HCBS developmental disabilities waiver provider requirements;
- Complete all provider enrollment requirements, including background checks;
- Have training in the following areas and provide evidence when requested:
  - Abuse, neglect, and exploitation and state law reporting requirements and prevention;
  - Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR); and
  - Basic first aid;
- Be age 19 or older and authorized to work in the United States;
- Not be legally responsible for you: In other words, not be your parent (natural or adoptive, when you are a minor), spouse, guardian, conservator, or power of attorney;
- Not live with you when providing respite, homemaker or home modifications;
- Accept a rate you choose;
- Enter into an agreement with Nebraska DHHS;
- Provide service(s) as specified in your ISP;
- Submit thorough and accurate billing claims electronically;
• Work drug-free; and
• Comply with HIPAA requirements.

To provide a habilitative service (training), your provider must have:
• A bachelor’s degree or education in: psychology, social work, sociology, human services, education or a related field;
• Four or more years of professional experience in providing habilitative services for people with developmental disabilities or in habilitative program writing and program data collection/analysis;
• Four or more years of life experience supporting someone with developmental disabilities; or
• Any combination of education and experience identified above equaling four or more years.

To drive you, your provider must:
• Maintain the minimum vehicle insurance coverage required by state law;
• Not have had his/her driver/chauffeur's license revoked within the past three years; and
• Use his/her own personally registered vehicle to transport.

POSSIBLE BENEFITS AND RISKS TO HIRING A FRIEND OR FAMILY MEMBER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefits</th>
<th>Risks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It may be easier to find someone.</td>
<td>It may be harder to dismiss someone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The person already knows you.</td>
<td>It may be hard to give criticism or report abuse/neglect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The person may know your likes and dislikes.</td>
<td>A personal relationship may be hurt.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

HOW CAN I FIND A PROVIDER?

If you do not know someone who can be your provider, you may not know where to look. Begin with local advocacy groups. Talk with local schools, such as special education programs or local colleges. Your Service Coordinator can direct you to resources in your community.

You can use statewide internet resources:
• Nebraska Resources and Referral System (NRRS) is a database of agencies and service providers.
• Nebraska 211 lists information regarding Health and Human Services agencies and services providers.

You may choose to advertise in a local newspaper, job websites or help wanted sites. For example, “Seeking non-smoker to provide respite care for a person with a disability in the person’s family home one weekend per month. Call Sue between 5 and 9 pm at 555-4567.” Or, “Wanted: Female to teach a person with a disability personal care skills and house cleaning. Hours and days are flexible; about 20 hours/month. Call Mark at 555-3456.” You are responsible for any advertising costs.

HOW DO I CHOOSE A PROVIDER?

It is important to meet and interview a potential provider before you ask to have him/her provide developmental disabilities services. Only you will know when you are comfortable with a person. DHHS is responsible for establishing an agreement with the provider, but you are responsible for deciding if the provider is right for you.

If you have never hired someone, it can seem like a big task. You can have someone you trust help with the process, but you are in charge.

CREATING A JOB DESCRIPTION

Think about what you expect of a provider and be clear on these expectations. You need to describe the services you need. You need to state the days of the week and hours you want. You need to say what you
expect from your working relationship. You should put this information in a written job description to give the person.

A job description should include your expectations, such as:

- The services, pay and schedule you want;
- Provider requirements for the services to be provided;
- List of what you want to learn;
- List of what you need help with;
- Your expectations for showing up and being on time;
- How much notice you need when the provider is not able to work due to illness or other commitments;
- Required physical activities, such as lifting;
- Rules you have in your home; and
- Your personal preferences, such as no smoking, no cell phone use or not bringing children or pets.

**TELEPHONE SCREENING**

Before meeting a potential provider in person, talk on the phone. Tell him/her about your needs, the requirements of the job, your expectations, the pay and the hours. Ask if there are tasks he/she cannot or will not do. Ask if he/she can meet all requirements. Based on the call, decide if you want to do an in-person interview.

**SCHEDULING THE INTERVIEW**

Decide where to do your in-person interview. You can have the person come to your home or meet in a public place. You may be more comfortable doing the interview in your home and you can show the person any adaptive equipment; however, the person will then know where you live even if you do not hire him/her. You may prefer to meet in a public place so the person does not enter your home; however, you should still be aware of sharing private or confidential information in public.

Regardless of where you decide to do the interview, it may be a good idea to have a friend, family member or your Service Coordinator attend. This can help you feel more safe and comfortable.

Set a time and place for the interview and decide on a way to connect each other if one of you cannot make the scheduled time. If you are scheduling interviews with more than one provider, allow enough time for each interview and time between interviews to make notes and think about what you heard and observed. Take your time and be organized.

**PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW**

Have a list of questions to ask about the person’s background and experience. Questions must be relevant to the job. Go over these questions with the person who is going to help you with the interview. You may want to ask that person to write down the answers for you.

Possible interview questions:

- What previous jobs have you had?
- How did your previous jobs prepare you for this job?
- What experience do you have working with people with disabilities?
- What other experiences have you had to prepare you for this job, such as volunteering or education?
- Do you have any questions about the job duties or schedule?
- Is there any reason you cannot perform the job duties?
- Is there any reason you cannot meet my expectations or “must have” items?
• How would you resolve any problems or disagreements? Give examples of situations you from other jobs.
• Have there been times when you have been scheduled to work, but were not able to show up or were late?
  o Why could you not be there?
  o How did you let your boss know?
• Do you have dependable transportation to get to work? If your provider is going to drive you, discuss details.

### Questions to Avoid & Suggested Alternatives

There are questions you cannot ask. These are discriminatory or otherwise inappropriate.

- **National Origin/Citizenship**
  - *Do not ask:* Are you a citizen? Where were you or your parents born? What is your native language?
  - *Ask instead:* Are you authorized to work in the United States? Are you fluent in the language I use?

- **Age**
  - *Do not ask:* How old are you? What is your birthday? When did you graduate from high school or college?
  - *Ask instead:* Are you age 19 or older? This is the minimum age required for an independent provider.

- **Marital/Family Status**
  - *Do not ask:* Are you married? Who do you live with? Do you plan to have a family? How many children do you have? What are your childcare arrangements?
  - *Ask instead:* The schedule for this job may change and may not be the same from week to week. Would you be willing to work with a changing schedule? This question is acceptable as long as it is asked of all applicants.

- **Personal**
  - *Do not ask:* How tall are you? How much do you weigh?
  - *Ask instead:* Are you able to lift “x” amount of weight? Can you assist with wheelchair transfers?

- **Disabilities**
  - *Do not ask:* Do you have any disabilities or medical conditions? What is your medical history? How is your family’s health?
  - *Ask instead:* Are you able to perform the job duties? This question is okay if you thoroughly describe the requirements of the job.

- **Arrest Record**
  - *Do not ask:* Have you been arrested?
  - *You do not need to ask for this history.* During the Medicaid provider enrollment process, abuse/neglect registries and criminal history checks are completed.

### Conducting the Interview

It is up to you to take the lead. The person is applying to work for you. You can have a family member, friend or Service Coordinator with you at the interview to observe, help or just provide support.

Begin the interview by describing the position, schedule and duties. If you made a written job description, give it to the person. Describe any physical activities you require, such as lifting. Review your expectations for attendance and arriving on time. Explain how much notice you need when your provider is not able to work due to illness or other commitments. Ask if the person is able and willing to do the job. If the answer is no, thank him/her and end the interview.
Ask the questions you prepared. You, or the person assisting you, should take notes on answers. This will be helpful later in deciding how the interview went.

At the end of the interview, ask for references. References are optional, but recommended.

Do not promise a potential provider he/she will be hired. A final decision cannot be made until the enrollment process is complete. You should tell the person services cannot be provided until provider enrollment is complete and a service authorization is completed.

**CHECKING REFERENCES**

After the interview, check the references that were given to you. You may be surprised at what you learn.

- **You can ask past employers:** Would you hire this person again? Was the person reliable? Was the person on time and dependable in completing tasks? When necessary, was this person willing to be flexible about schedule or duties? On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate your trust of this person?

- **You can ask personal references:** How long have you known this person? What is your relationship to this person? Do you feel this person has the skills necessary for this job?

**MAKING A DECISION**

Trust your instincts. Do not choose a person who makes you uncomfortable. If you think someone is not right to work with you, there is probably a good reason for your feelings.

You may want to hire more than one provider. You should be clear with each provider about your expectations and his/her schedule. You may want to identify a back-up provider. Ask if a provider is willing to work on-call or in an emergency. Do not let a good provider slip by. This can save you time searching for a provider later.

When you begin with a provider, be sure to have a back-up plan until you are sure he/she is reliable. If the provider does not show up or call, hire someone else! This behavior does not usually change.

Do not get discouraged when you hire a provider and it is not a good match. You must trust your provider and feel comfortable. You may have to try several different providers before you find the right one. Be patient. You will find the right provider.

**HOW DO I GET MY PROVIDER APPROVED TO START?**

When you want to hire a person, let him/her know you will be in touch. Ask when he/she is available to start. Tell the person that, if selected, you will set up an appointment to complete the necessary paperwork, background checks and provider agreement. Your Service Coordinator will help you with the paperwork.

Tell your Service Coordinator you want to hire an independent provider. Your Service Coordinator will help you, and the person, with the process. DHHS will help you and your provider understand how long the hiring process can take. You need a plan to have your needs met until your provider starts.

When your provider is not already enrolled to provide services, DHHS-DD sends you the independent provider enrollment packet. You give the packet to your potential provider. Your provider must complete the enrollment process. DHHS will notify you when the process is complete and whether the provider is approved.

**TRAINING MY PROVIDER**

**DOES DHHS TRAIN MY PROVIDER?**

DHHS-DD offers some training. You should encourage your provider to attend. Trainings are available to any interested people. You and your provider could go to training together! Many trainings are free. When there is a
cost, your provider will need to pay. Training cannot be paid from your IBA and you cannot pay your provider to attend training. Check out the DHHS-DD training page for more information about training.

WHY DO I NEED TO TRAIN MY PROVIDER?

You are responsible for making sure your provider receives adequate training to meet your needs. Training makes sure your provider knows how you want things done. Just because someone has experience or knows you, does not mean he/she knows how to work for you. You need to give clear expectations.

WHAT SHOULD TRAINING INCLUDE?

You should make a checklist to keep track of when you train your provider and on what topics. Many problems between an employer and employee are due to lack of training or poor communication. Allow your provider opportunities to ask questions. You may want to ask if there is something you can help him/her do or learn. If you have more than one provider, keep a checklist for each provider.

INDEPENDENT PROVIDER ORIENTATION

DHHS-DD conducts independent provider orientations every month. Orientation is intended for prospective, new, and current independent providers. It can also be attended by participants using independent providers and their guardians.

Orientation covers:
- General Information and Core Requirements for Independent Providers;
- DD Services and Specific Requirements;
- Independent Provider Referral and Enrollment;
- Providing Services; and
- Participant Rights and Person-Centered Planning

The orientation is not required, but highly recommended and provides valuable information needed to perform the job. The schedule and information to sign up for the orientation is online.

JOB REQUIREMENTS

You should provide a written job description of what you expect. Describe exactly what you want to happen on a daily or weekly basis. If services are provided in your home, give a tour and review house “rules.”

Discuss the importance of arriving for work on time. Let your provider know how and when he/she should notify you when he/she cannot make it or are running late.

If you want to spend time with your provider’s family or friends, your provider must be with you. If you would like respite in your provider’s home or will be alone with family or friends, adults need to have background checks before this happens. Your provider should not bring underage children when he/she is working; he/she cannot meet your needs while meeting the needs of others. Your Service Coordinator can help you understand the differences between a paid provider and friend.

HABILITATION

A provider is required to know how to write habilitative plans in order to provide any habilitative service. Your provider may have experience in this. Training is not required before completing provider enrollment. If training is needed, it is available for free through DHHS-DD.
PERSONAL PREFERENCES

Tell your provider what you think makes a good provider.

Tell your provider what “bugs you.” For example, not being included in decisions, people talking about you instead of to you, or cell phone use. You can ask your provider not to talk, text or play on his/her cell phone while being paid to work.

If you and your provider will go places, discuss payment for meals and admission cost for events. If you want to go somewhere, such as a movie, and your provider would not normally go and cannot afford to pay his/her own way, you can pay for your provider’s ticket. You cannot reimburse your provider for something he/she purchases. Your provider should not ask you to buy him/her things. If you think your provider is exploiting you, refer to the section on abuse and neglect.

EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

Hopefully an emergency situation will never happen, but it is important to be prepared so everyone can act quickly and calmly. It is your responsibility to make sure your provider is trained to handle an emergency. Emergencies include fire, flood and severe weather. You should discuss plans during the first week of work and review as needed. If your provider is not with you during an emergency, can you call him/her to assist?

If you have a fire extinguisher, smoke detector or other emergency equipment make sure the equipment is working and your provider knows its location and use. Show your provider evacuation routes in case of fire. If you live in an apartment building, show your provider where to find the fire alarms.

Talk about plans for severe weather and flooding. If you have a tornado kit, flashlights or other items that you may need in an emergency, your provider should know their location and use. What do you expect your provider to do when with you during a weather emergency?

MEDICAL NEEDS, HEALTH, AND SAFETY

Review your medical needs, including medical conditions, medications you take, and allergies. Describe what a medical emergency looks like for you and how you expect your provider to react. Train your provider to react properly to any medical conditions which can lead to medical emergencies, such as diabetes or epilepsy/seizures. Make sure your provider knows how he/she should respond in a medical emergency.

Have a list of emergency phone numbers. Review them with your provider and make sure he/she knows where to find them. If you and your provider will be in the community, it is a good idea to bring medical and emergency information in case an emergency arises.

If you choose not to share medical information, you cannot hold your provider accountable in a medical emergency. It is wise to talk to your provider about your medical information so he/she can react appropriately when a situation arises.

SUPERVISING MY PROVIDER

A provider who is happy will work better. Being happy is not just about fair pay and working conditions. Encourage your provider to take pride in his/her work. This is easier when your provider believes you value him/her as a person.

Praise your provider when he/she is doing something well. Respect for each other is important when you work closely together. Positive feedback is one way to show respect.
Sometimes you will need to give feedback which is not positive. This is not negative feedback, but constructive feedback. Give feedback as soon as you see something you do not like. If you wait, your provider may develop habits. Be direct and specific, explaining exactly what needs to be done differently. Be respectful. Do not target the character of your provider. Ask your provider to help find a solution. Focus on how to fix the problem instead of what went wrong.

When you are unable to resolve a problem by talking to your provider, talk to your Service Coordinator. You may give your provider a warning that if things do not improve you will dismiss him/her. For example, “You have not been able to work the hours we agreed on. If this does not improve next month, I will find someone else.” See “Dismissing my Provider” section.

When your expectations for your provider change, make sure to let him/her know. You may decide that you want something done differently and your provider will not know this unless you tell him/her. Do not assume your provider knows what you want.

**HOW DO I SCHEDULE SERVICES?**

You set your provider’s schedule for when he/she works with you. The schedule should be based on when you need services. You should create a calendar to help you keep track of when your services are provided, especially when you have more than one independent provider. Two providers cannot be paid for the same timeframe, so you need to make sure there is no overlap.

When you want to change your provider’s schedule, try to give the provider advanced notice. When you are unable to receive scheduled services, for example, when you are sick, let your provider know as soon as you can.

When your provider is not following the schedule you set, it is your responsibility to talk to him/her and resolve the problem. You should talk with your Service Coordinator when your provider is not willing or able to work the schedule you want.

When your provider asks to change his/her schedule, you can work with him/her to do so as long as you are still receiving services that meet your needs. Your schedule should be what you want, not based on your provider.

**MONITORING MY PLAN**

**WHO MONITORS MY SERVICES AND PROVIDERS?**

You are responsible for knowing when services are scheduled and what can be paid as part of a service. You can review your provider’s schedule and billing in Therap to make sure time is reported correctly. You are expected to know your provider is billing correctly. Your provider should not bill when you have questions about the schedule or when it does not agree with your record. Differences must be resolved. It is important to make sure fraud is not committed.

Any time you have a concern, talk to your Service Coordinator. He/she can help make sure your needs are met. You should notify your Service Coordinator when you make adjustments to a provider’s schedule, as this may affect your budget.

Your Service Coordinator monitors to make sure services are provided as written in your ISP. Your Service Coordinator will talk with you and your provider about how things are going. Your Service Coordinator may watch your provider working.
PAYING FOR SELF-DIRECTED SERVICES

HOW MUCH CAN I SPEND ON SERVICES?

Your annual individual budget amount (IBA) is the same amount for self-direction as it is when you use all agency providers. Your IBA is decided by an objective assessment process. Your Service Coordinator tells you your IBA and helps you plan how many hours your provider can work. You must stay within your budget. You work with your Service Coordinator to make sure you have money available for your entire year of services.

Each service has a maximum rate which you can pay your provider. Your Service Coordinator will tell you these rates. You and your provider decide what you will pay. There is no automatic rate increase. You may not want to start your provider at the maximum rate, so you can give a raise after some time or when things are going well. To change a provider’s rate, talk with your Service Coordinator.

Family or friends can help you manage your budget, but you are responsible. You must keep track of provider time and cost so you do not go over your annual budget. You must talk to your Service Coordinator about any budget changes.

If your provider is doing a service in your home, your Service Coordinator has you sign form FA-65 “Appointment of DHHS as Agent.” The form makes DHHS responsible for paying employer taxes, state and federal employment taxes, and other tax withholding on your behalf. Your provider is responsible for taxes when they are not withheld.

If you decide to stop self-directing services at any time, you can choose services from an agency provider with the remaining funds available in your current budget year.

HOW ARE SERVICES AUTHORIZED?

Your Developmental Disabilities Service Coordinator creates a service authorization when:

- Your provider has a current agreement with DHHS;
- Services and supports are documented in your ISP;
- Funding is available in your IBA; and
- Respite funding is only from one DHHS program source.

HOW DO I MONITOR MY IBA?

You are responsible for budgeting your IBA. It is important you have a good system in place to monitor how much is spent on your developmental disabilities services. Some weeks or months you may need more or fewer hours than what is projected in your budget. This is okay, but you need to adjust in future weeks and months to stay within your annual budget.

Do not hesitate to ask others to help you. Budgeting can seem complicated and overwhelming. It is okay if you do not want to do this on your own. A legal guardian, trusted family member or your Service Coordinator can help.

Your Service Coordinator monitors your budget on a monthly basis. He/she should know your provider’s schedule of work with you. Your Service Coordinator will look at it to determine if you are getting the services you need and if you are staying within your budget. If needed, your Service Coordinator will help you change your plan.
WHAT IF MY IBA RUNS OUT BEFORE MY YEAR IS OVER?

Your services and funding are authorized each year. You are responsible for making sure your annual budget lasts for the budget year. There may be months where your spending is higher, so you need to lower spending another month to stay within your budget. Additional funds are not available to you before your budget year ends.

A provider must accept Medicaid reimbursement as payment in full for services (payment from DHHS plus your share of cost, when applicable). As a participant on a Medicaid waiver you cannot suggest, endorse or agree to private pay arrangements. For example, you cannot pay your provider extra mileage.

WHAT IF I DO NOT SPEND ALL THE MONEY IN MY IBA?

Your budget is good for one year. If you do not spend funds within the year, you cannot carry it over to the next year.

WHAT IS SHARE OF COST?

You may have a share of cost to be eligible for Medicaid. Developmental disabilities services are paid for under Medicaid HCBS waivers, so you must keep Medicaid to receive services.

If you have a share of cost, it is assigned to a provider and the amount is deducted from his/her payment from DHHS. When you work with independent providers, you can choose which provider is assigned the share of cost. You are responsible to pay the share of cost amount to your provider.

MY PROVIDER’S BILLING

In order for your provider to submit a billing claim for services, your provider must:

- Have a current service authorization for the services provided;
- Bill after services have been provided;
- Be with you during the time for which he/she is billing;
- Be the only provider working with you (two providers cannot bill for the same block of time);
- Record his/her time and attendance in Therap;
- Record habilitative program data in Therap; and
- Bill within 180 days of providing services.

Billing is done on a computer program called Therap. You can find out more about billing in Therap’s Nebraska independent providers section. If you ask your provider for a copy of his/her attendance information, the provider must give it to you.

You can request to have access to Therap to look at your provider’s billings and any other provider documentation. Therap has a Nebraska participant/guardian section with all kinds of information for you.

If you have any questions about the billing process, talk to your Service Coordinator.

DISMISSING MY PROVIDER

There is always the possibility a provider will not work out. If this happens, you need to end his/her employment.

When a provider puts your health or safety at risk, you should immediately dismiss the provider and tell your Service Coordinator. If you suspect you have been abused or neglected, call the abuse/neglect hotline or your local police.
If you have a less-serious problem but do not want to continue working with your provider, you should plan how and when to dismiss him/her. If you dismiss a provider due to poor performance, it should not be a surprise. You should have talked to him/her about the problem. See “Supervising my Provider” section.

When possible, you should give your provider notice. This will give him/her time to look for another job. It will also give you time to find a new provider. With a back-up plan, you may have someone to fill in, but you will need to find a permanent provider.

It can be hard to tell your provider you no longer want his/her services. It is a good idea to have someone with you when you tell him/her. Stay calm even when he/she is upset. Stick to the facts about what did not work and give specific reasons and examples. Be firm, but kind. If the provider has keys to your home or other property of yours, make sure you get it back.

When you dismiss a provider you need to tell your Service Coordinator so he/she can update your service authorization. The provider will no longer be authorized to work with you. This person may still be a provider of developmental disabilities services and work with other participants, when selected and authorized to do so. A provider who is not right for you may be right for someone else.

Again, when a provider put your health or safety at risk, report to the proper authorities. A provider who has abuse/neglect substantiated will have his/her provider agreement terminated by DHHS-DD and cannot provide developmental disabilities services.

**WHEN DO I HAVE TO DISMISS MY PROVIDER?**

If a report of abuse or neglect is substantiated concerning the provider (or a member of the provider’s household, when services are delivered in his/her home), DHHS policy requires the provider’s agreement be terminated immediately. The same is true regarding convictions for certain crimes found in state regulation. When, at any time, you become aware of these issues related to your provider, you must tell your Service Coordinator so appropriate action can be taken.

**LINKS**

How to Become an Independent Provider for Developmental Disabilities Services
http://dhhs.ne.gov/DD%20Documents/How%20to%20Become%20an%20Independent%20Provider.pdf

Independent provider orientation
http://dhhs.ne.gov/DD%20Documents/Independent%20Provider%20Orientation.PDF

Nebraska 211 www.ne211.org

Nebraska Resources and Referral System (NRRS) www.nrrs.ne.gov

Resources http://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/DD-Resources.aspx

Therap’s Nebraska Independent provider section https://help.therapservices.net/app/nebraska-independent-providers

Therap’s Nebraska Participant/Guardian section https://help.therapservices.net/app/nebraska-individuals-guardians

Training http://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/DD-Training.aspx