



# The Next Step

An Abound Health Guide to Help You Understand  
Post Graduation I/DD Services for Your Loved One

**A detailed guide for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities and  
their families**

New Jersey Transition Guide

# Introduction

Navigating services for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) can feel complex and overwhelming for many families. When individuals transition out of the school system and into adult services, the structure and supports that existed through the education system change significantly. Families are often asked to make decisions about services, budgets, providers, and care models with what can feel like very little guidance.

**Abound Health is here to help you navigate this process.**

This guide assumes that you have already completed the necessary steps in the DDD (Division of Developmental Disabilities) Graduates Timeline<sup>1</sup> to be matched with a Support Coordination Agency when your high school graduate turns 21:

- Apply for Medicaid Eligibility
- Apply for DDD Eligibility
- Complete NJ Comprehensive Assessment Tool (NJ CAT)
- Complete the Support Coordination Agency Selection Form

Now you may be wondering: what is next? This guide takes you through the next step in your graduate's journey - as easy as A, B, C.

## In the sections that follow, we will cover:

- **Step A: Work with your Support Coordinator to build your Service Plan**, including clear descriptions of common services, a day-in-the-life example, and considerations for choosing a day program vs. individualized services.
- **Step B: Choose your Service Provider**, including questions to ask, RAP options, and notes on what sets Abound apart as a service provider in NJ.
- **Step C: Begin Services and Continue Advocating for Your Loved One**, including go-forward resources.

### A note about this guide

Our goal is to provide families with practical information that helps them understand the options available through DDD services and make informed decisions about the support model that best fits their goals. While Abound Health is a service provider, and parts of this guide outline the unique offerings of Abound, we believe this guide can benefit anybody exploring the DDD process in NJ.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nj.gov/humanservices/ddd/individuals/transition/>

## STEP A

# Build Your Service Plan

Work with your Support Coordinator to understand options and build a plan that fits your loved one.

## Overview

A few months before your loved one is eligible for services, DDD will match you with a Support Coordination Agency, who will assign you a Support Coordinator. Your Support Coordinator's job will be to walk you through these next steps and decision points.

This guide is intended to help you educate yourself in advance of, or in conjunction with, meeting your Support Coordinator so you can feel more informed when engaging in these conversations and advocate for the care you believe your loved one needs.

## Common Services Through NJ DDD

There are 20+ services available in the NJ Support Program (SP) and Community Care Program (CCP), but only a handful that the majority of I/DD adults receive.

### Day Habilitation

*DDD Definition: Education/training that assists an individual in gaining the skills needed to participate in the community (problem-solving skills, self-help skills, social skills, adaptive skills, daily living skills)*

Day habilitation programs, often called day programs, are structured daytime programs that individuals usually attend six to eight hours per day in a standalone center. Participants typically engage in group-based activities such as arts and crafts, exercise classes, recreational games, music activities, and occasional community outings. Many day programs also incorporate life-skills training into their schedule, such as cooking, money management, or communication skills. Frequently, day programs arrange transportation to and from the individual's residence.

**Best fit for individuals who:** enjoy a consistent routine, group activities, and peer socialization.

**Things to consider:** because activities are organized for a group, the daily schedule is usually determined by the program rather than the individual. Day programs typically operate using a 1:3 ratio, meaning one caregiver provides oversight and support for three individuals. Additionally, you must be within the catchment area for transportation, or able to provide daily transportation for your loved one.

### **\*Individual Supports (CCP only) / Community Based Supports (SP only)**

*DDD Definition: One-to-one direct support that promotes increased independence, productivity, enhanced family functioning, and inclusion in the community*

Individual Supports and Community Based Supports provide one-on-one assistance from a Direct Support Professional (DSP). Instead of attending a centralized program, individuals receive support in their home and/or community. The DSP can provide transportation to the individual. This model allows the entire day to be customized around the individual's goals, preferences, and interests. It also gives the individual opportunity pursue unique hobbies, develop independent living skills, and participate in activities that are personally meaningful to them.

**Best fit for individuals who:** want personalized routines, community exploration, skill-building, and flexible daily activities.

**Things to consider:** because support is delivered one-on-one, matching the right DSP can be very important.

### **\*Respite**

*DDD Definition: Short-term care/support of an individual due to the absence or need for relief of the usual caregiver(s)*

Caring for a loved one with complex needs can be physically and emotionally demanding. Respite services are temporary periods that allow caregivers to rest, attend appointments, work, or spend time with other family members while knowing their loved one is receiving quality one-on-one support. Respite is provided in the individual's home. During respite periods, Direct Support Professionals are not held to the same habilitative goals as they are for other services.

### **\*Transportation**

*DDD Definition: Assists individual in gaining access to services, activities, and resources*

Transportation services allow individuals to travel safely to appointments, recreational activities, employment opportunities, or community events. Transportation may be provided by a DSP, a transportation vendor, or through specialized transportation programs. Reliable transportation can significantly increase independence and access to community activities.

### **\*Private Duty Nursing (PDN)**

*Medical support for individuals who have significant health needs that require skilled nursing care.*

A licensed nurse may assist with tasks such as medication administration, monitoring chronic conditions, managing feeding tubes, providing respiratory support, and coordinating medical care. PDN services for I/DD individuals in NJ may be accessed through the Supports Program or through Managed Long Term Services and Supports (MLTSS). If it is assessed that an individual will be better served by the Supports Program than MLTSS, they can be enrolled in the Supports Program and receive PDN services through Medicaid.

### \*Supported Employment

*DDD Definition: Assists an individual to get and/or keep a job in the general workforce at or above minimum wage.*

There are many benefits to finding and maintaining a job, including high self-esteem, a sense of purpose, social interaction, learning new skills, and increased independence from earning one’s own income. NJ is an Employment First state, meaning NJ presumes that people with disabilities can and should work in a competitive and integrated setting. Job coaches may assist with job searching and interview preparation. After employment begins, job coaches may provide on-site support to help them learn tasks, navigate workplace expectations, and build confidence in their role.

\* Abound Health currently offers this service in NJ.

## Example Day and Week with Individual / Community Based Supports

Many clients are curious to better understand what a day or week could look like when using Individual or Community Based Supports. It can feel like a Day Habilitation Program mirrors school for a recent graduate, while the role of a one-on-one Direct Support Professional can feel less clear. The example below helps show what this can look like using a sample individual, Beth, and her DSP, Dakota.

Time	Activity
8:00 AM	<b>Morning Routine:</b> Dakota helps Beth with hygiene tasks, getting dressed, and making breakfast. Cooking breakfast can be a valuable opportunity to practice life skills such as measuring ingredients, using kitchen appliances safely, and cleaning up afterward. They review the schedule for the day so Beth can feel prepared and excited.
9:30 AM	<b>Community Activity:</b> Dakota drives Beth to the weekly Gardening Club meeting at the local park. Today they are focused on weeding, watering and pruning!  Participating in community groups allows individuals to interact with neighbors and build social connections, while also enjoying time outdoors.

<b>11:30 AM</b>	<p><b>Lunch in the Community:</b> After gardening, Beth and Dakota always go to Beth’s favorite local diner across the street. They sit in a booth together; Beth doesn’t need Dakota’s help reviewing the menu because she already knows what she wants – grilled cheese &amp; tomato soup. When the waitress comes, Dakota gives Beth the confidence to place her own order.</p> <p>At the end of the meal, Dakota helps Beth walk to the register with her check to pay. Dakota then helps Beth count out the correct amount to pay and leave as a tip. Beth is extremely satisfied!</p>
<b>1:00 PM</b>	<p><b>Recreational Activity:</b> In the afternoon, Beth and Dakota drive to the YMCA for an Adaptive Aquatics class. This is a new class for Beth and she has some apprehension about the water, but the certified instructor comes up with an activity that allows Beth to pick up floating flowers in the water!</p> <p>Dakota provides support and encouragement from the side of the pool so Beth can get more comfortable working independently with another adult.</p>
<b>3:00 PM</b>	<p><b>Rest:</b> After a busy day, Dakota knows that Beth will need some downtime. They return to her house for a rest.</p>
<b>4:00 PM</b>	<p><b>Skill Development:</b> Later in the afternoon, the focus may shift to skill-building activities that support one of Beth’s habilitative goals. Right now, Beth is working on sign recognition. Dakota sits with her as they review common signs that Beth may come across: STOP, EXIT, and RESTROOM.</p> <p>Before Dakota leaves for the night, she helps Beth put flowers from Gardening Club in a vase for her mom and brother to enjoy during dinner.</p>

## Sample Weekly Schedule

Activity Type	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Community Activity	Grocery shopping	Gardening Club	Library visit	Community Center Arts & Crafts Meet Up	Botanical Garden
Recreational Activity	Walking group at the mall	Adaptive Aquatics Class	Community Center Recreation	Walking group at the mall	Climbing Gym
Skill Development	Menu planning & cooking	Sign recognition	Technology practice	Laundry	Planning for next week

## Day Program vs. Individual/Community Supports

Your Support Coordinator will help guide you through this decision for the ISP, but it can help to have a sense of what you would prefer.

Question	Day Program	Individual/ Community Supports
How important is consistency in your daily routine? (Same caregiver, minimal changes to routine, limited new people.)	Somewhat	Extremely
Do you like exploring your community?	Sometimes	Yes
Are you looking to build more independence at home, such as hygiene or household routines?	Somewhat	Yes
Are social opportunities with peers a priority?	Yes	Not really
Do you prefer to have a schedule already planned for you?	Please plan for me	I'd prefer more of a say
Does having quieter environments matter to you?	No	Yes
Do you learn best in a classroom environment?	Yes	No
Do you prefer group activities?	Yes	No
Where do you feel safest learning a new skill, like paying a bill?	Controlled environment	Real-life setting
Do you have highly personalized goals?	No	Yes
<b>Final Tally:</b>		

## STEP B

# Choose a Service Provider

Compare options, ask informed questions, and choose the support partner that feels right.

## Overview

Once your ISP is set, it is time to choose a Service Provider. A Service Provider is an organization that has been approved to provide I/DD-related support services. A Service Provider might provide every service in your loved one's ISP, or specialize in only one service.

Your Support Coordinator will introduce you to a few service providers to consider. This part can feel overwhelming. It is like you are interviewing for a job, but you are actually on the other side of the table, and you might realize that does not make the choice any easier.

### Good to know

You can always change your service provider if you do not feel you have made the right choice.

# Guide for Choosing a Service Provider

Print this page out and fill it out for each Service Provider you meet so you can compare.

<b>Intake Process</b>	How much did the agency seek to understand my loved one’s needs, interests, and goals during intake?
<b>Services</b>	Where do the services mostly take place? In the agency building? In my home? In the community? If in the community, what partnerships do they have with community organizations?
<b>Social Connection</b>	How will the agency seek to connect me with peers and help me make friends? How will the agency help me keep my current friends?
<b>Goals</b>	How will the agency support my loved one in achieving their goals?
<b>Support</b>	How can I escalate any issues or concerns?
<b>Professionalism</b>	How were we treated during the intake process? Were we treated professionally? Were we kept well informed?
<b>Speed to Service</b>	How ready is this agency to satisfy my staffing needs?
<b>RAP Options</b>	If I would like to serve as a RAP, does this agency have such an option? What pay rates do they offer?

# RAP (Relative as Provider) Options to Consider

If your loved one is receiving Individual or Community Based Supports, you have the option to serve as a RAP, or Relative as Provider, for them. Effectively, you would operate as your loved one's Direct Service Professional, meaning that you would be subject to the same expectations, success measures, training, and compliance standards as a hired DSP. Since you are likely already spending a good bit of time with your loved one and working with them toward their goals, this also means that with a little more oversight, you might be eligible to be paid for work that you are already doing.

Many family members and friends in NJ choose to use RAP services for a few hours a week, for example, to fill in a DSP gap, or on nights and weekends. This might be something you want to consider.

## Two paths to consider

### 1. Through a Service Provider

*You work as a RAP DSP through a provider agency.*

Once you choose a Service Provider, they will effectively hire you as an employee. They will manage your onboarding and training, and support you as you record your hours worked and clinical notes. This helps ensure you are paid timely and without issue, and also alleviates some of the headache that might come with trying to navigate the DDD training requirements yourself.

**Things to consider:** a portion of your service reimbursement rate will go towards covering the cost of the Service Provider's resources to maintain your compliance

*About half of the ~750 DSPs that Abound Health works with are RAPs, and Abound has a track record of supporting RAPs and helping them feel part of a larger community.*

### 2. Self-Directed Employee

*You manage the process more independently.*

Alternatively, you may choose to work as a Self-Directed Employee. This means you are responsible for completing your own trainings, submitting your own hours, and adhering to the individual's ISP. If you choose this option, you will be paid more, but we frequently hear that the guidance and community that come from using a service provider can be more attractive.

If you are interested in pursuing a Self-Directed option, you can read more through NJ DDD's self-directed resources<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nj.gov/humanservices/ddd/individuals/community/selfdirected/>

# Service Provider or Self-Directed Employee: Which is Right for You?

Do not know which way to go? Take this quick quiz to see.

Question	Service Provider	Self-Directed
Are you looking to maximize your compensation?	No	Yes
Do you like doing taxes?	No	Yes
Do you want somebody to walk you through trainings and compliance requirements?	Yes	No
Are you comfortable taking responsibility for making sure your trainings stay current?	No	Yes
Would you rather focus on caregiving or paperwork?	Caregiving	Paperwork
Are you looking for the simplest path to get started quickly?	Yes	No
Would you like support from a care team, including ideas on how to best support your loved one in achieving their goals?	Yes	No
Are you looking to grow your community?	Yes	No
Do you like assembling IKEA furniture without the instructions?	Def Not	Absolutely
Which sounds more reassuring: “We’ll handle it” or “You’re in control”?	“We’ll handle it”	“You’re in control”
Did you read the Operator’s Manual for your car?	Who does that?	Me!
Your garbage disposal broke. What do you do?	Call tech support	Google it - I can do it!
Do you secretly enjoy paperwork?	Are you serious?	Actually... maybe a little
Would you rather take a trip to Hawaii or Delaware? <i>(JK - this has nothing to do with your decision, but Abound embraces the Aloha spirit!)</i>	Hawaii	Delaware
<b>Final Tally:</b>		

## What Sets Abound Health Apart

Whether or not you choose to work with Abound Health as a service provider, we hope this guide is helpful as you enter the next phase of developing an ISP, choosing a service provider, and getting started with services. That said, we would be remiss if we did not share some of what we believe sets Abound apart, and why we think we can be the best service provider for many individuals in NJ.

### Trusted Partner throughout New Jersey

Abound has operated for 10+ years in NJ under Gold Medal Health and PromptCare and is trusted by 500+ NJ families. Abound Health is also the largest service provider in North Carolina and Michigan, allowing the NJ team to benefit from lessons learned from serving thousands of clients and families. With scale also comes resources that enable us to have differentiated, tech-enabled offerings...

### Highly Mission-Driven

...although we may be a large company, we operate like a small company. Our President and CEO both actively serve as DSPs, and if you call one of our support lines you are almost as likely to get a member of our executive team as you are to get an associate. We are committed to empowering people.

### Quick and Seamless Intake Process

We pride ourselves on providing a white-glove intake process. You will be connected with an Intake Coordinator who works with you every step of the way. We have a rolodex of hundreds of individuals interested in serving as DSPs, and a proprietary algorithm (fancy!) to help identify strong DSP matches based on location, needs, and interests.

### Support

If you have a question or concern about your DSP, you can reach out to their supervisor at Abound. We are one of the few agencies in NJ that employ full-time supervisors, called Care Managers, to oversee our DSPs.

### Differentiated RAP Process

We are frequently the agency of choice for RAPs because we seek to make onboarding as seamless as possible. We are also working to transition as many required trainings as possible to our more user-friendly internal training platform, and we offer competitive RAP rates.

### Advocacy and Community

Our Advocacy Department helps answer questions about I/DD and hosts regular FIN, or Family Information Network, sessions on topics such as the transition process, estate planning, caregiver burnout, and guardianship. We also host a monthly Family Support Group and social events throughout the year.

## STEP C

# Begin Services and Continue Advocating

Helpful resources and reminders as your loved one begins services.

Congratulations. Now your graduate has started services and is working toward achieving their goals. But we know the journey is never truly over, so we want to offer a few additional resources that you may find helpful.

<b>New Jersey Division of Developmental Disabilities</b>	<a href="https://www.nj.gov/humanservices/ddd/">https://www.nj.gov/humanservices/ddd/</a>
<b>Rutgers Health Boggs Center on Disability and Human Development</b>	<a href="https://boggscenter.rwjms.rutgers.edu/">https://boggscenter.rwjms.rutgers.edu/</a>
<b>Special Olympics of New Jersey</b>	<a href="https://www.sonj.org/">https://www.sonj.org/</a>
<b>Facebook Group - NJ Special Needs Resources for Young and Mature Adults Joining Together</b>	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/groups/1078939779338421/">https://www.facebook.com/groups/1078939779338421/</a>
<b>Abound Health</b>	<a href="https://www.aboundhealth.com/">https://www.aboundhealth.com/</a>

### You do not have to navigate this alone.

Every family's journey is different. As your loved one transitions into adulthood, questions and changes are normal. What matters most is building a support system that helps your loved one feel safe, empowered, connected, and valued. If you have any questions along the way, please feel free to reach out.

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