



South Valley DDS Area Office

ASD Adult Resource Guide

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Welcome!

Welcome to the Department of Development Services (DDS), South Valley Area Office. This guide is for individuals and families with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and is specifically developed for this population as an overview of the types of supports and services which are currently being offered in our area.

This guide was created as a reference tool for you and your family to help navigate services which you may be interested in now, as well as in the future. As we all know, interests and goals change over time. Please keep this guide handy as things evolve over time you may be interested in exploring new services and supports with your DDS Service Coordinator. Please keep in mind that all DDS services are subject to availability of funding and approval by the Area Director.

Autism Service Coordinators

Your Autism Service Coordinator will initially set up an intake meeting to discuss your current and future goals in order to determine if you would benefit from services from DDS, or other state agencies.

If DDS services are appropriate, and funding is available, your Service Coordinator will help facilitate intake meetings with service providers as well as ongoing monitoring of those services once they are in place. An annual meeting will be held, a Life Plan which will help outline a person's goals and break them down into smaller objectives. Your Service Coordinator will conduct the Life Plan meeting along with your support team and monitor progress throughout the year.

DDS Services

****Subject to availability of funding and providers/staff availability. A discussion must be held with your Service Coordinator in order to initiate requests for funding and approval from the Area Office Director.****

- **DDS Individual/Home Supports**
 - **Adult Companion Services/Respite:** provides support with socialization for individuals who would like more community involvement. Services can be provided online or in person. These services typically do not require a Life Plan.
 - **Individual Home Supports (IHS):** services provided to individuals who currently live with their families who would like to work on Independent Living Skills in order to be successfully independent or increase their independence. These skills can include budgeting, meal planning and preparation, organization

of living space, assistance with medical oversight, hygiene skills, etc. Individuals utilizing this service have a goal to live on their own one day.

- **Individual Supports and Community Habilitation:** for individuals who live independently from their families, in their own apartments/homes. These supports can vary but may or may not include budgeting, meal planning and preparation, organization of living space, assistance with medical oversight, hygiene skills, as well as benefits assistance, advocacy or any other skill required to remain independent or improve their current living status.
- **Pre-Coaching/Engagement:** used for individuals who are not ready to accept services at this time and are severely isolated. They will work 1:1 with specially trained coaches who are familiar with autism and mental health challenges.
- **Coaching:** Coaching is used for individuals with autism who also experience mental health issues to help identify barriers in their life which is impeding on their goals and to help them overcome them.
- **College Navigation:** College Navigators assist students who are accepted into a college in maneuvering the campus life experience as well as assisting with acquiring services through the school if needed.
- **Clinical Resources:** Service coordinators can help navigate individual's current health insurance to find clinical resources, as well as access to DDS funded or provided services if needed and available. These could include assessments or education for individuals and families or staff.
- **DDS Day/Employment Supports**
 - **Community Based Day Supports (CBDS):** offers individuals with opportunities for social, recreation and career readiness skills. They offer pathways to employment through training and/or volunteer sites.
 - **Group Supported Employment:** offers individuals the opportunity to work in a small group setting along with a staff who can help assist with training and maintaining job skills at work sites.
 - **Individual Supported Employment:** offers 1:1 job coaching in order to explore vocational opportunities including applying and interviewing for positions. The goal for these supports is for independent competitive employment with minimal assistance by gradually decreasing the job coach's involvement and fading out over time (or maintaining minimal contact).
- **Family Support Centers**

Family Support Centers are funded by DDS to provide information and resources to individuals and families in our area. Family Support Centers offer support groups, information sessions, skill building workshops, as well as social and recreational activities. For individuals who live with their families, they can also offer navigation and flexible funding.

 - **Navigation:** If you live with your family and need assistance with public benefits, please contact your service coordinator to make a Navigation referral. Navigators are skilled in applying for and accessing Social Security, Masshealth, Housing applications, and other public benefits that you may qualify for.

- **Flexible Funding:** Please contact your service coordinator to discuss accessing funding from DDS for short term emergency needs or gift cards for local grocery stores, adaptive equipment and supplies, assistive technology, etc. Funding is for individuals who live with their families and is based on priority of need, and available resources (other restrictions apply).
- **Social/Support/Recreational Activities:** *These services do not require a referral from your Service Coordinator, however, some activities do have a small fee. Each center offers a variety of activities (online and in person). However, it is advised that you attend groups that are geared for ASD Only individuals when available. Other groups are open to people of all abilities which may not be a good peer match.

South Valley Family Support Centers

South Valley has two Family Support Centers which cover different geographic areas, but families can participate in events held by either agency. We strongly encourage families to sign up for notifications from your local center in order to be up to date with the most recent activities and resources in your area.

- **Seven Hills Family Support Center**
 (508) 796-1950
 208 Charlton Road, Sturbridge, MA 01566
 Contact: Elizabeth Carol (Director)- ECarrol@sevenhills.org
 (Brimfield, East Brookfield, Southbridge, Warren, Brookfield, Holland, Spencer, Webster, Charlton, North Brookfield, Sturbridge, Dudley, North Oxford, West Warren, Charlton Depot, Oxford, Wales)
- **Blackstone Valley Family Support Center/ Open Sky Community Services**
 (508) 234-6232
 50 Douglas Rd., Whitinsville, MA 01588
 Contact: familysupportcenter@openskycs.org
 (Bellingham Hopedale Millville Sutton Blackstone Medway Northbridge Upton Douglas Mendon North Grafton Uxbridge Franklin Milford North Uxbridge West Millbury Grafton Millbury South Grafton Whitinsville)
- **Family Support Center Directory**
 Other Family Support Centers available in MA can be found at:
<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/dds-family-support-centers>

Autism Support Centers

MA offers Autism Resource Centers throughout the state as well. Autism Resource Centers provide information and resources specifically geared towards people and families affected by Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). You are considered “ASD Only”, which means there are certain groups that are only for your population. We strongly encourage you to attend ASD Only or ASD Adult sessions when available which will have a better peer match for you.

- **HMEA’s Autism Resource Central**
<https://www.autismresourcecentral.org>
South Valley’s local center and host a variety of groups, trainings, and information sessions.
- **The Asperger/Autism Network (AANE)**
Located in Watertown- has great resources, groups, and seminars which are being offered online and in person. www.AANE.org
- **Autism Support Center Directory**
A complete list of Autism Support Centers in MA can be found at:
<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/autism-support-centers-list>

Other Services Available (Not DDS Funded):

There are a variety of supplemental supports available to you that are not funded by DDS. Your Service Coordinator can assist you in connecting with these services based on your eligibility and access to these services.

- **Vocational Supports**
 - **Mass Rehabilitation Commission (MRC):** DDS works in collaboration with MRC to assist individuals in obtaining employment. If you are ready to start working, you can fill out an online application for services (eligibility requirements apply): <https://www.mass.gov/mrc-connect>
 - **Career Centers:** located throughout MA, Career Centers offer resources such as resume assistance, trainings, and job fairs to assist individuals in obtaining employment. To find a center near you visit: <https://www.mass.gov/how-to/find-a-masshire-career-center>
 - **Central Mass Employment Collaborative (CMEC):** Provided by Riverside Community Services, CMEC pairs companies in MA with agencies and career centers supporting individuals with disabilities in obtaining employment.
<https://www.cmecworks.net/index.php>
- **Benefits Counseling:** If you are wondering how working will impact your social security benefits, a referral can be made by your vocational agency or service coordinator for **Work Without Limits** 1-877-YES-WORK. <https://workwithoutlimits.org/>

- **Department of Mental Health (DMH):** If you have a qualify mental health diagnosis which is the primary reason for your impairment, your Service Coordinator can work in collaboration with your DMH workers/case managers in order to best support you and your family. <https://www.mass.gov/orgs/massachusetts-department-of-mental-health>
- **Housing:**
 - **Family Support Center/Navigation:** If you live with your family and need assistance applying for housing, a referral can be made for Navigation through your family support center.
 - **Autism Housing Pathways (AHP):** <https://autismhousingpathways.org/> Housing can be confusing! This website helps walk you through different housing options in MA. There is also a great video that will walk you through the steps of applying to housing: <http://18section8.org/> . They also offer workshops.
 - **Guide to Obtaining Housing Assistance:** <https://www.mass.gov/guides/a-guide-to-obtaining-housing-assistance>
 - **MA Statewide Housing Application:** To complete the MA State-aided housing application: <https://publichousingapplication.ocd.state.ma.us/>
 - **Federal Housing Application:** <https://www.hud.gov/>
- **Independent Living Centers**
Independent Living Centers help people with disabilities learn to live more independently. They offer information and referral, peer support, skills training, advocacy, and transition services. Clients self-refer themselves and will be assessed for services.
 - **Center for Living and Working, Inc.** <https://www.centerlw.org/>
484 Main Street, Suite 345, Worcester, MA 01608.
 - **Metrowest Center for Independent Living** <https://mwcil.org/>
280 Irving Street, Framingham, MA 01702
- **Driving: Central Mass Safety Council:** (508) 835-2333 186 West Boylston St, Route 12- Wachusett Plaza, West Boylston, MA 01583. They offer adaptive driver training, there is a cost associated with these classes. Please contact them directly for more information/scheduling: <https://www.centralmasafety.org/index.html>
- **Emergency Services/Clinical Supports**
If you are experiencing a crisis or psychiatric emergency, it is important to know who your local Emergency Services provider is. They are available 24/7 to come out and do an assessment during psychiatric emergency situations. This service can be used as an alternative to hospitalization in certain situations:
 - **Riverside Emergency Services:**
 - **Milford and the Surrounding Communities: 800-294-4665**
 - **Southbridge and Surrounding Communities: 877-750-3127**
 - **Umass Memorial Health- Community Healthlink**
(Worcester and surrounding communities): **1-800-977-5555**