



Adult Day & Employment Services in Massachusetts

Supporting Students and Families Through the Transition to Adult
Services

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Turning 22 in Massachusetts

- ▶ **When students exit special education entitlement:**

- ▶ School services end
- ▶ Adult services begin
- ▶ Funding systems change
- ▶ Service coordinators become increasingly important
- ▶ Planning should begin years before exit

The Shift From School Services to Adult Services

▶ Important Difference

▶ School Services:

- ▶ Entitlement-based
- ▶ Driven by IDEA
- ▶ Schools coordinate supports
- ▶ Students receive services automatically through IEPs

▶ Adult Services:

- ▶ Eligibility-based
- ▶ Funding-dependent
- ▶ Individuals/families must apply

Services vary by need and availability

Educators Are Often the First Transition Guides

- ▶ Families frequently ask school teams:
 - ▶ “What happens after graduation?”
 - ▶ “Can my child work?”
 - ▶ “What adult programs exist?”
 - ▶ “How do we access DDS?”
 - ▶ “What if college is not the right fit?”
- ▶ Schools play a critical role in helping families:
 - ▶ Understand adult systems
 - ▶ Prepare for transition
 - ▶ Build realistic and meaningful post-school plans

Massachusetts Adult Service Systems

- ▶ Students may access adult services through:
 - ▶ Massachusetts DDS
 - ▶ MassAbility
 - ▶ MassHealth
 - ▶ Community providers/Adult service Agencies
- ▶ Educators do NOT need to become experts in every agency—but should understand the basic pathways.

What Is DDS?

- ▶ The Department of Developmental Services (DDS) supports individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities across Massachusetts. DDS provides:
 - ▶ Employment supports
 - ▶ Community Based Day Services
 - ▶ Residential supports
 - ▶ Family supports
 - ▶ Self-directed services
 - ▶ DDS refer for Masshealth funded Day Habilitation services

Who Is Eligible?

- ▶ Typically includes individuals with:
 - ▶ Intellectual disabilities
 - ▶ Autism spectrum disorder
 - ▶ Developmental disabilities with onset before age 22
- ▶ Eligibility involves:
 - ▶ Application process
 - ▶ Documentation review
 - ▶ Functional assessment
 - ▶ Assignment of DDS service coordinator

Traditional Services vs. Self-Direction

- ▶ DDS offers:
 - ▶ Traditional service models
 - ▶ Self-directed service models
- ▶ Key differences involve:
 - ▶ Flexibility
 - ▶ Control
 - ▶ Staffing responsibility
 - ▶ Budget management

Employment First Philosophy

▶ “Employment First”

▶ This means:

- ▶ Competitive integrated employment should always be explored first when appropriate.
- ▶ Adults with disabilities can work successfully with supports.

▶ Important for educators:

- ▶ Avoid making assumptions about employability.
- ▶ Focus on strengths and interests.

What Is Supported Employment?

- ▶ Supported employment helps adults:
 - ▶ Find jobs
 - ▶ Learn job skills
 - ▶ Maintain employment
 - ▶ Access job coaching
- ▶ Services may include:
 - ▶ Resume development
 - ▶ Interview practice
 - ▶ On-site coaching
 - ▶ Transportation support
 - ▶ Workplace accommodations
- ▶ Employment Placements can be individual or in a group

What is Community-Based Day Supports (CBDS)

- ▶ CBDS focuses on:
 - ▶ Community participation
 - ▶ Volunteer experiences
 - ▶ Recreation
 - ▶ Daily living skills
 - ▶ Social development
 - ▶ Community integration
- ▶ CBDS is often appropriate for individuals who:
 - ▶ Need structured daytime support
 - ▶ Benefit from community engagement
 - ▶ May work part-time or not yet be employment-ready
 - ▶ “Pathway to Employment”

What Is Day Habilitation?

- ▶ Day Habilitation (“Day Hab”) is a clinical and therapeutic day service for adults with developmental disabilities, funded by Masshealth. Participants are referred through DDS
- ▶ Common supports include:
 - ▶ Nursing services
 - ▶ Occupational therapy
 - ▶ Speech therapy
 - ▶ Physical therapy
 - ▶ Communication skills
 - ▶ Social skills
 - ▶ Wellness activities

How Day Hab Differs From School

▶ Important Distinction for Families

▶ Schools:

- ▶ Academic focus
- ▶ Educational entitlement
- ▶ Curriculum-driven

▶ Day Hab:

- ▶ Clinical/adult service model (consult)
- ▶ Skill maintenance and development
- ▶ Adult-focused programming

Who Benefits Most from Day Hab?

- ▶ Day Habilitation may be appropriate for individuals who:
 - ▶ Need clinical supports (Bx, OT, PT, SLP)
 - ▶ Need medical monitoring
 - ▶ Have intensive communication needs
 - ▶ Need therapies integrated into programming
 - ▶ Are not employment-focused at this time

Typical Day Hab Activities

- ▶ Examples activities may include, but are not limited to:
 - ▶ Cooking
 - ▶ Art
 - ▶ Exercise
 - ▶ Gardening
 - ▶ Music
 - ▶ Community outings
 - ▶ Sensory activities
 - ▶ Wellness programming

Traditional Service Model

▶ **Traditional Services**

- ▶ Provider agency:
 - ▶ Designs program
 - ▶ Hires staff
 - ▶ Manages schedules
 - ▶ Oversees budget
 - ▶ Coordinates services
- ▶ Advantages:
 - ▶ Lower family responsibility
 - ▶ Established structure
 - ▶ Predictable programming

Self – Directed Service Model

- ▶ Potential advantages:
 - ▶ Maximum customization
 - ▶ Flexible schedules
 - ▶ Tailored staffing
 - ▶ Community-integrated supports
 - ▶ Creative service design
- ▶ Examples:
 - ▶ Hiring independent support staff
 - ▶ Customized community activities
 - ▶ Individualized schedules

Agency with Choice (AWC)

▶ **Shared Responsibility Model**

▶ In AWC:

- ▶ Families help choose and supervise staff
- ▶ Agency acts as employer of record
- ▶ Agency handles payroll and HR functions
- ▶ Families direct daily services

Benefits of Agency with Choice

- ▶ Advantages:
 - ▶ Greater flexibility
 - ▶ Personalized schedules
 - ▶ Familiar staff relationships
 - ▶ Reduced administrative burden compared to full self-direction
- ▶ Good fit for:
 - ▶ Families wanting involvement without full employer responsibilities

Participant-Directed Program

▶ Highest Level of Flexibility

- ▶ Families or individuals:
 - ▶ Manage budgets
 - ▶ Hire staff directly
 - ▶ Set schedules
 - ▶ Design services
 - ▶ Make purchasing decisions within DDS guidelines

Transition Planning Best Practices

▶ **Effective School Practices**

- ▶ Begin early
- ▶ Invite adult agencies to meetings
- ▶ Hold transition fairs
- ▶ Encourage family to tour programs
- ▶ Include real-world experiences
- ▶ Teach self-determination skills

Age	School Team Focus
14–16	Begin transition conversations
16–18	Discuss DDS eligibility
18–20	Tour programs and agencies
20–21	Develop post-school plans
21–22	Finalize adult supports

Transition Planning Best Practices (Cont.)

Person-Centered Planning

▶ Focus on the Individual

- ▶ Ask:
 - ▶ What does the student enjoy?
 - ▶ What environments work best?
 - ▶ What support level is needed?
 - ▶ What are the student's strengths?
 - ▶ What does meaningful adulthood look like?

Building Self-Advocacy Skills

- ▶ Students should practice:
 - ▶ Making choices
 - ▶ Communicating preferences
 - ▶ Asking for help
 - ▶ Understanding accommodations
 - ▶ Participating in meetings
- ▶ Self-advocacy is one of the strongest predictors of adult success.

Transportation Planning

- ▶ Transportation can become a major barrier after graduation.
 - ▶ Important skills:
 - ▶ Community safety
 - ▶ Public transportation use
 - ▶ Ride scheduling
 - ▶ Travel training
 - ▶ Independent navigation
- ▶ Schools can incorporate these skills before age 22.

Common Family Concerns

- ▶ Families may worry about:
 - ▶ Safety
 - ▶ Staffing
 - ▶ Social opportunities
 - ▶ Loss of school structure
 - ▶ Adult loneliness
 - ▶ Transportation
 - ▶ Future planning
- ▶ Discuss these concerns during transition meetings.

Questions Families Should Ask DDS

- ▶ What services are available locally?
- ▶ Are waitlists involved?
- ▶ Can services be combined?
- ▶ What transportation exists?
- ▶ What self-direction options are available?
- ▶ How are staffing needs addressed?

Questions Families Should Ask Providers

- ▶ **Program Visit Checklist**

- ▶ Observe:

- ▶ Staff interactions
- ▶ Community participation
- ▶ Individual choice
- ▶ Engagement levels
- ▶ Employment opportunities
- ▶ Safety practices
- ▶ Communication supports

- ▶ Questions:

- ▶ How are goals developed?
- ▶ How is progress measured?
- ▶ What happens if needs change?

Key Takeaways

- ▶ Adult services are individualized
- ▶ There is no one “right” path
- ▶ Employment and community inclusion matter
- ▶ Families need guidance navigating systems
- ▶ Early planning improves outcomes

Massachusetts Resources

- ▶ **Key Resources for Educators & Families**
- ▶ [DDS Self-Direction Information](#)
- ▶ [DDS Turning 22 Services | Mass.gov](#)
- ▶ [MassHealth Day Habilitation program fact sheet | Mass.gov](#)