

# Deciding to Self-Direct

## Making Choices, Becoming Empowered

### A Guide for People with Disabilities



People receiving support through NJ's Division of Developmental Disabilities can choose to self-direct some or all of their services. When you self-direct, you are the boss! You choose who provides your supports and how. This guide provides information about self-directed services to help you decide if they are right for you.

# How Do I Know If Self-Directed Services Are Right for Me?

This guide helps you think about your life and whether self-directed services are right for you. You may want to include your family, friends, and others that know you well to help make this decision. Here's a summary of the steps you will follow in this guide and the information you'll find in each step:

## Step 1: Think About Your Life

Deciding whether to self-direct starts with knowing what you need and want in your life.

On **page 4**, you will find a tool to help you **Think About Your Life**. You can use this tool to share your dreams for the future with your Support Coordinator. They will help you plan for supports to achieve what you want and consider using self-directed services.

## Step 2: Learn About Self-Directed Services

On **page 5**, you will find information about **self-directed services**. There is also a list of reasons why people with disabilities might choose to self-direct and resources to help you learn more.

## Step 3: Make Your Decision

On **page 7** you will find questions to **Help You Decide** if using self-directed services is right for you. If you decide to self-direct some or all of your services, your Support Coordinator will make sure your choice is documented and authorized in your Individualized Service Plan (ISP).

## Step 4: Getting Help with Self-Directed Services

People who self-direct may choose to use Supports Brokerage services to help with arranging and managing their self-directed services. Information about Supports Brokerage can be found on **page 8**.

# Step 1: Think About Your Life

Deciding whether to self-direct starts with knowing what you need and want in your life.

Use the Life Trajectory Tool for Planning on **page 4** to **think about your life**. In the tool, you will find spaces to:

- share **your dreams for the future** and **what you don't want**.
- share **experiences, supports, or people** that have helped you to live the life you want or led to what you don't want.
- describe the **future**, how you may want to use self-directed services to help you achieve your good life, and things you want to make sure don't happen.

You may want to include your family, friends, Support Coordinator, and others who know you well as you think about your life. Your Support Coordinator can use this information to capture what you want for your life. They will help you plan for supports to achieve what you want and consider using self-directed services.

## Think about:



**Daily Life & Employment:**  
how you spend your day



**Community Living:**  
where and how you live



**Healthy Living:**  
managing health care and staying well



**Safety & Security:**  
maintaining rights and avoiding danger



**Social & Spirituality:**  
building friendships, relationships, and networks



**Advocacy & Engagement:**  
making choices, deciding goals, and having valued roles

# Life Trajectory Tool for Planning

## IN THE PAST

List what has supported you to have a good life in the past

List things in the past that led toward what you don't want

## MOVING FORWARD

List how you want to use self-directed services to help achieve your dreams now or in the future

List things to avoid that could lead toward what you don't want

## DREAMS FOR THE FUTURE

## WHAT I DON'T WANT

This resource was adapted from the Life Trajectory Tool for Planning developed by the University of Missouri-Kansas City Institute for Human Development available online here:

<https://www.lifecoursetools.com>

## Step 2: Learn About Self-Directed Services

### What are self-directed services?

**Self-directed services** provide people receiving services through NJ's Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) with an opportunity to choose who supports them and how. When someone self-directs, they hire, train, and supervise their own staff. Their staff are called **self-directed employees (SDE)**. Self-directed services frequently provide more choice and control than provider-managed services that handle all aspects of service delivery, including who provides support.

When you self-direct, you can hire someone who knows you well, or someone who you think would do the best job, to support you. You can train the person you hire to perform tasks based on how you want to be supported. You can create a schedule for your self-directed employee so you have assistance when you want and need it.

You can also self-direct by using your individual budget to purchase a program, class, or service available in your community (i.e. goods and services). These are businesses that anyone with or without a disability would use.

You can self-direct all of your services, or self-direct some services and use a provider agency for other services.



### What will I need to do if I self-direct?

Using self-directed services can be empowering and offers many benefits. They also require added responsibilities and more effort on your part. You and/or your family members or other representatives will need to find your own self-directed employee, plan for having the supports you need if the employee calls out, approve timesheets, and submit paperwork.

A financial management agency, called a **fiscal intermediary (FI)**, helps people who self-direct with some employer-related responsibilities. These include processing employee timesheets, payroll, and invoices, and issuing payments.

## Why do people with disabilities decide to self-direct?

There are many reasons people with disabilities decide to self-direct some or all of their services. Often, people make the decision to self-direct with the help of family and trusted members of their support circle.

People with disabilities may choose to self-direct because they want to:

- be in charge of where they go and what they do
- participate in more inclusive activities in their community
- choose the staff who support them
- find someone who can support them the way they prefer

## Where can I learn more about self-directed services?

Your Support Coordinator can provide you with information about self-directed services to help you decide if they are right for you. If you have questions your Support Coordinator cannot answer, you can:

- visit the Self-Directed Services/Self-Direction page on DDD's website:  
<https://nj.gov/humanservices/ddd/individuals/community/selfdirected/>
- check out *Understanding Self-Directed Services in New Jersey and the Role of the Supports Broker*:  
[boggscenter.rwjms.rutgers.edu/resources/publications/understanding-self-directed-services-in-new-jersey-and-the-role-of-the-supports-broker](http://boggscenter.rwjms.rutgers.edu/resources/publications/understanding-self-directed-services-in-new-jersey-and-the-role-of-the-supports-broker)
- contact DDD's Office of Education on Self-Directed Services:  
<https://www.nj.gov/humanservices/ddd/individuals/community/education/>  
email: [DDD.OESDS@dhs.nj.gov](mailto:DDD.OESDS@dhs.nj.gov)

# Step 3: Make Your Decision

## Questions to Help You Decide

Take time to think about your dreams for the future and what you have learned about self-directed services. You may want to include your family, friends, and others who know you well in writing down your answers, helping you decide, and figuring out where you might need assistance.



**YES**



**NO**

Do you want to be in charge of where you go and what you do?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you want to choose the self-directed employees that support you in your home and community?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you have someone in mind that might be a good fit to provide the support you need in your home or community?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are you prepared to train and coach the person you hire to support you based on your needs and preferences?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Can you create a schedule for your self-directed employee so you have support when you need?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are you prepared to provide feedback to your self-directed employee(s) about how they are doing and work together to improve if needed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are you interested in a program, class, or service available in your community?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are there other reasons you may want to self-direct? List them here:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Will you need help to self-direct? List ways you may need help:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

You can get help with these tasks from a Supports Broker. More information is available on the next page.

## Step 4: Getting Help with Self-Directed Services

People who self-direct may choose to use the **Supports Brokerage service** to help with arranging and managing their self-directed services. A **Supports Broker** helps people who self-direct with:

- planning, accessing, and managing self-directed services
- understanding the rules and responsibilities involved with self-directed services
- being a responsible employer by providing assistance with recruiting, interviewing, hiring, supervising, evaluating, and dismissing a self-directed employee
- finding community resources and building circles of support

If you decide to self-direct and are interested in getting help with your self-directed services, you can discuss Supports Brokerage options with your Support Coordinator.

More information about Supports Brokerage is available:

- on the Supports Brokerage page of DDD's website:  
<https://www.nj.gov/humanservices/ddd/individuals/community/brokerage/>
- in *Understanding Self-Directed Services in New Jersey and the Role of the Supports Broker*:  
[boggcenter.rwjms.rutgers.edu/resources/publications/understanding-self-directed-services-in-new-jersey-and-the-role-of-the-supports-broker](http://boggcenter.rwjms.rutgers.edu/resources/publications/understanding-self-directed-services-in-new-jersey-and-the-role-of-the-supports-broker)



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