

**Developmental Disabilities Services System of Care Plan Overview**  
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**How is the Developmental Disabilities Services (DDS) System of Care Plan (SOCP) Developed?**

The DDS System of Care Plan is required under §8725 of the Developmental Disabilities Act (DD Act) (Title 18 Chapter 204A). The links to the DD Act and the current SOCP can be found in the resource section below. The DD Act authorizes the department to administer developmental disabilities services in Vermont, establishes the principles of service, requires the development of a System of Care Plan (SOCP), outlines rules for applications for services, the handling of complaints and appeals and lists the rights of recipients of services. Of prime importance are the Principles of Service included in §8725 of the DD Act, as they guide our work:

- ***Children's Service:*** children need families and enduring relationships with adults in a nurturing home environment.
- ***Adult Services:*** adults, regardless of the severity of their disability, can make decisions for themselves.
- ***Full Information:*** People have a need complete information in order to make good decisions.
- ***Individualized Support:*** Services must be individualized to the capacities, needs and values of each individual.
- ***Family Support:*** Effective family support services shall be provided with respect and responsiveness to each family.

- **Meaningful Choices:** People with developmental disabilities and their families cannot make good decisions without meaningful choices.
- **Community Participation:** When people with disabilities are segregated from community life, all Vermonters are diminished.
- **Employment:** the goal of job support is to obtain and maintain paid employment in regular employment settings.
- **Accessibility:** Services must be geographically available.
- **Health and Safety:** The safety and health of people with developmental disabilities is of paramount concern.
- **Trained staff:** training is essential for all people who provide developmental disabilities services.
- **Fiscal Integrity:** The fiscal stability of the service system is dependent upon skillful and frugal management and sufficient resources to meet the needs of people with developmental disabilities.

The DD Act also establishes an advisory board, known as the DDS State Program Standing Committee. The role of the DDS State Program Standing Committee is to advise the department on the status and needs of people with developmental disabilities and their families and also to advise regarding the development of the SOCP (§8733).

The SOCP is required to be developed every three years and outline “a plan for the nature, extent, allocation and timing of services that will be provided to persons with developmental disabilities and their families.” Each plan must include:

1. Priorities for continuation of existing programs and development of new programs;
2. Criteria for receiving funding and services or funding; and
3. A process for evaluating and assessing the success of programs.

The DD Act (§8725 (b)) specifies that each plan shall:

1. Be based upon information obtained from people who receive services and other key stakeholders;
2. Include a comprehensive needs assessment, demographic information about people with developmental disabilities, information about existing services and characteristics of unserved and underserved individuals and the reasons for gaps in services and varying community needs and resource; and
3. The Commissioner shall determine the priorities of the plan based on funds available.

I have provided the timeline for development of the SOCP for SFY 2015 – 2017 for your information and am happy to review that with you. Information about who is served by DDS, funding and priorities, the specific services available and system development activities are included in the SOCP itself, while required information about demographic information, needs, existing services and other data are included in the Developmental Disabilities Services Annual Report.

## **How is the System of Care Plan Changed During its Term?**

The DD Act requires the department to make annual revisions to the SCOP as needed (§8725(d)). Some examples of when it might be necessary to make an annual revision to the SOCP include when the State wishes to implement a new service or model that is not already included in the existing plan or to administer services effectively and within the limits of available funding. When it is determined that the SOCP requires a revision, the department follows the same requirement as it does for the comprehensive 3-year plans by submitting the proposed changes to the DDS State Program Standing Committee for its advice and recommendations no later than 60 days before adopting any changes. With both the comprehensive 3-year plan and annual revisions, in addition to consulting the DDS State Program Standing Committee, the department typically posts the proposed changes, notifies interested stakeholders of the proposed changes, and invites broad public comment through hearings and/or accepting written comments.

## **What Services Does and Doesn't the SOCP Include?**

The SOCP addresses all state and federally funded developmental disabilities services that are administered by the department and in accordance with the 1115 Global Commitment Medicaid Waiver. The largest portion of funding goes to home- and community-based services including:

- Service Coordination
- Community Supports
- Employment Supports
- Respite
- Clinical Services
- Crisis Services
- Home Supports
- Transportation

The SOCP also includes other services such as funding for the state's one 6-bed Intermediate Care Facility for People with Developmental Disabilities (ICF/DD), Targeted Case Management, Flexible Family Funding, Bridge Care Coordination for Children with Developmental Disabilities, and funding for Pre-Admission Screening and Resident Review (PASRR) individuals in nursing homes that may qualify for specialized services. The SOCP also discusses some programs that are administered by other divisions of the department or other AHS departments that can serve people with developmental disabilities. The expectation is that these services not duplicate, but coordinate with any services administered by the department.

## **Who Does and Doesn't the SOCP Include Services for?**

The SOCP includes services for Vermonters with developmental disabilities as defined by §8722 of the DD Act, including people with an intellectual disability or a Pervasive Developmental Disorder which occurred before age 18 and which has significant deficits in adaptive behavior that were manifest before 18. The DD Act also allows services to support family members, such as respite. The Regulations for Implementing the Developmental Disabilities Act of 1990 (link provided below) provide additional guidance regarding eligibility and other matters.

## **What Are the Eligibility Requirements for Developmental Disabilities Services?**

The eligibility criteria to receive developmental disabilities services are outlined in Section 3 of the regulations. In brief, in order to receive developmental disabilities home-and community-based services, a person must have a developmental disability as defined by the DD Act, be a Vermont resident and be eligible for Medicaid. Additionally, a person must be assessed to meet one of the State's 6 Funding Priorities established in the SOCP. Some priorities apply to individuals in specific circumstances or of a certain age:

- Health and Safety
- Public Safety
- Preventing Institutionalization – Nursing Homes
- Preventing Institutionalization –Psychiatric Hospitals or ICF/DD
- Employment for High School Graduates
- Parenting

## **What Happens to Individuals Who Don't Get Services?**

In looking at the broad array of developmental disabilities services, we estimate that in SFY 12 approximately 30% of Vermonters who meet the definition for developmental disability receive services. Specifically looking at developmental disabilities home-and community-based services, it is estimated they represent about 19% of Vermonters who would meet a clinical and funding eligibility for comprehensive services. The Vermont Council of Developmental and Mental Health Services reported that in SFY 13 a total of 713 intakes were completed by the Designated Agencies for people seeking developmental disabilities services. Of those, nearly 30% of people were referred for other services and nearly 57% of people were found to meet the clinical eligibility criteria and 55% of those were found to also meet a SOCP priority. Overall, 30% of people seeking services had a funding application reviewed by the State Funding Committees.<sup>1</sup>

Whenever possible, when a person is found ineligible or is found not to meet a funding priority, the person is referred for other services. When a person is found clinically eligible, but does not meet a funding priority he or she may be able to access other services such as targeted case management or Flexible Family Funding providing funding is available to serve the person. In

other cases, people may be referred to other services, from subsidized housing, to mental health services, to home delivered meals and/or programs such as 3 Squares VT, fuel assistance or other Medicaid State Plan services.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide you with this information related to Developmental Disabilities and the Vermont's System of Care Plan. Please do not hesitate to be in touch if I can be of any further assistance.

### **Additional Resources:**

Developmental Disabilities Act of 1996:

<http://www.leg.state.vt.us/statutes/fullchapter.cfm?Title=18&Chapter=204A>

Vermont System of Care Plan for Developmental Disabilities Services, 2014 Update:

<http://www.ddas.vermont.gov/ddas-programs/programs-dds/socp-2014-update>

Regulations Implementing the Developmental Disabilities Act of 1996:

<http://dail.vt.gov/dail-statutes/statutes-ddas-dds-documents/dd-regs-3-11>

Report of the Developmental Disabilities Services Legislative Work Group Regarding Act 50

<http://dail.vermont.gov/dail-projects/dds-legislative-work-group/ds-legislative-work-group-report-1>

Developmental Disabilities Services SFY 2012 Annual Report

<http://www.ddas.vermont.gov/what-s-new/whats-new-documents/annual-report-sfy-2012>

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<sup>1</sup> Report of the Developmental Disabilities Services Legislative Work Group Regarding: Act 50, page 9. Submitted by Douglas Racine, Secretary, Vermont Agency of Human Services and Susan Wehry, Commissioner, Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living to the Joint Fiscal Committee. September 11, 2013.