

Consumer Directed Attendant FAQs

Often people with developmental disabilities receive assistance through the [Medicaid Waiver](#) program to get 1:1 caregivers. When the person with a disability and their support team decide they'd like to choose who to hire and how to train that caregiver, it is called "Consumer Directed Services." This handout is a shortened version of a [longer resource guide on Consumer Directed services](#) to give some quick tips and ideas about using this option.

Advantages of Consumer Directed Services

The greatest benefit of consumer directed services, sometimes called CD services, is that you can choose exactly who will provide you with supports. If you have an unusual medical or behavioral need, you can look for someone with expertise in that field. If you love music, you can search for someone who would like to help you go to concerts, buy albums, and dance. You can hire as many people as you want and work out with them what their schedule may be. You could decide you want some people there on a routine schedule and some people "on call" for backup or as-needed respite.

Disadvantages of Consumer Directed Services

Anyone who utilizes CD services would tell you there is a lot of work involved. In this situation, you are the employer, or you can choose to have someone close to you (e.g. a parent) serve in that role. You will search for staff, conduct interviews, hire, train, and terminate staff as appropriate. If your staff call you to say they cannot make it in for their shift, you are responsible for finding backup support or providing the support yourself. In agency directed services, the agency is required to provide backup staff, though that does not work flawlessly either. You must ensure staff use your Waiver's electronic timesheet system and submit all timesheets and paperwork to get paid for their work.

Combining with Other Services

If you would like to use other Waiver services (e.g., in-home skill building, employment supports, using an agency to provide attendants), you can do that. You'll work with your Waiver team, including DD Waiver Support Coordinator and DD and CCC Plus Waiver Service Facilitators, to make a plan, request services, and get them authorized for use.

Rate of Pay

In 2026, the hourly reimbursement rate in Northern Virginia is \$17.97. You may not supplement the hourly rate for Medicaid attendants. When they're hired, they agree to accept the Medicaid rate of pay for their work. *You may hire your Waiver attendant privately for additional hours beyond your Waiver hours. During those privately hired hours, you may pay the attendant a rate you feel is appropriate.*

Finding an Attendant

Many people opt to have a family member, friend, or neighbor work as a paid caregiver. In addition, here are other options to explore to find the right person:

1. Post an ad at websites like www.care.com or sittercity.com.
2. Consider general jobs websites like facebook.com, [linkedin](http://linkedin.com), and craigslist.org to share the job.



3. Post an add in your neighborhood newsletter/listserv/social media page, with your house of worship, or in a local community group. Sometimes people will consider this job more seriously if it is in close proximity to their home, reducing commuting time.
4. A local non-profit, SPARC, has a service called Personal Support Attendant (PSA) Match. For a flat fee, they'll write adds, interview and screen candidates, and help with the process.
<https://sparcsolutions.org/>
5. If you live near a community college, nursing school, or university, get in touch with them. Students learning about social work, psychology, special education, nursing, and other similar fields are often very interested in attendant care jobs. Often these students are comfortable with the rate of pay offered by the Waiver and are available on nights and weekends.
6. Talk to friends who use Waivers. They may have an attendant who works for them who needs more hours or is looking for a new client.
7. Tell people in your life you're looking for someone and ask them to recommend anyone they know who may be a good fit.
8. Ask staff who work with your loved one at school, work, day programs or other settings if they'd like to work with them in their home, too.
9. Consider asking grandparents, peers at school who are 18+ years old, neighbors, and other people who may not be the best for ongoing care if they'd be willing to be backup options.

Hiring and Training

Once you've found the right caregiver, work with your Waiver team on paperwork to get their background check completed and getting them enrolled to work. Keep copies of all documents submitted and follow up to ensure they're processed.

Once the new attendant is enrolled with the payroll agency, make a checklist of what you expect them to do. Be clear, and give instructions in writing whenever possible. Offer shadowing for the first few days on the job until everyone is comfortable with their new role. Make a plan to meet after a month, or two, or three to check in and assess how it is going.

More Information

- To learn more about Waivers and see the full Consider Directed Services resource guide, visit our resource library at <https://thearcofnova.org/resource-library/>.
- To see videos on Waivers and Consumer Directed services, visit <https://www.youtube.com/user/VideosatTheArcofNoVA>.
- For information on service options across a lifespan in Northern Virginia, visit The Arc of Northern Virginia's Transition POINTS website at <https://thearcofnova.org/programs/transition/> where you'll find guidebooks and toolkits for people with DD at any stage of life.

www.TheArcofNoVA.org and ask questions at www.thearcofnova.org/answers

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