

On one side is the possibility of **loss, injury, or disappointment**; but on the other side, risk can be seen as the possibility for **opportunity, success, and personal growth**. Although taking risks provides people the opportunity for personal growth, we have choice in the degree of risk to which we expose ourselves.

Some common risks that people expose themselves to everyday include:

- Social Risks: Being shunned by a community group or rejected by someone within the community.
- Personal Risks: Consequences when choosing not to follow recommended supports or services, failure to take care of one's physical wellbeing, or health care needs.
- Financial Risks: The potential of losing one's home, money, family, friends, jobs, etc.
- Relationship Risks: The possibility of not being liked, of heartbreak, or feelings of loneliness.
- Employment Risks: Failure to find work, difficulty getting to the work site, failure to perform the job functions appropriately, or of being fired from a job.
- Educational Risks: Failing a class or failing to get the degree you are seeking.

Although there is no such thing as a risk free life, everyone involved in supporting individuals we serve must accept some level of responsibility for helping to mitigate potential risks.

Individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities are often more vulnerable to risk. Some of these vulnerabilities may be very real while some are projected or anticipated based on assumptions and/or fears. Whether real or perceived, all efforts must be made throughout the person centered planning process to identify potential risks and vulnerabilities (including behavioral and health considerations) and to work with individuals to develop meaningful, valid, and appropriate safeguards. The reverse means overprotection, which prevents individuals we support from living the life they consider to be meaningful and productive.

Recommended areas to be considered for safeguard planning include the extent by which an individual can:

- Advocate for themselves;
- Attend to their daily activities;
- Manage their personal health and wellness;
- Manage their potential mental health considerations;
- Identify and use personal coping strategies for interfering behavior challenges; or
- Take action to support personal safety in their home and community environments.

Informed choice and decision making means taking responsibility and knowing consequences from the risk in front of you. For people who have not had a rich experiential base in decisions and choice making, consequences and responsibilities represent important elements for exploration to each choice made. The term informed choice refers to a person's knowledge of the consequence and responsibility of the decisions he/she is about to make. Therefore, people making choices need to understand more fully their responsibilities, and the possible consequences when making choices.

Through meaningful conversations with the person in the planning process, the review of these areas where safeguards may be needed are not meant to be a deterrent to an individualized plan of support, but an opportunity to identify approaches to support the person in a way that will mitigate or reduce the potential risks. Through thoughtful approaches to real life concerns, supports from both natural and paid support givers can be identified to help the person achieve the outcomes that are most important to them.

Overview of Self-Direction Services

In addition to the Broker and Fiscal Intermediary, which will help manage the budget, there are several other services that are available and can be purchased through self direction.

Individual Directed Goods and Services (IDGS)

Individual Directed Goods and Services (IDGS) are services, equipment or supplies not otherwise provided through OPWDD's HCBS waiver or through the Medicaid State Plan that address an identified need in the service plan. Self-Direction funds cannot be used to purchase an IDGS service that is available under the State Plan. Total IDGS expenditures are limited to \$32,000 annually or the person's PRA, whichever is less.

IDGS can be used to fully purchase or contribute towards the purchase of items or services which meet all of the following criteria:

- Are related to a need or goal identified in the Life Plan
- Are for the purpose of increasing independence
- Promote opportunities for community living and inclusion and/or increase the safety and independence in the home
- Are able to be accommodated without compromising health or safety
- Are provided to, or directed exclusively toward, the benefit of the individual

Examples of services that fall under the IDGS category are:

Transportation

Can be used to reimburse mileage costs when a person needs transportation to/from a service-related activities. This can also be used to help pay for public transportation. In order to be reimbursable under IDGS, the transportation costs and mileage must be related to a service within the Self-Direction Budget.

Health Clubs and Organizational Memberships

Funding for a gym or health club may be reimbursed through IDGS to support health and fitness or community integration. Memberships are for the individual only; family or staff memberships cannot be reimbursed. The club/organization must offer open enrollment to the public and the reimbursed fee must be the same as the published membership duties/fees.

Some examples of what can or cannot be reimbursed can include, but are not limited to:

Reimbursable	Non-Reimbursable
Ski Club Membership	Ski resort lift tickets or equipment rental
Museum or zoo membership	Tickets or season pass to water park
Pony Club membership	Horseback riding helmet
Girl Scout/Boy Scout dues	Scout uniform and trip expenses
Membership dues for a bowling league	Bowling shoe rental fee

Community Classes

Community based classes that teach a subject, are open to the public, and result in active engagement and participation in integrated community settings can be purchased through IDGS in the budget. Participation in specialized classes that take special needs, such as physical limitations or beginner level learning, into consideration are appropriate as long as those specialized classes are open to the broader public. Private classes and lessons are allowable as long as they relate to an integration goal and the lessons are not taking place privately for the purpose of segregating the participant.

Camp

Camp programs may be funded using IDGS if the camp is in New York State. Reimbursement is only available for camps that are not funded as a Waiver Respite Camp. These camps can be attended; however, they would be included in the budget as Direct Provider Purchased Respite.

Clinical Direct Service Provision (Direct Therapies)

There are only a handful of specialized direct therapies that can be built into a Self-Direction Budget. The approvable therapies are:

1. Hippo Therapy
2. Therapeutic Riding
3. Aquatic Therapy
4. Art Therapy
5. Massage Therapy

6. Music Therapy
7. Play Therapy

** Speech, Physical Therapy, and Occupational Therapy **ARE NOT** therapies that can be built into a Self-Direction Plan. These types of therapies can be accessed through use of your Medicaid State Plan Benefit card or other primary insurance carriers.

Household Related Items and Services

This is an area under IDGS where certain services or appliances can be reimbursed for those individuals living on their own. The service or appliance must help the individual live more independently and/or help ensure their safety. Household supports can include cleaning, minor maintenance, snow removal, or lawn mowing only for individuals not living in their family home

Other Than Personal Services (OTPS)

People may elect to use up to \$3,000 in 100% state funding for items that are not Medicaid fundable under this category. For any item or service to be approved for OTPS funding in any category, it must pass ALL of the following four tests:

- Be related to a valued outcome
- Increase independence and/or health and safety
- Not be an OTPS excluded item
- Not be funded through any other source

Examples of OTPS approved categories include:

1. Phone service – cell and/or land line*
2. Internet* (in instances where a participant has a cable package, OTPS can be used for phone and internet only, but not the cable portion)
3. Software related to the person's disability
4. Staff activity fees (self-hired staff only) to cover the cost incurred by staff when providing support to the self directing person in activities that support a valued outcome.
5. Staff advertising/recruitment can cover some of the cost of placing an employment ad in the newspaper or any employment websites.
6. Personal Use Transportation is used to pay for public transportation such as a bus pass, taxi or Uber to transport individuals to and from a waiver service or a service that is in the staff action plan.

7. Clothing* (capped at \$250)
8. Board Stipend* is to cover the cost of food for the self direction participant
9. Utilities* can cover the cost of the utility bill for an individual or family.
10. Other goods and services that increase independence
11. Other goods and services related to health and safety

* These items with an asterisk (landline, internet, clothing, utilities, and board stipend) are not reimbursable in OTPS for children under 18 years old where parents are responsible for these costs.

Family Reimbursed Respite (FRR)

Family Reimbursed Respite is in addition to or in place of Waiver Respite services that are either Direct Provider Purchased, Agency Supported, or Self-Hired. Funding can be provided to assist families to pay a person whom they trust to supervise their son or daughter.

Family Reimbursed Respite is paid for with 100% State funds and is capped at \$3,000 annually. This service is designed to be used as needed, up to the amount budgeted.

Housing Subsidy

Individuals who choose to live independently or who share a living environment may be able to include a housing subsidy in their budgets. The amount of the Housing Subsidy is calculated based on income and depends on the Housing and Community Renewal payment standards.

Glossary of Terms

- **Broker:** a professional who educates the person/family on Self-Directed service options, and assists the person in developing a Self-Direction budget, writing Staff Action Plans and facilitating Circle of Support meetings.
- **Budget Authority:** one of two “authority” choices in Self-Direction in which the person/family has the authority to make budget decisions, including hourly staff pay, in addition to hiring, firing and supervising staff.
- **Care Manager (CM):** a professional, selected by the person and/or family who helps the person access supports and services.
- **Circle of Support:** consists of the person, the Support Broker and the Care Manager. The person may choose to invite other family, friends and professionals who are committed to helping him/her live a self-directed life.
- **Community Habilitation:** a service that supports people to live in the home of their choice, and spend their time doing things that interest them, with people of their choosing. Supports include: teaching /assisting with daily living skills, facilitating community inclusion and relationship building, and training and support for community activities.
- **Developmental Disabilities Profile (DDP-2):** a needs-assessment tool. Scores from this assessment are used in developing the Personal Resource Allocation for the Self-Direction budget.
- **Developmental Disabilities Regional Office (DDRO):** OPWDD’s local offices which oversee and coordinate delivery of Medicaid Waiver services.
- **DOL:** Department of Labor
- **Effective Date:** a calendar date on which the Self-Direction budget can begin paying for goods and services.
- **Employer Authority:** one of the two “authority” choices in Self-Direction in which the person/family makes staffing decisions only. The hourly pay are set by the provider agency contracted by the person/family to provide staffing.
- **Fiscal Intermediary (FI):** a not-for-profit agency that serves as “employer of record” for Self-Direction plans with Budget Authority. The FI conducts background checks, collects service-related documentation, pays for or reimburses for budget-approved goods and services, and provides payroll/benefit services.
- **Individual Directed Good and Services (IDGS):** services, equipment or supplies not otherwise available through OPWDD’s HCBS Waiver or through regular Medicaid that address an identified need in a person’s ISP.
- **Lifepan:** a document prepared by the care manager and based on information gathered from the person during Person-Centered Planning. The Lifepan provides a detailed profile of the person, and identifies natural and community supports, Medicaid State Plan and/or Medicaid Waiver supports, and safeguards necessary to help the person achieve their dreams.

- **Medicaid Waiver:** an authority granted to states by the federal government to develop delivery or payment methods for Medicaid supports, such as Self-Direction, that are a departure from those approved in the Medicaid State Plan.
- **Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD):** state agency responsible for coordinating services for people with developmental disabilities.
- **Person-Centered Planning:** a process that aims to understand the person’s vision for a meaningful life, considering his/her strengths and abilities, needs, and planning for outcomes consistent with that vision; This process takes place through a series of conversations between the person, family (as needed), the CM, and/or Support Broker.
- **Personal Resource Allocation (PRA):** the maximum amount of money, based on the needs-assessment, which can be budgeted to pay for the person’s supports and services.
- **Self-Direction Budget:** a detailed budget developed by the Support Broker using an OPWDD-provided Excel template with an itemized amount of money to be allocated for supports and services included in a person’s Lifeplan.
- **Self-Direction Information Session:** a training session, conducted by the Self-Direction Liaison at the local DDRO, for people/families seeking to self-direct their services and supports.
- **Self-Direction Liaison:** a DDRO staff-member who provides training on OPWDD’s Self-Direction option to people/families, Support Brokers and Fiscal Intermediaries; Liaisons also review and approve Self-Direction budgets.
- **Staff Action Plan:** staff action plans provide self-hired staff with valued outcomes identified by the person in their plan, and the supports and safeguards staff are expected to provide to help achieve those outcomes.
- **Start-Up Budget:** a preliminary budget developed by the Support Broker and sent to the Self-Direction Liaison for approval. Once approved, the process of developing the comprehensive Self-Direction Budget can begin.

Agency Contact Information

Amy Bauer
Self-Direction Program Director
315-927-0189
amy.bauer@thearcolc.org

Fiscal Intermediaries

Amanda Aldrich
315-927-0188
amanda.aldrich@thearcolc.org

Jessica White
315-927-0184
jessica.white@thearcolc.org

Brokers

Aida Ahmetovic
315-927-0187
aida.ahmetovic@thearcolc.org

Daniel Guarno
315-927-0186
daniel.guarno@thearcolc.org

Nicole Dunbar
315-927-0185
nicole.dunbar@thearcolc.org

Fax Number

315-272-1798