

# The Individual and Family Support Program (IFSP)

## IFSP: First Steps

Your guide to understanding resources, supports, and services that the Commonwealth of Virginia offers to people with developmental disabilities (DD) and their families

*Revised August 2024*



**DBHDS**   
Virginia Department of Behavioral Health  
and Developmental Services

  
**My Life,  
My Community**



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*Use your mobile device to scan this QR code, or visit*  
**<https://mylifemycommunityvirginia.org/ifsp-first-steps>**

# Welcome! We're here to help!

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**We recognize that navigating the developmental disability system can be hard for families.** The Individual and Family Support Program (IFSP) at the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS) made this guide to help individuals and families understand resources, supports, and services that the Commonwealth of Virginia offers to people with developmental disabilities. We hope you will find this resource useful!

It includes the following information:

- how to access Virginia's Medicaid Waivers for Developmental Disabilities (DD Waivers),
- links to our one-stop information website, My Life, My Community,
- a summary of the IFSP, and
- a list of resources for people who are on Virginia's DD Waivers Waiting List ("the Waitlist").

For more detailed information about the resources named in this document, we invite you to visit our website at [mylifemycommunityvirginia.org](https://mylifemycommunityvirginia.org) or call My Life, My Community operators at **844-603-9248**.

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## What is the Individual and Family Support Program?

The IFSP helps individuals and families by providing:

- **Financial assistance:** Visit our webpage to learn more about eligibility and how to apply: <https://mylifemycommunityvirginia.org/ifsp-funding>
- **Education, information, and referrals:** Visit My Life, My Community, our one-stop online tool, to find what you need: <https://mylifemycommunityvirginia.org>
- **Peer mentoring:** Connect with peers with disabilities through The Arc of Virginia's Peer Mentoring Program! Visit <https://thearcofva.org/peer-mentoring>
- **Family mentoring:** Want guidance or support from someone who has been there? The Family to Family Network at the Center for Family Involvement can help! Visit <https://cfi.partnership.vcu.edu>
- **Community coordination:** Ready to give back to your community and have your voice heard? Consider joining your IFSP Regional Council. Visit <https://mylifemycommunityvirginia.org/connect-ifsp-regional-councils>

To get updates directly from the IFSP, please sign up for our email list at <http://tiny.cc/ifsp-email>. This is the best way to get the most up-to-date information from us!

To speak with a live operator, you can call My Life, My Community at **844-603-9248** (Monday through Friday, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.). Operators can help you find the Community Services Board or Behavioral Health Authority (CSB/BHA) that serves your area. They can also help you navigate the My Life, My Community website, and can share information about the resources named in this document.

**NOTE:** Some families may know of or receive services through an Individualized Family Service Plan (also known as an IFSP) through the Infant and Toddler Connection of Virginia. The Individual and Family Support Program at DBHDS is not the same program!

# Virginia Developmental Disability “DD” Waivers



This is a brief overview of Virginia’s Developmental Disability Waivers (DD Waivers). You can find more detailed information in the *Navigating the DD Waivers Guide* (<http://tiny.cc/dd-waivers-guidebook>).

## What is a developmental disability?

A “developmental disability” is usually a lifelong disability that can affect a person’s day-to-day physical function, learning, language, or behavior. Developmental disabilities can often—but not always—begin in early childhood.



To read how Virginia defines “developmental disabilities,” visit <http://tiny.cc/VAC-definitions>, or use your mobile device to scan this QR code.

## What is a DD Waiver? DD Waivers help people with

developmental disabilities, including an intellectual disability, live at home and in their communities. Virginia has 3 types of DD Waivers (read more at <https://mylifemycommunityvirginia.org/dd-waivers-info>). Each type provides access to a different level of supports and services for employment, independent living, and other needs.

**How are DD Waivers assigned?** Waivers are assigned based on the urgency of need for support. Individuals who meet the eligibility criteria are placed on the needs-based waiting list due to the limited number of waivers funded by the Virginia General Assembly. This list is called the DD Waivers Waiting List (also called “the Waitlist”). It is not a chronological waiting list. (For more information about the Waitlist, you can review Section 3 of the *Navigating the DD Waivers Guide*.)

**What DD services are available?** The services and supports you can receive within the service system are based on individual needs. In Virginia, the service system helps people with developmental disabilities and their families across the entire lifespan, from birth to adulthood. (For more information, you can review Section 7 of the *Navigating the DD Waivers Guide*.)

The service system includes the following:

- service providers,
- advocacy organizations,
- public agencies, and
- nonprofit partners.

**Where do I start?** Contact your local Community Services Board or Behavioral Health Authority (CSB/BHA) (<https://vacsb.org/csb-bha-directory>) and ask for a DD Waiver screening to start the process. Local CSB/BHAs are entry points to DD Waiver services in your region. CSB/BHAs provide community assistance for people who:

- are in crisis,
- have behavioral health needs, and/or
- have developmental disabilities.

To find your local CSB/BHA, visit My Life, My Community. Type in your city, county, or zip code. Then type “CSB or BHA” in the topic box.

To learn more about state assistance for people of all ages with DD, please visit the DD Waivers Information page on My Life, My Community: <https://mylifemycommunityvirginia.org/dd-waivers-info>

# Support Coordination/Case Management (SC/CM)

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**What is support coordination?** Support coordination is when a support coordinator (SC) helps you find the supports and services you need. Support coordination is also called “case management” (CM). SCs are the point of contact for DD Waivers and the Waitlist.

**How can I get support coordination?** Contact your local CSB/BHA (<https://vacsb.org/csb-bha-directory>) to ask about support coordination. Your CSB/BHA staff will guide you through the process of determining eligibility for support coordination (read more at <http://tiny.cc/sccm-options>).

The process starts with an assessment. The assessment verifies that you have a developmental disability. It also identifies the services and supports that you need. During the assessment, your SC will ask you questions from an assessment tool called the Virginia Intellectual and Developmental Disability Eligibility Survey (VIDES). The information from the assessment lets your SC know if you are eligible for the DD Waivers. Based on your responses, your SC can work with you to develop an individualized plan.

If you are eligible for the Waivers, you will be added to the Waitlist.

**What if I’m on the Waitlist?** You can still receive support coordination services if you meet certain criteria, especially if you have a special service need. Your SC will work with you to ensure you get the necessary support while you wait for waiver services (read more at <http://tiny.cc/sccm-options>).

**How do I get help for my infant or toddler (under the age of 3)?** Early Intervention Services (EI) helps families with children who are:

- under the age of 3,
- not developing as expected, and
- have a medical condition that can delay normal development.

EI services also help parents and caregivers support their children with everyday services. Services are available for all eligible children and their families. This is true whether you can pay for the services or not. To learn more about EI services, contact the Infant and Toddler Connection of Virginia at <https://itcva.online>.

**How do I get help for a child older than 3?** If your child is older than 3, you should contact your local school system.

Your local school system offers services to help your child succeed in school through Special Education services. To connect with the special education program at your local school system, visit the Virginia Department of Education’s Virginia School Directories: <https://www.doe.virginia.gov/about-vdoe/virginia-school-directories>

**Where else can I go for help?** Community-based supports may also be available. To learn more about state programs and supports in your local community, visit the IFSP’s “Resources for Families” webpage (<https://mylifemycommunityvirginia.org/resources>) or contact your local CSB/BHA (<https://vacsb.org/csb-bha-directory>).

To find out about supports for children with special health care needs, visit the Virginia Department of Health Care Connection for Children (<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/care-connection-for-children>) and Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT) (<http://tiny.cc/epsdt>).



# Resources for People with DD in Virginia



If you or a loved one has a developmental disability, is on the DD Waivers Waiting List, or has a DD Waiver, then you may be eligible for the supports listed here. You can also find more resources at <https://mylifemycommunityvirginia.org/ifsp-first-steps>!

## Help with Finding Resources

- The IFSP partners with disabilityNavigator to provide **My Life, My Community**, an online tool that helps individuals and families gain knowledge and connect to resources in their community. Explore the site to find general information on waivers, providers, and services: [mylifemycommunityvirginia.org](https://mylifemycommunityvirginia.org)
- Local Community Services Boards/Behavioral Health Authorities (CSB/BHA) have **support coordinators/case managers (SCs/CMs)** who can answer your general questions about waivers and services. Support coordinators/case managers should be your point of contact if something changes, or if you need help sooner: <http://tiny.cc/sccm-options>

## Connecting with Others

- Peer support for self-advocates and people with disabilities through The Arc of Virginia's **Peer Mentoring Program**: <https://thearcofva.org/peer-mentoring>
- Emotional, informational, and systems navigational support for families through the VCU Center for Family Involvement's **Family to Family (F2F) Program**: <https://cfi.partnership.vcu.edu>
- Connections to other families in your community through the **IFSP Regional Councils**: <https://mylifemycommunityvirginia.org/connect-ifsp-regional-councils>

## Getting Personalized Help or General Assistance

- Financial assistance through the **Individual and Family Support Program (IFSP) Funding Program** (<https://mylifemycommunityvirginia.org/ifsp-funding>). Read the **Beyond IFSP-Funding** document to find suggestions for free or reduced-cost alternatives for items or services typically purchased with IFSP funds: <http://tiny.cc/beyond-ifsp-funding>

## Health Services and Health Advocacy

- Maintenance and repair of your Durable Medical Equipment (DME), assistive technology (AT), and physical therapy consultations through the DBHDS Office of Integrated Health's **Mobile Rehab Engineering Team**: <http://tiny.cc/dbhds-mre>

## Health Services and Advocacy (continued)

- Assistance overcoming barriers and accessing dental care through the DBHDS Office of Integrated Health's **Dental Program**: <http://tiny.cc/dbhds-dental>
- Assistance navigating complex health services and advocating for access and quality care in addition to **training resources and opportunities** (<http://tiny.cc/dbhds-oih>) through DBHDS Office of Integrated Health's Community Nursing: <http://tiny.cc/dbhds-community-nursing>

## Resources for Youth

- If your child is under the age of 3 years old, they may be eligible for **Early Intervention Services** through the Infant and Toddler Connection. Learn more: <https://itcva.online>

## Resources for Transition-Age and Adults

- If your child is between 14-22 years old and enrolled in an approved education program, they may receive **Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)** through the Division of Rehabilitative Services at DARS (<http://tiny.cc/dars-transition>). These services include job exploration counseling, work-based learning, workplace readiness training, instruction in self-advocacy, and counseling on postsecondary education. To learn about vocational rehabilitation or other employment services in general, contact **your local DARS field office**: <http://tiny.cc/dars-field-offices>
- **Rent or housing assistance** through one of DBHDS's Integrated, Independent Housing Resources: <https://mylifemycommunityvirginia.org/independent-housing>
- Virginia now formally recognizes **Supported Decision-Making Agreements (SDMAs)** as an alternative to more restrictive substitute decision-making options, such as legal guardianships. SDMAs give individuals with DD the ability to receive support with making various choices in their lives while also retaining all of their rights, including the right to make their own decisions: <http://tiny.cc/dbhds-sdma>

# Crisis Services and General Information

If you need immediate help for an individual with developmental disabilities experiencing a behavioral or mental health crisis, please contact **the REACH crisis services program in your region** (<http://tiny.cc/reach-crisis>) for assistance.

The REACH program is the statewide crisis system of care that is designed to meet the crisis support needs of individuals who have a developmental disability and are experiencing crisis events as a result of a behavioral or mental health support need that puts them at risk for homelessness, incarceration, hospitalization, and/or danger to themselves or others. REACH services are available statewide, with one regional program being located in each of the Commonwealth's five DBHDS services regions (Western/Region 1, Northern/Region 2, Southwestern/Region 3, Central/Region 4, and Eastern/Region 5).

The **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline** offers 24/7 call, text, and chat access to trained crisis workers who can help people experiencing suicidal, substance use, and/or mental health crisis, or any other kind of emotional distress. Dial 988, or visit [988lifeline.org](https://988lifeline.org) for more information.

- **Region 1 Crisis Line Children and Adults:** 888-908-0486 (Charlottesville)
- **Region 2 Crisis Line Children and Adults:** 855-897-8278 (Woodbridge)
- **Region 3 Crisis Line Children and Adults:** 855-887-8278 (Radford)
- **Region 4 Crisis Line Children and Adults:** 833-968-1800 (Chester)
- **Region 5 Crisis Line Children and Adults:** 888-255-2989 (Suffolk)



To find your region or to get more information, visit [mylifemycommunityvirginia.org/resources](https://mylifemycommunityvirginia.org/resources) and select "Find Your IFSP Region" in the carousel.

*If you need this message provided in Spanish or another language, please contact us at 804-663-7277.*

*Si necesita este mensaje proporcionado en Español, por favor contactenos en 804-663-7277.*



Don't forget that you can complete the **Annual Choice form** and the **Needed Services form** online! Visit [mylifemycommunityvirginia.org/dd-waivers-info](https://mylifemycommunityvirginia.org/dd-waivers-info) and click on "Accessing the Waiver Waitlist Forms", or scan this QR code to get the form links and instructions.

*Special thanks to the Center for Family Involvement  
at Virginia Commonwealth University*

