

The Individual and Family Support Program (IFSP)

IFSP: First Steps

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

Revised July 2025



DBHDS 
Virginia Department of Behavioral Health
and Developmental Services


**My Life,
My Community**



*Need an electronic copy of this document?
Use your mobile device to scan this QR code, or visit
mylifemycommunityvirginia.org/ifsp-first-steps*

Welcome! We're here to help!

We understand that finding the information you need is not always easy. Not sure where to begin?

Maybe you're just starting out. Maybe you're waiting for services, or maybe you're already receiving support. This guide is filled with free resources and answers! We encourage you to keep reading—you might find exactly what you need.

It includes the following information:

- an overview of Virginia's Home and Community-Based Services Developmental Disabilities Waivers (DD Waivers);
- links to our one-stop informational website, My Life, My Community;
- a summary of the Individual and Family Support Program (the IFSP); and
- a list of resources for people with DD in Virginia.

This guide was developed and revised with input from people with developmental disabilities and their families. Their lived experience shapes our efforts to make sure that this material is clear, accessible, and useful for everyone!

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: mylifemycommunityvirginia.org/ifsp-funding
- **Education, information, and referrals:** Visit My Life, My Community, our one-stop online tool, to find what you need: mylifemycommunityvirginia.org
- **Peer mentoring:** Connect with peers with disabilities through The Arc of Virginia's Peer Mentoring Program! Visit thearcofva.org/peer-mentoring
- **Family mentoring:** Want guidance or support from someone who has been there? The Family to Family Network of Virginia can help! Visit cfi.partnership.vcu.edu
- **Community coordination:** Ready to give back to your community and share your voice? Consider joining your IFSP Regional Council. Visit ifsp.tny.cc/councils

To get updates directly from the IFSP, please sign up for our email list at 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 our toll-free My Life, My Community helpline 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!

Overview of Virginia's Developmental Disability (DD) Waivers



This page offers a quick look at how Virginia's DD waivers support people with developmental disabilities. For more details, explore the ***Navigating the DD Waivers Guide*** (tiny.cc/dd-waivers-guidebook)!

What is a developmental disability?

A "developmental disability" is usually a lifelong disability that begins before age 22. It can affect how a person:

- moves their body;
- learns and processes information;
- communicates; or
- handles everyday tasks.

People with developmental disabilities may need different kinds of supports to live well and reach their goals.



To read how Virginia defines "developmental disabilities," visit tiny.cc/vac-definitions, or use your mobile device to scan this QR code.

What are the DD waivers? DD waivers are programs that help people with developmental disabilities, including intellectual disabilities, live at home and in their communities.

Virginia offers 3 types of DD waivers:

1. The **Building Independence Waiver (BI)** for adults who mostly live independently and don't need supports all the time;
2. The **Family and Individual Supports Waiver (FIS)** for children and adults living with family, friends, or in their own homes who need regular support; and
3. The **Community Living Waiver (CL)** for children and adults who need supports at all times, including residential supports.

What supports do DD waivers pay for?

DD waivers fund a wide range of supports to help people live fully and safely in their communities.

Some examples of supports are:

- medical care and skilled nursing;
- help finding and keeping a job;
- behavioral supports and interventions;
- support with daily tasks and community living; and
- home modifications and assistive technology.

To learn more about DD waiver supports, you can review Section 7 of the ***Navigating the DD Waivers Guide***.

What is the DD Waivers Waitlist? Virginia funds a limited number of DD waivers. This means not everyone who qualifies will get a waiver right away. Instead, people are placed on a needs-based waiting list called the DD Waiver Waiting List (or "the Waitlist").

This is not a first-come, first-served list. This list is based on the urgency of your needs, not the date you applied. (To learn more about the Waitlist, you can review Section 3 of the ***Navigating the DD Waivers Guide***.)

Where do I start? Your first step is to find your local Community Services Board or Behavioral Health Authority (CSB/BHA) (vacs.org/cs-bha-directory). Contact them and ask for a DD Waiver screening to begin the process. As part of this process, you'll talk to a support coordinator who will help you figure out what supports you need and how to get started. Learn more on page 4!

When should I start? It's never too early to reach out for help! Contact your local CSB/BHA as soon as you notice delays, get a diagnosis, or need help with daily living. Even if you don't know if you are eligible for a DD waiver, starting now helps you learn what supports are available and find people who can guide you.

Support Coordination and Getting Help

Support coordination helps you find and access DD services that support daily life and long-term goals. Support coordinators are your point of contact for:

- DD waiver screenings,
- the Waitlist, and
- ongoing help even if you're not eligible for a waiver.

Sometimes, support coordination is called "case management".

How do I get help from a support coordinator?

Contact your local CSB/BHA (vacsb.org/csb-bha-directory) and ask about support coordination. You can also request a DD waiver screening to find out if you are eligible for a DD waiver.

When you contact the CSB/BHA, they'll ask you to bring documents that show you or your family member has a developmental disability. This could include medical records, school evaluations, or other paperwork. They'll tell you what's needed when you call.

What happens during a DD waiver screening?

The support coordinator will meet with you and complete an assessment using the Virginia Intellectual and Developmental Disability Eligibility Survey (VIDES tool). It helps show what supports you need. The information from the assessment along with the paperwork you bring lets the support coordinator know whether you are eligible for DD waivers and what other supports you may be eligible for.

What if I'm on the Waitlist or not eligible for a DD waiver? Support coordinators may still help you access services while you wait, especially if you have urgent needs. Even if you're not eligible for a DD waiver, you may still qualify for support coordination or other programs. Your support coordinator will work with you to find options that fit. (Read more at tiny.cc/sccm-options.)

Help for Children

Infant or toddler (under age 3): Early Intervention Services (EI) helps families with children who are:

- not developing as expected, and/or
- have a medical condition that can delay normal development.

EI services help parents and caregivers support their children with everyday needs. Services are available to 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 itcva.online.

Children aged 3 and older: Public schools offer Special Education Services to support learning and development. To connect with the special education program at your local school system, visit the Virginia Department of Education's Virginia School Directories: doe.virginia.gov/about-vdoe/virginia-school-directories

Supports for children with special healthcare needs:

- Virginia Department of Health Care Connection for Children: vdh.virginia.gov/care-connection-for-children
- Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment (EPSDT): tiny.cc/epsdt

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 My Life, My Community's "Resources for Families" webpage (mylifemycommunityvirginia.org/resources) or contact your local CSB/BHA (vacsb.org/csb-bha-directory).

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. *They are available to you at no cost!* Find more resources at [mylifemycommunityvirginia.org/ifsp-first-steps!](https://mylifemycommunityvirginia.org/ifsp-first-steps)



Finding Information

Learn what supports and services are out there—and how to use them!

- **My Life, My Community:** Search this website for general information, providers, services, and resources! mylifemycommunityvirginia.org
- **Community Services Boards/Behavioral Health Authorities (CSBs/BHAs)** help people who are in crisis, have behavioral health needs, and/or have developmental disabilities vacsb.org/csb-bha-directory
- **Infant and Toddler Connection of Virginia:** Help for children under age 3 itcva.online
- **CCC Plus:** Alternative waiver in Virginia, managed by the Virginia Department of Social Services tiny.cc/cc-plus
- **Community Nursing:** Help navigating complex health services, health advocacy, and training resources and opportunities tiny.cc/dbhds-oih
- **Supported Decision-Making:** Understand how to make your own choices with support tiny.cc/dbhds-sdma
- Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services **Pre-Employment Transition and Vocational Rehabilitative Services (Pre-ETS):** Explore career interests and learn how to prepare for, find, and keep a job. For students ages 14-22 with a documented disability and enrolled in an approved education program tiny.cc/dars-transition



Connecting with People

Talk to others who have been there! Get support and share ideas.

- **Peer Mentoring:** Find support from other self-advocates and people with disabilities thearcofva.org/peer-mentoring
- **Family to Family Network of Virginia:** Connect with other families like yours for emotional and systems navigational support cfi.partnership.vcu.edu
- **IFSP State and Regional Councils:** Share your voice, connect with others, and work together to improve supports in your community ifsp.tny.cc/councils



Getting Goods & Services

Financial support and other programs that can help!

- **IFSP-Funding:** For people on the DD Waivers Waitlist and their families. Apply for money to pay for supports you need! mylifemycommunityvirginia.org/ifsp-funding
- **Beyond IFSP-Funding:** Ideas for free or low-cost items and services tiny.cc/beyond-ifsp-funding
- **DBHDS Dental Program:** Support getting dental care tiny.cc/dbhds-dental
- **DBHDS Mobile Rehab Engineering:** Help with medical equipment, assistive technology, and physical therapy consultations tiny.cc/dbhds-mre
- **Rent or housing assistance:** Visit DBHDS' integrated, independent housing resources tiny.cc/dbhds-housing

Crisis Services and General Information

If you or someone you care about has a developmental disability and is experiencing a behavioral or mental health crisis, help is available. Please contact **the REACH crisis services program in your region** (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 988va.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:** 757-656-7755 (Suffolk)



To find your region or to get more information, visit 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-waiver-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*

