



# ENSURING EXCELLENCE IN COMMUNITY-BASED DAY SUPPORTS: A GUIDE FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS AND STAFF

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## Introduction

A major component in the evolution of employment and day services and supports funded by the Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services (DDS) is the development and expansion of Community Based Day Supports (CBDS).

### DDS defines CBDS as follows:

*Community-Based Day Supports- (Activity Code 3163) - This program of supports is designed to enable an individual to enrich his or her life and enjoy a full range of community activities by providing opportunities for developing, enhancing, and maintaining competency in personal, social and community activities.*

This publication is a guide for service providers in developing and operating CBDS services in a way that will ensure a consistent high quality of services that fully supports and embraces the DDS vision of CBDS, resulting in a richer and fuller life that maximizes community integration and employment for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

## Guiding Principles in the Design of a Successful CBDS Service

Developing CBDS begins with understanding its purpose. CBDS should not be viewed simply as activities to fill a person's day. CBDS is instead a vehicle for individuals to explore and engage in meaningful and purposeful activities, based on individual preferences and needs as identified in their person-centered Individual Service Plan. CBDS can include employment related and non-employment related activities, but must always be purposeful and supportive of the participant's goals. Pre-planned CBDS activities should promote the full integration and inclusion of individuals with disabilities into mainstream society through positive community contributions and relationship development.

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### CBDS is not:

- A replacement for paid employment.
- A prerequisite for employment.
- Activities just to fill time.
- Activities that individuals are “plugged” into.
- Random activities just to keep people busy.
- Simply fun, recreational activities.

Over time efforts should be made to evolve from a standard “9 to 3” program structure, with a recognition that people both work and participate in community activities at a wide variety of times that don't necessarily fit within the typical day program hours. In fact, throughout this publication, the use of the term “program” has been deliberately avoided in describing CBDS. It is important to not think of CBDS as a program that individuals are fit into, but rather as a flexible support service customized to individual needs. At the same time, CBDS is primarily focused and offered during typical weekday work hours, not on weekends, and is not intended as a wrap-around to residential services and supports.

## THE ROLE OF CBDS

The role of CBDS varies depending on the particular needs of the individual. As defined by DDS, CBDS is designed for:

- Working-age adults to facilitate a pathway to employment.
- Supplemental supports for individuals employed part-time who need a structured and supervised program of services during the day when they are not working, that will enhance the benefits of work or allow the person to pursue particular interests and develop other skills.



- Individuals of retirement-age and who need and want to participate in a structured and supervised program of services in a group setting.

#### **Service options include:**

- Career exploration: assessing of interests through volunteer experiences, internships, or situational assessments.
- Community integration experiences to support fuller participation in community life.
- Skill development and training.
- Development of Activities of Daily Living and Independent Living Skills.
- Socialization experiences and support to enhance interpersonal skills.
- Pursuit of personal interests and hobbies.

Integrating a pathway to employment is a core component of CBDS for individuals of working age. Activities should be designed that allow an individual to explore and discover interests, build skills, and develop connections, that will result in employment. A primary staff role is working with individuals on using CBDS activities to guide and inform an individual's decisions about employment options and the types of jobs to pursue. Also, remember that CBDS is not a substitute for employment, and every effort should be made to maximize an individual's time in paid employment. See "Examples of Employment-Driven CBDS Activities" for ideas on how to integrated a pathway to employment within CBDS.

#### **HAVING THE RIGHT VALUES**

The success of CBDS is going to be dependent on both the agency and individual staff having the right set of values that underlies the development and implementation of CBDS. These include:

- A belief that individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities can fully participate in typical valued societal roles, side-by-side with their fellow citizens without disabilities.
- Engaging and embracing the full diversity and richness of potential activities in the community.
- Using a mindset of how individuals without disabilities typically participate in the community as a core guide for development of CBDS.
- Using generic, typical resources in the community available to all.
- Using a person-centered planning process, and individual needs and preferences as the driver of all activities.
- Maximizing opportunities for the development of individual relationships with community members.

#### **Examples of Employment-Driven CBDS Activities**

As noted, a core component of CBDS, particularly for individuals not working, or who are underemployed, is participation in employment-focused activities. The following are examples of the types of CBDS activities that are employment focused.

##### **Career Exploration Activities**

- Volunteering in organizations connected to potential career interest
- Job tours
- Job shadowing
- Situational assessments and job trials
- Internships
- Workplace Visits/Tours
- Informational interviews
- Job clubs

##### **Additional Skill Building Activities**

- Travel training
- Health and wellness programs
- Employment skill development for specific occupations
- Vocational training and certifications (One-Stop Career Centers and similar organizations can provide guidance and connections)
- Classes/workshops on job seeking (interviewing, resume writing, etc.)
- Job preparation and soft skill development: dressing for work, social interactions at work, schedule management, time management, etc.
- Managing public benefits and benefits issues

- Viewing the role of the staff and agency as facilitators of inclusion and full acceptance of individuals with disabilities.
- Ensuring typical adult roles for all involved.
- Avoiding activities that reinforce stereotypes and stigma of individuals with disabilities – i.e., “the group from the disability agency is here today”.
- Avoiding activities that unnecessarily segregate.

Along with these values, one of the most important is creating an atmosphere that empowers individuals. Individuals participating in CBDS should be full partners in guiding day-to-day activities. This includes:

- Individuals working with staff on development of their weekly schedule.
- Engaging in continuous dialogue with individuals regarding potential activities that can assist them in meeting their goals.
- Providing a range of choices to individuals and guiding them in making those choices.
- Avoiding a “staff are in charge” culture.
- Having staff avoid a pre-decided “here is what we’re doing today” approach.

Within such an atmosphere, as with all of us, it is important to recognize that individuals can’t simply do whatever they want on a day-to-day basis (as much as we would all like to do that!). The activities chosen must fit within the goals and purpose of CBDS, and this should be explained to individuals. Development and encouragement of self-determination is a critical component of CBDS, but should be conducted within a context of pursuit of individual goals, expectations, and responsibilities.

## Designing a CBDS Service

There is no ‘One Size Fits All’ approach to designing CBDS. Countless variables – including the size of an agency, geographic location, and the goals and needs of the individuals it serves – will influence how CBDS is designed. However, the following principles can serve to guide in the design of a successful service, and ensure that it is well suited to meet individual needs.

### PERSON-DRIVEN

The design of a CBDS service, the types of activities it facilitates, and the way individuals spend their time within CBDS should be based first and foremost, on a thoughtful, person-centered planning process, that identifies an individual’s preferences and interests. The outcomes of this planning process, regularly updated, guide how the participant spends their time in CBDS activities.

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### PURPOSEFUL

CBDS activities must be part of a larger plan for the individual’s progress toward their individually decided goals. Activities that are staged solely for the purpose of occupying the participants’ time are not satisfying to either participants or staff, and they undercut the central purpose of CBDS.

### COMMUNITY-BASED

Designers and implementers of CBDS must ensure that CBDS activities occur fully integrated within the community. CBDS activities – job training, recreation and wellness programs, volunteer activities, job exploration, etc. – can be implemented with greater quality and typically less expense in the community, using resources that already exist. For example, rather than assuming the full responsibility of creating a job-training program, an agency should support individuals who are interested in a training program, to access such programs available via a One Stop Career Center, community education program, community college, or similar entity.

### FACILITIES AND LOCATION

Many disability day and employment programs have large buildings, and there is a temptation to simply use the space available for CBDS activities. This is contrary to the purpose of CBDS and can become an easy fallback – i.e., if you have the space, it will get used. Core principles in terms of facilities are:

- Design any facility you use so that it is supportive of CBDS in terms of location, size, and set-up.
- Many day and employment programs have traditionally been located in industrial locations and office parks. Such locations are isolated from the community and not conducive to CBDS activities. Facilities that are maintained should be in town centers or other locations in reach of businesses, activities, and public transportation.
- Keep any space you have small, so it avoids becoming a “hang out”.

## CAREER-DRIVEN

While not every CBDS participant is on a stated career track, those who should participate in CBDS activities that are built around their individual employment goals. While a career-track CBDS service can include a variety of activities (for example, travel training and wellness programs combined with other kinds of planning and job development activities, can improve an individual's competitiveness in the job market), it should be clear how the various elements support and are aligned with achieving a successful outcome of paid employment for the individual. For those not on an employment track, CBDS offers an opportunity to gain exposure to the option of work in different settings and of such a variety that they may reconsider their interest in employment.

## GENERIC (NOT DISABILITY SPECIFIC)

CBDS activities should not be disability specific. For example, wellness activities should occur in a gym or health club in the community, rather than using exercise equipment at the disability program. An individual could be supported in a One-Stop Career Center's resume writing workshop, rather than an in-house class provided by the service provider. While there will be some exceptions (Social Security benefits planning will of course remain a disability-specific service), even these can typically be conducted in community-based settings. Also, development of "artificial communities" for people with disabilities should be avoided. For example, instead of an art group for people with disabilities, individuals interested in art can participate in art classes in the community. Likewise, older people can participate in activities for all seniors in the community (such as at the local senior center) instead of a retirement program run by the service provider. An exception to this use of generic activities is participation in a disability peer support group, such as Mass Advocates Standing Strong.

## MAXIMIZE COMMUNITY AND NATURAL SUPPORTS

As with employment, the use of community and natural supports should be emphasized, rather than creating reliance on paid staff. Individuals should not just be physically in the community, but be full participants in the community. Maximizing the interaction that individuals have with community members helps build the networks and relationships of individuals. It also creates an increased understanding by the community of the competency and contributions that individuals with disabilities



can make, while also reducing the reliance on paid supports. One of the chief purposes of CBDS is relationship development, which can only occur when individuals are provided opportunities to get to know other community members with common interests. To assist with connecting with the community and developing relationships over time, schedules should include routine participation in activities at set locations rather than a string of ever changing ones.

## MAXIMIZING TIME IN THE COMMUNITY AND MINIMIZING TIME "ON-SITE"

As noted, agency staff should be continuously striving to minimize the amount of time individuals are "on-site". To address this issue:

- There should be a clear message from management about the goal of maximizing time in the community.
- CBDS services should be designed with the core goal of maximizing time in the community.
- Minimize if not eliminate the need for individuals to come to the agency building. Work towards designing CBDS services in a manner that does not require people to come to the building first to begin their day in the community, or end their day there - and avoid having the building becoming the default service location. Design services that allow individuals to meet up with staff in prescribed locations in their home communities and participate in activities from there. Once agencies gain skill and develop the structures and supports to implement the service in this manner, it will allow them to minimize or eliminate their need for buildings for day support.
- The amount of time individuals are spending on-site at the agency building during CBDS should be tracked, with goals for reducing it over time.

Even using the strategies above, one of the challenges of CBDS is having sufficient resources so that individuals can spend virtually all of their time in the community, and avoiding using agency space as a primary activity space. As noted, spending time “on-site” should not be the default option, but when it is necessary, the activities should still fit within the CBDS goals of being deliberate, and individually driven towards specific goals.

## MANAGING STAFF: INDIVIDUAL RATIOS

Funding for CBDS does not typically allow for 1:1 staffing for individuals needing ongoing support, and staff are often providing supports to individuals in small groups. However, it is important to individualize supports, and individualization without 1:1 supports, through a combination of thoughtful and effective group structures, and staff ability to understand and respond to the needs of each individual in a group. In order to manage groups of individuals with one staff supporting them keep the following suggested strategies in mind:

- Begin by giving full consideration to the needs and preferences of each individual. Where are there common interests? Who fits in well together?
- Make good matches between staff and the people served. Not all staff and individuals prefer to be with each other. Give ample consideration to which staff will work best with which individuals. Be prepared to make changes when matches don't seem to be working out.
- Make good matches between people served. Be sure to give individuals an opportunity to indicate their preferences about who they like to spend time with and respect their wishes.
- Develop diverse groups with different levels of support needs. When out in the community, it is much easier to support a group if more physically able people are paired with some who are less so. The same is true for groups that contain people with medical and behavioral challenges as well.
- Have individuals participate in activities with similar interests.
- Seek out opportunities for natural supports, such as support from fellow participants in a class or activity, to enable fading of support staff.
- Identify different activities in the same or nearby locations so that staff can provide transportation and intermittent support. For example, one person could be participating in a yoga class at the Y while another goes swimming and yet another does volunteer work in a non-profit office.
- Be prepared to reshape groups as indicated. Not every group will work out as planned.

## SCHEDULING: AVOIDING THE GLOBAL ONE SIZE FITS ALL APPROACH

Successful CBDS services are very highly structured and have firm, preplanned schedules with meaningful activities designed to meet the desired outcomes of the participants. Scheduling however should not consist of a series of activities that individuals are simply plugged into. A core principle of schedule development is to support the CBDS goal of activities based on the needs and interests of the individual. Scheduling in a way that aligns with this core principle can be one of the biggest challenges of CBDS, due to the wide variation in individual needs, requirements for staff support, and the many variables that can impact the planned schedule on a daily basis.

A typical CBDS scheduling approach is to have a group that is consistent in terms of who participates, and developing a schedule on a weekly basis of a variety of activities for that group. While this is

### Scheduling Example

A staff member is responsible for the schedules of 6 individuals for the week. The process begins with the individual's work schedules for the week, and putting those on the schedule. If an individual is looking for work, then a primary part of the individual's week should be employment-related activities: employment-related community exploration, job tours, job shadows, job clubs, etc. The next step is scheduling the planned activities that each of the individual's participates in on a regular basis – volunteering, community group, enrichment, classes, etc. Next is determining if there are one-time community events and activities that are a good fit for the individual and scheduling those. The last step is identifying additional activities that may be more flexible in nature (e.g., going to the health club, other recreational activities, etc.). At this point, the staff member should consider the following:

- What level of staff supports does each individual need and at what times during the week? Are there are activities where some individuals can simply be dropped off and picked up, and others where this a need for staff support?
- Where are there commonalities where individuals can do activities together, or be physically near each other?
- How can activities be scheduled that can make the best use of staff time and resources? What do I need to discuss and negotiate with other staff to make sure individuals are doing as many activities as possible that are individually driven?

After these steps, the team can develop an overall CBDS schedule in terms of individual activities and staff support.

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the easier approach in times of managing staff and resources, it results in everyone participating in the same activity for the day – and possibly the week. While that may be appropriate in some cases, the scheduling system should accommodate changes in groupings for certain activities, in order to maximize activities that are individually driven. To address this, a better approach to scheduling is to identify individuals who have interest in a common activity and then developing a schedule where individuals switch groups and support staff depending on the activities they will be participating in. This is more challenging in terms of both logistics, and matching up individuals and staff, but will result in more individually driven services.

Agencies should develop specific procedures and guidelines for schedule development and management, which staff are expected to follow. Here are suggestions for scheduling procedures:

1. Begin by developing a weekly schedule for each individual.
2. Examine the individual schedule and determine where there are commonalities with the schedules of other individuals in terms of activities.
3. Start combining schedules into a cohesive group, resulting ultimately in an overall schedule for individuals and staff.

The following are suggested guidelines on management of schedules:

- A. A significant portion of time will have to be devoted to developing weekly individual schedules that continuously evolve. Scheduling is a weekly, not a one-time event.
- B. Determine who is going to be responsible for developing schedules and the timing of weekly schedule development.
- C. Contingencies must be developed for alternative activities since unanticipated circumstances can and will occur that cause an interruption to the schedule, including staffing issues, weather, etc.
- D. While an individual may not be spending their entire day on his/her ideal activity, schedules should be designed so that at least part of their day is a preferred activity.

Scheduling can be challenging as many variables can impact the planned schedule on a daily basis, including an individual's work schedule, where they currently stand in their job search, etc. In scheduling, remember that for individuals of working age, employment-related activities should be an integral part of the schedule for those who are unemployed or underemployed. The intent of CBDS for individuals of working age is to provide meaning, deliberate activities when an individual isn't working, with activities that will lead to employment for those not working, and possibly a better job for those who are.

### STAFF COMPETENCIES

The success or failure of CBDS is going to be highly dependent on the skill and competency of staff. Staff supporting CBDS require a different skill set than that required in a facility-based day program. If staff are being converted from positions in facility-based services, there needs to be a recognition that the skill-set is significantly different. Not only are different skills required but also a different mindset, going from more of a caretaker role operating within a building, to a community-inclusion facilitator. This is not always an easy shift for staff, and agencies should be very aware and cognizant of this. In addition, if staff have longstanding relationships with the individuals in CBDS from the facility-based day program, shifting away from the dynamics of that relationship in terms of a caretaker role for both staff and individuals can be a challenge.

The skill sets needed for staff in CBDS are similar to those of staff who do effective job placement and support, and it is critical that agencies ensure that staff are competent in these areas:

- Person-centered planning
- Community mapping
- Networking
- Negotiating skills
- Facilitation of integration in community settings
- Maximizing use of natural supports
- Individual support strategies: accommodations, assistive technology, systematic instruction, etc.
- Supporting individuals with complex needs in community settings.

Along with different staff competencies, staff also needs to be supported in different ways. This includes having cellphones for all staff for effective communication, having clear procedures for how to deal with emergency situations in the community, and providing effective supervision for staff that

spends the majority of their time in the community away from their direct supervisor.

## MAXIMIZING INDEPENDENCE

Individuals who participate in CBDS do so because they are individuals who need some type of planned and structured non-work activity for at least part of their day. If an individual can participate in community activities on their own, and also spend time in their home unsupervised, then their need for CBDS services is minimal. While individuals participate in CBDS because of the nature of their support needs, a key goal of CBDS should be maximizing the independence of individuals involved, the ability of the community to provide necessary supports, and reducing dependence on paid staff. This is not only better for the individual and community, but it allows paid staff resources to be used more effectively. The following are suggested strategies in that regard:

- Individuals should participate in community activities that are a good match for them, in terms of utilizing their strengths, and accessing assistance and supports from others as necessary.
- Staff should avoid being a barrier to inclusion. As with job coaching, staff should undertake their role in a way that facilitate natural supports, by connecting individuals with other individuals participating in the activity who can provide assistance and support.
- Use the full array of techniques that maximize independence: accommodations, assistive technology, natural cues, etc.
- Avoid “learned dependence” on staff by both the individuals served and the organizations where individuals are participating in activities.
- As with job coaching, work to fade over time.

## BE PREPARED! DEVELOP PROCEDURES BEFORE INITIATING SERVICES

Many agencies experience challenges in the development of quality CBDS services. Some of these include:

- Developing the same schedule for all CBDS participants.
- Having individuals spending the majority of their time in activities in the agency’s building.
- Having on-site classroom-type instruction as a primary CBDS activity.
- Identifying activities in the community that are haphazard, not deliberate, and have little

connection to individual goals and preferences (i.e., any community activity is a good activity).

- Identifying a very narrow set of community activities to participate in.
- Despite the best of intentions, developing activities that reinforce stigma and stereotypes of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
- Taking individuals out in large groups, with limited, if any, actual integration in community settings, and interactions with community members.
- Assigning a group of individuals to a staff member, and telling the staff member to “keep them busy” with no oversight, and limited if any consideration about how the activities fit within the overall goals and purpose of CBDS.
- Having individuals spending time on leisure activities – e.g., going to the movies.
- Activities that continue to reinforce stereotypes and stigma of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Some of these challenges occur in the early stages as part of CBDS development with the intent of moving away from them over time. However, these can quickly become habits and the normal way of operating. Therefore, it is important to start out doing things right!

The best way to develop and maintain top quality in CBDS services is to plan carefully, and develop all necessary procedures to ensure smooth and safe



operation in advance of initiating services. Start small, refine your procedures and then bring the service to scale. Take time to work out in advance such issues as communication, staff support and supervision, emergency preparedness and crisis management, medication management and other things that can and will impact services on a daily basis. The better prepared an agency is before starting, the better the service will roll out.

If your agency is experiencing the challenges listed above with your CBDS service, it may be time to take a step back and re-assess. Agency staff should meet and develop an action plan on how to make changes to improve the CBDS service design and operations. While you may not be able to change your service model immediately for everyone, pick a small group of individuals and work to develop a support service for them that is keeping with CBDS best practices: a holistic approach where CBDS fits in with the overall person's life (not a "9 to 3" program), and serves as a compliment to employment; avoiding the need to come to "the building"; individually goal-driven activities that are deliberate in nature; flexible staff supports as necessary.

Remember that building a strong CBDS service takes time. Also, like most services, CBDS is ever evolving, and there should be ongoing, deliberate efforts, to ensure that is of the highest quality aligned with best practices assisting individuals to achieve meaningful individual outcomes

## Identifying Potential Activities

Community mapping, the identification of potential activities in particular communities, is the starting point of a quality CBDS service. While individual scheduling must be responsive to the person's particular interests and needs, it is prudent to develop and maintain a large catalogue of activities from which to begin to develop more individualized schedules. This is an essential start-up activity for all CBDS services.

In identifying CBDS activities, the ultimate decision regarding activities for individuals to participate in should be driven by the core principles of a quality CBDS service including:

- Maximum time in community.
- Deliberate and purposeful activities.
- Driven by individual goals and preferences.
- CBDS as a supplement to employment, not a replacement.

- Use generic community resources.
- Adult appropriate activities.
- Focus on relationship development with community members.
- Maximize community/natural supports.
- Staff modeling interactions with individuals that foster an image of competence and promote acceptance.

As has been emphasized, individual interests and preferences should be the starting point in terms of identifying opportunities. However the community experiences of many individuals may have often been very limited. As a result, individuals may have narrow and limited views of non-work activities they may be interested in. Therefore, it is critically important that:

- A. Individuals have opportunities to explore and try activities they previously have not had the opportunity to participate in.
- B. Staff and programs that support individuals with disabilities have a high degree of awareness of resources and activities in their community that individuals could potentially engage in.
- C. While exploring new activities remember to have some routine places to go and get involved with community members with whom the people supported can form meaningful relationships.

Communities, both large and small, have various community groups, activities, and leaders. Identifying potential CBDS opportunities requires understanding and mapping out the full array of potential resources – bearing in mind that this may be a never ending process, as communities change, evolve, and more connections are made. Consider the following questions:

- What are the prominent groups in your community?
- Who are the prominent leaders?
- How do we connect with them?

Community mapping – i.e., the awareness of community resources and activities - requires a similar mindset to job development: using networking as primary tools for identifying opportunities, conducting research on potential opportunities via the internet and other sources, supplemented as necessary by cold calling.



## HERE IS AN OUTLINE OF STEPS IN IDENTIFYING POTENTIAL CBDS ACTIVITIES:

### Step 1: Identify connections

Brainstorm regarding individuals who either live or work in the community where you want to identify opportunities. Be sure to consider staff, individuals supported by the agency, family members, board members, and of course, any external connections. Also consider additional individuals and organizations in the community, whether you have a connection or not (the Internet can be a great resource for ideas). Any and all ideas are useful (No “Yes, buts...”). Note that when hiring new staff it is a good idea to ask questions about their connections in the community. The best people to connect the people served to their communities are those who are well connected themselves. (See listing later in this publication of possible organizations to contact.)

### Step 2: Decide whom to connect with

Who on this list would be good to talk to, to generate ideas? Keep an open mind, but particularly focus on individuals who are active in the community and connected with others.

### Step 3: Start outreach

Start outreaching to individuals. Follow the same basic tenants as you do with job development:

- A. Keep the ask simple and something people can say yes to.
- B. Use phone and email for initial outreach, and bear in mind that the goal of initial outreach is to get an in-person meeting.
- C. Be pleasant but persistent.

### Step 4: The in-person meeting

Conduct the initial meeting using the following guidelines:

- A. Focus on the exploratory nature of what you’re doing – connecting with community resources, looking for community activities for individuals to participate in.
- B. Be clear about ultimately matching individuals with activities that meet their interests (like any other person).
- C. Stress the importance of keeping activities adult-appropriate, typical of other citizens in the community, and fully integrated.
- D. Keep a focus on developing additional connections. No meeting should ever end without asking, “Who else can we talk to?”

## Organizations and individuals to consider connecting with

The following is a sample list of potential individuals and organizations to connect with. In some cases, these are organizations where individuals may be able to actually participate in activities, while in other cases, these may be individuals who can help in identifying potential activities elsewhere in the community (or both!). This list is just a start and as you start your community mapping, you’re sure to find lots of others.

- Town and city officials
- City departments: parks and recreation, economic development
- Political leaders
- United Way
- Chamber of Commerce
- Civic/Service Organizations: Rotary, Lions Club, Elks, etc.
- Public library
- Colleges and universities
- Adult education classes
- Toastmasters (public speaking)
- Arts groups: visual arts, performing arts (drama)
- Public access television
- Hospitals/health care organizations
- Senior citizen organizations
- Environmental groups
- Parks commissions
- Advocacy organizations
- Recreation programs
- Athletic organizations
- Youth groups
- Historical societies
- One-Stop Career Centers
- Animal shelters
- Food banks
- Soup kitchens
- Habitat for Humanity
- Immigrant and refugee organizations
- League of Women Voters
- American Red Cross
- Religious/faith-based organizations
- Museums

### Internet Sites to Explore

The Internet offers many opportunities to begin to identify activities. Here are just a few sites that may be of assistance:

- [www.VolunteerMatch.com](http://www.VolunteerMatch.com)
- [www.Meet-up.com](http://www.Meet-up.com)
- [www.MassVolunteers.org](http://www.MassVolunteers.org)

### **Step 5: Start tracking and building your community resource list**

It is critical to build a list of potential community activities and opportunities. Use a simple Excel spreadsheet or database to capture important information like location, contacts, available activities, fees or costs, accessibility, transportation, and other pertinent information. Also note that some procedure for coordinating use of the activity sites will be needed since multiple groups of people should not use the same site at the same time.

### **Step 6: Start exploring**

Have individuals start to participate in the activities that have been identified. Start with those activities that are of particular interest for the individual, but give them opportunities to try new and different things that they may not have previously considered.

### **Step 7: Stay up to date on what's going on**

A core part of identifying CBDS activities is keeping up to date with activities in the community that individuals might be interested in participating in. Both staff and individuals should regularly be identifying possible activities, via monitoring of newspapers, community Internet sites, subscribing to community activity updates, etc. This can include one-time community events as well as information on new groups being started, new ongoing activities, etc.

## **GET ENGAGED, GET INVOLVED**

As part of efforts to expand the community presence of individuals with disabilities, it's important for individuals and the services that support them to increase their presence at community activities. If there's a community event, it's important to have a presence, so that community groups and fellow community members view individuals with disabilities as fellow citizens who have a diversity of interests and talents. If your community has any sort of community events where a cross-section of organizations are represented (town day, community service fair, etc.) be sure to attend. These are great opportunities to network.

## **EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING TECHNIQUES**

Although it should never be a primary activity, part of CBDS activities may include group-learning experiences. The following guidelines can be helpful in designing an effective learning experience:

- Given that the individuals are adults, activities should avoid replicating an atmosphere of a school classroom or atmosphere. This includes not

describing the activities as a "curriculum,"

- Use peer-to-peer teaching – i.e., have individuals develop and guide how instruction should occur, have them help lead instruction, and teach each other.
- Use the community and community resources for instruction rather than spending time "at the program".
- If it's not possible for individuals to attend an existing instructional activity in the community, identify experts and community members who can provide instruction on different issues (hopefully at their location). For example, have a bank staff member or a member of a non-profit group that teaches financial management teach basics of money management, rather than agency staff. Staff should be used as instructors only as a fallback.
- Have instructors and staff avoid lecturing to the group like a teacher, and instead have individuals participate in activities that are activity-based and interactive.
- Focus as much as possible on experiential activities and learning (examples: instead of sitting in a classroom learning about how to take the bus, go out in the community and take the bus; conduct mock interviews with individuals videotaping and critiquing each other).
- Avoid use of classes and classrooms, particularly at the agency building. If you are having a group teaching activity, try to find space in the community (i.e., the library, local community center, etc.) where it can be held.
- Train staff to identify and take advantage of "teachable moments" in the community. Not every skill building opportunity will be a part of the individual's plan but should be capitalized upon.

### **Examples of Topics for Instruction**

When group education and instruction is conducted as part of CBDS, the following are examples of possible topics, in addition to the skill-building activities listed above under Employment-Driven CBDS activities:

- Money management and financial literacy
- Self-advocacy
- Disability rights
- Being an effective volunteer
- Being an effective board member
- Positive social relationships

The most important source of ideas is the individuals in CBDS. Ask them what they want to learn about or what would help them be more independent, and find a learning resource.

## Transportation and CBDS

Access to transportation is critical to full participation in both community activities and achieving employment success. At the same time, it can pose a significant challenge, particularly for individuals with mobility impairments such as those who use electric wheelchairs, and in rural areas with limited or no public transportation. However, it is critically important to not view transportation as an insurmountable barrier. It is instead a need to be addressed within CBDS from two perspectives:

- Expanding the array of transportation options available.
- Developing and expanding the skills of individuals to travel independently as much as possible.

While there are individuals for whom agency transportation may be the only option due to the nature of their support needs, it is critically important both in terms of efficient use of resources and expanding the independence of individuals, to use agency transportation only as necessary, rather than as the default option. Greater awareness of transportation resources in the local areas, linking with local transportation agencies and providers, and general networking in the community are key to expanding transportation options. The Massachusetts Human Service Transportation Office has a variety of resources to assist with transportation needs: [www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/commissions-and-initiatives/hst/for-consumers.html](http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/commissions-and-initiatives/hst/for-consumers.html). In addition, the Community Transportation Association of America ([www.ctaa.org](http://www.ctaa.org)) has resources and creative transportation ideas from across the country.

In conjunction with increasing awareness and use of the full array of transportation options, increasing skills in terms of travel and transportation is key to enhancing the independence of individuals,

and should be a core component of CBDS. Transportation topics can include:

- Identifying transportation options
- Taking public transit
- Planning a walking route
- Bicycle safety (as appropriate)
- Being safe in the community
- What to do when you are lost
- Using transportation technology

Practicing transportation skills can be integrated within CBDS. When planning an activity with an individual or group of individuals, have individuals spend time on the following:

- Identification of transportation options, besides the agency vehicle
- Development of a trip plan
- Transportation preparation

Doing this on an ongoing basis as part of CBDS will not only help build transportation skills, but will help individuals evolve away from an automatic assumption and reliance on agency transportation. Such activities also assist with the development of general decision-making and self-determination skills.

### Travel training resources:

- MA Human Services Transportation Office: [www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/commissions-and-initiatives/hst/travel-instruction-programs-around-massachusetts.html](http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/commissions-and-initiatives/hst/travel-instruction-programs-around-massachusetts.html)
- Easter Seals Project Action: [www.projectaction.org/Training/TravelTraining.aspx](http://www.projectaction.org/Training/TravelTraining.aspx)
- Association of Travel Instruction: [www.travelinstruction.org](http://www.travelinstruction.org)

## Right to Participate

As efforts are made to more fully include individuals in the community, there may be challenges from some community organizations in terms of their willingness to let individuals with significant disabilities fully participate. As with job development, it is important for staff to be skilled in negotiating with organizations in terms of facilitating acceptance, inclusion, and creating a welcoming atmosphere. This includes providing assurances regarding the capabilities of the individual, and the availability of supports and assistance to the individual and organization. At the same time, it is important to recognize that individuals with disabilities have an absolute right to participate in community activities open to others. A few basic guidelines in this regard:

- If an activity is open to all members of the community, then individuals with disabilities have the right to participate.
- An organization cannot impose additional or different requirements

for people with disabilities to participate.

- If there are qualification requirements for participation in an activity for all individuals, if the person with disability can meet these requirements, they can participate.
- Generally, individuals have the right to reasonable accommodations and modifications if it is a publicly funded organization (ADA Title II), or public accommodation or commercial facility (ADA Title III).

Most situations can be dealt with in a positive manner with a bit of negotiating, and staff does not want to be put in a position of threatening legal action. At the same time, if a community organization open to all will not allow individuals to participate, a gentle and diplomatic reminder that they have a right to participate like other community members may be necessary. If there are questions regarding these types of issues, contact the Disability Law Center ([www.dlc-ma.org](http://www.dlc-ma.org)) or Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination ([www.mass.gov/mcad](http://www.mass.gov/mcad)) for assistance.

# ENSURING EXCELLENCE IN COMMUNITY-BASED DAY SUPPORTS: A GUIDE FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS AND STAFF



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