

**CONSTRUCTING
A GOOD LIFE**

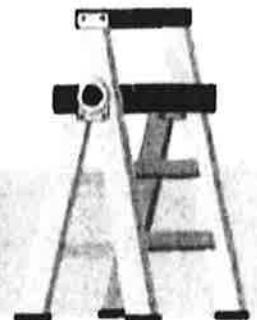
**THROUGH
UNDERSTANDING**

THE NOW AND COMP WAIVERS

A Ready Reference
for Families and
Individuals with Disabilities

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Commissioned by the
Department of Behavioral Health and
Developmental Disabilities



2009

INTRODUCTION

This Ready Reference for families and individuals with disabilities is a practical tool designed to help people better understand the NOW and COMP Medicaid Waivers. The guide is intended to share basic information and to answer frequently asked questions.

This booklet was commissioned by the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities. The Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities is committed to making sure that families and people with developmental disabilities have the information that they need in order to make good decisions about supports and services. Dottie Adams, Individual and Family Support Director, has worked to make sure that the information presented is understandable, simplified without jargon, and accurate.

The NOW and COMP Waivers are resources that can help provide supports to people who want to live with their family or in other kinds of community living arrangements. The services offered through these waivers can make it possible to have supports during the day, at night, or on the weekends.

It is important when developing the Individual Service Plan (ISP) that the individual's interests and personal preferences be noted. There are also additional planning processes such as MAPS, PATH, Essential Lifestyle Planning or Personal Futures Planning that can be used to gather more detail about what the person's dreams are and what is most important for them to try to accomplish. These planning processes should include family and friends and trusted professionals. In all of these planning processes, the individual is the main focus.



The Medicaid Waivers can provide a great deal of support, but in order to construct a good life in the community, other things need to be taken into consideration. Individuals need to have relationships with people other than those who are paid to provide their support. This natural support can come from friends, relatives, neighbors, faith organization members, co-workers, or civic groups. People need to become a part of their community. These relationships help enrich the person's life and also provide a safety net of "watchful eyes" to make sure that the person is healthy, safe, and happy.

WHAT IS A MEDICAID WAIVER?

A Medicaid Waiver is money that may be used to pay for services for a person who has developmental disabilities. These services can take place in the person's home or in the community. Both children and adults can be supported by Medicaid Waiver Services.

Medicaid usually pays for doctor appointments, hospital expenses, medicine, therapy, and some supplies and equipment. The waiver allows for Medicaid dollars to be used to pay for additional services. The Medicaid Waiver dollars are part state and part federal money.

The state has to write a plan that tells what kind of services will be provided under their Medicaid Waivers. It has to be approved by Federal Medicaid. Each state's Medicaid Waiver is different. You can move around Georgia and your Medicaid Waiver will go with you. If you move out of state, it does not transfer with you.

Once you receive a Medicaid Waiver, it remains yours for as long as you continue to meet the eligibility requirements and still need services.



The Waivers are like Tools.
Know the Differences in how they work
and what they provide.



**WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN
THE NOW AND COMP WAIVERS?**

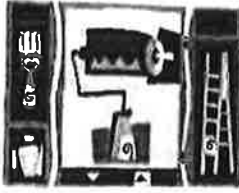
The **NOW** Waiver stands for **New Options Waiver**. It provides supports to people who do not need 24 hour care. It was designed for people with disabilities who live with family members or in their own home. There is a limit of \$25,000.00 a year for services under the NOW Waiver. This waiver is for people who need less intensive services and supports.

The **COMP** Waiver stands for **COMPREHENSIVE SUPPORTS Waiver**. It was designed for people who need a full range of out-of-home services or intensive in-home services. The COMP Waiver is also used for people who are transitioning out of institutions into community living.

SERVICES THAT ARE WAIVER SPECIFIC

The NOW and COMP Waivers each include specific services that are *only* available in that waiver.

NOW Waiver	COMP Waiver
Respite Care Natural Support Training Individual Goods and Services	Community Residential Alternative Services



SUMMARY OF SERVICES



The NOW and COMP Waiver Programs provide the following services. Participants can choose which services best meet their needs within their budget.

Adult Occupational Therapy: This service promotes fine motor skill development, coordination, sensory integration, and facilitates the use of adaptive equipment or technology.

Adult Physical Therapy: This service promotes gross and fine motor skills, and facilitates independent functioning.

Adult Speech and Language Therapy: This service helps promote communication capacity and function.

Behavioral Supports Consultation: This service assists the person with challenging behaviors by providing an expert to develop a positive behavior support plan and to train people supporting that individual in how to implement that plan consistently.

Community Access: This service supports people in being involved in their community. It can be done individually or in a group. It can take place during the day, the evening, or the weekend.

Community Guide: This service is designed to help people who are learning how to self-direct their supports. It can involve obtaining community resources, problem solving, skills development in self directing, or building supportive relationships.

Community Living Support: This service helps the person live at home. It can help with bathing, dressing, toileting, eating, shopping, banking, exercising, decision making, supervision of the person taking their medicine, or other activities that assist the person in being able to live in their home.

Community Residential Alternative: This waiver service is for people who are living in a residential home operated by a provider agency. The person can receive supports in daily living activities, life skills, and household chores. The agency staff provide the training and supervision in the home. It is only available in the COMP waiver.

Environmental Accessibility Adaptations: This service makes adaptations to accommodate the person in their home. It might include ramps, grab bars, doorway widening, or bathroom modifications.

Financial Support Services: This service draws down the funds and pays the bills for people who are self directing their services. They manage payroll, taxes, and background checks and make sure the participant knows how their funds are being used.



SUMMARY OF SERVICES (continued)



Individual Directed Goods and Services: This could include services, equipment, or supplies that address the person's needs specified in the Individual Service Plan (ISP) but not otherwise available in the waiver.

Natural Support Training: This service allows for training and education to families or individuals who provide unpaid support, training, companionship, or supervision. It is only available in the NOW Waiver.

Prevocational Services: This service is designed to help people work towards employment. It might include teaching concepts of completing tasks, safety, social interaction skills, or problem solving.

Respite Services: This service is intended to provide caregivers, family members, and individuals with disabilities brief periods of relief. It can be hourly or overnight. It is only available in the NOW Waiver.

Specialized Medical Supplies: This service includes supplies that are needed by the individual and are written into their Individual Service Plan. It might include food supplements, clothing, disposable briefs, latex gloves, etc.

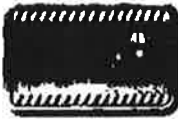
Specialized Medical Equipment: This service provides various equipment that would help the person perform daily living activities or interact more independently in their environment. The needed equipment must be included in the Individual Service Plan.

Support Coordination: This service is provided by a person who is independent of the service provider and focuses on the health and safety of the individual. The support coordinator is also responsible for completing paperwork necessary to keep the person's waiver and services going.

Supported Employment: This service supports people to become employed and to maintain their employment in the community. It can include job development, job coaching, and long term supports on the job.

Transportation: This service lets people travel to community activities, resources, and places that cannot be accessed through Medicaid non-emergency transport nor as part of another waiver service.

Vehicle Adaptation: This service provides adaptations to the individual's or family's vehicle and may include lifts, ramps, special seats or other modifications to the interior of the vehicle.



NEW FEATURES OF THE WAIVERS



INDIVIDUAL BUDGETS

Every person on the waiver has an individual budget based on their needs. The family should be aware of how much money is available to purchase the supports needed. In the past, the dollars went to the providers to reimburse them for providing the services.

SUPPORTS INTENSITY SCALE

The tool that is used to determine the level of need for each person on the waiver is called the Supports Intensity Scale. The support coordinator has been trained to use this instrument to do an interview with people who know the individual well. By having a standard way to measure people's needs, the system can be more accurate and fair in how it allocates the funds for services.

UNBUNDLING SERVICES

In the previous waivers, some services were bundled all together. Examples were Natural Support Enhancement and Day Supports. Federal Medicaid does not want the services to be bundled anymore so in the new waivers each service is separate and distinct. So what used to be one service under the old waiver may be 2-3 different services in the NOW/COMP waivers.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT SERVICES

If a family wants to be in control and direct their own services, then they can use the financial support services to draw down the Medicaid funds and pay the bills for them. The agency pays the taxes and social security, pays for the background checks, and provides W-2 forms and monthly budget reports.

NEW SERVICE - COMMUNITY GUIDE

There is a new service under the NOW/COMP waivers called Community Guide. This service is available for people who want to self direct their services. There is a training program that community guides take in order to be certified to provide this service. They can help train people in self directing and can help make connections in the community.



STEPS TO APPLY FOR THE MEDICAID



1. Contact the Intake and Evaluation Team at the Regional Office to apply for Services. The Intake and Evaluation Team will do a screening to see if you are eligible for services. They will place your name on either a long term or a short term waiting list if you are eligible. Attaching a psychological evaluation along with your application can help speed the process. You must also show proof of citizenship (birth certificate, passport, or permanent resident card.)

The short term waiting list is designed for people needing waiver services immediately or in the near future.

The long term waiting list is designed for people needing waiver services at some point in the future.

2. If you are on the short term planning list, then a planning list administrator will be assigned. This person will check in with you and your family periodically to see if there are any changes in your situation. They will also help you look for other supports.

3. When funding becomes available, the regional office staff will send a letter stating that you have been approved for a Medicaid Waiver. You will be given 30 days to choose which support coordination agency you want to work with. If you don't make a selection, then one will be assigned.

4. The Intake and Evaluation Team will come out to the house to complete the paperwork for the waiver. This includes doing a social history, a psychological update, a nursing assessment, and completing other Medicaid required documents. As a family member, be sure that the assessments thoroughly describe the needs of your son/daughter.

5. The Support Coordinator will assist you and your family in completing the Individual Support Plan. Goals will be developed from needs identified in the intake assessments. The Support Coordinator will also complete the Supports Intensity Scale and the Health Risk Assessment Tool which will be used in determining the amount of funding that will be received.

6. The individual and their family will be given information about providers who work in that region. The family will choose the provider they want with help from the Support Coordinator or decide if they would prefer to self direct.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR THE WAIVERS?

The target group for the waiver program is individuals who have intellectual disabilities and/or developmental disabilities. Individuals with developmental disabilities such as cerebral palsy, epilepsy, autism, or neurological impairments, must have severe impairments to be eligible for the waiver. Both children and adults can be served by the waiver.

It is important to keep the Planning List Administrator aware of your current situation. If there is a change in your health or if there is a crisis in your family, this might move you up on the waiting list. There are many people in Georgia who need services and the waiting list is long. Don't wait until you need the services to apply. Think ahead and apply now. This is especially true for students who will be graduating from high school. There is no law that mandates services for adults with disabilities as there is for education. Many families are surprised to find out that there is no funding available for services after high school. Many parents have had to quit their job to stay at home with their son/daughter after graduation.

People have to be Medicaid eligible to obtain a Medicaid Waiver. If you receive SSI, you automatically have Medicaid. If you receive Medicare and not Medicaid, it is possible to make you Medicaid eligible through a "Medical Assistance Only (MAO)" process. Talk to the Intake and Evaluation Team to begin this process.



CHOICES IN SERVICE DELIVERY

There are three ways that services can be delivered.

1. Traditional

If a person has been receiving services from a provider agency and they want to continue to be served by that agency, this is possible. The provider agency will be responsible for handling all the details. They will hire and train the staff and supervise them. They will work with you and the support coordinator to provide the services that are specified in the Individual Service Plan.

If a person has just received a waiver, he/she or their family can ask the regional office for a list of providers approved to serve people in that area. It is up to the family to choose which agency they want to provide the services.

2. Co-Employer Arrangement

There is a new option called the co-employer arrangement where the person and their family choose who will support them, but the provider agency handles all the other aspects of the services. The worker is an employee of the provider agency, but the person being served has some say-so in which staff will be working with them. A provider agency has to sign up to be a co-employer.

3. Self Directed

Self-Direction, Consumer-Direction, or Participant-Direction all refer to the same concept. Letting you be in charge. This includes making decisions about who to hire, when to schedule their hours, and how much to pay workers. Each of the new waivers provides for this option. Supports are available to assist you in managing these responsibilities.



Just Like A Do It Yourself
Project....You Can Learn
To Self Direct Services.
Over 700 People In
Georgia Are Self Directing.





FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



1. What is the plan year for individuals receiving NOW or COMP services?

The plan year begins on the individual's birthday and ends on the birthday the following year. There is some confusion because some of the waiver paperwork is required to be done based on the fiscal year (July 1-June 30). The support coordinator can help keep the Individual Service Plan and the other paperwork done at the appropriate times.

2. How do I change services for my family member?

Families should work with their support coordinator to change waiver services. Changes can be made to the Individual Service Plan through an addendum at any time. If the budget hasn't been spent as expected during the year, then the team should look at what changes need to be made by mid-year so that resources are used wisely.

3. Where is there a list of providers for the NOW/COMP waivers?

The five Regional Offices maintain the list of approved providers. Their contact information is on page 11.

4. Can a family member be paid for providing NOW/COMP services?

The Federal law states that neither the parent of a minor child nor a spouse can be paid for providing care. Other family members may be able to be paid if there are extenuating circumstances. This could include:

- lack of qualified providers in a remote area
- lack of qualified providers who can provide services at the necessary times or places
- presence of extraordinary and specialized skills or knowledge by approvable relatives in providing services in the ISP
- clear demonstration of it being the most cost effective way to provide services

Approval of payment to family members must be in advance of any services provided.

5. Can participants receive Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) services in the NOW /COMP waivers?

Yes. ABA services include assessment, planning, consultation, family training, and individual skills training. The professional level assessment and plan development are available through Behavior Supports Consultation services. Family training is also available through this service or through the NOW service, Natural Support Training. Skills training can be provided through Community Access and Community Living Support Services. Adults can also receive skills training through Prevocational and Supported Employment Services.

RESOURCES

The NOW and COMP Waivers policies and procedures are separate manuals and come in two volumes each. They are quite lengthy, but if you need to find the answer to a specific issue, the information should be there. The entire waiver policies and procedures manuals can be found on the following website.

NOW and COMP Policies and Procedures	https://www.ghp.georgia.gov
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There is also a website where questions and answers about the NOW and COMP waivers are posted. If you want to see those, go to the follow website:

NOW and COMP Web-based questions	http://dbhdd.goergia.gov Services tab on left, Developmental Disabilities dropdown, What's New with the Waivers dropdown
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List of commonly used acronyms and abbreviations

Acronym or Abbreviation	
DBHDD	Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities
DD	Developmental Disability, includes intellectual impairment, other neurological conditions, epilepsy, cerebral palsy, and autism, which require treatment similar to that for individuals with mental retardation.
ISP	Individual Service Plan, yearly plan that specifies goals, objectives and services
SIS	Support Intensity Scale, tool used to determine a person's level of support needs
HRST	Health Risk Screening Tool, a tool used to look at a person's medical issues
NOW	New Options Waiver
COMP	Comprehensive Supports Waiver
MAO	Medical Assistance Only , a process used to make someone Medicaid eligible
ABA	Applied Behavior Analysis, a behavioral approach used for people with autism
I & E	Intake and Evaluation Team, the single point of entry into services
SSI	Supplemental Security Income, monthly benefit that covers room and board costs



Use this information to help you construct a support plan that works well for your life

HOW TO CONSTRUCT A GOOD LIFE IN THE COMMUNITY

Having Medicaid Waiver services is not the end result. It is a vehicle to having a life in the community. The support services should help link the person to the community.



Everyone should be paying attention to what the person enjoys doing and where in the community other people are who share those interests.



To have a good life in the community, people should have a variety of opportunities. They need chances to share their gifts and talents.



They need ways to learn new things of interest. They need places to go where they can participate in meaningful activities.