



Family/Individual Information Package: Waterloo Wellington

Hosted by: Canadian Mental Health Association Waterloo Wellington



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Canadian Mental
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Waterloo Wellington

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Waterloo Wellington

Last Modified: 2022/12/19

INTRODUCTION	3
THE SUPPORT DATABASE	3
DIRECT SUPPORT PROVIDERS.....	3
ENGAGING A DIRECT SUPPORT PROVIDER.....	4
IMPORTANT NOTES ABOUT THE SUPPORT DATABASE.....	4
GENERAL PROCESS FOR CONNECTING WITH A DIRECT SUPPORT PROVIDER	5
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DATABASE USERS	6
STEP 1 – IDENTIFY NEEDS.....	6
STEP 2 – QUALITIES OF A DIRECT SUPPORT PROVIDER.....	6
STEP 3 – WILL THE DIRECT SUPPORT PROVIDER BE CONSIDERED AN EMPLOYEE?	6
STEP 4 – REVIEW DIRECT SUPPORT PROVIDER PROFILES.....	8
STEP 5 - INITIAL TELEPHONE/EMAIL CONTACT AND SCHEDULING INTERVIEWS.....	8
STEP 6 – CONDUCTING AN INTERVIEW.....	8
STEP 7 – CHECKING REFERENCES AND BACKGROUND SCREENINGS.....	10
STEP 8 – DEVELOPING A CONTRACT.....	10
STEP 9 - ONBOARDING AND ORIENTATION	12
STEP 10 - TIPS FOR MAINTAINING A GOOD WORKING RELATIONSHIP.....	13
PREPARING THE DIRECT SUPPORT PROVIDER FOR THE ROLE	13
UNIQUE PERSONALITY AND NEEDS.....	13
FUTURE GOALS.....	14
REFLECTING ON SUPPORT NEEDS	14
SUPPORT AREAS TO CONSIDER.....	14
WHO IS THE BEST PERSON TO PROVIDE SUPPORT?	16
HAVING SOMEONE INVOLVED IN THE HOME AND FAMILY	16

Please note:

This guide is not financial or legal advice. It is intended to provide general information about contracting with a Direct Support Provider. For legal, financial, or other professional advice, contact a lawyer, accountant, or other appropriate professional. People who hire Direct Support Providers are required to follow all the laws and rules related to the employment process. If there is any conflict between the laws and this guide, the law will prevail. Respiteservices.com and host for Wellington Region, CMHA WW is not responsible or liable for any problems that come up when people employ or contract with their own Direct Support Providers.

IS THIS INFORMATION FOR ME?

Are you a person with a developmental disability in Ontario? Do you get money from a job, a direct funding program, the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) or another source? Do you use SSAH or Passport funding? Would you like to use some of that money to hire someone to support you and your life in the community? Are you a friend or family member of someone who wants to hire their own Direct Support Provider?

This guide is intended to help find a Direct Support Provider through the Support Database at respiteservices.com.

**FINDING A RESPITE/DIRECT SUPPORT PROVIDER THROUGH
'THE SUPPORT DATABASE'****INTRODUCTION****THE SUPPORT DATABASE**

The respiteservices.com/supportyourway.ca website is a free online information service that local organizations throughout Ontario support for the benefit of people with disabilities, their families and individual service providers in the community. The website(s) include a database through which people with disabilities and/or their families (known as “**Database Users**”) can make their support needs known, and through which independent individual service providers (known as “**Direct Support Providers**”) can offer their services to Database Users. The Support Database is updated regularly as new Direct Support Providers join the database and Database Users find successful matches.

DIRECT SUPPORT PROVIDERS

Direct Support Providers vary in experience, skill sets, and availability, and should not be considered trained therapists. Direct Support Providers are available for part-time parent/caregiver relief, in a Database User home or in the community. This may include one-to-one support in the community and assisting families to implement recommendations made by qualified therapists (e.g., Speech Language Pathologist or Occupational Therapist). The Support Database does not guarantee or warrant that any specific Direct Support Provider is appropriate for any Database User. The Support Database also does not supervise, control, or otherwise have any involvement with the services that a Direct Support Provider provides to a Database User, or the relationship between a provider and a Database User.

A Direct User's obligations and a Direct Support Provider's rights depend on their status as a self-employed contractor or employee. There are several resources available on the web that will help determine a Direct Support Provider's status. The information provided here is not legal advice and the Support Database does not warrant that any information provided is up to date or accurate. It is expressly recommended to seek legal advice (or at the very least seek further legal information) before entering a service relationship with a Direct Support Provider.

ENGAGING A DIRECT SUPPORT PROVIDER

To be placed in the Support Database, Direct Support Providers must:

- Submit a Provider Profile outlining their experience, interests, and availability,
- Provide a resume,
- Obtain a Police Reference Check (vulnerable sector screening),
- Provide 2 references (for major disqualifying features only),
- Attend an orientation session to the Support Database.

It is however up to each Database User to personally screen the Direct Support Providers they are considering, to verify their current documentation and references, and to select and contract with a Direct Support Provider of their choosing based on their own independent assessment of whether the person is trustworthy and appropriate.

Direct Support Providers are not employees of respiteservices.com or the Support Database. Database Users accessing the database contact and engage with Direct Support Providers directly, either as self-employed independent contractors or as employees. The Support Database is an information service only and does not have any involvement in any direct support relationships that may result from the information provided through the Support Database.

There is no charge for the use of the Support Database. There is no guarantee that an appropriate connection can be made between a Direct Support Provider and a Database User needing support.

IMPORTANT NOTES ABOUT THE SUPPORT DATABASE

1. The Support Database does not represent or warrant that any Direct Support Provider is suitable for any Database User's needs or at all, or that any information included in a Direct Support Provider's profile is accurate or current. When engaging with a Direct Support Provider each Database User should perform their own screening, obtaining, reviewing, and confirming up-to-date background checks and references.
2. It is the responsibility of the Database User who wishes to engage a Direct Support Provider to call, interview, engage, pay, and supervise the Direct Support Provider, consistent with the Database User's needs. The Support Database does not provide supervision for the Direct Support Provider or in any way control how, when, where, or what services will be provided.
3. Direct Support Providers are not Support Database employees. Payment to a Direct Support Provider is made directly by the Database User that engages them. The Support Database will not assume any responsibility for disagreements over fees/payments/services provided. Any problems in this regard must be resolved between the Direct Support Provider and the Database User.
4. Some requests are difficult to fill due to the travel time or type of hours requested. The Recruitment and Training Coordinator adds Direct Support Providers to the registry throughout the year and will try to provide new Direct Support Provider profile information that is consistent with your needs, as soon one is available. Database Users are strongly encouraged to recruit Direct Support Providers from their own community.

GENERAL PROCESS FOR CONNECTING WITH A DIRECT SUPPORT PROVIDER

The general process for engaging a Direct Support Provider is as follows:

1. The Database User creates a family/individual profile in the Support Database.
2. The Recruitment and Training Coordinator reviews the database of Direct Support Providers to see if there are any providers immediately available whose profiles meet the needs identified by the Database User.
3. At the same time the Database User is encouraged to review the Direct Support Provider Classifieds on www.respiteservices.com and/or www.supportsyourway.com.
4. If the Recruitment and Training Coordinator identifies Direct Support Providers who might fit the Database User's needs, the Recruitment and Training Coordinator will contact the Database User and provide the Database User with the profiles of those available Direct Support Providers.
5. It is then up to the Database User to contact any Direct Support Provider who is suitable to determine whether they are a fit, and to make further enquiries to confirm that the Database User wishes to engage the Direct Support Provider.
6. The Database User and their chosen Direct Support Provider then negotiate the terms on which service will be provided, whether on an independent contractor or employment basis, the rate/fees, schedule, and all other terms of their relationship.
7. The Database User and the Direct Support Provider are then asked to notify the Recruitment and Training Coordinator as to their updated needs or availability so that the database remains current for the benefit of all users and providers.

Please keep in mind:

- The Support Database is updated throughout the year, but no guarantees are made as to the accuracy or currency of the database, or the availability of a suitable Direct Support Provider.
- There may be a longer wait when a special request is made.
- Direct Support Providers may not be available in your area during the times you require support.
- In some cases, a Direct Support Provider may be identified more quickly if the hours of support are more flexible.
- Please note there is no guarantee that an appropriate Direct Support Provider is available on short notice, or at all.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DATABASE USERS

STEP 1 – IDENTIFY NEEDS

Identifying needs is important to achieve a good fit between the Database User and the Direct Support Provider. Start by asking some questions and recording answers. Here are some examples:

- What do I need/want the Direct Support Provider to do?
- Will they be administering medication?
- Do I want a non-smoker?
- Do I need a Direct Support Provider with a driver's license?
- Must the Direct Support Provider have their own vehicle?
- Do I need a Direct Support Provider who can swim?
- Do I want specific qualifications in my Direct Support Provider?
- Do I or my loved one who will be receiving support have any other personal preference or needs when it comes to the attributes of the Direct Support Provider?
- Will I require the Direct Support Provider to have first aid and/or CPR, or any other certification or training?

STEP 2 – QUALITIES OF A DIRECT SUPPORT PROVIDER

- Knowledgeable, warm, caring?
- Willing to learn?
- Problem solver, good judgement?
- Able to take direction?
- Positive outlook, energetic?
- Dependable, punctual?
- Flexible, accessible, and responsive to family's needs?
- Good rapport with the person receiving support and family?

STEP 3 – WILL THE DIRECT SUPPORT PROVIDER BE CONSIDERED AN EMPLOYEE?

Before making plans to engage a Direct Support Provider it is recommend that the Database User considers what the nature of the relationship will be. Consider the following:

- Do I plan to control the schedule, the location, the type of activities performed?
- Will the Direct Support Provider dictate the schedule, or be able to flex the times that support will be provided around their other clients, employment etc.?
- Do I plan to supervise the Direct Support Provider, or will the services be provided independently?
- Do I need so many hours of support per week such that the Direct Service Provider will come to rely on or be dependent on their earnings for their livelihood?
- Will the Direct Support Provider be expected to provide any resources, tools or equipment when providing the support?

All these factors and more may play into the appropriate legal characterization of the Direct Service Provider, which may impact legal obligations when it comes to how the Direct Service Provider is paid, etc. Give some

thought to this before selecting a Direct Support Provider and consider the budget to determine the number of hours of support that can be afforded.

Is the Direct Support Provider Self-Employed or An Employee?

A Database User's obligations and a Direct Support Provider's rights depend on their status as a self-employed contractor or employee. There are several resources available on the web to help determine a Direct Support Provider's status. The information provided here is not legal advice and the Support Database does not warrant that any information provided is up to date or accurate. It is expressly recommended to seek legal advice (or at the very least seek further legal information) before entering a service relationship with a Direct Support Provider.

Many Database Users choose to engage with their Direct Support Provider as a casual contractor regardless of the legal requirements. Before making any decisions, find out more by visiting the following websites:

- Government of Canada - [Employee or Self-employed? - Canada.ca](#)
- Government of Canada - [Determining the Employee/Employer Relationship](#)
- Ontario Ministry of Labour - [Fact Sheet – Difference between an Employee and an Independent Contractor](#)

Obligations Based on Employee Status

If a Database User intends for the Direct Support Provider to provide regular service on an ongoing basis in the Database User's home, under their control and supervision, at times and locations dictated by the Database User, and/or to the exclusion of work with other families, clients, or employers, then the Direct Support Provider could be considered an employee.

It is important to note that a Direct Support Provider could still be considered an employee even if they use their own vehicle, have signed an agreement saying they are an independent contractor, or they invoice the Database User.

Employees have several entitlements under the *Employment Standards Act, 2000*, such as vacation pay, public holiday pay, and termination pay, among other things. There are also reporting obligations for employees to the CRA (ex. T4s, EI and CPP contributions, Income Tax deductions) and Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) related obligations.

Consider visiting the Ontario Ministry of Labour for further information about obligations under the Employment Standards Act, 2000:

- [Your guide to the Employment Standards Act | ontario.ca](#)
- [Educational resources | Your guide to the Employment Standards Act | ontario.ca](#)

Visit the Government of Canada website for more information about employment related deductions, remittances, and reporting obligations:

- [Recruiting and Hiring Workers in Canada](#)
- [T4 - Information for employers - Canada.ca](#)
- [Payroll Deductions Online Calculator - Canada.ca](#)

Obligations Based on Self-Employed Direct Support Provider Status

If the Direct Support Provider provides service intermittently, at times and in locations that the Direct Support Provider dictates, with little or no supervision, and the Direct Support Provider is not dependent on the Database User for their livelihood, then it may be that the Direct Support Provider would be considered an “independent contractor” or self-employed worker.

An independent contractor is responsible for declaring their own income to Revenue Canada and making their own remittances.

They also do not have the same rights under the *Employment Standards Act, 2000* that an employee would.

Technically speaking, however, a person who pays a self-employed contractor is still required to file a T4A with Revenue Canada. Learn more about that here:

- [T-4A Information for Payers](#)

STEP 4 – REVIEW DIRECT SUPPORT PROVIDER PROFILES

- Database Users review worker profiles and select those Direct Support Providers they would like to consider engaging with.
- Database Users are encouraged to make a list of Direct Support Providers and write down information about each that is obtained when Database Users contact them.

STEP 5 - INITIAL TELEPHONE/EMAIL CONTACT AND SCHEDULING INTERVIEWS

- Database Users should contact the Direct Support Providers whose profiles have been provided by the Recruitment and Training Coordinator within forty-eight (48) hours of receiving the profiles. Direct Support Provider availability changes quickly as users and providers make connections.
- When a Database User calls a prospective Direct Support Provider, they should state their name, and that the contact information was obtained from the Support Database.
- As a Database User, explain when a Direct Support Provider is needed (days and times), required activities or duties, the needs of the person with a disability, and where the activities will take place.
- If the Direct Support Provider is interested, set a date and time for an interview. It is important to choose a time when the person who will be receiving supports can be present so the Direct Support Provider can meet and interact with them.

STEP 6 – CONDUCTING AN INTERVIEW

The interview allows time to discuss needs with a potential Direct Support Provider:

- Schedule a time that is convenient for both the Database User and the potential Direct Support Provider.
- Plan about an hour for each interview. Don't be in a hurry.
- Take the time to check references and ask for verification of professional experience.
- Be prepared – have questions ready, the profile of the person receiving supports handy, expectations highlighted, and the person receiving supports present for part, if not all of the interview.

- Be specific about needs and expectations of how time will be spent, and the discretion that the Direct Support Provider will have in determining how, what, when and where services will be provided.
- Be sure to discuss fees and payment expectations, and how payment will be processed. Once again this relates to whether the Direct Support Provider will be an employee of the Database User or is a self-employed contractor.

Example interview questions for potential Direct Support Providers:

- Please tell me about yourself.
- Please expand on your experience working with children/adolescents/adults.
- Why are you interested in providing support care services?
- Describe your strengths and areas you are working on.
- What other clients or jobs do you have?
- Why are you the right person to support me or my loved one?
- What would you do if we disagreed on something?
- If my son/daughter cries when I leave, how will you handle the situation?
- If my son/daughter must be taken to the hospital for an emergency, what steps would you take?
- What would you do if my son/daughter did not respond to your request?
- What hours are you able to work? During the day, weekend, holidays, short notice? Are there specific times when you are unable to work?
- Are you willing to take my son/daughter out for activities?
- Describe a difficult problem you have had to handle with an individual. How did you handle it?
- Do you have any special training or experience you would like me to be aware of?
- Do you have a valid driver’s license? Would you take my son/daughter in your own vehicle?
- Would you drive our vehicle?
- Do you have 3rd party liability insurance on your vehicle?

Areas of Caution for Interview Questions

There are certain questions when looking for a Direct Support Provider that are not appropriate to ask. Although Database Users may be subject to some exemptions under the Human Rights Code when it comes to engaging a person to provide personal care supports, it is still a good idea to avoid the types of questions that could give rise to a perception that you are asking discriminatory or overly intrusive questions.

Inquiry area	Questions to Avoid	Questions that are Acceptable
National Origin/ Citizenship	-Are you a Canadian citizen? - Where were you born? -What is your “native tongue”?	- Are you authorized to work in Canada? -What languages are spoken fluently (related to job performance)?
Age	-How old are you? -When did you graduate? -What is your birth date?	-Are you over age 18?
Marital/ Family Status	-What is your marital status? -Whom do you live with? -Do you plan to have a family?	- Would you be able and willing to travel as needed by the job?

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	-How many kids do you have?	
Race/Colour	-What is your race?	None are appropriate
Religion	-What is your religious affiliation?	None are appropriate

STEP 7 – CHECKING REFERENCES AND BACKGROUND SCREENINGS

The Support Database requests references; however, it is recommended that Database Users check references independently. This may help to decide whether a Direct Support Provider is the right fit. References can be either personal or work related.

Personal References may include an adult friend, religious leader, a teacher or professor, or a neighbour.

Professional References may include a past or current employer/supervisor or a family that the provider has supported in the past.

Here are a few suggestions for questions to ask a reference:

- What is your relationship with the provider?
- How long have you known this person?
- I am looking for someone to provide XXXX type of supports, would you have any concerns about the person's ability to perform such duties?
- Does the provider follow directions?
- Is the provider reliable? Punctual? Honest?
- Is there anything else you would like to comment on?

It is also recommended to review each candidate's background criminal record check and vulnerable sector screenings. Direct Support Providers must provide this check to the Support Database. Review this screening and ensure comfortability with the Direct Support Provider working alone with the individual requiring support.

STEP 8 – DEVELOPING A CONTRACT

Once a Direct Support Provider is selected, develop a contract for services with them. Clearly discuss expectations and be specific about the employment relationship with them. A written contract is encouraged. It is important to establish and maintain a good working relationship. Listed below are some issues identified by both Direct Support Providers and Database Users as important things to remember and discuss.

a. The Schedule

The Database User should work with the Direct Support Provider to determine what the schedule will look like. If the Direct Service Provider is a self-employed contractor, this will be at times that the Direct Support Provider dictates they are available and that also work for Database Users or their loved one.

The Database User should confirm with the Direct Support Provider the day, time, types of activities and who has control over these issues.

Staying connected – both parties should provide advance notice of any change in the schedule, health status, and any other valuable information for care. Note that if the Direct Support Provider is an employee, there are new requirements that came into effect on January 1, 2019, related to minimum advance notice of cancellation (48 hours) and cancellation pay where notice is not provided (3 hours wages).

b. Rate and Manner of Payment

The rate of pay should be established at the interview or when entering a contract with the Direct Support Provider. Other payment topics including payment method (cash, cheque, e-transfer, etc.) and frequency of payment (weekly, monthly, etc.) should also be determined at this time.

Typically, a self-employed Direct Support Provider will dictate the rate, whereas an employee will be more likely to be subject to the rate set by the Database User. Direct Support Providers that are self-employed should be invoicing on an invoice they prepare.

Employees on the other hand are typically subject to the rate the Database User is prepared to offer, and it will typically be the Database User's responsibility to keep a record of the Direct Support Provider's hours of work.

The Database User may need to consider varying rates – for example, one rate for community integration supports and another rate for while the person with a disability is sleeping and not in need of direct support. Keep in mind that an employee is entitled to be paid minimum wage, even during periods of sleep, except in exceptional circumstances (such as where the employee lives in the home during their period of employment).

c. Trial period

There may be times when there is not a good fit when hiring a Direct Support Provider, whether it is from their perspective or the Database User's point of view.

Establish a trial or probationary period before any long-term commitment is made by either party, especially if unsure about the relationship.

d. Transporting Individuals

A Database User may request that a Direct Support Provider drive the person with a disability and use their own vehicle. If a Direct Support Provider agrees to transport, ensure the Direct Support Provider has:

- A valid driver's license,
- Safe vehicle,
- Minimum of \$1,000,000 liability on their insurance (it is recommended that they speak to their own insurance company for requirements and consider taking out a rider on the policy for this purpose),
- Notified their insurer that they are driving for the purposes of employment or self-employment.

A Database User may choose to cover the cost of transportation during the time the Direct Support Provider is with their loved one with a disability, though that looks more like an employment related benefit as opposed to what would be typical with a self-employed contractor relationship.

The Direct Support Provider should be responsible to ensure all passengers are safe and that proper seat belts and car seats are being used. It is good practise to keep a First Aid Kit in the car. A phone for emergencies is also helpful. The Database User may wish to discuss this with the Direct Support Provider.

e. Length of Agreement between Database User and Direct Support Provider

A Direct User's obligations and a Direct Support Provider's rights depend on their status as a self-employed contractor or employee. There are several resources available on the web that will help determine a Direct Support Provider's status. The information provided here is not legal advice and the Support Database does not warrant that any information provided is up to date or accurate. It is expressly recommended to seek legal advice (or at the very least seek further legal information) before entering a service relationship with a Direct Support Provider.

It is hoped that once an agreement has been made for direct support that the commitment of the Direct Support Provider to the Database User will lead to an ongoing, productive, and satisfying relationship.

A long-term relationship means the Database User can avoid having to seek out and engage a new Direct Support Provider.

If a Direct Support Provider decides to leave or a Database User no longer needs the Direct Support Provider's support, it is important to give each other notice (notice obligations depend on the status of the Direct Support Provider, the terms of any contract signed, and the requirements under the *Employment Standards Act, 2000* if applicable).

Note that if the Direct Support Provider is an employee, it is important to address termination specifically in the contract and limit termination entitlements to the *Employment Standards Act, 2000* minimum, expressly excluding any common law reasonable notice or pay in lieu thereof, to avoid having to pay out large sums related to "reasonable notice" or "severance" that may otherwise be payable.

f. Confidentiality

The Database User and Direct Support Provider should maintain confidentiality with regards to the individual and family that they are supporting. It is important for there to be a clear understanding between the Direct Support Provider and the Database User that all personal information must not be discussed unless the person is present or has given their consent to specific information being discussed.

g. Contracts

Ideally a contract is in writing between the Database User and the Direct Support Provider. What will be included in the contract depends on the status of the Direct Support Provider and may be titled as an Employment Agreement or an Independent Contractor Agreement. Issues have been highlighted that ought to be addressed in the agreement (above in sections a-f). There are many resources available online for templates. Respiteservices.com expressly recommends that Database Users get advice before entering a legal contract and does not express any opinion on the enforceability or validity of any templates.

STEP 9 - ONBOARDING AND ORIENTATION

The Direct Support Provider attends an orientation/information session before they become active on the Support Database. However, this is a very general session about the Support Database and is not related to providing service to Database Users, or the specific needs and expectations of a particular Database User. Database Users should provide the Direct Support Provider with information related to:

- Needs and any health concerns, medications, allergies.
- The location where supports will be provided.
- A list of key contacts (local hospital, parents, doctors, or other supports).
- Any emergency support plans that have been prepared.
- Any person centre plan (ISPs) you or your loved one might have.
- Lists of likes and dislikes and any recommendations you may have as to how to avoid or respond to upset.

For further information in this regard see the section on 'Preparing a Direct Support Provider' below.

STEP 10 - TIPS FOR MAINTAINING A GOOD WORKING RELATIONSHIP

Identify and discuss problems as soon as they arise. Be prepared to negotiate a solution to the problem:

- Keep communication open and on-going. Try using a communication book to keep everyone informed and be responsive to any suggestions or recommendations documented.
- Discuss specific strengths and needs of the individual requiring support and any strategies used to support them with communication, behaviour or in various situations in the community or at home.
- If serious problems arise, document dates, times, issues, and concerns.
- If possible, for quality programming, invite the Direct Support Provider to attend a therapy session to observe the therapist at work with the individual. In this environment, the Direct Support Provider can ask the therapist questions and observe and implement the program under the watchful eyes of an expert. This also allows for observation of the Direct Support Provider in action with the individual they are supporting. Keep in mind that the more training that is provided, however, the more likely the Direct Support Provider will be an employee and not a self-employed contractor.
- Discuss activities, any costs associated with activities and travel expenses with the Direct Support Provider. Many places in the community offer discounts on entrance fees and activities to those supporting individuals with a disability.
- Train Direct Support Providers on proper use of any communication aids, assistive devices, or equipment.
- Unless agreed otherwise, only the person engaged and approved by Database Users should provide care to the person with a disability. If a Direct Support Provider is not able to fulfil the hours needed, clarify who would be responsible to make other arrangements, the Direct Support Provider, or the Database User. Keep in mind that allowing or requiring the Direct Support Provider to arrange alternative supports will help to prove that the Direct Support Provider is a self-employed contractor.

PREPARING THE DIRECT SUPPORT PROVIDER FOR THE ROLE

As a Database User, take some time to think about the individual who needs support and what their special characteristics are. This will help to develop a plan of support. It will also help in determining what is most important to the individual and family. By taking this time, a good match may be found more easily. Most families will have to recruit, select, and train several Direct Support Providers over the years, so taking time to think about these things and making notes, simplifies the process.

UNIQUE PERSONALITY AND NEEDS

People with disabilities may have specific needs. It can mean that they have challenges related to communication, physical care, social interaction, and medical needs. They might have unique reactions to the world around them, including sensory issues, making it hard for them to interpret what is happening. Usually, a parent/caregiver has special knowledge about the individual's routine, communication style and cues. Someone who does not know the individual might read or interpret these signs incorrectly. The more information Direct Support Providers have, the more likely they are to assist in an effective and meaningful manner.

Make notes about these things. Database Users sometimes find it hard to tell their story repeatedly. Putting thoughts in writing often makes it easier to do this. Sometimes it is easy to get distracted in the conversation and a written guide helps to focus on the things that are important. Sharing information during the interview and screening a new Direct Support Provider helps to decide if the Direct Support Provider's skills, interests, and personality are a match.

In consulting with Database Users about the development of this booklet, they said that they wanted Direct Support Providers to know about their or their loved one's disability, but that it was just as important for Direct Support Providers to think about them or their loved one as a person, get to know them as a unique individual, and understand how their disability affects them. Help the Direct Support Provider to understand you or your loved one as a person, not just a label. How can the Direct Support Provider help move towards the vision you and your loved one have for your or their life?

FUTURE GOALS

How does the future look? This vision likely includes friends, activities that are meaningful, connections to the community, safety, security, and skills that help to live a meaningful life in the best and most independent way possible. The Direct Support Provider is not there to be a friend, but instead a bridge builder. Think about how the Direct Support Provider can use their time to help nurture friendships and relationships, make connections in the community and build skills to use in the future.

REFLECTING ON SUPPORT NEEDS

The Database User will be aware of what is required of the Direct Support Provider and how a particular disability may affect everyday life. Think about how to describe needs to a Direct Support Provider for the first time and how the Direct Support Provider can offer the right kind of support.

Clearly describing personality, interests, abilities, and needs is critical in choosing and preparing someone to provide support. Write out a profile. Have the information in a binder that can be updated as the needs change. This keeps things organized and information will be remembered. It also helps to keep things positive and focused on strengths, interests, and challenges. Consider including the following information:

SUPPORT AREAS TO CONSIDER

Contact information:

- The name of the place parents/caregivers can be reached, the phone number and the expected time of return.
- The phone number of a neighbour or relative to call for assistance in an emergency.
- Provide a tour of the house and/or community building, pointing out door locks, exits, security systems, thermostat, location of flashlight, pet information.

Communication:

- What communication styles/techniques are used?
- Are there particular words, signs, or other methods that are used in times of distress or anxiety?
- Are there ways that the person with a disability asks questions or makes their needs known?
- Does the person with a disability use any communication devices?

Creating and Maintaining Relationships:

- What helps you or your loved one feel most comfortable with others?
- Are there things that help the person with the disability to connect to other people?
- When does the person with the disability need space from others?
- What types of activities help the person with the disability to break down barriers with others?

Sensory Issues:

- Are there things that affect you or your loved one such as crowded environments, noise level, smells, colours, texture or feeling of clothing?
- How is the person with the disability most comfortable and how can the Direct Support Provider help them to deal with these issues?

Activities and Play:

- Are there particular activities that you or your loved one like to do?
- What are the activities that the person with the disability need the highest level of support with?
- Are there activities that the person with the disability can enjoy independently?
- Is there a regular community program that you or your loved one can participate in with support (e.g., parks and recreation, Girl Guides, Scouts, choir, etc.)?

Responses through Challenging Behaviours:

- Are there situations when you or your loved one responds in a way that is challenging to support?
- What does this look like?
- How do you find it most effective to help the person with the disability move through a tough time?
- Are there things that you or your loved one avoid because it leads to problems?
- What is the best plan for safety for yourself or your loved one?

Physical Needs:

- What are the physical needs that your or your loved one requires support with?
- Does this include help in the bathroom, eating, doing up a seatbelt, dressing?
- Is there any special equipment that the Direct Support Provider needs to know about?

Medical Needs:

- Are there any special medical needs that the Direct Support Provider needs to know about, including seizures, allergies, medications, diet?
- What is the emergency plan for any medical issue?
- What are the specific instructions about any medications or medical needs?

Cultural or Religious Background:

- What important things does the Direct Support Provider need to know to respect your family's cultural or religious background?

WHO IS THE BEST PERSON TO PROVIDE SUPPORT?

Develop a list of traits that are important in a Direct Support Provider.

Some different examples are:

- Comfortable helping me or my loved one participate in community activities.
- Relaxed- not too rigid, open to new things, calm demeanour during stressful times.
- Structured- has an organized approach.
- Willing to implement specific kinds of activities, responses, and techniques.
- A real problem solver- open minded about how to solve problems without getting flustered.
- Committed to having me or my loved one be included in the community.
- Warm and open disposition.

HAVING SOMEONE INVOLVED IN THE HOME AND FAMILY

Having a Direct Support Provider involved in the family can be both a wonderful opportunity and a stressor. Sometimes, having someone coming into the home is difficult. Database Users have the right to expect that the Direct Support Provider will keep their family information private and confidential.

Setting boundaries helps the Direct Support Provider keep in mind that that they are in a family home and there to assist the individual and family. Remember the reason that they are in the home and be aware of their role.

Developing an open and trusting relationship is important, but the Direct Support Provider's role is not to be a friend or confidant. They are there to provide care and support and to fulfill the responsibilities that were agreed upon. Having healthy boundaries allows clarity in the role. Here are some thoughts to consider:

- Never lend money or borrow money.
- Keep social times with the Direct Support Provider to occasions that are focused on supporting the person with the disability, such as a birthday party.
- Do not discuss personal problems with the Direct Support Provider.
- Give as much notice as possible if cancelling or changing schedules/times.
- Encourage the Direct Support Provider to set a time to discuss plans and issues on a regular basis. This fosters effective communication and a sense of involvement.
- Be thoughtful and clear about expectations around communication and the use of social media, texting, and applications such as Snapchat, Instagram, etc.

Following these guidelines helps both the Database User and the Direct Support Provider to define their roles. It is important for both the Database User and the Direct Support Provider to be flexible, considerate, and respectful.

For more information, or problem-solving, please contact the respiteservices.com Recruitment and Training Coordinator by email: respite@cmhaww.ca