



DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC SECURITY

Your Partner For A Stronger Arizona

DIVISION OF DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

OIFA Member Update - April 2023

REMINDER: ‘This Is My Life’ Helps DDD Members Take Control of Own Futures

Just like everyone else, if you have an intellectual or developmental disability (I/DD), you get to make decisions about your own life.

In fact, the United Nations has a treaty called the “[Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#).” This treaty says that people with a disability making their own life decisions is a basic human right.

DDD fully supports its members’ rights to make their own life decisions. For this reason, the Division has a well-established program called “This Is My Life.”

What is ‘This Is My Life’?

“This Is My Life” is a service funded by the state of Arizona. It’s available to anyone age 16 or older who receives benefits from the DDD.

The service helps DDD members learn how to communicate their wishes, make personal decisions, and choose the type of help they receive. It also teaches DDD members to advocate for themselves.

Some of the skills taught in “This Is My Life” are:

- Self-advocacy
- Self-awareness
- Goal setting
- Communication
- Problem-solving

Many people with I/DD don’t learn the skills they need to advocate for themselves or push for things they want in life. “This Is My Life” helps them learn how to do that and use those skills. The outcome is a happier, more fulfilling life for DDD members.

How to sign up for ‘This Is My Life’

Anyone age 16 or older who receives DDD benefits can ask to get services from “This Is My Life.” It’s easy! Just ask your Support Coordinator to help you sign up. Family members and guardians can also ask the Support Coordinator for help signing up their loved one for “This Is My Life.”

April is Autism Acceptance Month: Early Diagnosis Key to Lifelong Outcomes

[PBS Newshour](#) named Phoenix, Ariz. the most “autism-friendly city in the world.” Additionally, Mesa became the first Autism-Certified City in the United States.

April is Autism Acceptance Month. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), about one in 36 children in the U.S. is diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder.

What is autism?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) describes Autism Spectrum Disorder as a “developmental disability that can cause significant social, communication and behavior challenges.” The CDC estimates one in 54 children is diagnosed with autism.

Early diagnosis is key

Research by the National Institute of Health shows early diagnosis and support for someone with autism are more likely to have positive, long-term effects.

Examples of early support include:

- Family training
- Speech therapy
- Hearing impairment services
- Occupational therapy
- Nutrition services
- Educational services based on need

ABA - a common therapy for autism

According to Autism Speaks, “Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) is a therapy based on the science of learning and behavior.” ABA is one of the most common therapies used to help people with autism.

The benefits of ABA include:

- It increases functional skills.
- It increases social skills.
- It teaches new behaviors.
- It increases independence.
- It reduces or eliminates unhealthy behaviors.

When medically necessary, a person with autism can get ABA through AHCCCS. AHCCCS has a package of ABA services. DDD members who are eligible for long-term care can get ABA through their DDD Health Plans.

Additionally, if you’re already receiving services through a behavioral health clinic or are enrolled in a behavioral health clinic or home, talk to the clinic. They can help find an ABA provider for you. If you don’t go to a behavioral health clinic, contact your DDD Support Coordinator. You can also call Member Services at your health plan or contact your DDD Support Coordinator to help find a provider.

For more information, read the [AHCCCS policy on ABA](#).

AHCCCS Extends Parents As Paid Providers As-Is Until November 2023

The Parents as Paid Providers service flexibility began at the start of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency. The goal was to ensure families had support during the emergency. AHCCCS worked with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to allow parents to become Direct Care Workers

(DCW) for their children who receive DDD benefits. This let Qualified Vendors hire parents and stepparents to provide services for their minor children. Parents as Paid Providers was temporary during the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency. More information can be found on the Division's website in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).

AHCCCS recently updated its list of flexibilities. One update extends Parents as Paid Providers with **no changes until** Nov. 11, 2023. The Division will keep providing updates as November 2023 gets closer.

COVID-19 National Emergency Ending Next Month, in May

The federal government is planning to end the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency next month, in May 2023. This means in June 2023, many COVID-19 options will end for people getting supports and services from the Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD).

You can read the national announcement on COVID-19 [by clicking here](#).

What's changing at DDD?

During the COVID-19 emergency, DDD offered various options so families could keep vital services. Some of those options ended on April 1, 2023. These changes are:

- All planning meetings with Support Coordinators returned to in-person instead of being remote.
- DDD stopped offering support for remote learning. Schools are back to in-person classes.
- DDD took down the guidance, "Assessing Risk for DDD Members Who Are At Higher Risk for Severe Illness From COVID-19."
- Group homes or developmental home services no longer have to hold a place for DDD members who move in with family due to COVID-19.

Many other options from the COVID emergency will end on June 30, 2023. You can visit DDD's [Actions Related to COVID-19 web page](#) for more information to see the status of each option.

Worried about COVID exposure? Just Ask to Mask

DDD knows some members and families may worry about COVID. Returning to in-person meetings may increase that worry.

To reduce COVID risk, all you have to do is Ask to Mask. Reach out to your Support Coordinator and ask them to wear a mask for the visit.

DDD takes the health and well-being of its members seriously. This is the main reason DDD is returning to in-person planning meetings. Planning meetings are the core of DDD's work to help members live self-directed, healthy, and meaningful lives. By returning to in-person meetings, Support Coordinators can assess members' health and well-being. They can also ensure members have what they need and are free of abuse and neglect.

However, if you are trying to avoid COVID, don't be shy. Your health matters! Tell your Support Coordinator and Ask to Mask.

New Visitors in Group Homes Might Ask for Interviews. Why? HB 2865

In 2022, a bill named HB 2865 became law. Now, in the coming weeks, DDD members living in group homes might feel the effects of that law.

HB 2865 was passed to ensure people with complex behavioral needs get quality care to meet those needs. It requires the DDD to contract with the Arizona Center for Disability Law. The Center will help provide more information about Arizona group homes.

One of the ways the Center will do this is by interviewing people who live in the group homes, including DDD members. People from the Center might ask residents questions about the services they receive. They might also talk to the families of residents.

DDD members and their families are encouraged to talk to people from the Center. However, interviews are optional for them.

Representatives from the Center may also talk to staff at the group homes.

Attention: Qualified Vendors to use New Incident Report Form on May 1

DDD is making some changes to the Incident Report Form that Qualified Vendors use. Members should be aware of these changes.

The changes will start on May 1, 2023. They will increase the amount of information provided on the Incident Report Form. This will reduce the need to contact Qualified Vendors for more information.

The changes include:

- Three event types: Medication, Death, and Other. Vendors complete only the part that applies to the event being reported. Member injury events are reported in the section marked "Other". Vendors can skip the Other event-type areas.
- More sections. These areas allow DDD to collect detailed information about member demographics, required notifications and corrective actions already put into place by the vendor. These sections will need to be filled out.

Incidents reported on or after May 1, 2023, must be done using the new form.

SAFETY CORNER

Save a Life: Learn to Swim, Follow 5 Steps to Water Safety

Learning to swim is one of life's pleasures. It is also a life-saving skill.

Each year, thousands of people drown. Arizona has the third-highest drowning rate in the country. Most often, those deaths could have been prevented with a few steps:

1. Learn to swim, or help others learn to swim. Swim schools in Arizona offer swimming lessons for all ages, and many include lessons for children or adults with disabilities. Ability 360, an organization that works with people with disabilities, has a Phoenix location with swimming lessons at 5031 E. Washington St. Other swimming schools and programs offer classes as well.
2. Watch. Be sure an adult is always watching children and those with disabilities when they are around bathtubs, hot tubs, pools, lakes, rivers, or the beach. If a lifeguard is available, even better. Never leave anyone unattended around water. It is best to have someone nearby that knows CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation).
3. Prevent. Make sure children or those with disabilities cannot wander into areas with pools or lakes. Here in Arizona, some areas have irrigation canals. Many of these do not have fences

around them. Fences with locking and self-closing gates need to surround pools or other water areas to stop children or others who cannot swim from getting into the water.

4. Wear lifejackets. These jackets can save the lives of those who do not know how to swim. The jackets can be worn as an extra safety measure whenever a young one or person with disabilities is around water. But do not depend on lifejackets alone. Swimmies and floating toys are not lifejackets.
5. Be aware. The best way to avoid drownings is to watch those around the water. Never leave a child or person with disabilities alone in or near water, not even for a moment. When watching others in the water, do not let activities (reading, cell phone, talking with another person nearby) take your attention away from watching those in or near water.

Each year, children between 1 and 4 years old are the most at risk of drowning. The organization called Stop Drowning Now, reports that:

- In the U.S., about 3,500 to 4,000 people drown per year. That is an average of 10 fatal drownings per day.
- Drowning remains one of the top five causes of accidental injury-related death for children ages birth to 5 years old.

These numbers increase for people with disabilities. Children with autism and other disabilities are more likely to seek out and drown in water. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reports that for “infants under 1 year old, two-thirds of all drownings happen in bathtubs. Most drownings happen in home swimming pools among children ages 1 to 4. About 40 percent of drownings among children ages 5 to 14 happen in natural water, and about 30 percent happen in swimming pools.”

When people know how to swim, they will be able to enjoy the coolness and sensation of being in the water. For children with autism, Down Syndrome, Cerebral Palsy, or other conditions, the freedom of being in the water may be a treat.

Swimming also gives people with disabilities another way to improve their health. Swimming for exercise can improve heart function and strengthen muscles and bones.

Town Hall Meetings

DDD hosts town hall meetings for members, families and providers. You can join via the Internet or by telephone. Attendees can also ask questions. **The next town hall will be held on Thursday, May 4, 2023.** Guests from Arizona Special Olympics will present at the meeting. Visit <http://bit.ly/dddtownhall> for details to join.

Community Resources

DDD has information for local, state, and national groups that support members and their families. The DDD website has links to many of these groups that can assist with day to day tasks and other services that may not be covered by the Division. [Visit the community resources section of the DDD website to learn more.](#)

Arizona Warm Lines

Trained peer support specialists are available to provide support if you need it. These warm lines are available to all Arizonans age 18 and over. Peer support specialists have lived experience. They have been through tough times. They are trained to listen and support callers.

Area Covered	Provider	Phone Number	Hours
All Arizona Counties	NAZCARE	1-888-404-5530	4pm to 10pm Monday – Thursday 3pm to 10:30pm Friday – Sunday
Central Arizona	Crisis Response Network	602-347-1100	24 hours
Southern Arizona - Pima County	Hope, Inc	520-770-9909	8am - 10pm
Southern Arizona - All Other Counties	Hope, Inc	1-844-733-9912	8am - 10pm

The Family Involvement Center offers a warm line for family members. They offer support to family members that deal with behavioral health challenges. This service is also available at no cost.

- Statewide phone number: 1-877-568-8468
- Hours:
 - Monday - Friday: 8am - 6pm
 - Saturday - Sunday: 8am - 12pm

Crisis Services

If you, a family member, or a friend have a mental health emergency, it is important that you seek help right away. Trained crisis staff are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to help over the phone. The Crisis lines are free, confidential, and open to anyone who needs help. For medical, police and fire emergency situations, always call 911.

Statewide Crisis Hotline

- 1-844-534-4673 (1-844-534-HOPE) or text 44673 (4HOPE)

Suicide and Crisis Hotlines by County

- Maricopa County served by Mercy Care: 1-800-631-1314 or 602-222-9444
- Cochise, Graham, Greenlee, La Paz, Pima, Santa Cruz and Yuma Counties served by Arizona Complete Health - Complete Care Plan: 1-866-495-6735
- Apache, Coconino, Mohave, Navajo and Yavapai Counties served by Health Choice Arizona: 1-877-756-4090
- Pinal County served by Mercy Care: 1-866-495-6735
- Gila County served by Mercy Care: 1-800-631-1314
- Gila River and Ak-Chin Indian Communities: 1-800-259-3449
- Salt River Pima Maricopa Indian Community: 1-855-331-6432
- Tohono O’odham Nation: 1-844-423-8759

Especially for Teens

- Teen Life Line phone or text: 602-248-TEEN (8336)

National 24-Hour Crisis Hotlines

Phone

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 988 available for talk or text
- National Substance Use and Disorder Issues Referral and Treatment Hotline: 1-800-662-HELP (4357)

Text

- Text the word "HOME" to 741741

Report Fraud, Waste or Abuse

Medicaid fraud, waste and abuse (FWA) are crimes. Report fraud, waste, and abuse right away. You will not get in trouble or lose services if you report any suspected fraud, waste, or abuse.

You can report FWA to DDD by:

- Calling DDD at 1-877-822-5799
- Sending an email to dddfwa@azdes.gov
- Sending a letter to DES/DDD, Attn: Corporate Compliance Unit, 1789 W Jefferson St., Mail Drop 2HA1, Phoenix, AZ 85007
- Completing this [online form](#).

You can also report FWA to AHCCCS

- Provider Fraud
 - In Arizona: 602-417-4045
 - Outside Arizona: 1-888-ITS-NOT-OK (1-888-487-6686)
- Report Member Fraud:
 - In Arizona: 602-417-4193
 - Outside Arizona: 1-888-ITS-NOT-OK (1-888-487-6686)
- If you have questions about AHCCCS fraud, abuse of the program, or abuse of a member, email the AHCCCS Office of Inspector General (OIG) at AHCCCSFraud@azahcccs.gov.

Stay Up to Date

All old OIFA newsletters are available to view on DDD's website. Visit the [Member Services](#) page and click on the "Member Newsletters" section.

DDD is Here to Help

Please contact your Support Coordinator or the DDD Customer Service Center at 1-844-770-9500 ext. 1 (TTY/TDD 711) if you have questions.

Call the DDD Customer Service Center at 1-844-770-9500 ext. 1, TTY/TDD 711, to ask for this material in other formats. Language help is available at no cost to you.