



# Understanding Pennsylvania ODP Waivers

*A guide for families, caregivers, and community partners*

ODP waivers are Medicaid Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) programs that can provide supports to eligible Pennsylvanians with intellectual disability, autism, complex medical needs, or certain developmental disabilities so they can live and participate in their homes and communities.

## What is ODP?

The Pennsylvania Office of Developmental Programs (ODP), within the Department of Human Services, oversees services for eligible individuals with intellectual disability, autism, and certain developmental disabilities.

Eligibility for ODP services and enrollment in a Medicaid waiver are related, but they are not the same thing.

## Pennsylvania's major ODP waivers

| Waiver           | Age / population              | General focus                                        | Important distinction                        |
|------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| P/FDS            | Any age; qualifying ID/autism | Home and community supports                          | Individual annual service cost limit applies |
| Community Living | Any age; qualifying ID/autism | More intensive home/community support                | Higher individual annual service cost limit  |
| Consolidated     | Any age; qualifying ID/autism | Comprehensive support, including residential options | No individual annual service cap             |

## A diagnosis does not automatically determine the waiver

The appropriate pathway depends on eligibility, functional needs, level of care, available waiver capacity, and the types and intensity of supports needed. An autistic person may qualify through the P/FDS, Community Living, or Consolidated Waiver system.

## Examples of supports that may be available

- In-Home and Community Support (IHCS)
- Respite and caregiver support
- Behavioral Support
- Employment and community participation supports
- Transportation and assistive technology
- Home accessibility/adaptive supports
- Nursing or other health-related waiver services when applicable
- Supports Coordination and Individual Support Plan (ISP) development

The exact services available depend on the waiver, assessed need, authorization, and the person's ISP.

# How to Start the ODP Process

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## 1. Contact the county ID/Autism program

The county Mental Health/Intellectual Disabilities or Administrative Entity is the local entry point for ODP registration. Ask to register for ODP intellectual disability/autism services and request an eligibility determination.

## 2. Gather supporting documentation

Useful records can include diagnostic evaluations, psychological testing, school evaluations/IEPs, adaptive-functioning information, medical records, behavioral assessments, medication lists, hospital/crisis records, and documentation from current service providers.

## 3. Complete the eligibility process

The county reviews documentation to determine whether the person meets ODP eligibility criteria. Additional records or evaluations may be requested.

## 4. Connect with Supports Coordination

When applicable, a Supports Coordinator helps identify needs, develop the Individual Support Plan, coordinate services, and assist with waiver-related processes.

## 5. Complete waiver and level-of-care requirements

Waiver enrollment involves Medicaid HCBS eligibility requirements, including applicable level-of-care, Medical Assistance, and financial determinations.

## 6. Complete and maintain PUNS when applicable

The Prioritization of Urgency of Need for Services (PUNS) documents current and anticipated unmet needs. Families should accurately describe support needs, caregiver circumstances, health and safety risks, and the consequences of services not being available.

## 7. Identify the services actually needed

Ask for assessment of specific supports—not simply a waiver name. Examples include IHCS, Behavioral Support, respite, nursing, employment, community participation, assistive technology, or other appropriate services.

## 8. Ask about options while waiting

Waiver capacity can be limited. Ask about base-funded services, Medicaid State Plan services, behavioral health services, school-based supports, and other community resources that may be available in the meantime.

## Helpful questions for families to ask

- What ODP eligibility pathway applies to me or my family member?
- Has a PUNS been completed, and does it accurately reflect current needs?
- Which waiver services could address the identified needs?
- Are any services available before waiver enrollment?
- Can any services be participant-directed?
- Could a qualified family member provide an authorized service and be paid?
- What documentation would strengthen or clarify the assessment of support needs?
- Who should I contact if needs, caregiver availability, health, behavior, or safety circumstances change?

## Pennsylvania resources

PA Office of Developmental Programs (ODP): [pa.gov/agencies/dhs/resources/intellectual-disabilities-autism](https://pa.gov/agencies/dhs/resources/intellectual-disabilities-autism)

ODP Customer Service: 1-888-565-9435

County MH/ID offices: available through the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services website.

**Educational use notice:** This guide provides general education and navigation information. Eligibility, waiver enrollment, service authorization, funding availability, and paid-family-caregiver arrangements are determined individually under current Pennsylvania Medicaid and ODP requirements.