

January 13, 2017

Dear NJ Self-Directing Individual/Family:

You are receiving this communication from the Regional Family Support Planning Councils (RFSPC) (<https://njcdd.org/the-regional-family-support-planning-councils/>), because you or your family member is currently using Self-Directed services through the Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD). There are many changes about to take place. We believe some of these changes require specific education and advocacy.

Listed below is some of the upcoming changes related to **DDD**:

1. Easter Seals will no longer serve as the FI for NJ DDD. A new Fiscal Intermediary (FI), Public Partnerships, LLC has been chosen by the Department of Human Services (DHS) to become the new FI in 2017.
2. Your current self-hires, or as they are now called, Self-Directed Employees (SDE), will no longer be employed by Easter Seals. They will lose Health Insurance, Paid Time Off and/or Life Insurance through Easter Seals.
3. Public Partnerships, LLC **will not** act as the Common-Law Employer (employer of record) for your self-hires/Self-Directed Employees (SDE). You and or your designee will become the Common-Law Employer, using your social security number to register as a business with the assistance of the FI.
4. All self-hires/Self-Directed Employees (SDE) will be expected to start a new employment application process with Public Partnerships, LLC.
5. You will also probably be given new enrollment material, new forms, new contact information and new business practices.
6. Most importantly, DDD will now require a total of 13-17 hours of **Mandatory Staff Training** for all self-hires/Self Directed Employees (SDE) to include:
 - a. CPR/First Aid (5 hours estimated time to complete)
 - b. Family Developed Orientation/Training with Sign Off (2-4 hours estimated time to complete)
 - c. Danielle's Law Training (30 minutes estimated time to complete)
 - d. DDD Shifting Expectations (30 minutes estimated time to complete)
 - e. Prevention of Abuse, Neglect & Exploitation (2-3 hours estimated time to complete)

- f. Medication Administration Training (as applicable) (2-2 ½ hours estimated to complete)
 - g. Positive Behavior Supports training (as applicable) (when a written behavior plan is used) (1 hour estimated time to complete)
 - h. Other specialized training as applicable
7. **Currently** self-hires/Self-Directed Employees (SDE) are trained by individuals or family members. There is a sign off in the plan of care that individuals or family members take full responsibility to choose and design trainings for their self-hires/Self-Directed Employees (SDE). This option will no longer be available.
 8. A **significant change** is that DDD will now require that all Self-Directed Employees (SDE), including those who only help you occasionally (“back-up”), to complete the above-stated mandated trainings.
 9. Parents, siblings, cousins, neighbors will be expected to complete training regardless of their knowledge or experience caring for the individual with disabilities. DDD indicates it will allow exceptions if an extreme hardship has been presented and approved by DDD due to extraordinary circumstances.
 10. DDD will develop a mechanism to cover the cost of training outside of an individual’s budget.

Most concerning is that no grandfathering to complete DDD’s mandated training will be made for the **current** self-hires/Self-Directed Employees (SDE), many of whom have supported individuals with disabilities for many years.

We believe the impact on self-hires/Self-Directed Employees (SDE) and the people they support will be overwhelming. We ask you to consider the following questions:

- How many of your current workers will be able and willing to complete these requirements?
- Will your current workers, particularly family members who know your loved one, want to continue employment if they must take these trainings?
- Can your current workers use a computer to complete online trainings?
- Do they need training in a different language other than English?
- How will this new recruitment change the time and efforts required when you need new workers?
- Will someone who currently works 5 hours or less a month (“back-ups”) want to continue helping you or your family?

If your answers leave you worried about the future, it is critical to let your voice be heard before it is too late. In the last 13 years, the Self-Directed Services have provided individuals and families with flexibility, choice and control to meet the complex needs of people with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities. The message is clear:

**Don't take away my choice or control. Make training available
but DO NOT mandate training.**

**I can and will choose the right training for staff who support
myself and my loved one.**

We urge you to contact the Commissioner today so that Trainings for self-hires does not become mandatory.

Write your message to the Commissioner at:

NJ Department of Human Services
Elizabeth Connolly, Acting Commissioner
Office of the Commissioner
222 South Warren Street
PO Box 700
Trenton, NJ 08625-0700

Or send an email to the Commissioner at: Elizabeth.Connolly@dhs.state.nj.us

Join your Regional Family Support Planning Council to remain current with changes. Get involved by attending a local meeting and/or statewide forums. Find your local meeting location and schedule here: <https://njcdd.org/the-regional-family-support-planning-councils/family-support-planning-councils/>

For more information contact Kyoko Coco, Family Support Coordinator, New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities (NJCDD) at 609 341-3112 or by email at Kyoko.Coco@njcdd.org.

Together we can make a difference as family members supporting freedom, choice and control.

Mercedes Witowsky, Chair, Statewide Family Support Planning Council
Rebekah Novemsky, Vice-Chair, Statewide Family Support Planning Council
Mary Kneuer, Regional Family Support Planning Council Member
Ann Martinelli, Regional Family Support Planning Council Member
Natalie Trump, Regional Family Support Planning Council Member