public partnerships PPL
Your #1 choice for self-directed care™

SUPPORT EMPOWERMENT CHOICE
DDS SELF-DIRECTION PROGRAMS

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**MA Participant Directed Program**

**Topics in the Frequently Asked Questions**

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# GENERAL PARTICIPANT DIRECTED PROGRAM INFORMATION

## *a. What is Public Partnerships LLC (PPL)?*

Public Partnerships LLC (PPL) is a national fiscal management services organization dedicated to assisting state, county, and local public agencies implement a participant-directed service model. We are currently providing fiscal management services in 19 states with more than 40 programs. We serve a wide range of participant needs and have over 120,000 enrolled participants and 130,000 employees for whom we provide payroll services.

## *b. How does PPL work with DDS?*

PPL and DDS work together to ensure participants receive the services they are authorized for. DDS provides PPL with information about which services a participant is authorized for through this program and PPL provides the financial management. PPL provides fiscal accountability by ensuring payments are consistent with what DDS has authorized and abides by state and federal requirements.

## *c. What is the purpose of the Participant Directed Program?*

The Participant Directed Program is a statewide program open to adults who receive services from DDS. Individuals who are enrolled in the Participant Directed Program can decide what suits their assessed needs. Through the Participant Directed Program, PPL is used as a tool to help individuals directly select and arrange for supports and services.

Self-direction is a service option for families that offers flexibility, creativity, and individualized supports. Employers can recruit, hire, manage, and terminate employees. Participants and their representatives can work with employees to establish work schedules and specific tasks for the employee to assist with.

## *d. How do I know if the Participant Directed Program is the right fit for me?*

Meet with your DDS service coordinator and/or other DDS Area Office staff to talk about your individual needs and goals and determine whether this is the correct program for you.

List of Area Office contacts is available here:
https://areaofficelocator.dds.state.ma.us/Home/LookupByCity

# ENROLLMENT INTO THE PARTICIPANT DIRECTED PROGRAM

## *a. How does a participant get started with the Participant Directed Program?*

To begin with, a participant should meet with their DDS service coordinator and/or other DDS Area Office staff to determine whether this is the correct program to meet their services and needs.

DDS will assess all individuals to determine their needs for services. A participant's Support Broker will work with him or her to develop a budget to cover needed services.

The participant's name, information, and funding allocation will be provided to PPL by the DDS system which handles program enrollment. Enrollment status information will be visible to participants, support brokers, and DDS administrators in the PPL BetterOnline Web Portal.

You can choose who will be providing your services and supports. Participants and/or their families can begin by interviewing potential staff. This is to protect participants and to assure that the person who will begin working with them can safely meet their needs.

Once individual employees have been identified, they must complete a PPL Provider Packet with support from the DDS Service Coordinator/Support Broker. The packet consists of: general demographic information, payment setup, state and federal tax forms, pre-employment training or educational requirements, and background checks. The background checks are run through several different systems and require follow-up by the employee to complete fingerprinting:

- PPL runs the employee through the Disabled Persons Protection Commission (DPPC) background check – results are instant.
- PPL runs the employee through the Office of Inspector General (OIG) – results are instant.
- PPL runs the employee through the Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) background check – results are available by the next business day.
- Employee ID is required to run the National Background Check (NBC). PPL will then email the employee with the NBC letter and information about scheduling a fingerprinting appointment.
- Once the employee has completed fingerprinting the suitability letter is sent from DDS to PPL.

This entire process typically takes 4-6 weeks. Support Brokers will monitor the employee's status on the web portal.

**A completed Provider Packet must be submitted to PPL prior to any paychecks being issued.**

## b. How do employees get paid?

Upon receiving the Good to Go and pre-employment requirements, employees will fill out a PPL timesheet with the dates and hours worked. There are several options available for submitting timesheets:

1. The participant and employee can submit and approve time online using the BetterOnline™ portal, PPL's online web portal that allows for the submission and approval of e-timesheets. Digitally filling out and submitting timesheets online results in any errors being flagged on-screen so that employees can immediately identify and correct any issues.
2. Time4Care is a simple and secure smart device application that can be used "on the go" as an alternative to BetterOnline™ or paper timesheets.
3. If an alternative to the electronic process is needed please consult with your Support Broker.

Program participants can register to have access to the BetterOnline Web Portal. Here you can review your current budget, details of what was paid, to whom, and on what date. You can also call PPL Customer Service for support at 1-888-866-0869.

An employee may sign up for direct deposit payments. To do so, employees will provide banking information (bank name, account number, routing number) or a copy of a voided check in their employee application. It takes 1-2 payroll periods for direct deposit to become active and employees will receive mailed paper checks in the interim.

## c. When are payments sent out?

PPL calculates payments and runs payroll on a bi-weekly basis. Pay periods run from Sunday-Saturday with all timesheets due by the Monday after the end of the payroll period. A copy of the payroll schedule and deadlines is available at www.publicpartnerships.com, search for Massachusetts under the "State Programs" menu option.

## d. How do participants, families, employees, and or DDS staff get the appropriate paperwork?

Users can access all necessary forms on PPL's website, www.publicpartnerships.com. Select Massachusetts from the "State Programs" menu option, then select "Massachusetts Participant Directed Program" under "Program Documents".

# HIRING EMPLOYEES

## *a. How do employees get started working with a participant in this program?*

After PPL has received the completed employment packet, employees will be notified by the participant and can begin billing for services rendered. Note! If employees do not complete the enrollment process payments will not be issued.

All new employees are required to be enrolled or registered in the PPL portal. This is where they can view their personal information, timesheets, previous pay periods, and W-2 tax forms. Your DDS support Broker can assist in this process.

## *b. How much can employees be paid for services?*

The Participant Directed Program allows participants to determine negotiated rates for services rendered. This allows for participants the flexibility to determine how much to pay employees for hourly, daily, or monthly services. **Note!** There are rate ceilings that negotiated rates cannot exceed and rate floors (minimum wage) that rates cannot be below. If you have additional questions regarding setting employee pay rates, please discuss with your DDS Support Broker.

## *c. Do employees have to complete paperwork?*

Employees must complete a provider packet. PPL will not be able to issue payments to employees until we receive the completed paperwork. Employees should be prepared to complete state and federal tax forms, background check consent forms, and employment credentials (when applicable) as mentioned above.

Your DDS Support Broker can walk you through the completion of a new provider packet. Once complete, the Support Broker will send a completed packet to PPL and monitor the process until the employee is fully enrolled. Your Support Broker will contact you when the employee can begin working.

## *d. What are the Terms and Conditions of employment?*

Any employee providing services in the Participant Directed Program must complete an Employment Agreement (Parts A and B) and submit them to PPL. Forms A and B are available on www.publicpartnerships.com.

To begin working, employees must complete an Employment Agreement and Pay Rate Agreement. In addition to these agreements, you may be asked to perform additional responsibilities which you should discuss with the participant or your Employer of Record.

These documents need to be signed and dated by the employee and responsible party before PPL can issue a paycheck for services rendered. These Agreements will establish a hire date, wage (for each service being provided), as well as provide important information to the employee about employment policies and rules. The Terms and Conditions Agreement is included in all provider packets.

## e. What is an Employer of Record?

An Employer of Record is typically the participant, guardian, or other person close to the participant who will be assigned with an Employer Identification Number (EIN) by the IRS for the purpose of hiring and or firing employees. PPL acts as your agent in this process. Establishing the EOR must be done in collaboration with PPL

The participant budget will have employer taxes withheld as employees work. These are typically withheld in addition to the employee's hourly rate. These employer taxes consist Social Security, Medicare, worker's compensation, and Federal/State unemployment.

Support Brokers will print the necessary Employer of Record forms with pre-populated information directly from the portal and send or bring them to the participant to sign.

## f. What taxes are withheld for each employee?

**All payroll employees must pay taxes.** Social Security, Medicaid (FICA), and state and federal income taxes are withheld from each employee's paycheck. PPL will prepare and mail W-2 wage statements to each employee in January.

Please note, employees paid as Independent Contractors will not have taxes withheld from their paychecks. PPL will issue 1099's to these employees at the end of the calendar year.

## g. Who is responsible for paying employment taxes for individual employees? How are employer taxes calculated?

Employment taxes come out of the participant budget. But NOTE! PPL will calculate the Employment taxes for individual employees and issue the payments on behalf of participants. To help with budgeting for taxes to be paid, Support Brokers and Service Coordinators can utilize the Wages Cost to You that calculates Employer taxes based on the amount participants wish to pay to their employees.

Click here for the Cost to You Chart or go to
https://www.publicpartnerships.com/media/ch3f5axk/pdp-2022-employee-wages-cost-to-you.pdf

## h. Do employees receive sick time?

Per Mass State law, employers with 10 or fewer employees are entitled to accrue unpaid sick time. One hour is accrued for every 30 hours that are worked on a rolling basis. PPL keeps track of the accrued time for each employee.

## i. When does someone use Marion Edwards Associates (MEA) as the Employer of Record?

If a participant cannot be setup as the Employer of Record (for instance, they are already receiving PCA services), Marion Edwards Associated (MEA) can be setup as the employer agent for the participant's employees. Because there is an additional cost to the participant budget for utilizing MEA, this option is recommended only if a participant cannot be setup as the Employer of Record and there is no one else that could be setup as the Employer of Record.

MEA will pay all Employer taxes, hold a worker's compensation policy, and charge an administrative fee. The employer taxes and worker's compensation policy are the same as for a participant setup as an Employer of Record.

As per state law, all employers with more than 10 employees accrue paid sick time, which would include employees hired by MEA. One hour is accrued for every 30 hours worked by the employee on a rolling basis. Sick time if requested by the employee is paid out of the allocation. MEA working with PPL keeps track of the accrued time for each employee.  Sick time accrued expires at the end of the calendar year.

Timesheets are faxed directly to MEA at 617-426-4632, who will produce and send checks directly to employees. MEA will withhold Social Security, Medicaid (FICA), and state and federal income taxes from each employee's paycheck. A summary of all employee tax withholdings will appear on their check stub. MEA will also prepare and mail a W-2 wage statement to each employee in January.

# PAYMENTS AND BUDGETING

## a. Can a participant purchase other things like goods/items, memberships, etc?

All requests for purchases of goods and services must be discussed ahead of time and approved by your DDS Support Broker. Once agreed upon your Support Broker will submit this purchase to PPL for payment. Note: a reoccurring monthly payment may also be setup through the BetterOnline Web Portal by your Support Broker (for example, monthly transportation pass).

## b. How can a participant keep track of his or her spending?

Participants can monitor their spending in real-time and approve timesheets through PPL's BetterOnline Web Portal. On a monthly basis, paper spending statements are mailed directly to the participants outlining the previous month's expenses. Users may elect to view this report electronically through the portal or in hard copy. The following information is included in the Family Friendly Spending Report:

- What is documented as the budget for the year
- What has been spent so far (by service)
- What funding is available

## c. Who can be contacted for questions, concerns, or comments?

Contact Public Partnerships Customer Service at 1-888-866-0869 or email them at pplma_pdp@pcgus.com. The Public Partnerships program information page for the Participant Directed Program is available at www.publicpartnerships.com. Select State Programs, then Massachusetts, then Participant-Directed Program (PDP).