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Robert Wood Johnson  
Medical School

THE BOGGS CENTER ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

*New Jersey's University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research, and Service*

# Selecting a Support Coordination Agency

## Making Choices, Becoming Empowered A Guide for Families



People receiving support through NJ's Division of Developmental Disabilities are able to choose the agency with which they receive support coordination services. The opportunity to do this can be empowering as people with disabilities and their families select an agency that they believe will do the best job helping them plan for and obtain the supports and services they need.

This pamphlet provides families with information and ideas that can help in the selection process.

## What is a Support Coordination Agency?

A Support Coordination Agency is an organization qualified by the Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) to assist participants in identifying and gaining access to the services and supports they need. Support Coordinators complete a variety of responsibilities in partnership with the person, his/her family, DDD, and service providers which include:

- Identifying the person's support needs and preferences
- Developing the NJ Person Centered Planning Tool and NJ Individual Service Plan
- Locating options for services that include: traditional disability providers, generic community supports, government supports beyond DDD, and/or natural support based on funds available in the person's individual budget
- Ongoing monitoring of supports and services
- Responding to emergencies and other service related needs of the person and/or family

For more information about support coordination, including a list of Support Coordination Agencies, visit <http://rwjms.rutgers.edu/boggscenter/projects/infopeopleandfamilies.html>

## How do I Choose?

The ability to choose a Support Coordination Agency is a new experience for most. Choosing a Support Coordinator can make it possible for people and their families to:

- Match the person's wants/needs with the skills and expertise of the Support Coordination Agency
- Find an agency that knows the person's local community and the supports that exist
- Select an agency with which they feel comfortable working
- Discuss what is expected from someone providing support coordination services
- Change to a different agency if the need arises

This pamphlet provides information on what to consider when selecting a Support Coordination Agency. Choice starts with understanding the preferences and support needs of your family member and what s/he needs from the Support Coordination Agency. On **page 2**, there are some topics about **Your Family Member's Life** that are important to consider and communicate to the Support Coordination Agency.

You and your family member will want to take time to learn about potential Support Coordination Agencies. Suggestions for **Interviewing a Support Coordination Agency: Questions to Ask** can be found on **page 3**. On **page 5** you will find reflection questions to **Help You Decide** which Support Coordination Agency will meet your family member's needs.

Once you and your family member have decided which Support Coordination Agency you would like to work with, you will need to complete and submit the Support Coordination Agency Selection Form. More information about **Submitting Your Selection** can be found on **page 6**.

# Your Family Member's Life...

The first thing to do when selecting a Support Coordination Agency is to look at your family member's life and what s/he wants and needs.

- What is important to your family member to have in his/her life? Consider people, places, things, and environmental factors (e.g. friends, hobbies/interests, enjoyable activities, feeling included, following a routine, etc...)

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- What are some supports your family member needs? Consider health, safety, transportation, behavior, wellness, and/or supports related to employment, daily living, community engagement, etc...

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- What does your family member want for his/her life? Consider ideas related to: community participation, employment, health and well-being, life-long learning, home, relationships, etc...

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- Given this, what do you want/need from a Support Coordinator as s/he helps your family member get the supports and services s/he needs?

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## Questions to Ask Support Coordination Agencies

### Basic information:

- How many people do you provide support coordination services to? What is the typical caseload of one of your Support Coordinators?

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- What is the average turnover of a Support Coordinator at your organization?

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- How do you match people using supports with Support Coordinators?

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- How long have you provided services in New Jersey? In this region?

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- How does your agency respond to issues/needs that occur after typical business hours?

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### Knowledge & Experience:

- How would you describe the experience your Support Coordinators have working with individuals with disabilities?

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- What training and mentoring do your Support Coordinators receive to give them the knowledge and skills to help my family member obtain the supports and services needed to live the life s/he wants? Please describe some of the key skills your Support Coordinators have.

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- How do your Support Coordinators develop or adapt services and supports to address the needs and preferences of culturally diverse communities? Provide some examples.

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- How are your Support Coordinators connected with the local community and resources? Please give examples.

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- How do you educate and empower people and families about the support options that are available to them?

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**Ongoing Support:**

- How do your Support Coordinators monitor the quality of supports received and work with the person, family, and providers to ensure that quality is achieved?

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- How do you get feedback from the people you serve and how do you use this information to improve services?

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**Additional Questions:**

- How is your agency different from others? How do you stand out from other Support Coordination Agencies?

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- Are there people or families using your support coordination services I can contact as a reference?

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- Other questions specific to your family member’s needs and preferences...

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### What did you think of the Support Coordination Agencies you interviewed?

Take time to review your notes from your conversations with the Support Coordination Agencies.

- Which agencies did you interview?

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- Which agency made you feel respected, comfortable, and at ease?

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- Which agency shares your family's beliefs and values?

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- Which agency understands your family member's disability?

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- Which agency will be responsive to what your family member wants, needs, and prefers?

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- Which agency has the skills and knowledge needed to support your family member?

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- Which agency do you believe is dedicated to helping people to get what they need in their lives?

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Some questions found in preceding sections were adapted from:

*The PA Training Partnership for People with Disabilities and Families, Temple University/UCEDD. "Choosing a Support Coordination Organization."*

*Maryland, Developmental Disabilities Administration, Dept. of Health and Mental Hygiene*

*National Resource Center for Participant Directed Services. (2010). "Developing and Implementing Participant Direction Programs and Policies: A Handbook."*

## Submitting Your Selection

The Support Coordination Agency Selection Form must be completed and returned to DDD once you and your family member have decided on the Support Coordination Agency that will best meet their needs. The form allows a first and second choice of Support Coordination Agencies to be selected. If no preference is given, a Support Coordination Agency will be auto-assigned for your family member.

After your Support Coordination Agency Selection Form is received, the Support Coordination Agency chosen will assign a Support Coordinator, who will contact your family member to begin the person-centered planning process.

To access the Support Coordination Agency Selection Form electronically, visit:  
<http://rwjms.rutgers.edu/boggscenter/projects/infopeopleandfamilies.html>

The completed Support Coordination Agency Selection Form can be submitted:



via email to:  
DDD.SCHelpdesk@dhs.state.nj.us



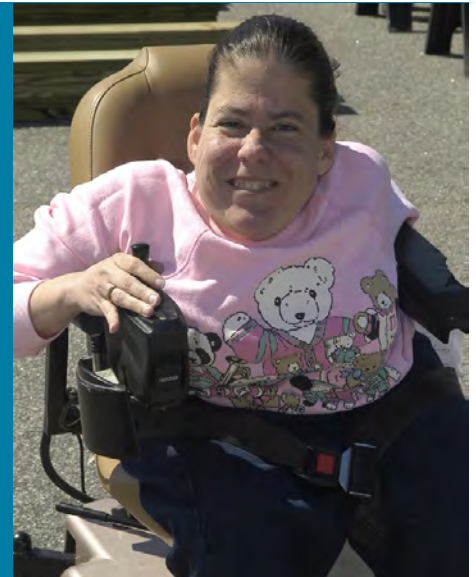
via mail to:  
New Jersey Division of Developmental Disabilities  
Central Office c/o SCA Selection Forms  
PO Box 726  
Trenton, NJ 08625-0700

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