



# ADMH

## Prospective Community Provider-Certification Orientation Frequently Asked Questions

**Why do I need an orientation to become certified?** According to Alabama law, any community program providing services to people living with developmental disabilities, mental illnesses, and/or substance use disorders, must be certified by the Alabama Department of Mental Health prior to providing services. This ensures that programs meet minimum quality and safety standards. Because not all certification applications are approved, the Prospective Provider orientation includes information that can help optimize opportunities for a successful application process.

**Why is space limited to the Phase 2 Orientation?** The certification application process can be long and involved. ADMH limits the number of certification applications that are reviewed to what can effectively be assessed/approved within a year, while also monitoring existing programs for continued compliance with standards.

**I don't want to wait until the orientation to get started! What can I do?** There is a lot of reading to make sure your program meets certification requirements (and increase the likelihood of a successful certification application.) The standard requirements are written into law through the Alabama Administrative Code. Below you will find links to the Alabama Administrative Code and the certification requirements for each service area. Although attending the *Prospective Community Provider—Certification Orientation* is a requirement prior to submitting an application for certification, you should familiarize yourself with the requirements you must meet in order to be certified. <https://mh.alabama.gov/certification-administration/>

**What if I don't know what population I want to provide services to?** Until you decide what population you would like to serve, you will not be able to meet standard requirements or submit a successful application for certification. Each service area (mental illness, developmental disabilities and substance use disorders) has separate requirements that must be met prior certification. Links to these requirements can be found at the URL above. Basic service population definitions are below.

### Definitions of the ADMH Service Populations:

#### Mental Illness Services

Generally refers to services provided for individuals living with clinical diagnosed disorders that are characterized by disruption of mood, thought, and/or behavior that interferes with daily functioning.

#### Substance Use Disorder Services

Generally refers to services that address the treatment or prevention of a maladaptive pattern of substance use (typically alcohol or drugs) leading to clinically significant impairment or distress.

#### Developmental / Intellectual Disability Services

Generally refers to services provided for individuals living with intellectual disabilities characterized by significant limitations both in intellectual functioning (reasoning, learning, problem solving) and adaptive behavior during the developmental period or prior to the age of 18.

**Will I be certified after orientation?** No. The ADMH provides a two-phase orientation process to assist you in understanding the certification application process and to provide information you can use to determine whether your program has the current capacity to meet certification standards. There is no guarantee that your certification application will be approved.

**Once I am certified, will I receive funding?** Certification by the ADMH does not mean you will get funding from ADMH. It is also not inherently a means of obtaining clients to bill for services. You will need to develop your agency's business plan and secure funding from other funding sources.

**How do I start my business?** Being a licensed business in Alabama is different than being certified. Being certified does not include, nor does ADMH have a role in, determining legal status of your business. As you determine whether your program has the capacity to be a certified community provider, you should:

- Go to the Alabama [Secretary of State](#) website to review requirements for becoming a business in Alabama.
- Develop community partnerships by reaching out to other community providers and organizations who have an interest in the people who may need the services you plan to provide.
- Establish a business plan to determine how your agency will obtain clients and receive payments for services provided by your agency.

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## Frequently Asked Questions

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### What are staffing and documentation requirements for Developmental Disability services?

- The Executive Director must complete a favorable background check, possess a Bachelor's degree from an accredited institution in a Human Services field, provide detailed information demonstrating 5 years of experience with service provision to people with intellectual disabilities, and
- Submit all requested documents from the checklist provided during the Phase 2 orientation.

### What are staffing Requirements for Mental Illness and/or Substance Use Disorder services?

- Your agency must have a full-time **Executive Director** with either of the two:
  - ⇒ Have at least a master's degree in Public Health, Business Administration, Public Administration, Psychology, Counseling, Social Work or related field and at least five (5) years managerial experience in a mental health or substance abuse treatment setting; or
  - ⇒ Have a Bachelor's Degree in Public Health, Business Administration, Public Administration, Psychology, Counseling, Social Work or related field and at least ten (10) years managerial experience in mental health or substance abuse treatment setting.
- Your agency must have a full-time **Clinical Director** who meets the following:
  - ⇒ Have a minimum of either a master's degree in psychology, social work, counseling, or psychiatric nursing and have a minimum of 3 years post master's relevant clinical experience or be a physician who has completed an approved residency in psychiatry.
  - ⇒ For agencies who provide substance abuse treatment services, have a license or a substance abuse counselor certification credential from the Alabama Association of Addiction Counselors, National Association of Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Counselors, Alabama Alcohol and Drug Abuse Association, or International Certification and Reciprocity Consortium/Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse, Inc.
- There shall be a **Business Manager/Chief Financial Officer or equivalent**:
  - ⇒ The financial accounting operations of a service provider organization with a total annual budget exceeding \$750,000 shall be supervised by a full time employee or contracted service who has the following qualifications: At least a bachelor's degree in accounting or business, finance, management, public administration, with at least three (3) college accounting courses and at least two (2) years accounting experience.
  - ⇒ The financial accounting operations of a service provider organization with a total annual budget less than \$750,000 shall be supervised by an employee or contracted service who/which has the following qualifications: Demonstrated familiarization with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles and at least two (2) years accounting/bookkeeping experience.
- Qualified **clinical staff and medical staff** per applicable Administrative Code per program/service you are applying to provide. Information available our ADMH website: <https://mh.alabama.gov/certification/>

**What if I want to invest in property or other areas of my program before achieving certification?** You may invest in your program at any time, however, there are reasons you might delay investing in property or other major investments:

- The certification process can be lengthy and you may not provide services until your program's certification application is approved.
- Depending on services, property will need to meet Life Safety inspection prior to certification. Additionally, if being certified to provide Home and Community Based Services (HCBS), you must maintain full compliance to the HCBS Settings Rule and be approved by the Regional Community Services Office prior to services being provided.
- There is no guarantee your certification application will be approved and if approved, there is no guarantee the setting will meet requirements.