

**Alabama Department of Mental Health
Division of Developmental Disabilities Community Waiver Program
Direct Service Personnel Qualifications and Training Requirements
for Agency DSPs and Self-Directed Services DSPs
Rev. 3/14/2025**

Standard Minimum Agency Direct Service Personnel Qualifications and Training Requirements:

*These apply to all CWP services other than: Peer Specialist Services; Family Empowerment and Systems Navigation Counseling; Financial Literacy and Work Incentive Benefits Counseling; Positive Behavior Supports; Occupational Therapy; Physical Therapy; Skilled Nursing; Speech and Language Therapy; Housing Counseling; Community Transportation; Remote Supports -Technology Installer and Provider; Assistive Technology and Adaptive Aids. For the requirements that apply to these services, see the section of this document titled “**Non-Standard Minimum Agency Direct Service Personnel Qualifications and Training Requirements for Specific Services that Must Not Also Meet Standard Minimum Qualifications and Training.**”*

Qualification:

- Minimum age of 18.
- Must pass a statewide background check confirming no convictions for any crime of violence, abuse, neglect, exploitation or any felony offense.
- Must pass a pre-employment drug screen.
- TB skin test if required by Alabama Medicaid Agency (see AMA Policy #WAV37).

Post-Hire Training Requirements:

All courses listed below must be completed within 90 days. The first section “Before Serving People” **twelve (12) hours** of training must be completed before assigning staff to provide direct supports. The following courses may be completed prior to the schedule indicated below as long as all training is completed within 90 days.

Must complete the following training on the schedule noted below:

BEFORE SERVING PEOPLE:

Welcome to Employment and Community First (AL-ECF Module)

Orientation (AL-ECF Module)

Introduction to CWP (AL-ECF Module)

Supporting People with IDD (AL-ECF Module)

Keys to Independence: Everyone Can Succeed (AL-ECF Module)

Supporting Community Participation (AL-ECF Module)

Standard Precautions (AL-ECF Module)

Signs and Symptoms of Illness/Medication Side Effects (AL-ECF Module)

First Aid (Certification required)

CPR (Certification required)

Incident Prevention & Management System (IPMS): reportable event (critical incident) identification and reporting (Content provided or pre-approved by ADMH/DDD)

Infection Control (Content provided or pre-approved by ADMH/DDD)

Training on the specific service(s) the DSP will be providing. This should include the service definition, expected outcomes, and reasons the service is authorized (Content provided or pre-approved by ADMH/DDD)

Training specific to the individual(s) being served, including training on their person-centered plan and service implementation plan(s)

WITHIN 30 DAYS OF STARTING TO SERVE:

Disability Rights Movement (AL-ECF Module)

The Importance of Full Citizenship and Valued Social Roles (AL-ECF Module)

Supporting People to Form and Keep Relationships (AL-ECF Module)

The Importance of Employment (AL-ECF Module)

Emergency Preparedness (AL-ECF Module)

Working with Person Supported, Families/Conservators (AL-ECF Module)

Supporting Self-Determination (AL-ECF Module)

WITHIN 60 DAYS OF STARTING TO SERVE:

Positive Behavior Supports (AL-ECF Module)

What Really Keeps People with IDD Safe (AL-ECF Module)

Home and Community-Based Services (AL-ECF Module)

Additional Agency Direct Service Personnel Qualifications and Training Requirements Applying to Specific Services that Must Also Meet Standard Minimum Qualifications and Training Requirements Noted Above:

Employment Supports-Individual Employment Supports:

Provider Agency Qualifications:

- Employs a program manager who will supervise DSPs providing these services and who is qualified to provide Supported Employment services by holding a CESP, ACRE or Customized Employment certification, or other qualification pre-approved by DMH/DDD, and who has at least two (2) years experience providing Supported Employment or similar employment services.

Direct Support Professional Qualifications

- For Exploration, Discovery, Job Development Plan, Job Development and Career Advancement, and Co-Worker Supports, DSPs must qualify as a **Job Developer**. To do this, DSPs shall also meet the following qualifications: completion of a minimum of one certificate-based Job Development and Placement curriculum. DMH/DDD maintains and publishes on its website a current approved listing of such curriculums.
- For Job Coaching, DSPs must qualify as a **Job Coach**. To do this, DSPs shall also complete and pass the online Training Resource Network *Job Coaching and Consulting* course before providing service (<https://trn-store.com/catalog/job-coaching-and-consulting>).

Employment Supports-Small Group Supports:

Provider Agency Qualifications

Employs a program manager who will supervise DSPs providing these services and who is qualified to provide Supported Employment services by holding a CESP, ACRE or Customized Employment certification, or other qualification pre-approved by DMH/DDD, and who has at least two (2) years experience providing Supported Employment or similar employment service.

Direct Support Professional Qualifications

(DSPs must also qualify as a **Job Coach**. To do this, DSPs shall also complete and pass the online Training Resource Network *Job Coaching and Consulting* course before providing service (<https://trn-store.com/catalog/job-coaching-and-consulting>).

Employment Supports: Integrated Employment Path Services:

- **Provider Agency Qualifications**

Employs a program manager who will supervise DSPs providing these services and who is qualified to provide Supported Employment services by holding a CESP, ACRE or Customized Employment certification, or other qualification pre-approved by DMH/DDD, and who has at least two (2) years experience providing Supported Employment or similar employment service.

- **Direct Support Professional Qualifications**

DSPs must also qualify as a **Job Coach**. To do this, DSPs shall also complete and pass the online Training Resource Network *Job Coaching and Consulting* course before providing service (<https://trn-store.com/catalog/job-coaching-and-consulting>).

Community Integration Connections and Skills Training

- Must have at least one (1) year of experience working directly with individuals with intellectual disabilities or other developmental disabilities.
- Prior to service delivery, must complete at least twelve (12) hours of training using content that augments what is available through TBR platform and that focuses on: the service definition; philosophy and values underpinning expectation of community inclusion for individuals with intellectual disabilities; effective strategies for facilitating community involvement, participation and contribution; facilitating relationships between people with ID and other members of the broader community; task analysis, systematic instruction with emphasis on application to teaching skills for community participation, involvement and contribution; other teaching strategies that are effective for assisting individuals with ID to develop skills for maintaining relationships with others who do not have disabilities; how to develop, implement, evaluate, and as needed revise, a written teaching plan focused on acquisition of community participation, involvement, contribution and relationship skills.
- An Associates degree from an accredited institution in a human services field is preferable but not required.

Independent Living Skills Training

- Must have at least one (1) year of experience working directly with individuals with intellectual disabilities or other developmental disabilities.
- Prior to service delivery, must complete at least eight (8) hours of training using content that augments what is available through TBR platform and that focuses on: task analysis, systematic instruction with emphasis on application to teaching independent living skills and other teaching strategies that are effective with individuals with intellectual disabilities, how to develop, implement, evaluate, and as needed revise, a written teaching plan focused on acquisition of independent living skills.
- An Associates degree from an accredited institution in a human services field is preferable but not required.

Non-Standard Minimum Agency Direct Service Personnel Qualifications and Training Requirements for Specific Services that Must Not Also Meet Standard Minimum Qualifications and Training Requirements:

Peer Specialist Services

- Must pass a statewide background check confirming no convictions for any crime of violence, abuse, neglect, exploitation, or any felony offense.
- Must have experience relevant to successfully supporting other people with disabilities, including specific experience relevant to each topical area covered by this service that the Peer Specialists wishes to be qualified to address. There are a total of 4 topical areas covered by the service:
 - Directing the person-centered planning (PCP) process;
 - Understanding and considering self-direction;
 - Understanding and considering individualized integrated employment/self-employment;
 - Understanding and considering independent and supported living community living options.

- Prior to service delivery, must complete training addressing the following topics:
 - Disability Rights Movement (AL-ECF Module or with content preapproved by ADMH/DDD)
 - Training on the specific service the DSP will be providing including the service definition, expected outcomes, and reasons the service is authorized (Content provided or pre-approved by ADMH/DDD)
 - Training specific to the individual(s) being served, including training on their person-centered plan and person's reason/goal for referral for Peer Specialist Services
- Prior to service delivery, successfully complete at least eight (8) hours of training in best practices for offering Peer Specialist Services for each of the topical areas covered by this service that the Peer Specialist wishes to be qualified to address.
- Complete no less than two (2) hours of annual refresher training for each of the topical areas covered by this service that the Peer Specialist wishes to be qualified to address.

Family Empowerment and Systems Navigation Counseling

- Must pass a statewide background check confirming no convictions for any crime of violence, abuse, neglect, exploitation, or any felony offense.
- Prior to service delivery, must complete training addressing the following topics:
 - Training on the specific service the DSP will be providing including the service definition, expected outcomes, and reasons the service is authorized (Content provided or pre-approved by ADMH/DDD)
 - Training specific to the individual(s) being served, including training on their person-centered plan and specific reasons for referral for the service
 - Prior to service delivery, successfully complete at least eight (8) hours of training in best practices for working with families, working with individuals with intellectual disabilities, family empowerment strategies, and community mapping techniques.
- Complete no less than two (2) hours of annual refresher training.

Financial Literacy and Work Incentives Benefits Counseling

- Must pass a statewide background check confirming no convictions for any crime of violence, abuse, neglect, exploitation, or any felony offense.
- Minimum of Associate's Degree in human service or related field.
- For Work Incentives Benefits Counseling: Must be a certified Community Work Incentives Coordinator (CWIC) or Work Incentives Practitioner (WIP).
Prior to service delivery, must complete training addressing the following topics:
 - Training on the specific service the DSP will be providing including the service definition, expected outcomes, and reasons the service is authorized (Content provided or pre-approved by ADMH/DDD)
 - Training specific to the individual(s) being served, including training on their person-centered plan and specific reasons for referral for the service
- For Financial Literacy Counseling: Prior to service delivery, successful completion of a curriculum focused on financial literacy and empowerment from the National Disability Institute and offered by a qualified trainer from NDI and/or ADMH/DDD.
- Successfully complete no less than four (4) hours of annual continuing education (for Work Incentives Benefits Counselor) or refresher training (for Financial Literacy Counselor) provided

by ADMH/DDD.

Positive Behavior Supports

- Must pass a statewide background check confirming no convictions for any crime of violence, abuse, neglect, exploitation, or any felony offense.
- Must have worked in the Intellectual/Developmental Disability (IDD) field for five (5) years or more, two of which must have been at a professional level in a position that addressed challenging behavior or who worked in a related field (e.g., mental health).
- Holds an appropriate BA/BS level degree, master's degree, other advanced degree above the level of master's or equivalent experience in a field related to human services such as psychology, social work, behavioral, disabilities, or rehabilitation psychology.
- Has completed DDD training in positive behavior supports and/or behavioral psychology.

Physical Therapy

- Must pass a statewide background check confirming no convictions for any crime of violence, abuse, neglect, exploitation, or any felony offense.
- Physical Therapists employed or contracted by provider organization are licensed under the Code of Alabama, 1975 Sec.34-24-212.

Occupational Therapy

- Must pass a statewide background check confirming no convictions for any crime of violence, abuse, neglect, exploitation, or any felony offense.
- Occupational Therapists employed or contracted by provider organization are licensed under the Code of Alabama, 1975 Sec. 34-39-5.

Speech and Language Therapy

- Must pass a statewide background check confirming no convictions for any crime of violence, abuse, neglect, exploitation, or any felony offense.
- Speech Therapists employed or contracted by provider organization are licensed under the Code of Alabama, 1975 Sec. 34-28A-1, Ch. 870-x-1-7.

Housing Counseling Services

- Must pass a statewide background check confirming no convictions for any crime of violence, abuse, neglect, exploitation, or any felony offense.
- Prior to service delivery, must complete training addressing the following topics:
 - Training on the specific service the DSP will be providing including the service definition, expected outcomes, and reasons the service is authorized (Content provided or pre-approved by ADMH/DDD)
 - Training specific to the individual(s) being served, including training on their person-centered plan and specific reasons for referral for the service
- Must have specialized housing counseling training (with content approved by ADMH/DDD), certification, and/or relevant experience in counseling people with disabilities on housing issues and understanding how housing issues impact people with disabilities and can be effectively resolved for people with disabilities.

Skilled Nursing Services

- Nurses are licensed under the Code of Alabama; 1975 Sec. 34-21.

Community Transportation

- Stand-alone transportation companies or individual transportation providers (not including CWP providers of other services that are also providing Community Transportation) must comply with the Alabama Motor Carrier Act and must be certified or be issued a permit to operate, as applicable, by the Alabama Public Service Commission. In addition, they must adhere to any local certification/licensure requirements.

Remote Supports: Technology Installer and Provider

- Recognized and experienced vendor or Remote Supports technology with experience in at least two (2) other states and current capability to provide Remote Supports services in geographic areas covered by this waiver in State of Alabama.
- Before service delivery, training on Incident Prevention & Management System (IPMS): reportable event (critical incident) identification and reporting (Content provided or pre-approved by ADMH/DDD)

Minor Home Modifications:

- Must meet all applicable state (Alabama Code 230-X-1) and local licensure requirements.
- Must meet all construction, wiring, and/or plumbing building codes, as applicable.

Assistive Technology and Adaptive Aids

- Must meet all applicable state (Alabama Board of Home Medical Equipment Services Providers) and local licensure requirements.

Standard Self-Directed Services Direct Service Personnel Qualifications

- Prior to hire, must pass a statewide background check confirming no convictions for any crime of violence, abuse, neglect, exploitation or any felony offense.
- For persons hired by recipients electing to self-direct services to provide the following services, no additional training is required beyond that represented in the service definition:
 - Personal Assistance – Home (including family providers)
 - Personal Assistance – Community
 - Breaks & Opportunities (Respite)
 - Community Transportation
 - Community Integration Connections and Skills Training
 - Independent Living Skills Training

For self-directed service personnel providing employment services, no additional training is required post-hire beyond that represented in the service definition; but the following additional pre-hire qualifications are required:

- For Exploration, Discovery, Job Development Plan, Job Development and Career Advancement, Self-Directed Services personnel must qualify as a **Job Developer**. To do this, the Self-Directed Services worker shall provide, to the FMSA, documentation of successful completion of a minimum of one certificate-based Job Development and Placement curriculum. DMH/DDD maintains and publishes on its website a current approved listing of such curriculums. The FMSA

will maintain the documentation of the qualification in the worker's file.

- For Job Coaching, the Self-Directed Services worker must qualify as a **Job Coach**. To do this, the Self-Directed Services worker shall provide, to the FMSA, documentation of successful completion of the online Training Resource Network *Job Coaching and Consulting* course before providing service (<https://trn-store.com/catalog/job-coaching-and-consulting>). The FMSA will maintain the documentation of the qualification in the worker's file.

For self-directed service personnel providing Skilled Nursing services (RN or LPN):

No training is necessary post-hire, but the FMSA must verify that the worker is a licensed Nurse under the Code of Alabama; 1975 Sec. 34-21. The FMSA will maintain the documentation of this pre-hire qualification in the worker's file.