



Advocates for Children of New York

Protecting every child's right to learn

Applying for OPWDD

The Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) is a state agency that provides services to people of all ages with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Many children with IEP classifications of Intellectual Disability (ID), Multiple Disabilities (MD), or Autism qualify for OPWDD services. This guide is for parents in New York City seeking OPWDD services for their child.

What can I get through OPWDD?

This depends on your child's needs. Services can include:

- Family support services (like in-home care and respite care): services that give parents a break to do things like get chores done, care for other children, or take a few moments for themselves. This break can be for a few hours or over a longer period like a weekend.
- Physical therapy (PT)
- Occupational therapy (OT)
- After school programs and summer camp
- Day and community habilitation programs: Programs that teach your child job skills, communication skills, and skills they will need to live on their own (independent living skills)
- Reimbursement for clothes
- Nurses
- Medical, dental, and mental health services
- Residential programs: programs where your child lives 24/7 in order to get more supports and services
- Applied Behavior Analysis therapy (ABA): special therapy for students with Autism that is proven to help them learn
- On-the-job coaching (supported employment)
- Behavior support
- Equipment like oxygen tanks, crutches, wheelchairs, etc.
- Transportation to and from services
- Care coordination
- Social skills training
- Much more

Who is eligible for OPWDD?

To receive services from OPWDD, your child must meet four requirements:

1. Your child must have a diagnosis of one (or more) of the following: Intellectual Disability; Autism; Cerebral Palsy; Epilepsy; Familial Dysautonomia; or Neurological Impairments (with injury, malformation, or disease in the central nervous system).
2. Your child must have had this disability before age 22.
3. The disability is expected to be permanent.
4. The disability must be so serious that it affects your child's ability to live everyday life independently.

How do I apply?

STEP I: GATHER YOUR DOCUMENTS

To apply for OPWDD, you will need these 4 documents:

1. An [OPWDD Eligibility form](#).
2. A **psychological assessment** that shows your child has one of the disabilities listed on page 1. This evaluation must be less than 3 years old. It should include:
 - Adaptive Behavior Scales (such as the Vineland II or ABAS)
 - I.Q. testing (such as the WISC-IV, WAIS-IV or Stanford Binet V)
 - A written summary explaining the results from the person who did the testing (called a “narrative”)
3. A **Social History** or a **Psychosocial**
 - These might be included in the psychological report listed above or done with your child’s school evaluations as part of the IEP process
 - Must be less than 1 year old
4. **Medical Report**
 - If your child has a diagnosis besides intellectual disability, you will also need a Medical or Specialty report that includes your child’s diagnosis
 - Must be less than 1 year old

NOTE:

Many people who meet OPWDD standards have the following scores:

I.Q. score below 70 + 2 adaptive scores in the “low” range

or

I.Q. above 70 + 3 or more adaptive scores in the “low” range

OPWDD may also ask you for other documents or evaluations, including an IEP.

If you need help going over your documents, YAI LINK or New York Lawyers for the Public Interest (NYLPI) can review them with you. See page 7 for contact information.

» GETTING EVALUATIONS «

If your child gets special education services, the New York City Department of Education (DOE) may have many or all of the reports you need for OPWDD in your child’s school record. You can request them from the school by contacting the school psychologist, principal, family worker, or parent coordinator. If you are using DOE tests to apply for OPWDD, be sure the report includes “standard scores.” Standard scores usually have SS before the number.

If your child does not already have the reports you need to apply to OPWDD, you can often get them for free at an Article 16 Clinic. Article 16 Clinics offer evaluations, medical and therapeutic services for people with developmental disabilities. To find an Article 16 Clinic go to: www.yai.org/directory-idd-specialized-clinics. You may be put on a waitlist for an evaluation or services.

STEP 2: TURN IN YOUR DOCUMENTS

You can mail all of the documents that you gathered in Step 1 directly to the Developmental Disability Regional Office (DDRO) for your borough. After the DDRO reviews your documents, they will mail you a letter within 2-4 weeks that tells you whether your child is eligible. If you don't receive an eligibility letter after 4 weeks, call your local DDRO to follow up.

You can also turn in your documents at a Front Door Information Session.

Developmental Disability Regional Office (DDRO):

This is your local regional office that can answer questions about your eligibility and OPWDD in general. The Metro NY area is Region 4 and there is an office in each borough (see attached list for locations).

STEP 3: ATTEND A FRONT DOOR INFORMATION SESSION.

This step is mandatory. Front Door sessions are 2 hours long and are usually held at DDROs.

You may attend a Front Door session in any borough, even if you do not live there. Call the DDRO to register for a Front Door session. You may need a photo ID to get into the building. Front Door sessions are sometimes also held at schools or community centers.

During the Front Door session, you will watch videos that describe the services OPWDD can provide. After watching the videos, you will have an opportunity to ask questions and may be able to get help completing the eligibility packet. You do not have to bring anything to this session. Be sure to sign in at the session.

NOTE: You can attend a Front Door session *at any point in time*, but it can be most helpful to attend a session after you have gotten your eligibility letter. If you attend a Front Door session before mailing in the documents listed in Step 1, DDRO staff can review them for you and let you know if you are missing anything.

STEP 4: CONTACT A CARE COORDINATION AGENCY

We recommend that you begin looking for a Care Coordinator (formerly Medicaid Service Coordinator/MSC) as soon as you get your eligibility letter.

A Care Coordinator can help you finish the OPWDD application process and help you get services for your child after your child is found eligible for OPWDD. In NYC, there are 3 care coordination organizations (CCOs) that you can choose from: Advanced Care Alliance (ACA), Care Design, and Tri-Country Care. You will receive a list with their contact information when you attend the Front Door Session.

NOTE: If you sign up with a CCO before the 10th of the month, you can be served that same month. If you sign up after the 10th, you will be served at the beginning of the next month.

STEP 5: COMPLETE THE DDP-2 PHONE INTERVIEW

After the Front Door session, someone from OPWDD will call you to fill out a Developmental Disabilities Profile (DDP-2). This form can be found here: https://opwdd.ny.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ddp_2.pdf. It may be helpful to go over this form before your phone call and have it in front of you while filling it out with an OPWDD staff person. It can take up to an hour to complete this form, so make sure to schedule the phone call for a day when you have plenty of time and can concentrate on the questions.

When you are answering DDP-2 questions, only mark “independent” if your child is able to do these things on their own, without support and without you reminding them.

TIP:
Keep an eye out for this call because it can take up to 3 weeks to reschedule. If a week has passed since your Front Door session, and you have not gotten a call about the DDP-2, call the DDRO to follow up.

EXAMPLE:

G. SELF-CARE / DAILY LIVING SKILLS				
27. As best you can, indicate how independently individual typically performs each activity:	TOTAL SUPPORT <i>Completely Dependent</i>	ASSISTANCE <i>Requires lots of hands-on help</i>	SUPERVISION <i>Requires mainly verbal prompts</i>	INDEPENDENT <i>Starts and finishes without prompts or help</i>
a. Toileting/bowels	1	2	3	4
b. Toileting/bladder	1	2	3	4
c. Taking a shower/bath.....	1	2	3	4
d. Brushing teeth/cleaning dentures	1	2	3	4

After you’ve completed the DDP-2, you should receive a Life Plan from your Care Coordinator. This may take 2-3 weeks to get to you. If you do not get a copy within 3 weeks, contact your Care Coordinator.

STEP 6: WORK WITH YOUR CARE COORDINATOR TO FINISH THE PROCESS

Your Care Coordinator will help you sign all of the necessary documents to complete the eligibility process. When these documents have been submitted, you will receive a Notice of Decision (NOD) in the mail within a month. If you do not get the NOD after a month, call your Care Coordinator. After you get the NOD, your child can start getting OPWDD services with the help of your Care Coordinator.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How does OPWDD decide if my child is eligible?

1. When you send your records to the DDRO, staff review them to see if your child's disability meets the requirements. Then, they send you a letter telling you if your child is eligible, or they ask for more evaluations. If they ask for more records, be sure to send them as soon as you can.
2. If you do not get a letter or call within 3 weeks of submitting more records, call the DDRO to follow up.
3. If OPWDD decides that your child is *not* eligible, you can ask them to review the documents again. If OPWDD finds your child not eligible a second time, you can request a Medicaid Fair Hearing or a third review. If you request a Medicaid Fair Hearing, then the DDRO Director (or someone appointed by the Director) will automatically do a third review of your paperwork. The letter that you receive will also give you a deadline to request the third step review.

Is OPWDD eligibility different for young children?

It can be. The eligibility requirements for OPWDD are the same for people of all ages. However, OPWDD sometimes gives "provisional eligibility" to children age 8 and under. Provisional eligibility means that your child will receive full OPWDD services until a point of time determined by OPWDD. Before the end of the provisional eligibility period, you will have to give OPWDD updated information about your child's disability.

What can I do if my child is found ineligible?

If OPWDD finds your child ineligible after the second review, you can meet with OPWDD to discuss the decision, request a third review, or request a Medicaid Fair Hearing.

Preparing for the Medicaid Fair Hearing can be difficult. If you need help or an advocate for this hearing, you can reach out to Disability Rights NY (DRNY). See page 7 for contact information. Services at DRNY are free.

Do I have to attend a Front Door session for each of my children?

No. If you have more than one child that needs OPWDD services, you only have to attend one Front Door session for all of your children.

Does my income affect my child's eligibility?

No. Eligibility through OPWDD and receiving Medicaid through OPWDD is based on your child's income. In most cases, the child does not have an income.

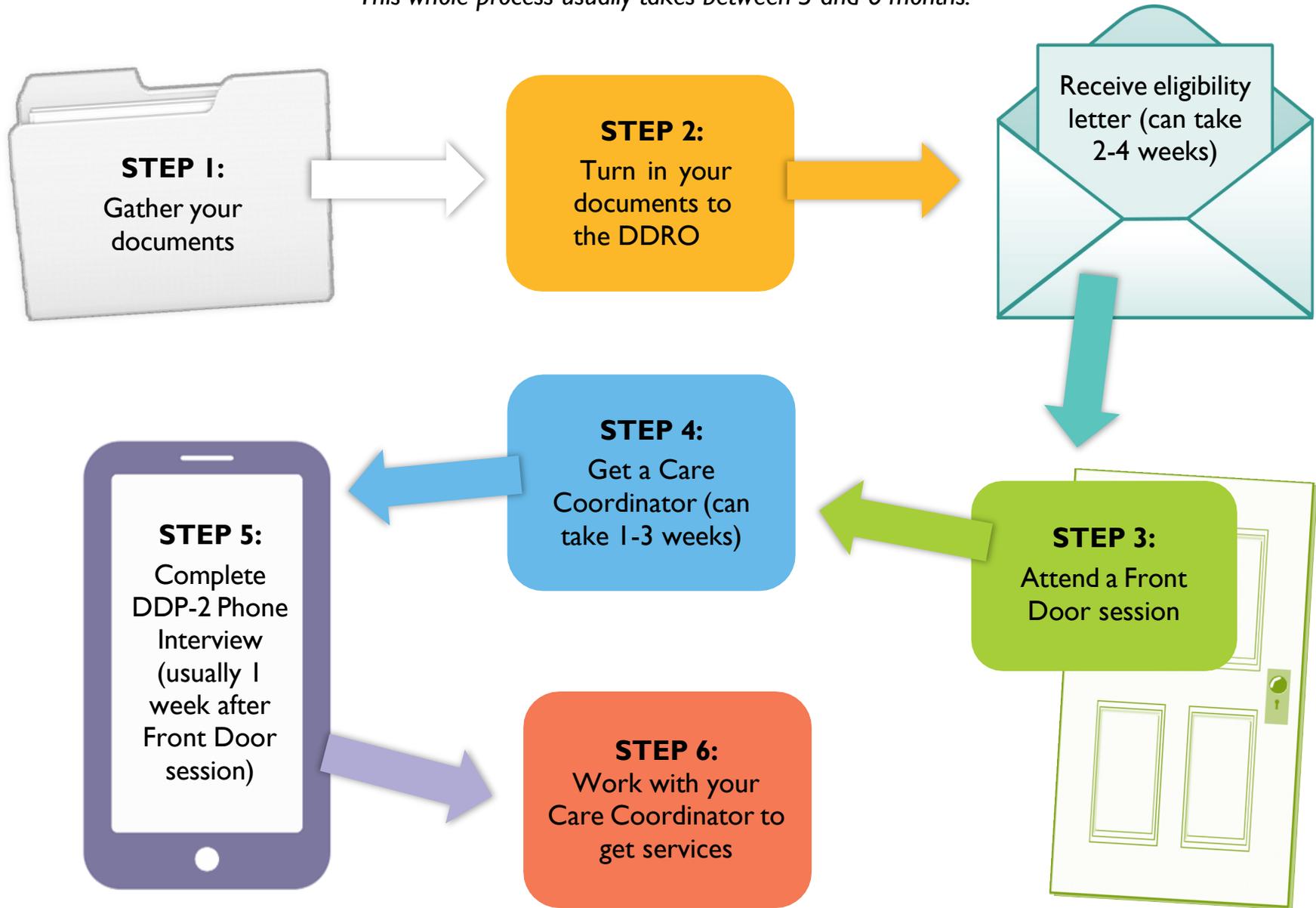
What is Self-Direction?

Self-Direction gives you an opportunity to be completely in charge of your child's plan. When you have a Care Coordinator, the Care Coordinator will find agencies that can provide services to your child. OPWDD will give you a budget based on your child's needs. Then, you must find and pay vendors to provide the services that your child needs. This option gives you the most freedom and control over your child's services.

Keep in mind that you cannot immediately enroll in Self-Direction. You must continue to work with a Care Coordinator and you must attend the mandatory training sessions to participate in Self-Direction.

Applying to OPWDD

This whole process usually takes between 3 and 6 months.



LOCAL DDRO OFFICES

Borough	Mailing Address	Coordinator & Back Up	Email	Phone and Fax
Brooklyn	888 Fountain Ave. Brooklyn, NY 11239	Howard Reyer	Howard.reyer@opwdd.ny.gov	P: (718) 642-8657
		Korede Amole	korede.h.amole@opwdd.ny.gov	F: (718) 642-6013 P: (718) 642-8783
		Lucy Omezi	Lucy.omezi@opwdd.ny.gov	F: (718) 642-6013 P: (718) 642-5013
Bronx	2400 Halsey St. Bronx, NY 10641	Shanequa McIntosh Whitmore	Shanequa.mcintosh@opwdd.ny.gov	P: (718) 430-0369
		Scott Lawson	Scott.a.lawson@opwdd.ny.gov	P: (646) 766-3324
Manhattan	25 Beaver St., 4th Fl. New York, NY 10004	Fred Vasseghi	Fereydun.vasseghi@opwdd.ny.gov	P: (646) 766-3324
		Marjorie Allen	Marjorie.a.allen@opwdd.ny.gov	P: (718) 430-0828
		Samantha Sasley	Samantha.sasley@opwdd.ny.gov	P: (646) 766-3362
Queens	PO Box 280507 Queens Village, NY 11428	Christina Antioco-Feit	Christina.antioco@opwdd.ny.gov	P: (718) 217-5537
		Eric Magwood	eric.magwood@opwdd.ny.gov	P: (718) 217-5396
		Lynn Tenenbaum	Lynn.tenenbaum@opwdd.ny.gov	P: (718) 217-2478
Staten Island	1150 Forest Hill Rd Building 12, Suite A Staten Island, NY 10314	Laura Martino	laura.x.martino@opwdd.ny.gov	P: (718) 982-1925
		Grace Feyjinnmi, Psy.D	grace.o.feyjinnmi@opwdd.ny.gov	P: (718) 982-1941 F: (718) 982-1931

CARE COORDINATION ORGANIZATIONS

Advanced Care Alliance (ACA)

(833) 692-2269

www.advancecarealliance.org

Tri-County Care

(844) 504-8400

www.tricountycare.org

Care Design NY

(518) 235-1888

www.caredesignny.org

ADDITIONAL CONTACT INFORMATION

YAI LINK

link@yai.org

(212) 273-6182

www.yai.org/link

New York Lawyers for the Public Interest (NYLPI)

(212) 244-4664

www.nylpi.org

Disability Rights New York (DRNY)

mail@DRNY.org

(518) 432-7861

TTY: (518) 512-3448

Toll Free: (800) 993-8982

www.drny.org

This fact sheet does not constitute legal advice. This fact sheet attempts to summarize existing policies or laws without stating the opinion of AFC. If you have a legal problem, please contact an attorney or advocate.

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