Support Broker Authorization FAQ

What is a Support Broker?

Support Brokers ("Brokers") assist people with developmental disabilities who choose to Self-Direct their Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) services with Budget Authority to develop a Circle of Support and complete and manage a Self-Direction Budget. Self-Direction is a service delivery model that offers people with developmental disabilities greater responsibility in managing their own supports and services. People who participate in OPWDD's Self-Direction model have the option to self-hire and co-manage their own staff supports (Employer Authority) and decide on the mix supports and services they need and how the funding allowed for these supports and services is allocated (Budget Authority).

How can I become a Support Broker?

Prospective Support Brokers must attend a series of eight (8) training courses provided by OPWDD. Those interested in becoming a Support Broker should fill out the interest form found here: https://forms.office.com/g/P3BfkCKK8T. After completing the interest form, prospective Support Brokers will receive an email that outlines the next steps in the registration process.

What are the trainings that I will take?

Introduction To Self-Direction – A prerequisite course that provides background on Self-Determination and Self-Direction, and a general understanding of what it means to Self-Direct OPWDD services. This course is prerecorded and available on demand on the Statewide Learning Management System (SLMS).

Self-Advocacy/Self-Determination – This course teaches the foundational concepts of Self-Advocacy, Self-Determination, and the OPWDD Self-Direction model of services available to individuals with developmental disabilities. This course is prerecorded and available on demand on the Statewide Learning Management System (SLMS) or can be delivered by an OPWDD voluntary provider, where available. [1]

Introduction and Advanced Person-Centered Planning – This course provides information on how to develop and implement person-centered plans. Attendees will learn skills that will enable them to work with an individual and their circle of support to develop a person-centered plan designed to meet that person's future goals and objectives. This course is prerecorded and available on demand on the SLMS or can be delivered by an OPWDD voluntary provider, where available.[1]

Broker Training Institute (BTI) – Four (4) live trainings that are offered virtually via Webex. These are distinct modules that sequentially build upon one another to enhance the knowledge and skills necessary for becoming a successful Support Broker. Information covered includes the philosophy of Self-Direction, history of the movement, details regarding the responsibilities of Support Brokers, information

regarding billing and documentation requirements, and Circle of Support training. These modules must be completed in order.

Developing a Self-Direction Budget – This course is a live training offered virtually via Webex that will provide learners with an overview of OPWDD services and instructions on how to create Budgets for people with developmental disabilities who choose to Self-Direct their OPWDD services with Budget Authority. This class is only available after completing Broker Training Institute 1-4.

After successfully completing all eight (8) trainings, potential Support Brokers will receive an additional six (6) required trainings for independent review. These trainings are "read-only" and require attestation for initial Support Broker Authorization. The list of training required is listed below:

1. Privacy and Security of Health Information[3]
2. Overview of Developmental Disabilities
3. Medicaid Compliance[3]
4. PICA
5. PRAISE (replaces Incident and Abuse Reporting)[3]
6. Rights and Responsibilities of Persons Receiving Services

[1]Credit may be given for Self-Advocacy/Self-Determination and Person-Centered Planning when obtained through a provider of Home and Community Bases Services (HCBS) or a Coordinated Care Organization (CCO). These courses may only be available to employees of HCBS agencies or CCOs. You will need to send your Certificates for these courses to SD.broker.training@opwdd.ny.gov prior to enrolling in later courses.

[2]The desktop version of Microsoft Excel is required to complete the Self-Direction Budget and is available within Microsoft 365. The online web-based (free) version of Excel does not contain the functionality required to complete the Self-Direction Budget.

[3]These three trainings must also be reviewed annually for Support Broker reauthorization.

How do I attend these trainings?

The prerequisite courses, "Introduction to Self-Direction", "Self-Advocacy/Self-Determination" and "Person-Centered Planning", are prerecorded and available for review on SLMS. The "Broker Training Institute Modules 1-4" and "Developing a Self-Direction Budget" trainings are offered as live classes virtually via Webex. After we have confirmed that you have completed the three (3) prerequisite courses we will send you a link to the Support Broker Training Request Form to request registration in a Welcome Call and the Five (5) live Webex trainings. If approved into the training, you will receive a follow-up email with log in information for each class.

What is the Welcome Call? Is it required?

The Welcome Call is a one-hour, virtual Webex meeting where Central Office staff will review technical assistance, training expectations, professionalism and ethics. Attendance is mandatory before proceeding with the Broker Training Institute.

Is there an order that trainings must be taken?

Yes, the three prerequisites, “Introduction to Self-Direction", “Self-Advocacy/Self-Determination” and “Person Centered Planning” must be taken prior to being registered for the Welcome Call and Broker Training Series. After completing the three prerequisites, you will be able to enroll in the following classes: Broker Training Institute (BTI) Modules 1-4 and Developing a Self-Direction Budget. The trainings must be carried out in this order.

Do I have to complete the whole series at once? What if I miss a day?

Training does not all have to be completed at once, however, they must be completed in the order prescribed above. If you miss a class that is a prerequisite for the next class, you will be dropped from the remaining classes and must wait for the next available class to continue the series. Multiple instances of not attending a class you are enrolled in (without cancelling in advance), arriving late, leaving early, or not completing the open book assessment may affect your future enrollment in classes. Trainers may also deny prospective Support Brokers a certificate if there is evidence that they did not participate or attend the full training.

Do trainings have a testing component?

Yes. Each of the recorded prerequisites will have a ten-question quiz at the end. Prospective Support Brokers must score 70% or above to receive credit. Similarly, each of the live trainings (BTI modules 1-4 and Developing a Self-Direction Budget) include a ten-question, open book quiz which prospective Support Brokers must receive a passing score (70%) to receive a certificate and continue to the next training. These quizzes will be completed in Microsoft Forms and a link to the quiz will be provided via email prior to each class. Quizzes will be open for completion from the end of class until 9am the next morning. Learners who do not pass the quiz or fail to complete the quiz by the 9am deadline have not demonstrated an understanding of the class material and must retake the module. Learners should contact sd.broker.training@opwdd.ny.gov to resolve any technical issues prior to the 9am deadline as **there will be no extensions after the deadline**.

Are classes prerecorded? Can I just listen in?

The first three (3) classes are prerecorded and available on demand through SLMS. The Broker Training Institute modules 1-4 and Developing a Self-Direction Budget are live training courses and require active participation to be successful. Calling in is not recommended and you will need a device with a screen so that you can see the

presentation and participate in questions/prompts. If you choose to call in, it is your responsibility to inform the trainer of your identity to ensure credit is received.

What technology will I need to be successful?

The Interest Form, Registration Request Form, and Quizzes are all Microsoft Forms and accessed via links provided to learners and submitted electronically. You will receive a follow up email to confirm when we have received your submissions of these forms. Classes will be held on the Webex platform with log on links being sent via email. You will need access to a device where these applications can be accessed. After you become a Support Broker, you will need access to Microsoft Excel to be able to complete Self-Direction Budgets.

What do I do after I've completed the eight training courses and six additional courses?

After completing all eight (8) training courses, potential Support Brokers must complete and submit the Support Broker Authorization form along with their training certificates to sdbroker@opwdd.ny.gov. Copies of the six BTI ancillary (read and sign) training courses do not need to be sent. The Support Broker Authorization form should be completed in Adobe Reader (https://get.adobe.com/reader/) to minimize the possibility of file corruption when data basing. The form is password protected to prevent printing. Completed forms must be submitted to OPWDD (sdbroker@opwdd.ny.gov) as a PDF with a digital signature. Forms submitted in in any other manner will be rejected. Attempts to submit forms that have been scanned or reproduced in another manner will be automatically rejected.

When will I receive notification when my authorization has been approved?

If your Support Broker Authorization form is accepted, it will be saved for processing. If your form is not accepted, your form will be returned to you with instructions on how to correct. Accepted forms are processed on a biweekly basis, after which the approval letter with your Authorization number will be emailed to you.

I intend to be an unpaid Support Broker for a family member. Do I need to be authorized?

Family members who reside in the same household as the person who Self-Directs their services or who are the parents, legal guardians, spouses, and adult children (including sons and daughters-in-law) of the person **cannot** be paid for providing Support Broker services to their family member. Family members and other people who wish to offer unpaid Support Broker services must first fulfill the initial training requirements outlined above. There is no need to apply for authorization if the services provided are unpaid. In such cases, the provider of unpaid Support Broker services should use the designation "99999" as their Support Broker authorization number on any relevant documentation.

Authorized Support Brokers who are providing unpaid services should continue to utilize their existing authorization number for all documentation related to those services.

How do I build a caseload after I am authorized?

Support Brokers play a crucial role in developing their caseloads, which can be achieved through several avenues. One common method is by receiving referrals from the "Public List," provided the Support Broker opts to be publicly listed upon authorization. Additionally, Support Brokers may build their caseloads through employment with authorized providers or by actively networking within the community. These strategies not only enhance their professional visibility but also foster valuable connections that can lead to new opportunities.

You can provide Support Brokerage services as (1) an Independent Support Broker, (2) an Agency Support Broker through employment with an OPWDD authorized HCBS Waiver service provider that offers the Support Brokerage service, or (3) when permitted by the Agency (as defined in item 2), the Support Broker may serve as both an Independent and Agency Support Broker. Support Brokers serving as both Independent and Agency Support Brokers must provide separate demographic and contact information, in addition to Public List status for each role.

Additional background screening requirements apply; information is available at https://opwdd.ny.gov/providers/hiring-new-employee.

How long will I remain authorized?

Unless revoked by OPWDD, or surrendered by the Support Broker, Authorization is active from the effective date listed on the Support Broker Verification List until the following July 31st. Support Brokers must be reauthorized annually by July 31st to continue providing services after that date.

What do I need to do to remain authorized after July 31st?

Support Broker authorizations expire annually on July 31st and Support Brokers must apply for reauthorization by that date. Reauthorization is required for all Support Brokers who wish to maintain their authorization status, regardless of whether they have an active caseload. Support Brokers must submit a Support Broker Reauthorization form to confirm/update demographic information, attest to reviewing the three (3) annual read and sign trainings noted above, and document annual professional development hours. Support Brokers must obtain twelve (12) professional development hours annually that enhance their ability to provide Support Broker services. This number is prorated for Support Brokers during their first year of Support Broker Authorization.

What happens if I haven't successfully completed the Reauthorization process by July 31st?

Support Brokers who fail to reauthorize by July 31st are unable to bill for providing Support Broker services until they successfully apply for reauthorization and their name is added to the subsequent Bi-Weekly Support Broker Verification list. The Reauthorization form is available on the OPWDD website and is also emailed to authorized Support Brokers.

Where can I find additional information about Support Broker requirements?

Additional information regarding Support Broker Authorization, Reauthorization, and the Centralized Broker Review Process can be found in OPWDD Administrative Directive Memorandum #19-ADM-05R, *Authorization Standards for Support Brokers*.

Additional information regarding Support Broker Billing and Documentation Standards can be found in OPWDD Administrative Directive Memorandum #19-ADM-*06, Service Documentation for Support Broker Services.*

These documents can be found on the OPWDD Home Page (www.opwdd.ny.gov) via the search function or by selecting "Regulations & Guidance"

Where can I find additional information about Support Broker updates?

OPWDD hosts Fiscal Intermediary/Support Broker conferences quarterly in March, June, September and December aimed to provide relevant Self-Direction training, presentations, policy updates, and illustrative case examples to Fiscal Intermediary agencies, Support Brokers, and OPWDD Self-Direction Liaisons. Each conference is 3 hours in length and broadcast virtually using Webex. Support Broker participation can be applied toward yearly professional development requirement or Reauthorization. Authorized Support Brokers will be sent communication regarding the specific dates annually and registration prior to the quarterly Webex.

These Webex conferences are recorded for those who are unable to attend at the scheduled dates and times. The recording will be made available on the SLMS platform.

Central Office Contacts:

Questions regarding authorization, reauthorization and Central Broker Authorization and Review (CBAR) can be directed to: sdbroker@opwdd.ny.gov

Questions on Self-Direction policy can be directed to:
self.direction.redesign@opwdd.ny.gov

Technical issues with SLMS can be directed to: talentdevelopment@opwdd.ny.gov

Questions regarding Support Broker training can be directed to:
sd.broker.training@opwdd.ny.gov

How do I know which OPWDD Region I am in? How can I contact the Regional Field Office?

Region 1 SPS.R1.SD@opwdd.ny.gov

- **District:** Finger Lakes
  Counties Served: Chemung, Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Schuyler, Seneca, Steuben, Wayne, Wyoming, Yates
- **District:** Western New York
  Counties Served: Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Erie, Genesee, Niagara, Orleans

Region 2 SPS.R2.SD@opwdd.ny.gov

- **District:** Broome
  Counties Served: Broome, Chenango, Delaware, Otsego, Tioga, Tompkins
- **District:** Central New York
  Counties Served: Cayuga, Cortland, Herkimer, Lewis, Madison, Oneida, Onondaga, Oswego
- **District:** Sunmount
  Counties Served: Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Hamilton, Jefferson, St. Lawrence

Region 3 SPS.R3.SD@opwdd.ny.gov

- **District:** Capital District
  Counties Served: Albany, Fulton, Montgomery, Rensselaer, Saratoga, Schenectady, Schoharie, Warren, Washington
- **District:** Hudson Valley
  Counties Served: Orange, Rockland, Sullivan, Westchester County
- **District:** Taconic
  Counties Served: Columbia, Dutchess, Green, Putnam, Ulster

Region 4 SPS.R4.SD@opwdd.ny.gov

- **District:** Bernard M. Fineson
  Counties Served: Queens
- **District:** Brooklyn
  Counties Served: Kings
- **District:** Bronx Metro NY
  Counties Served: Bronx
- **District:** Manhattan Metro
  Counties Served: New York (Manhattan)
- **District:** Staten Island
  Counties Served: Richmond (Staten Island)

Region 5 SPS.R5.SD@opwdd.ny.gov

- **District:** Long Island
  Counties Served: Nassau, Suffolk