

CHOOSING A PROVIDER:

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS AND FAMILIES OF CHILDREN, TEENS AND ADULTS WITH INTELLECTUAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES(IDD)

The good news is: **YOUR CHILD OR LOVED ONE WITH IDD SOON WILL BE RECEIVING SOME MUCH-NEEDED SERVICES AND SUPPORTS.**

Like many families, you may have waited a long time for this to happen. After you put a name on the **interest lists** for the [Medicaid waiver programs that serve people with IDD in Texas](#) (Home and Community-Based Services, HCS; Community Living Assistance and Support Services, CLASS; Texas Home Living, TxHmL; and others), the wait time often is more than 10 years.

You're happy - but also confused.

You've signed papers. You've listened to lots of information.

And now, you are given a **list of service providers** in your area.

You and your child/loved one must **choose one** of these providers - an agency or organization whose job it will be to provide hands-on, direct services.

The list gives each provider's name and contact information, and tells you how many clients they serve, both locally and statewide.

Of course, you ask: 'Who's good? Who's the best?' But by law, the local agency (MHMR of Tarrant County) that watches over services to people with IDD **is not allowed to recommend or choose a provider for you.** So: what's a parent, family member or other caretaker to do?

Choosing the 'right' service provider - an agency or company that will be a good fit, both for your child/loved one and your family - probably will take time. You might get lucky, and find that your first provider is 'The One.' But chances are you will need to **try more than one provider** before you find one that works for you.

The kind of provider you need - and the questions you should ask - will depend on your situation, and on the plans your family is making together.

For instance, a person with IDD enrolled in the HCS program may receive services:

- in the family home
- in a home he/she owns
- in a foster/companion care home
- in a 3-4 person residence operated by an HCS provider

So, the first questions you ask probably will be about where he/she is going to live:

Will you and your family continue to provide the majority of your child/loved one's care? Some programs let you **foster** your own child or loved one - continuing to do things you've always done, but being paid (through a provider) for your time and work. In some cases, a **consumer-directed** option puts you in charge: You have funding that lets you hire people to provide services (including friends and family who don't live with you). But if you don't have the ability or time for these options, a provider can help with many of the caretaking tasks for you.

Will your child/loved one live in a group residence, or in someone else's foster/companion care home? Your questions and concerns will be different if he/she is going to live away from home, possibly for the very first time.

Is your adult child/loved one changing from one kind of residence to another-from a nursing home to a group home in the community, for instance? Moving from a very sheltered living situation to a home in the community is a big step. Parents and family need to do a lot of looking and asking - and **involve the person with IDD in the planning** as much as possible - to make sure the 'new place' is a good fit.

You can choose a different provider at any time. Don't get discouraged or upset if you need to switch providers in the first months/years. It happens-and it is part of a process that will get you to the provider you're looking for.

We know it's confusing - so we've put together ideas and questions from parents who've been there before you. In the end, you will have to come up your own question list - but these could help you get an idea of the kind of questions you should ask.