



Adult **Getting Started** Guide



Introduction

This guide is designed to help those new to services in Central Oregon. It also may be helpful to people looking to find additional services or looking for an overview of how the process works.

The good news is that Central Oregon is filled with super services and, in most cases, a dedicated group of employees working for all the various agencies and organizations.

Many of the services covered in this guide may be available to individuals before the age of 18. However, once an individual turns 18 they are potentially eligible for an additional layer of services. This is especially true if little to no services, outside of school, were accessed prior to turning 18.

If you are looking for help for someone under 18, please see our youth guide here.

Many, though not all, programs and services require a determination of eligibility.



DiversabilityVillage.Org





Eligibility

In the state of Oregon, eligibility for services is determined by each county. In Deschutes County, eligibility is determined through an application process. An eligibility specialist gathers and reviews available medical and educational records to determine eligibility. In some cases, a new evaluation may be needed. These are provided by an outside assessor and may have a waitlist.

To get started, head to [the Deschutes County Eligibility page](#). There you will find specific information, links to an application, a release of information form, and the contact information for an eligibility specialist.

Evaluations

Evaluations, often completed over the course of a person's life, provide critical information to the eligibility process. Most commonly, evaluations are conducted by a person's medical team, certain specialists or psychology clinics, and, if still in the school system, school psychologists.

Evaluations are used to help determine a potential diagnosis, determine a level of support needed as well as areas of strengths and weakness. The Deschutes County Development Disability eligibility team also uses existing records to determine eligibility for services.

Depending on the applicant's age and the age of the records, the eligibility specialist may request a new evaluation be completed.



After Eligibility Determination

Once the green light is given for eligibility, individuals are now eligible for a variety of services and are assigned a case manager. The case manager works through another assessment process to determine the level of different services that are available for an individual's particular circumstances.

Additional assessments are common even after eligibility determination.

Case Managers

After eligibility has been determined, a Case Manager is assigned. Case management involves working with a County Service Coordinator or brokerage Personal Assistant. You get to decide if which way to go.

County Service Coordinator

As the name suggests, the County Service Coordinator works for the county and provides a range of services. Complete details are [found here](#).





Brokerage Personal Assistant (PA)

Personal Assistants work for a brokerage service that provides the same type of services as a county Service Coordinator. Brokerages follow all the same rules and regulations as the county and were created to add additional options and capacity for the I/DD community.

A PA from a brokerage only helps with in-home supports and will no longer be able to assist if an individual transitions to foster care, a group home, or supported living. Not to worry though, they will be part of the early search for a residential placement and then part of the hand-off to a county Service Coordinator.

Additional details may be [found here](#).

Which is better?

Good question and one that I immediately had. As you can imagine, the county cannot recommend one or the other. I chose the county and have worked with multiple wonderful and dedicated Service Coordinators. I also now serve on the board of [Full Access High Desert](#), the brokerage for the Central Oregon area. I am continually impressed by the people I meet there and the commitment they have to the our community.

In sum, both are great routes and you will likely find someone very motivated to help. They are there to connect the community with many different types of services including financial, residential, housing, in-home help, vocational services, and more.



Designated Service Providers

A DSP provides help with the day-to-day living needs of disabled individuals. This may include basic healthcare needs, spending time together in the house, behavior needs, relief care, or in the case of my son, hiking and biking all over Central Oregon.

The assessments ordered by the case manager will determine the number of monthly hours available.

Various agencies provide these services. Please [see here](#) for more information.

It is possible, through the K-Plan, for family members to act as DSPs.

Community First Choice State Plan (K-Plan)

The K-Plan enables individuals to remain in their homes and be cared for by family members and others as directed by the family administrator. A determination, similar to DSP hours, is made for how many eligible hours are available each month.

Once hours are determined, these hours may be used to pay a family member or designated service provider (DSPs). For example, we hired DSPs and ourselves to help manage our son day-to-day.

For more details, check with your County Service Coordinator or Personal Agent as well as [this link](#).



Respite Care

Respite care enables families to take extended periods of time away from their impacted child or adult. 14 days is the total amount of respite days available. Your Service Coordinator or PA will have more details on this program.

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)

VR helps match individuals with disabilities with employers and employees throughout the state.

VR eligibility requires a series of assessments (yes some more) and is not a super quick process. Once eligibility is determined, VR will provide referrals to various agencies that will help to find jobs and support individuals in those jobs.

For more on the process, [please see this detailed outline](#) from VR. A general overview of VR [is found here](#).





Social Security

Social Security Supplemental Income (SSI) program is a "Federal income supplement program funded by general tax revenues. It is designed to help aged, blind, and disabled people, who have little or no income. It provides cash to meet basic needs for food, clothing, and shelter."

Eligibility

The [SSI website](#) provides specific instructions on eligibility and how to apply.

Need some help? A phone call or email to the team at [Abilitree](#) in Bend will put you in touch with a Social Security Advocate who can help apply on your behalf.

I found them a tremendous help even though I chose to apply for SSI for my son without an advocate. They taught me how the process works and what mistakes to avoid.





ABLE Accounts

As you may know by now, eligibility for SSI is based on financial need. If an individual has too much income or too much money in their bank account, they may lose all or some of their eligibility. ABLE accounts allow individuals to keep additional money without it impacting SSI eligibility.

An [ABLE account](#) plays a very helpful role in maintaining proper income levels. *"The law aims to ease financial strains faced by individuals with disabilities by making tax-free saving accounts available to cover qualified disability expenses."*

What the money may be spent on and how much may be kept in an ABLE account may change each year.

[Oregon Able Savings](#) administers the program in Oregon and once it is up and going, the individual receives a VISA debit card to use for expenses.





Medicaid

Generally, eligibility for SSI also comes with eligibility for Medicaid and the Oregon Health Plan (OHP).

Find more details here on the [OHP website](#). The team at [Abilitree](#) is super helpful as well and is a great first place to contact.

Residential Options

At some point, an individual with an intellectual or other disability may want or need to live away from their immediate family members.

A variety of options are available for both adults and children. All residential options require a referral from your County Service Coordinator or Personal Assistant. Ask them to get the process started.

After the referral, a county Direct Referral Contact (DRC) assists with the placement process.





Foster Care

Foster care typically involves a family opening their home to an individual to live with them. The foster care family receives payment from the state based on the resident's assessed level of support.

Foster care homes are licensed by the state, required to maintain a set of quality standards, and are subject to regular review and evaluation.

Foster homes are designated normally as either for [adults](#) or [children](#), not both. However, a small number of homes may have approved variances to care for adults and children.

Group Homes

Group homes are often run by a nonprofit organization and support individuals based on their individual needs. A typical group home may have up to five residents. Employees work for the organization in shifts.

Group homes are also designated as either for [adults](#) or [children](#), not both.

Group homes are also licensed by the state and required to maintain a set of quality standards and are subject to regular review and evaluation.



K-Plan For Living Support (Same as above)

As mentioned above, the K-Plan enables individuals to remain in their homes and be cared for by family members and others as directed by the family administrator. A determination, similar to DSP hours, is made for how many eligible hours are available each month.

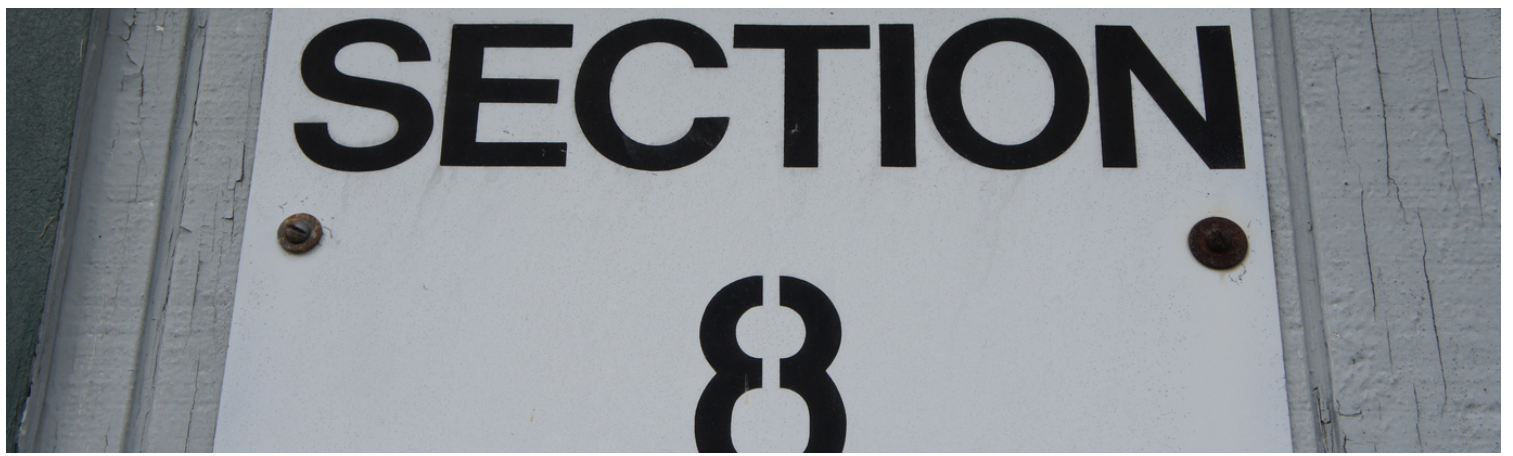
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For more details, check with your County Service Coordinator or Personal Agent as well as [this link](#).

In-Home Care

The same type of in-home care provided by a DSP in a family's home is also available to adults if/when they choose to live in their own residence. Support is provided on an hourly basis. The County Service Coordinator or Personal Assistant will conduct an assessment that determines the number of support hours available to help with various daily living tasks.

For example, an adult may qualify for a set number of hours a month of assistance from [a Designated Service Provider](#). These hours are available to help with grocery shopping, meal prep, hygiene reminders, learning household chores, transportation needs, etc.



Low-Cost Housing

Depending on income levels, individuals may qualify for financial assistance and reduced rent through Housing and Urban Development (HUD) also known as Section 8. The state of Oregon [has further information.](#)





About The Author

Michael Boll is the father of Braden, a young adult with an intellectual disability (I/DD).

He was both frustrated and impressed with the services available for people like Braden. Impressed that the people he met are so wonderful, and frustrated that it was not easy to find them or understand how the process works.

This guide is designed to help those in a similar situation and clear the way to finding helpful services.

Michael is a founder of [Partners in Possibilities](#) and a team member at [Diversability Village](#).

