



September 2012

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Legislative Committee Services  
State Capitol Building  
Salem, Oregon 97301  
(503) 986-1813

Background Brief on ...

# Disability Services

Disability services are an array of programs, services, and supports for children and adults with diverse disabilities. Some of these services are required by law, by legal decision, or by state public policy. These services may be operated by the state, counties, private, or nonprofit agencies. Much of the funding for disability services is federal money that flows to states either as matched funding (e.g., Medicaid), block grants (e.g., mental health block grant), federal grants/contracts, or in other ways. The state also allocates considerable funding for disability services and distributes funds to counties that provide many local services. Counties and cities sometimes use local revenues to provide or enhance services for their residents.

## What is a Disability?

According to the Americans with Disabilities Act, a disability is “a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of (an) individual; a record of such an impairment; or being regarded as having such an impairment.” Within this broad definition state agencies use specific definitions of disability for each program or service.

Physical or mental disabilities may include contagious or noncontagious diseases and conditions such as orthopedic, visual, speech and hearing impairments, sensory disabilities, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, muscular dystrophy, multiple sclerosis, cancer, heart disease, diabetes, mental illness, psychiatric disabilities, specific learning disabilities, Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) disease (whether symptomatic or asymptomatic), tuberculosis, drug addiction, and alcoholism.

Developmental disability is a disability that originates prior to the age of 22 is likely to continue indefinitely,

and significantly impacts adaptive behavior. Developmental disabilities include intellectual disability, cerebral palsy, Down Syndrome, autism spectrum disorders, and other neurological conditions that originate in and directly affect the brain.

### **Oregon Health Authority (OHA) and Department of Human Services (DHS)**

Many disability-related services are provided by the OHA and DHS, the human services umbrella agency that administers long-term services, welfare programs, children's services, and related programs such as the Oregon Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services Program. DHS primarily serves people with disabilities through the Office of Aging and People with Disabilities (APD), the Office of Developmental Disability Services (DD) and the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VR). OHA provides health services through the Division of Medical Assistance Programs (DMAP) and mental health and addictions services through its Addictions and Mental Health (AMH) Division.

### **Offices of Aging and People with Disabilities (APD) and Developmental Disabilities (DD)**

The APD and DD administer programs for seniors and people with physical and developmental disabilities. Most services operate through a network of state offices, county agencies, community mental health programs, community developmental disability programs, and Area Agencies on Aging. These offices provide case management services to people with disabilities. Case managers work directly with individuals to determine eligibility for services, develop long-term plans and acquire needed services, and to gain access to benefits such as Medicaid and food stamps. Programs that APD and DD operate include:

- *Medicaid Long-Term Care Services* – Supports seniors and people with disabilities who need assistance with activities of daily living. These services can be provided in the individual's home or in community-based programs such as assisted living facilities

and adult foster homes, or in nursing facilities.

- *The Office of Developmental Disability Services* – Provides support to over 20,000 qualified adults and children with developmental disabilities through a combination of case management and services. Adults with developmental disabilities may be eligible for services ranging from support to help individuals live in their own homes, to 24-hour comprehensive services. Services are provided in a variety of settings including group homes, foster homes and state-operated group homes. Children with developmental disabilities may be eligible for services ranging from family support and in-home services to out-of-home placements. Placements can be to proctor care, foster homes, or residential settings.
- *All Developmental Disability Servicers are community based* – The array includes case management, and residential care services, such as group and foster homes, employment services, family support, in-home support, and crisis services and protective services for people with a developmental disability. Eligibility determination and case management services are provided by Community Developmental Disability Programs (CDDP's) located in each county and usually operated by local county government.
- *State-Operated Group Homes* – The state also operates 23 group homes for people with developmental disabilities who have severe medical and/or behavioral problems.
- *Disability Determination Services* – Two groups provide disability determination services in APD; Oregon's Disability Determination Services (DDS) and the Collaborative Disability Determination Unit (CDDU).

The DDS program determines medical eligibility for disability benefits for Social Security and Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI). The statewide workload is centrally performed in Salem and is 100

percent federally funded. As of March 2012 nearly 201,460 Oregonians received approximately \$160.8 million per month in SSDI and SSI disability benefits which then flow into the state economy.

The CDDU is comprised of three program teams: The Presumptive Medicaid Disability Determination Team (**PMDDT**), the State Family Pre-SSI/SSDI (**SFPSS**) program team and the Children's Benefits Unit. These teams provide disability determinations for Medicaid and SFPSS service; assist clients with the Social Security application and appeals process; and provide representative payee services for children in DHS custody.

The DDS and CDDU determine eligibility according to the Social Security Administration's definition of disability: A physical or mental medical condition that prevents an individual from engaging in substantial gainful activity (**SGA**) and is expected to last, or has lasted, twelve consecutive months or is expected to result in death.

### **Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)**

The VR has 34 field offices throughout the state to provide vocational services to people with disabilities. Services include vocational evaluation, training, restorative services, transportation, job placement, job supplies, and related services. Services are funded with federal moneys that require state matching funds. VR also receives funding for Independent Living Services. These dollars are passed through to the seven independent living centers across the state.

### **Oregon Health Authority: Addictions and Mental Health**

A part of disability services is Oregon's health care system through the Oregon Health Authority, especially through the Oregon Health Plan and the Addictions and Mental Health Division. For more information, see the *Oregon Health Plan* and *Addiction and Mental Health Services* Background Briefs.

### **Commission for the Blind**

The Commission for the Blind, which is not part of DHS, assists eligible blind individuals to be self-sufficient through training in employment, independent living, and related areas. Training includes rehabilitation services that provide vocational counseling, direct training, job placement assistance, and other employment-related services. The Businesses Enterprise Program provides self-employment for blind individuals through operation of cafeteria and other food vending services in various state agency buildings. The Commission's Orientation and Career Center serves people with imminent or recent loss of sight by offering counseling and training. Industries for the Blind is a sheltered workshop program for adults with developmental disabilities, many of whom are visually impaired or blind. The Older Blind Program provides independent living training to assist individuals over the age of 55 to help them maintain their independence in their home and community.

### **State Independent Living Council (SILC)**

The SILC, which is housed within but not part of DHS, is a Governor-appointed council that conducts activities promoting self-determination, community inclusion and peer mentoring of people with all type of disabilities in society. The SILC works closely with the VR, the Oregon Commission for the Blind, private, nonprofit Centers for Independent Living (**CILs**) as well as others in the public and private sector to provide service coordination and education related to the philosophy of Independent Living, as defined in the Rehabilitation Act. The SILC co-develops a State Independent Living Plan (**SILP**) and evaluates its implementation. To aid in the process, the SILC identifies independent living service needs, and surveys consumer satisfaction with services provided by CILs, including information and referral, peer counseling, individual and systems advocacy and independent living skills training.

## **Office of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman**

This independent agency serves as the consumer advocate for residents of long-term care facilities in Oregon. The agency staff and its certified volunteers monitor care, investigate and resolve resident and citizen complaints, and offer consultations to residents, families, other state agencies and the public. Substantiated complaints are forwarded to APD for formal investigation and regulatory follow-up.

The agency is federally mandated through the Older Americans Act and through Oregon statute. Learn more about the agency at [www.oregon.gov/ltco](http://www.oregon.gov/ltco)

## **School-Based Disability Services**

Infants and school-age children with disabilities are often eligible to receive ancillary disability-related services such as Early Intervention, assistive technology, vocational training, and job placement as part of the state's special education system. For more information on these services, see the *Special Education* Background Brief.

## **Staff and Agency Contacts**

Sandy Thiele-Cirka  
[Legislative Committee Services](#)  
503-986-1286

Mike Maley  
[Department of Human Services](#)  
Deputy Director of Developmental Disabilities Services  
503-947-4228

Karen Mainzer  
[Department of Human Services](#)  
Legislative Coordinator  
503-945-6444

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