

FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES OF THE MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES

**Prepared by the Mental Health Legal Advisors Committee
December 2011**

What do the DDS Family Support Guidelines and Procedures say?

The Dept. of Mental Retardation: New Family Support Guidelines and Procedures (July 2002), <http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/docs/dmr/family-support-guidelines.pdf>, breaks Family Support Services into two categories: Family Support Service and Allowable Expenditures:

Family Support Services

- Family leadership and development
- Family orientation, education and training
- Family networking and support groups
- Supports and services for community participation
- Outreach and education to community members and organizations
- Flexible funding options

Allowable Expenditures

- Respite support
- Recreational/ social activities
- Child care
- Home management support services
- Short term emergency needs
- Specialized diagnosis, evaluation and treatment
- Specialized equipment/ supplies
- Specialized nutrition/ clothing
- Specialized utility costs
- Therapeutic services and supports
- Transportation
- Vehicle expenses
- Home modifications

The manual also explains two types of more intensive family supports, Enhanced Family Support Services:

1. The Intensive Flexible Family Support Program
 - A time-limited, goal-oriented service for families experiencing severe stress that is causing the child to be at risk of an out-of-home placement.
2. The Medically Fragile Family Partnership Program
 - Provides comprehensive wrap-around supports to families with children with significant cognitive, physical and complex health care needs.

The manual also lists Specialty Family Support Services:

- The Family Leadership Series, which is sponsored annually in different geographic

- areas of Massachusetts;
- Autism Support Groups;
- After School Programs;
- Planned Facility-Based Respite; and
- Camp Programs.

Can I seek Family Support if I don't have a DDS Service Coordinator?

Yes. In seeking family support services, if you don't have a DDS Service Coordinator, you can ask to speak to a supervisor of service coordinators in your child's area office.¹

How much Family Support will an individual receive?

The amount of the family support allocation will be based on a needs assessment performed by DDS, the availability of services and resources in the individual's DDS service area, and the priority assigned to the individual and family.²

How do I pay for Family Support?

To pay for services, you receive an allocation in the form of a stipend to you or a direct provider agency payment (that goes through the Family Support Provider Agency). You can choose during planning process.³

¹ The Arc of Mass., *Building a Future: A Handbook for Families* (3rd Ed. 2006), <http://www.arcmass.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=q0pVSKSMgrE%3d&tabid=36&mid=2362>, at 7.

² Boston Bar Association & Children's Hospital Boston, *Parents' How-To-Guide to Children's Mental Health Services in Massachusetts* (2009), http://www.bostonbar.org/theguide/bba_theguide_jan2009.pdf, at 124.

³ *Id.*