

# OPWDD's FRONT DOOR QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS DECEMBER 2013

## THE FRONT DOOR:

### Q. What is the Front Door?

- A. OPWDD's Front Door is designed to improve the way people learn about and access available service options while giving individuals as many opportunities as possible to direct their own service plans. There is a Front Door Team at each OPWDD Regional Office.

The front door supports a person-centered approach for people with developmental disabilities that prioritizes individual choices, needs, and desires in making decisions and provides a statewide approach to how we offer services to people in order to promote the awareness and choice of service options for individuals and families, with a particular emphasis on self-direction, employment, and community inclusion.

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### Q. What is the intent of the front door?

- A. The Front Door strives to:
- Create a standardized, statewide process for people learn about OPWDD and available service options
  - Better connect individual to services and supports based on their assessed needs.
  - Give individuals and families as many opportunities as possible for self-direction

The Front Door is also built on the philosophy of self-determination and the idea that people with developmental disabilities have the right to:

- Enjoy more meaningful relationships with family, friends, and others in their lives
  - Experience personal growth
  - Fully participate in their communities
  - Live in the home of their choice
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### Q. How can individuals and families contact their Regional Office Front Door Teams?

- A. Front Door contact information can be found on OPWDD's website at [http://www.opwdd.ny.gov/welcome-front-door/Front\\_Door\\_Contact\\_Numbers](http://www.opwdd.ny.gov/welcome-front-door/Front_Door_Contact_Numbers)

## FRONT DOOR – PHASE ONE:

### Q: In Phase I, who must go through the front door?

- A: Presently, the front door process is focused on people who are NEW to OPWDD. A person is considered "New" to OPWDD if:
- Eligibility has not been established
  - Eligibility has been established but the person is not receiving services
  - An eligible person is not receiving MSC and is now requesting MSC

- An eligible person is not receiving any HCBS Waiver services and is now requesting one or more
- There has been a significant break (1 year or more) in services
- Young adults who are transitioning from public or residential schools into the OPWDD adult service system
- Individuals who are transitioning into the community from Developmental Centers (DCs) or Intensive Community Facilities (ICFs)

### **FRONT DOOR – PHASE TWO:**

**Q. When will Phase 2 begin, which will require anyone who wants a “change” in their services to also go through the front door?**

- A. A target date for Phase 2 has not yet been identified. OPWDD is working to ensure that state-wide practices are in place and DDRO resources are available to effectively and efficiently meet the anticipated demands on the front door in Phase 2.

### **FRONT DOOR INFORMATION SESSIONS:**

**Q: Are there alternatives for families who cannot attend a Front Door Information Session or an initial contact meeting in person?**

- A: Whenever possible, individuals and families are encouraged to attend one of the Front Door Information Sessions hosted by the DDRO in their catchment area. In instances when individuals and/or family members are not able to attend an information session, DDRO staff may provide information via telephone or in person on OPWDD services, including information on self directed options. The Front Door Resource Booklet and Information specific to self direction should be shared with each individual/family contact and they should be provided a contact number to follow-up with any additional questions they may have related to these materials. Many DDROs have partnered with families and providers to give information sessions at locations that are convenient for individuals and families.

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**Q: At what point in the process should an individual contact their DDRO and go to Front Door Information Session training?**

- A: Anytime a person is interested in finding out more information about OPWDD supports and services or is interested in determining their eligibility for OPWDD services or finding out more information about the supports and services offered by OPWDD they should contact the DDRO Front Door Team.

Upon contact, a Front Door Team staff person will share with individuals and/or their representative when Front Door Information Sessions are scheduled or, if necessary, will make arrangements for a telephone or personal informational discussion with the individual.

**Q. Can individuals and families attend the Front Door Information Session before eligibility is determined?**

- A. Yes, individuals and families may attend the Front Door Sessions even before eligibility is determined if they choose – in fact some may find it helpful to attend as these information session includes information on the eligibility process.
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**Q: Can service coordinators and or other individuals attend Front Door Information Sessions?**

- A. Yes. The front door is meant to be a user friendly process and its success depends on collaboration and partnership with provider agencies, individuals, families, and other stakeholders. Therefore, service coordinators and other people who are important to the individual are invited to attend.
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**Q. If someone attends a Front Door information session for one family member who may be eligible for OPWDD services, do they need to attend the session again if a second family member seeks OPWDD eligibility/services at a later time?**

- A. Front Door information sessions are not individual specific therefore it is not necessary for a parent or other family members to attend multiple sessions for more than one child. However, any interviews or discussions are specific to each person and would require the family to interact with the front door team for each family member seeking services.
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**Q. What happens when the person and their family do not speak English or rely on a sign language interpreter to communicate? Will translators or sign language interpreters be provided?**

- A. Regional Office personnel have access to interpretation services and will utilize interpreters as needed. The resource booklet is readily available in Spanish and in other languages as requested. Additionally, if a sign language interpreter is needed or any other support due to communication challenges such will be made available or facilitated by DDRO as needed.
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**Q: Must the Front Door Information Session be presented by OPWDD/DDRO staff whether it is a formal session or informal session?**

- A: Yes, although Information sessions can be provided at locations convenient to individuals and families, including provider agency locations, community locations, etc.

**ADDITIONAL STAKEHOLDER FRONT DOOR TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES:**

**Q. What is the plan for making this information available to Waiver Service Providers? Are there any plans for trainings or memorandums for the programs?**

- A. OPWDD has been working with executive directors from provider agencies and provider associations on the new Front Door practices since its inception. Ongoing communications with standing committees at the regional office level will continue and additional trainings will be pursued as needed.

Statewide provider trainings to ensure that all staff within various programs and operations understands the Front Door and how it relates to their duties and responsibilities. This information will be provided in various formats.

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**Q. Are voluntary agencies allowed to educate the schools on the Front Door Process or is this training that will be provided by Regional staff?**

- A. OPWDD is committed to working with the school districts and providing education as to our eligibility and front door process. This has already taken place in some regions and we intend to continue our outreach. However, as voluntary providers work with and partner with their local school districts it is expected that they will also provide families of school-aged children a general understanding of OPWDD services and the eligibility/front door processes. Partnering with OPWDD staff for more formal education and information sharing is strongly encouraged.

**FRONT DOOR PROCESSES:**

**Q. Many individuals currently enter our service system through the provider agencies. Now, should the MSC providers refer the individuals/families directly to the Front Door staff to answer their questions or do we still offer support and guidance?**

- A. People new to our service system should be referred to the front door team, yet provider agencies still play a vital role in supporting people through this process. The need to support people through the eligibility and service authorization process remains and providers are encouraged to continue to offer that support. It is imperative that everyone we serve is aware that they have a choice in providers. At any time a person may choose another provider agency. This has not changed – what has is that we will ensure the person is empowered with a better understanding of the services and providers available to them.
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**Q. Have eligibility requirements changed under the front door process?**

- A. There has been no change to the eligibility process; which continues to be a consistent process used in each DDRO region.
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**Q. Who completes the initial assessment/developmental disabilities profile 2 (DDP2) for new people seeing OPWDD supports?**

- A. The OPWDD Regional Offices now have the responsibility for conducting the initial assessment for new people coming into our service system. However, the assessment often requires input from others who know the individual and the DDRO often reaches out to family members, other providers, Service Coordinators and even community members, where applicable, to accurately complete this assessment. It is important to note that the assessment is not completed until after eligibility is determined.

**Q. Based on the new Front Door process, who will assist the families in obtaining the necessary documentation needed for eligibility and assessment if they access the Front Door prior to selecting an MSC vendor?**

- A. The DDRO Front Door Teams can provide information to individuals and families as to what evaluations and other documentation are necessary and often assist individuals and families through the eligibility process. Front Door staff may also provide information regarding available MSC vendors in their area who may be available to provide assistance.
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**Q. How will the front door support someone who is an urgent need?**

- A. If the person is new to OPWDD and experiencing an urgent need for services, they must still go through the Front Door. However in emergency, extremely urgent situations, or when the individual's safety may be at risk, front door staff will expedite the process to insure that needed services are authorized in a timely fashion. In these rare situations, the front door process will not encumber an individual's access to services. However, it is expected that once the emergency circumstance has been addressed the front door will process will be completed to determine the ongoing needs of the individual..
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**Q. Will CHOICES still be utilized as part of the front door process?**

- A. Yes. The implementation of the Front Door process has not changed CHOICES utilization. Agencies presently using CHOICES may continue to do so.
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**Q. Will families be provided the outcome of the assessment in writing, so they have the ability to review and request changes?**

- A. Results of any assessment may be shared with the individual and/or their family upon their request.
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**Q. There is a general concern that with the Front Door process families may be waiting a longer time for enrollment and service authorization and are struggling in the meantime without the supports they need. Are we anticipating a quicker enrollment process?**

- A. As the steps become more familiar and everyone involved becomes more acquainted with the Front Door process we anticipate a better flow resulting in a quicker response to accessing supports and services as well as a more accurate response. Supports and services will be based a person's actual assessed needs and not just on what is available in a particular region at a particular time. Additionally, when individuals are seeking supports that are consistent with the transformation goals the authorization may be more prompt. Often requests to access supports that are very costly and which are designed to provide supports to people who have more significant or complex needs, (such as Day Habilitation and IRAs), require a more careful review process prior to authorization.
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**Q: How long does the front door process take from time of initial contact to implementation of services?**

- A: The time it takes for someone to get through the front door process, from initial contact to service delivery depends on a number of factors including
- whether the person is found eligible for OPWDD services,
  - the response time to requests for additional information,
  - the time necessary for decisions related to service planning; e.g. what services are requested, what resources are available, etc.

Moving through the front door process involves an on-going partnership between individuals and families, OPWDD, and voluntary providers including service coordinators. The Front Door process is a collaborative and everyone must work together to ensure that supports and services are provided as timely as possible.

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**Q. How will OPWDD be handling due process rights to individuals when they disagree with a decision?**

- A. There are no changes to the due process rights for the individuals we serve. A person has basic rights to object to their Plan of Care and the services for which they have been authorized.

## THE ROLE OF THE SERVICE COORDINATOR

**Q. Is the MSC service coordinator a part of the front door team?**

- A. No. The front door is a function of the OPWDD Regional Office. However, the Regional Office may partner with an MSC vendor to acquire information important to understanding who the individual is and what their service needs may be.
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**Q. What is the expected time frame between starting the front door process and authorizing MSC?**

- A. This can depend on a number of factors including:
- if/when the person is found eligible for OPWDD services,
  - when the individual and/or their representative engages in a Front Door information session,
  - timely response to requests for additional information, etc.

The MSC application will be processed once OPWDD eligibility has been established, the person has attended a Front Door Information Session, and the person has Medicaid eligibility.

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**Q. If a person does not have Medicaid and identifies the need for a waiver service(s), is the FD Team going to assist with referrals since the individual can't have MSC approved until they get a waiver service and Medicaid?**

- B. No. Though MSC will not be authorized until the person has Medicaid, and for some this is predicated on Waiver enrollment, the expectation continues that the MSC vendor agency assist the person in this process. This is one of many activities that MSC vendors may perform prior to being able to bill for the person which is why we allow agencies to bill at the transitional rate (three times the usual rate) the

first month they bill for a person who is new to MSC. We recognize there is often up-front work performed that cannot yet bill for so the intention of the transitional rate is to compensate for it.

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**Q. In reviewing *The Path to OPWDD Services*, it appears that the MSC cannot truly get involved until after the last step which is the service authorization step. Is this true?**

A. This is not true. The authorization for Service Coordination follows a shorter path than authorization for direct services – since service coordination is needed to help with the development of the service plan that will lead to authorized supports. MSC may be authorized once the person is found eligible for OPWDD services (ID/DD eligible), has acquired Medicaid and their MSC application - including the Ongoing and Comprehensive Assessment - has been completed. As stated above, the individual and or the family must also engage in Front Door Information Session prior to MSC authorization.

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**Q. Since the Front Door is approving the MSC service is there still a need to do the ongoing and comprehensive MSC form?**

A. Yes, the Ongoing and Comprehensive must still be completed. The eligibility process for OPWDD and MSC has not changed.

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**Q. Will the ISP format change now that Front Door is responsible for approval and authorization?**

A. The regional offices were always ultimately responsible for approval and authorization of services. Therefore, there are no foreseen changes to the ISP format as a result of the new Front Door process.

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**Q. What are the main areas of ISP that should be completed to submit to FD team?**

A. The entire ISP should be completed to the best of your knowledge at the time of a request for supports and service authorization.

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**Q. At which point should the MSC apply for the Waiver for new individuals going through the Front Door Process?**

A. Once developmental disability eligibility has been established and it is determined, based on service planning, that the individual needs an HCBS waiver service, the MSC should begin completing and compiling the required HCBS application packet documentation.

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**Q. Now that the Front Door Team has responsibility for conducting the initial assessment process, how does this affect the assessment/planning process that has occurred between the Service Coordinator and the individual/advocate?**

A. The front door assessment process is not intended to replace any discussions or dialogue the individual and/or family has with the service coordinator. The service coordinator is expected to engage in ongoing

discussion and assessment of a person's needs, and continue to support information individuals/families share about their needs and interests, as they always have, as the foundation to service planning and development of an Individualized Service Plan. Presently the service coordinator will continue to conduct the ongoing assessment to determine changes to a person's needs and/or interests. Service Coordinators will also receive a Front Door Planning Summary which provides some basic information that the Service Coordinator can use as they work with the individual/family to develop their ISP. This document should be viewed as an additional resource and should not replace any service planning activities.

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**Q. Some service coordinators are continuing to be asked to assist individuals and families through initial interviews and intakes. However, these individuals cannot be enrolled in MSC at that time. This could pose an issue with an agency who questions why we haven't billed for something that would be considered a qualified contact and service. How do we address this?**

A. If an agency is already involved with an individual and/or family assisting them through the intake and eligibility stages of the front door process, service coordinators are encouraged to continue to do so. This may include attending an information session with the individual/family, providing them information on the necessary documentation needed for eligibility determination, assisting them to apply for Medicaid and HCBS Waiver etc.

There are many such actions an agency may take on to support a person prior to them being approved for MSC. This is why OPWDD allows agencies to bill at the transitional rate (three times the usual rate) the first month they bill for a person who is new to MSC. We recognize there is often up-front work you perform that you cannot yet bill for so the intention of the transitional rate is to compensate you for it.

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**Q. Will the role of the service coordinator under MSC change for those who opt into Managed Care?**

A. Yes, the role will change as we move to a managed care model. When we move to managed care the managed care entities will be responsible for service authorization while OPWDD will maintain the responsibility of eligibility determination and assessment.

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**Q. Does the process defined in the MSC Front Door Flow Chart differ for individuals who choose to self direct some or all of their supports and services?**

A. The process defined by the flow chart process is the same for a person choosing CSS or other self directed options as it is for someone using traditional provider-managed services. All individuals must go through eligibility, assessment, service planning and service authorization to access approved supports and services.

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**Q. How is the LCED (Level of Care Eligibility Determination) going to fit into the front door process as technically, a waiver service could be approved in the service authorization process prior to the submittal of the Waiver application packet?**

A. The LCED remains a required part of the Waiver Application and the application will not be approved without it. So even if a service is "technically" authorized before submittal of the waiver application that service cannot begin until waiver eligibility is established; which requires a current LCED.

**Q. Is the *MSC Front Door Service Planning Summary* that service coordinators will begin receiving designed to tell the service coordinator what services an individual wants and what their needs are?**

A. As part of the Front Door process, Front Door staff and the individual/family have engaged in a preliminary discussion of needs, interests, desires, and person-centered goals as they relate to self-direction, employment/day services and housing options. The *Front Door Planning Summary* service coordinators will be receiving is designed as a resource as it contains some of the basic information acquired during initial discussions between the individual, family and DDRO staff. It is anticipated that the *Front Door Planning Summary* will help provide the service coordinator with a starting point as they begin to work with the individual/family in developing the Individualized Service Plan (ISP).