



# REPORTS

New York State Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities  
44 Holland Avenue Albany, New York 12229

George E. Pataki, Governor      Thomas A. Maul, Commissioner

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## NEW YORK'S SELF-DETERMINATION PROGRAM PILOT EXPANDED

**Self-Determination Services for People with Mental Retardation and  
Developmental Disabilities is Funded for 200 Additional Individuals**

The State of New York, Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD) is pleased to formally announce the expansion of its pilot Self-Determination program. Governor George Pataki has authorized OMRDD to expand the original pilot to an additional 200 individuals over the next two years utilizing the Consolidated Supports and Services program of the Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) Waiver, funded through Medicaid and approved by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS).

### *What Is Self-Determination?*

Self-determination is a method by which people with mental retardation and developmental disabilities will be given the opportunity to achieve additional control and direction over the services that support them in community living. A person who elects to participate in the Self-Determination program should have a clear concept of his or her life goals, and have a freely chosen circle of support consisting of family, friends and others who will help him or her determine a support plan and budget based on needs and choices that are available and meet the criterion set forth in the person's Individualized Service Plan (ISP).

### *How Is the Program Funded?*

Utilizing a new Medicaid Services Waiver called Consolidated Supports and Services is an

innovative approach to personal supports for people with developmental disabilities. The program utilizes Medicaid dollars to support persons who are eligible for OMRDD services.

### *How It Works*

Consolidated Supports and Services enables the individuals who are in the program to have greater control over their own lives than they would in more traditional services. Each person participating in Self-Determination must choose a Fiscal Intermediary (FI) in the form of a voluntary agency to help administer his or her annual budget. Each budget is individually developed in order to meet the person's specialized needs for supports and services and other costs associated with living in the community. Consistent with the person's ISP, the FI acts as the individual's fiscal and business agent to bill for government funds and pay for the supports and services with funding from OMRDD. Funds are expended as directed by the person enrolled in Self-Determination with the advice and counsel of his or her circle of support in accordance with the approved plan. All resources for a person enrolled in Self-Determination are portable, meaning that the funds are tied to the individual rather than a service provider. With OMRDD approval, an individual may opt to change or redirect funds to alternate providers.

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## *The National Movement*

Self-Determination is part of a movement that is being piloted across the nation, taking its roots from a Declaration of Self-Determination that was issued after the national conference of Self-Advocates in November, 1997. New York was one of the first states to have a Self-Determination program approved as part of its federal Medicaid waiver program.

### *Self-Advocacy Association of New York State*

In addition to working with parents, providers, advocates, and local officials, OMRDD has been working with the Self-Advocacy Association of New York State, Inc., an organization of consumer advocates, to assure that the program design best meets the needs of the people it will serve. The original Self-Determination pilot in New York State began with a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation in 1998, affording Self-Determination opportunities to 24 individuals.

“While Self-Determination is not for everyone, for those whose dreams can be fulfilled through this program, participating in Self-Determination will indeed be a life-changing experience,” said Commissioner Thomas A. Maul. “We are proud to be able to expand this pilot, as it offers a unique opportunity for some people to live more independent lives and still have the supports they need.”

Representatives from New York’s Self-Advocacy Association will be working directly with people who are interested in the program to help them develop their plans and then to successfully implement them. “I look forward to seeing many positive results over the next two years,” said Commissioner Maul.

Donald Chrisman, Chairman of the Self-Advocacy Association of New York State, Inc. said, “We are really excited to hear that self-determination is a go! We appreciate all the hard work by self-advocates, family members, providers, leadership

in OMRDD and DOB and other supporters who have helped us advocate for self-determination. Now the real work can begin . . . helping people create the life they want.”

The Self-Determination Program is an example of government listening carefully to the people it serves. In expanding the pilot, New York once again leads the nation in providing innovative approaches to maximizing the potential of the people it serves through another individualized service for people with mental retardation and developmental disabilities.

For further information about OMRDD’s programs,  
please check the OMRDD Web Site at:  
[www.omr.state.ny.us](http://www.omr.state.ny.us)

or contact OMRDD’s  
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Specific questions about Self-Determination  
may be directed to OMRDD’s  
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