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Robert Wood Johnson  
Medical School

THE BOGGS CENTER ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

*New Jersey's University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research, and Service*

# Selecting a Support Coordination Agency

## Making Choices, Becoming Empowered A Guide for People with Disabilities



People receiving support through NJ's Division of Developmental Disabilities are able to choose the agency they receive support coordination services from. The opportunity to do this can be empowering as people with disabilities and their families select an agency that they believe will do the best job helping them plan for and obtain the supports and services they need.

This pamphlet provides information and ideas that can help in the selection process.



## Selecting a Support Coordination Agency: Making Choices, Becoming Empowered

This guide is designed for people with disabilities to use when choosing a support coordination agency. You may want to include your family, friends, and others that care about you in reviewing these materials, interviewing support coordination agencies, taking notes, and making decisions.

A family version of this guide is available online at:  
<http://rwjms.rutgers.edu/boggscenter/projects/infopeopleandfamilies.html>



## What is a Support Coordination Agency?

A support coordination agency is an organization that will help you get the services you need. Support coordinators help you by:

- Listening to what you need and want in your life
- Developing your Individual Service Plan
- Finding service providers in your community that meet your needs
  - Checking in to make sure the services are meeting your needs
    - Answering your questions
    - Responding to emergencies

This guide helps you to think about your life and what to ask when you are choosing a support coordination agency. You may want to include your family, friends, and others that care about you in helping you to make this decision.

## Step 1: Thinking about Your Life

Choice starts with knowing what you need and want in your life.

On **page 3**, there are some topics about **Your Life** that you should talk about with support coordination agencies.

## Step 2: Learning about Support Coordination Agencies

You can choose the support coordination agency you want. In order to do this, you will want to take time to learn about the different agencies. You can find a complete list of support coordination agencies that work in your community online at: <http://rwjms.rutgers.edu/boggscenter/projects/documents/ListofSupportCoordinationAgencies.pdf>

You can talk to support coordination agencies before making your choice. Doing this can help you find the agency that:

- Will listen and understand your needs
- Knows your community and the supports that are available
- You feel comfortable working with

Suggestions for **Interviewing a Support Coordination Agency: Questions to Ask** can be found on **page 4**.

## Step 3: Making Your Decision

On **page 6** you will find questions to **Help You Decide** which Support Coordination agency will meet your needs.

# Step 1: Thinking about Your Life

## Your Life...

Think about your life and what you want and need.

- What is important for you to have in your life? Think about: people, places, things, activities, and environment (such as calm surroundings, privacy, routine, and so on).

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- What support do you need? Think about: health, safety, transportation, behavior, wellness, and supports related to employment, daily living, communication, and so on.

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- What do you want in your life? Think about: community participation, employment, health and well-being, continued learning, home, relationships, and so on.

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- How do you want your support coordinator to work with you? Think about: length of meetings, visiting you at work, communicating through email, meeting your family and friends, and so on.

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## **Interviewing Support Coordination Agencies: Questions to Ask...**

### **Questions to Ask Support Coordination Agencies**

Below is a list of questions you might want to ask when you interview support coordination agencies. You may want to include your family, friends, and others that care about you in helping you to ask these questions and taking notes.

#### **Basic information:**

- How many other people will my support coordinator work with?

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- How long will I work with the same support coordinator?

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- How will you know which support coordinator will be right for me?

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- How long have you provided services in New Jersey? In my community?

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- How does your agency respond to issues and needs that occur after typical business hours?

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#### **Knowledge & Experience:**

- Describe the experience your support coordinators have working with individuals with my disability.

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- What training do your support coordinators receive?

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(continued) 

## Step 2: Learning about Support Coordination Agencies (continued)

- How will your support coordinators consider my background (including culture, traditions, and language) when working with me and helping me find services? Please give some examples.

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- How will your support coordinators work with me to understand my needs and wants and the way I communicate them?

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- How well do your support coordinators know my local community and resources? Please give examples.

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- How will you involve me, my family, and others that care about me in planning for and choosing services?

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### Ongoing Support:

- How will your support coordinators make sure my needs are being met in the ways that I want?

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- How will you use my suggestions to make support coordination services better?

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### Additional Questions:

- How is your support coordination agency better than others?

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- Are there people or families using your support coordination services I can contact to learn more?

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Helping You Decide...

What did you think of the support coordination agencies you interviewed?

Take time to review your notes from your conversations with the support coordination agencies. You may want to include your family, friends, and others that care about you in writing down your answers and helping you decide.

- How do you feel about the support coordination agencies you interviewed?

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- Which agency made you feel respected and comfortable?

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- Which agency understands what is important to you?

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- Which agency understands your abilities and strengths?

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- Which agency understands your support needs?

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- Which agency has the skills and knowledge to support you?

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- Which agency really wants to help?

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Some questions found in preceding sections were adapted from:

*The PA Training Partnership for People with Disabilities and Families, Temple University/UCEDD. "Choosing a Support Coordination Organization." Maryland, Developmental Disabilities Administration, Dept. of Health and Mental Hygiene*

*National Resource Center for Participant Directed Services. (2010). "Developing and Implementing Participant Direction Programs and Policies: A Handbook."*

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