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## **Support Service Provider (SSP) Policy and Guidelines**

*Status: Active*

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### *A. Program Purpose*

The Support Service Provider (SSP) program was created to assist people who are deafblind integrate into their community and increase their level of independence. All activities the SSP and client engage in must align with this purpose.

### *B. Client Requirements*

1. In order for a person to be eligible for SSP services, they must meet the following requirements.

a. Vision requirement:

- i. Visual impairment of distance vision acuity at 20/70 or less in the best eye with best correction, or
- ii. Progressive vision loss with distance vision acuity of 20/50 or less in the best eye with best correction, or
- iii. Field loss of 20 degrees or less in the best eye. Loss must be a functional impairment documented by an eye doctor.
- iv. Vision Report must be within the last two years of application date.

b. Hearing requirement:

- i. Audiogram showing a Pure Tone Average at 500hz, 1000hz, and 2000hz of at least 50 decibels or worse in the best ear.
- ii. Audiogram must be within the last two years of the application date.

- c. Service requirement:
    - i. The person is not receiving similar services from:
    - ii. A school district education system or have a current IEP, or
    - iii. The Division of Services for People with Disabilities (DSPD).
  - d. Cognitive requirement:
    - i. The person must have the cognitive capacity to advocate for themselves, respond in an emergency situation and give instructions or direction to the SSP regarding the activity they would like to engage in.
2. As part of the eligibility process, the client must have the program goals and guidelines described to them in person by the program coordinator.
    - a. At that meeting and at least once a year thereafter, the client will be required to set goals that align with the program purpose.
    - b. The program coordinator or client may request the SSP attend the client's goal-setting meeting.
  3. After eligibility is determined, the client will be paired with an SSP. The program coordinator may first choose from the current SSP staff. If no SSPs are available, the program coordinator may consider hiring a new SSP to work with the client.
  4. The client must provide the program coordinator and SSP with at least one emergency contact. It is the client's responsibility to notify the coordinator and SSP if the contact information changes.
  5. The client must be respectful of the requests the SSP makes regarding the vehicle, whether state car or personal. For example, if the SSP prefers food is not eaten in the car, the client must eat before or after riding in the car. If the client has a service dog, the SSP may require the client to bring a blanket to put down before the dog gets in the car.
  6. Clients cannot live with, be a spouse of, a child, sibling or close acquaintance of the client they are assigned to.

### *C. SSP Requirements*

1. Hiring:
  - a. SSPs are hired as part time, at-will, non-benefited State of Utah employees and cannot work more than 29 hours per week.
  - b. SSPs must successfully pass a criminal history background check and DWS fraud check.
  - c. SSPs cannot live with, be a spouse of, a child, sibling or close acquaintance of the client they are assigned to and must follow the [DWS Code of Ethics](#).

- i. Note: In some circumstances, such as the need for ASL communication or in a small town, clients and SSPs may know each other. SSPs must notify their supervisor of the conflict of interest. The supervisor will determine if another SSP needs to be assigned or if the current SSP can continue to work with the client.

## 2. Maintaining Employment:

- a. SSPs are employees of the department and are required to complete the mandatory department training, such as Defensive Driving, Workplace Harassment, Code of Ethics, Conflict of Interest, etc. SSPs that do not complete the training may be terminated.
- b. To ensure client safety, the department will continually monitor SSPs' criminal history. To maintain employment, SSPs must continue to have a clear criminal history.

## 3. Vehicle Usage and Mileage Compensation:

- a. SSPs must follow the [DWS Travel and Transportation Policy](#).
- b. Prior to transporting a client, SSPs must have (and maintain) a valid Utah driver license, complete the state defensive driver training, and obtain a state driver PIN.
- c. SSPs are allowed up to 40 miles a week or 80 miles of mileage reimbursement per pay period per client. SSPs are not expected to drive after the client has reached these limits. Any exceptions must be approved by the SSP coordinator in advance.
- d. SSPs will be reimbursed for mileage at the current state approved rate per mile. This rate is subject to change.
- e. In addition to the [DWS Travel and Transportation Policy](#), if using their personal vehicle to drive clients, SSPs must:
  - i. Check with their personal insurance agent to determine if their policy will cover damage to the vehicle while being used for business purposes and make any changes to ensure they are fully covered. Note: Damage to an SSPs personal vehicle is not covered by the State Risk Management insurance.
  - ii. Maintain minimum amounts of liability insurance as required by [state law](#). Note: In the case of an accident or issue, the employee's insurance will be the primary coverage for liability insurance, while State Risk Management will be secondary.
  - iii. Provide a copy of their insurance policy, showing the amounts of coverage, at least once a year to the SSP coordinator. Note: The SSP coordinator will maintain the insurance policy in the employee's file.
  - iv. Track their odometer miles using the appropriate SSP mileage tracking log and State of Utah reimbursement form. Note: SSPs are highly encouraged to submit the mileage reimbursement form the same pay period the mileage was accrued. DWS may not reimburse for mileage that is not filed timely.

- v. Not drive out of the state of Utah, even if the road or highway crosses state lines (such as driving from Kanab to St. George). If in the course of work-related travel, it is necessary to drive out of state, a fleet vehicle must be used. There are no exceptions to this policy.

- f. The SSP is responsible for any parking or traffic violation tickets or fines.

#### 4. Training and Monitoring:

- a. SSPs will complete the SSP Sensitivity Training Courses when starting employment.
- b. To understand the role of an SSP and relationship dynamics with clients, SSPs may observe at least one appointment with a current SSP and client.
- c. After the above is met, SSPs will be assigned a caseload of deafblind clients.
- d. The program coordinator will periodically observe, evaluate and provide feedback on how the SSP facilitates the client's independence and how well the two parties work together.
- e. SSPs provide the program coordinator with monthly reports regarding client progress on their goals, as well as information on activities engaged in and how they meet the purpose of the program.
- f. SSPs may also share concerns about the client with the program coordinator. SSPs should contact adult protective services, and in the case of active physical harm call 911, if they feel it is necessary and notify the program coordinator regarding the situation.

#### 5. Professional Ethics and Boundaries:

- a. SSPs must follow all DWS and State of Utah required professional and ethical boundaries.
- b. In addition to the above, program specific guidelines of ethics and boundaries are listed below.
  - i. Choice: The purpose of the SSP program is to increase independence. Although at times the SSP may feel as though they are helping, they may be impeding on the rights that a client has to make decisions on their own. As long as it is within the parameters of the program guidelines, the client is the one responsible to make decisions as to what to do, and where and when to go.
  - ii. Confidentiality: The SSP and client spend a significant amount of time together and the SSP may learn many confidential, private and personal details about the client. It is important that confidential information is not shared with anyone without the client's consent.
  - iii. Privacy: The client's privacy is important. When the SSP is in the client's home, they must not move anything without asking for permission.

- iv. Professionalism: The SSP needs to be on time for appointments, focused and ready to work. Both parties are expected to present themselves in a professional manner, including speaking professionally, in both tone and language and dressing appropriately for an activity. SSPs and clients may form close relationships, however the SSP must keep in mind the line between professional and personal relationships and keep the relationship in a professional manner. That includes not accepting gifts or being a beneficiary in the client's will, living with the client, or having the client come to their home, etc.
- v. Technology: As technology advances, it is important to remember that the SSP is at work and their full attention should be on the client. Texting, talking, playing games, and social networking are inappropriate while working. The SSP is being paid to give one-on-one attention to the client. There are times when a personal call is necessary such as during emergencies. There may also be times when a client is asking for online information such as looking up an address. These are acceptable uses of technology while at work.
- vi. Record Keeping: The SSP will complete at least monthly documentation of the activities engaged in, location and how the activities meet the program purpose. Additional documentation regarding client needs and concerns may also be required.
- vii. Time Off: It is the SSP's responsibility to notify the program coordinator if they are unable to work, such as for vacation or illness.
- viii. Drinking and/or Drug Use: Neither the SSP nor the client may drink alcohol or use illegal drugs while on assignment. If the client drinks alcohol or uses illegal drugs prior to or during the assignment, notify the coordinator immediately. Leave the situation while ensuring the client is able to get home safely (taxi, family, etc.).
- ix. Appropriate Attire: The SSP must follow [DWS dress code policy](#), which requires business casual dress unless the activity requires something different. For example, if the assignment is to attend an outdoor activity such as a picnic, shorts may be appropriate. Or if the assignment is a wedding or a play, more formal attire would be appropriate.
- x. SSPs cannot conduct personal business for themselves while working with clients. For example, when assisting a client with grocery shopping, the SSP cannot do their own shopping at the same time. The SSP's focus must be on the client.

#### 6. Time Reporting:

- a. SSPs must enter time worked through the online state system by 5:00 p.m. the Monday after the last day of the pay period. If the SSP does not have access to the internet at

home, free public computers are available at local libraries or DWS employment centers.

- b. SSPs must submit work logs to the program coordinator by email or fax. The work logs contain the time the SSP arrived for the client's appointment and the time the appointment ended.
- c. The SSP must calculate work time in quarter hour increments and time spent traveling according to Utah Admin Code [R477-8-12](#).
- d. There are times when a client may call the SSP and request assistance with completing a phone task or negotiating SSP services. The SSP may claim the time that it takes to complete this task.

#### 7. Terminating Employment:

- a. SSPs are encouraged to provide at least two weeks' notice so a replacement can be found.

### *D. Scheduling, Activities and Limitations*

#### 1. Scheduling:

- i. Unless approved for additional hours by the program coordinator, each client is able to use a SSP for up to 10 hours per week. SSPs may be assigned more than one client and cannot work more than 29 hours per week.
- ii. The client and the SSP will coordinate a consistent, weekly, schedule with appointments lasting at least two hours.
  - i. If the client wants to modify their weekly scheduled appointments, the client is encouraged to contact the SSP as soon as possible, but at least two days in advance.
  - ii. The SSP may not be able to accommodate the client's change in schedule.
- iii. Cancellations should only occur in the case of illness, emergency or other serious unavoidable circumstances. If the SSP or client needs to cancel, they must notify the other person immediately.
- iv. If a client fails to show up for an appointment the SSP will be required to stay 20 minutes, and then they may leave.
  - i. In the case of a no-show, or if the client cancels within 24 hours of a scheduled appointment, the SSP will be allowed to bill up to 2 hours which will be taken from the client's authorized weekly hours.
  - ii. The SSP must inform the program coordinator of the no-show within two days.

- v. If the SSP or client is more than 15 minutes late to an appointment or runs over 15 minutes past the scheduled end time, the other party should report this to the program coordinator within two days.
- vi. The program coordinator will track the number of last minute changes for every SSP and client. After three changes or cancellations, the program coordinator will reevaluate the SSP or client for their participation in the program.

2. Clients are responsible for:

- i. Planning and organizing activities for each appointment prior to when the SSP arrives.
- ii. Organizing appointments based on the amount of time each task is expected to take and the amount of time available with the SSP.
- iii. Planning appointments in correlation to their home and the location of the other appointments to not incur excessive mileage.
  - i. For example, the client should not plan to go east of their home, then west, then east again. If a client does not know where an appointment is located in reference to their home, they may utilize the SSP to help find the location and the distance from their home. This should be done during the prior appointment, not immediately before leaving their home.
- iv. Paying admission fees, or other associated costs of attending an activity.
  - i. Some places will allow a person with a disability to have a guide or an aide attend for free. The client may want to consider calling ahead to see if the SSP can enter for free, otherwise they will be responsible for paying for the SSP's costs.

3. SSPs are responsible for:

- i. Relaying visual and environmental information in the client's preferred method of communication.

1. For example, the SSP should relay the following information to the client.

1. Who is in the room
2. What people are doing and talking about
3. The emotional tone of the room (are people frustrated/excited/tired/etc.)

- ii. Assisting the client in situations where communication barriers are present but not speaking on behalf of the client. Note: SSPs are not certified interpreters and may not provide interpretation services according to Utah Code 35A-13-6.

.For example, unless the SSP is a certified interpreter, it is not appropriate to use ASL to communicate what the other person is saying at the same time the person is saying it. The appropriate way to handle this is to wait until the person has finished talking and then explain to the client what was discussed. This would be

considered as “assisting with communication.” It is important the line between the two is not blurred. The Program Coordinator can provide additional coaching and training on appropriate methods of communication.

- iii. Encouraging the client to have a solution-focused mindset to improve their independence. The SSP may not recommend a solution for a client but rather provide options the client may evaluate.

.For example, if the client cannot use their spices due to lack of organization, the SSP may suggest solutions such as categorizing based on priority, arranging alphabetically, creating braille labels, creating large print labels, color coding, etc.

- iv. Paying for their own meals and food unless:

.They are included in the cost of the activity or event, or

i.The travel meets the requirements in [DWS Meal Reimbursement Policy](#).

4. Types of Allowed Activities:

- a. Errands: shopping, going to the dry cleaners or the library, etc.
- b. Reading and writing: reading mail and personal correspondence, paying bills, completing basic banking transactions, looking for apartments, applying for public services, etc.
- c. Recreational activities: attending sporting events or other entertainment, going for walks, playing card games, etc.
- d. Transportation: transporting the client to activities, attending the activity with the client and transporting the client home.
- e. Medical appointments: attending doctor or physical therapy appointments.
- f. Religious events: attending weddings, baptisms, funerals, family history centers, choir concerts or church-related events. This is allowable as long as the SSP agrees to attend and does not need special religious clearance to attend. If the SSP is not comfortable attending, the client may request another SSP for the event. The program may not require the SSP to attend religious activities.

5. Limitations:

.SSP Limitations:

0.The SSP may not sign any document on behalf of the client.

1.The SSP is not required to do activities the client should do for themselves like cleaning, cooking, bathing, personal care, dog sitting etc.

2.The SSP is not a medical professional and cannot provide home health care or deal with medical situations or emergencies. This includes handling body fluids, testing blood sugar levels, providing medical advice or care etc.

1. If the client needs consistent medical attention, such as home health care, they should not be left alone with an SSP.



2. If there is a medical emergency and help is needed (i.e. client is having a seizure or unable to communicate due to a medical issue), the SSP must call 911 immediately and notify the program coordinator and the client's emergency contact.
3. If a situation arises where the safety of the client is questionable (i.e. the client is dizzy), the SSP should make sure the client is able to get home safely and medical personnel is contacted if necessary. The SSP must notify the program coordinator immediately and this information should be recorded in the log.
4. If a situation arises where the SSP is unsure if emergency medical personnel should be contacted, they must side on the safety of the client and call 911.
5. SSPs cannot drive clients to the emergency room and must call 911.

i. Activity Limitations:

0. The activity must be more than just transportation.

1. Clients are allowed to use their SSP for transportation up to 40 miles a week or 80 miles a pay period. The client is responsible to manage their hours and mileage by prioritizing needs. The SSP may assist the client with looking up distances or calculating driving time to give the client enough information to make an educated decision about their schedule.
2. The SSP cannot just drop a client off at an activity and return later to pick up the client. The SSP must stay with the client while at the activity.
3. If the client needs transportation only, other resources such as uber, lyft, taxis and paratransit are available.

1. The activity cannot be to help the client in their employment or for activities where the client gets paid.

2. The activity cannot occur out of state.

3. Activities that require prior approval from the program coordinator and agreement from all three parties are:

1. Activities requiring overnight travel,
2. Activities outside the client's community and the SSP's home base, as defined by state travel policy.

ii. Safety Limitations:

. The safety of the client and the SSP are of utmost importance. If at any time either party feels uncomfortable, they can decline an appointment or the SSP/client assignment.

