



Family/Individual Information Package: Dufferin

Hosted by: Kerry's Place Autism Services and Dufferin Child and Family Services



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INTRODUCTION: THE SUPPORT PROVIDER DATABASE

The respiteservices.com/supportyourway.ca website is a free online information service that local organizations throughout Ontario support for the benefit of people with disabilities, their families and individual service providers in the community. The website(s) include a database through which people with disabilities and/or their families (known as “**Database Users**”) can make their support needs known, and through which independent individual service providers (known as “**Direct Support Providers**”) can offer their services to Database Users. The Support Provider Database is updated regularly as new Direct Support Providers join the database and Database Users find successful matches. *respireservices.com/supportyourway.ca* and the local organizations that support this program are together called “*respireservices.com/supportyourway.ca*”.

DIRECT SUPPORT PROVIDERS

Direct Support Providers vary in experience, skill sets, and availability, and should not be considered trained therapists. Direct Support Providers are available for part-time parent/caregiver relief, in Database User home or in the community. This may include one-to-one support in the community and assisting families to implement recommendations made by qualified therapists (e.g. Speech Language Pathologist or Occupational Therapist). The Direct Support Database does not guarantee or warrant that any specific Direct Support Provider is appropriate for any particular Database User. The Direct Support Database also doesn't supervise, control, or otherwise have any involvement with the services that a Direct Support Provider provides to a Database User, or the relationship between a provider and a Database User.

ENGAGING A DIRECT SUPPORT PROVIDER

In order to be placed in the Direct Support Provider Database, Direct Support Providers must submit a Provider Profile outlining their experience, interests and availability, as well as a resume, all of which is reviewed during a personal interview by Direct Support Database personnel. Each Direct Support Provider also has a Police Reference Check (vulnerable sector screening) conducted, 2 references checked (for major disqualifying features only) and has attended an orientation session to the Direct Support Database. It is however up to each family to personally screen the Direct Support Providers they are considering, to verify their current documentation and references, and to select and contract with a Direct Support Provider of their choosing based on their own independent assessment of whether the person is trustworthy and appropriate.

Direct Support Providers are not employees of *respireservices.com* or the Direct Support Database. Database Users accessing the database contact and engage with Direct Support Providers directly, either as self-employed independent contractors or as employees. The Direct Support Database is an information service only and does

not have any involvement in any direct support relationships that may result from the information provided through the Direct Support Database.

There is no charge for the use of the Direct Support Provider Database. We cannot guarantee that we can always make an appropriate connection between a Direct Support Provider and a family/individual needing support.

IMPORTANT NOTES ABOUT THE SUPPORT PROVIDER DATABASE

1. The Direct Support Database does not represent or warrant that any Direct Support Provider is suitable for any particular Database User's needs or at all, or that any information included in a Direct Support Provider's profile is accurate or current. When engaging with a Direct Support Provider each Database User should perform their own screening, obtaining, reviewing, and confirming up-to-date background checks and references.
2. It is the responsibility of the Database User who wishes to engage a Direct Support Provider to call, interview, engage, pay and supervise the Direct Support Provider, consistent with the Database User's needs. The Direct Support Database does not provide supervision for the Direct Support Providers or in any way control how, when, where, or what services will be provided.
3. Direct Support Providers are not Direct Support Database employees. Payment to a Direct Support Provider is made directly by the Database User that engages them. The Direct Support Database will not assume any responsibility for disagreements over fees/payments/services provided. Any problems in this regard must be resolved between the Direct Support Provider and the Database User.
4. Some requests are difficult to fill due to the travel time or type of hours requested. The Program coordinators add Direct Support Providers to the registry throughout the year. Program coordinators will endeavour to make your information known to Direct Support Providers profile is consistent with your needs as soon one is available. Database Users are strongly encouraged to recruit Direct Support Providers from their own community.

GENERAL PROCESS FOR CONNECTING WITH A DIRECT SUPPORT PROVIDER

The general process for engaging a Direct Support Provider is as follows:

1. The Database User registers their need for support with the Direct Support Database and they are entered into the Direct Support Provider Database.
2. Program coordinators review the database of Direct Support Providers to see if there are any providers immediately available whose profiles meet the needs identified by the Database User.
3. At the same time the Database User encouraged to review the Direct Support Provider Classifieds on www.respiteservices.com and/or www.supportsyourway.com.

You obligations and an Direct Support Provider's rights depend on their status as a self-employed contractor or employee. There are a number of resources available on the web that will help you determine an Direct Support Provider's status. The information provided here is not legal advice and the Direct Support Database does not warrant that any information provided is up to date or accurate. It is expressly recommended that you seek legal advice (or at the very least seek further legal information) before entering into a service relationship with an Direct Support Provider.

4. If the Program coordinator identifies Direct Support Providers who might fit the Database Users needs, the Program coordinator will contact the Database User and provide the Database User with the profiles of those available Direct Support Providers.
5. It is then up to the Database User to contact any Direct Support Providers who appear to be suitable to determine whether they are a fit, and to make further enquiries to confirm that the Database User wishes to engage the Direct Support Provider.
6. The Database User and their chosen Direct Support Provider then negotiate the terms on which service will be provided, whether on an independent contractor or employment basis, the rate/fees, schedule and all other terms of their relationship.
7. The Database User and the Direct Support Provider are then asked to notify the Program Coordinator as to their updated needs or availability so that the database remains current for the benefit of all users and providers.

Please keep in mind:

- The Direct Support Database is updated throughout the year, but no guarantees are made as to the accuracy or currency of the database, or the availability of a suitable Direct Support Provider.
- If you are using the Direct Support Provider database, the Direct Support Provider search usually takes 5 business days to complete.
- There may be a longer wait when a special request is made or Direct Support Providers are not available in your area, during the times you require support.
- In some cases, a Direct Support Provider may be identified more quickly where Direct Support Providers with flexible hours exist in your region.
- Please note there is no guarantee that an appropriate Direct Support Provider is available on short notice, or at all.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DATABASE USERS

STEP 1 - WHAT ARE YOUR NEEDS?

Identifying your needs is probably the most important thing you have to do to achieve a good fit between you as a Database User and your Direct Support Provider. Start by asking yourself some questions and recording your answers. Here are some examples:

- What do I need/want the Direct Support Provider to do with my son/daughter?
- Will they be administering medication?
- Do I want a non-smoker?
- Do I need a Direct Support Provider with a driver's license?

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- Must the Direct Support Provider have their own vehicle?
- Do I need a Direct Support Provider who can swim?
- Do I want specific qualifications in my Direct Support Provider?
- Do I or my loved one who will be receiving support have any other personal preference or needs when it comes to the attributes of the Direct Support Provider?
- Will I require the Direct Support Provider to have first aid and/or CPR, or any other certification or training?

STEP 2 – WHAT ARE THE QUALITIES YOU ARE LOOKING FOR IN A DIRECT SUPPORT PROVIDER?

- Knowledgeable, warm, caring
- Willing to learn
- Problem solver, good judgement
- Able to take direction
- Positive outlook, energetic
- Dependable, punctual
- Flexible, accessible and responsive to family's needs
- Good rapport with the person receiving support and family

STEP 3 – BASED ON YOUR PLANS FOR THE DIRECT SUPPORT PROVIDER WOULD THEY BE CONSIDERED TO BE AN EMPLOYEE?

Before making plans to engage a Direct Support Provider we recommend that you consider what the nature of the relationship between you and the provider will be. Consider the following issues:

- Do you plan to control the schedule, the location, the type of activities performed?
- Will the Direct Support Provider dictate the schedule, or be able to flexibly schedule the times that support will be provided around their other clients, employment etc.?
- Do you plan to supervise Direct Support Provider or will the services be provided independently?
- Do you need a large number of hours of support per week such that the provider will come to rely on or be dependent on their earnings from you for their livelihood?
- Will the Direct Support Provider be expected to provide any resources when providing the supports?

All of these factors and more may play into the appropriate legal characterization of the provider, which may impact your legal obligations when it comes to how the provider is paid etc. We recommend you give some thought to this before you select a worker, as well as consider your budget to determine how many hours of support you can afford.

You can learn more about how a Direct Support Provider might be characterized by visiting the following websites:

- Government of Canada - [Employee or Self-Employed Guide](#)
- Government of Canada - [Determining the Employee/Employer Relationship](#)
- Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services - [Hiring a Support Worker Guide](#)
- Ontario Ministry of Labour - [Fact Sheet – Difference between an Employee and an Independent Contractor](#)

STEP 4 – REVIEW DIRECT SUPPORT PROVIDER PROFILES

Your obligations and a Direct Support Provider's rights depend on their status as a self-employed contractor or employee. There are a number of resources available on the web that will help you determine a Direct Support Provider's status. The information provided here is not legal advice and the Direct Support Database does not warrant that any information provided is up to date or accurate. It is expressly recommended that you seek legal advice (or at the very least seek further legal information) before entering into a service relationship with a Direct Support Provider.

- Review worker profiles and select those Direct Support Providers that you would like to consider engaging with.
- Make a list of these individuals leaving space to write down information about each that you will obtain from them when you contact them.

STEP 5 - INITIAL TELEPHONE/EMAIL CONTACT AND SCHEDULING INTERVIEWS

- We recommend that you contact the Direct Support Providers whose profiles have been provided to you by the Program coordinator within forty-eight (48) hours of receiving the profiles. Direct Support Provider availability changes quickly as users and providers make connections so you may be disappointed if you wait.
- When you call a prospective Direct Support Provider, we recommend that you tell the Direct Support Provider your name, and that you got their name through the Direct Support Database.
- Explain when you need a Direct Support Provider (days and times), what you would like the Direct Support Provider to do, the needs of your loved one with a disability and where the activities will take place.
- If the Direct Support Provider is interested then set a date and time when you can meet with the provider for an interview. It is important that you choose a time when the person who will be receiving supports can be present during the interview so provider can meet and interact with them.

STEP 6 – CONDUCTING AN INTERVIEW

Now that you have identified your needs and have written them down, and scheduled an interview you are ready to meet the Direct Support Provider. The interview is where you talk about these needs with a potential Direct Support Provider:

- Schedule a time that is convenient for both yourself and the potential Direct Support Provider.
- Plan about an hour for each interview. Don't be in a hurry.
- Take the time to check references and ask for verification of professional expertise.
- Be prepared – have your questions ready, the profile of the person receiving supports handy, your expectations highlighted, and the person receiving supports present for part, if not all of the interview.
- Be specific about your needs and how you expect the respite time to be spent with the person receiving supports, or the discretion that the provider will have in determining how, what, when and where services will be provided.
- Be sure to discuss fees and payment expectations, how it payment be processed. Once again this relates to whether the Direct Support Provider will be your employee or is a self-employed contractor.

Example interview questions for potential Direct Support Providers:

- Please tell me about yourself.
- Please expand on your experience working with children/adolescents/adults.
- Why are you interested in providing respite care services?
- Describe your strengths and areas you are working on.
- What other clients or jobs do you have?
- Why are you the right person to support my loved one?
- What would you do if we disagreed on something?
- If my son/daughter cries when I leave, how will you handle the situation?
- If my son/daughter has to be taken to the hospital for an emergency, what steps would you take?

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- What would you do if my son/daughter did not respond to your request?
- What hours are you able to work? During the day, weekend, holidays, short notice? Are there specific times when you are unable to work?
- Are you willing to take my son/daughter out for activities?
- Describe a difficult problem you have had to handle with an individual. How did you handle it?
- Do you have any special training or experience you would like me to be aware of?
- Do you have a valid driver's license? Would you take my son/daughter in your own vehicle?
- Would you drive our vehicle?
- Do you have 3rd party liability insurance on your vehicle?

Areas of Caution for Interview Questions

There are certain questions when looking for a Direct Support Provider that are not appropriate to ask Direct Support Providers. Although families are subject to some exemptions under the Human Rights Code when it comes to engaging a person to provide personal care supports, it's still a good idea to avoid the types of questions that could give rise to a perception that you are asking discriminatory or overly intrusive questions.

Inquiry area	Questions to Avoid	Questions that are Acceptable
National Origin/ Citizenship	-Are you a Canadian citizen? - Where were you born? -What is your "native tongue"?	- Are you authorized to work in Canada? -What languages are spoken fluently (related to job performance)
Age	-How old are you? -When did you graduate? -What's your birth date?	-Are you over age 18?
Marital/ Family Status	-What's your marital status? -Whom do you live with? -Do you plan to have a family? -How many kids do you have?	- Would you be able and willing to travel as needed by the job?
Race/ Colour	-What is your race?	N/A
Religion	-What is your religious affiliation?	N/A

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STEP 7 – CHECKING REFERENCES AND BACKGROUND SCREENINGS

The Direct Support Database requests references, however, it is recommended that you check references for yourself as only you can determine whether you trust the references provided and determine whether a Direct Support Provider is the right fit for you. References can be either personal or work related.

Personal References may include an adult friend, religious leader, a teacher or professor, or a neighbour.

Professional References may include a past or current employer/supervisor or a family that the provider has supported in the past.

Here are a few suggestions for questions you can ask a reference:

- What is your relationship with the provider?
- How long have you known this person?
- I'm looking for someone to provide XXXX type of supports, would you have any concerns about the person's ability to perform such duties?
- Does the provider follow directions?
- Is the provider reliable? Punctual? Honest?
- Is there anything else you would like to comment on?

It is also a good idea to review each candidate's background criminal record and vulnerable sector screenings. As a condition of being included in the Direct Support Database each Direct Support Provider must provide a screening to the Direct Support Database. We recommend that you review these and ensure that you are comfortable with the results of the screening and that you feel you can trust you're the Direct Support Provider to work alone with your loved one with a disability.

STEP 8 – CHARACTERIZING YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH A PROVIDER

Is the Direct Support Provider Self-Employed or Your Employee?

Your obligations and a Direct Support Provider's rights depend on their status as a self-employed contractor or employee. There are a number of resources available on the web that will help you determine a Direct Support Provider's status (see STEP 3 above for a list of resources and links). The information provided here is not legal advice and the Direct Support Database does not warrant that any information provided is up to date or accurate. It is expressly recommended that you seek legal advice (or at the very least seek further legal information) before entering into a service relationship with a Direct Support Provider.

Many families choose to engage with their Direct Support Provider as a casual contractor regardless of the legal requirements. Before making any decisions we recommend you find out more by visiting the following websites:

- Government of Canada - [Employee or Self-Employed Guide](#)
- Government of Canada - [Determining the Employee/Employer Relationship](#)
- Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services - [Hiring a Support Worker Guide](#)
- Ontario Ministry of Labour - [Fact Sheet – Difference between an Employee and an Independent Contractor](#)

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It's important that you carefully consider the characterization of your relationship with any Direct Support Provider because there can be costly consequences for mischaracterizing your worker if they are injured, file a claim, or are audited.

Obligations based on Employee Status

If you intend the Direct Support Provider to provide regular service to you on an ongoing basis in your own home, under your control and supervision, at times and locations dictated by you, and/or to the exclusion of other work other families, clients or employers, then the Direct Support Provider could be considered an employee.

It's important to note that a Direct Support Provider could still be considered an employee even if they use their own vehicle, have signed an agreement saying they are an independent contractor, or they invoice you.

Employees have a number of entitlements under the *Employment Standards Act, 2000*, such as vacation pay, public holiday pay, and termination pay, among other things. There are also reporting obligations for employees to the CRA (ex. T4s, EI and CPP contributions, Income Tax deductions) and Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) related obligations.

Consider visiting the Ontario Ministry of Labour for further information about obligations under the Employment Standards Act, 2000:

- [What Businesses Need to Know](#) (applies to families who are employers)
- [Your Guide to the Employment Standards Act](#)
- [ESA Online Compliance Tools](#)

You can also visit the Government of Canada website for more information about employment related deductions, remittances and reporting obligations:

- [Recruiting and Hiring Workers in Canada](#)
- [T-4 Information for Employers](#)
- [Payroll Deductions Online Calculator Tool](#)

Obligations based on Self-employed Direct Support Provider Status

If the Direct Support Provider will provide service to you intermittently, at times that the Direct Support Provider dictates, with little or no supervision, at locations and in such manner as the Direct Support Provider dictates, or in the Direct Support Provider's home, and the Direct Support Provider is not dependent on you for their livelihood then it may be that the Direct Support Provider would be considered an "independent contractor" or self-employed worker.

An independent contractor is responsible for declaring their own income to Revenue Canada and making their own remittances.

They also do not have the same rights under the *Employment Standards Act, 2000* that an employee would.

Technically speaking however, a person who pays a self-employed person is required to file a T4A with Revenue Canada. Learn more about that here:

- [T-4A Information for Payers](#)

STEP 9 – DEVELOPING A CONTRACT

Once you choose a Direct Support Provider, develop a contract for services with them. Discuss clearly your expectations and be specific about their employment relationship with them. You are encouraged to have a written contract with them. It is important to establish and to maintain a good working relationship. Listed are some issues identified by both Direct Support Providers and families as important things to remember and to discuss.

a. The Schedule

Work with the Direct Support Provider to determine what the schedule will look like. If the provider is a self-employed person, this will generally be at times that the Direct Support Provider dictates they are available and that also work for your loved one.

Confirm with the Direct Support Provider the day, time period, the types of activities and who has control over these issues (keeping in mind the status you have determined above).

Keep in touch – both parties should provide advance notice of any change in the schedule, health status, and any other important information for care. Note that if your provider is an employee, there are new requirements that will come into effect on January 1, 2019 related to minimum advance notice of cancellation (48 hours) and cancellation pay where notice isn't provided (3 hours' wages).

b. Rate and Manner of Payment

The rate of pay should be established at the interview or when you enter into a contract with a provider, as should how you will pay (cheque or cash) and when you will pay (weekly, monthly, etc.).

Typically, a self-employed provider will dictate the rate, whereas an employee will be more likely to be subject to the rate set by you. Self-employed, providers should also be invoicing you on an invoice they prepare.

Employees on the other hand are typically subject to the rates you are prepared to offer and it will typically be your responsibility to keep a record of their hours of work.

You may also need to consider varying rates – for example, one rate for community integration supports and another rate for while your loved one with a disability is sleeping and not in need of direct support. Keep in mind that generally speaking an employee is entitled to be paid the minimum wage, even during periods of sleep except in special circumstances (such as where the employee lives in during their period of employment and could be a "residential support worker").

c. Trial period

There may be times when you don't get a good fit when hiring a Direct Support Provider, whether it is from their perspective or yours.

Establish a trial period for your contractor or probationary period for an employee before any long-term commitment is made by either party, if you are unsure about the relationship

d. Transporting Individuals

Your obligations and a Direct Support Provider's rights depend on their status as a self-employed contractor or employee. There are a number of resources available on the web that will help you determine a Direct Support Provider's status. The information provided here is not legal advice and the Direct Support Database does not warrant that any information provided is up to date or accurate. It is expressly recommended that you seek legal advice (or at the very least seek further legal information) before entering into a service relationship with a Direct Support Provider.

You may request that a Direct Support Provider drive your loved one with a disability and use their own vehicle. If a Direct Support Provider agrees to transport ensure the Direct Support Provider has:

- A valid driver's license
- Safe vehicle
- Minimum of \$1,000,000 liability on their insurance (you may wish to speak to your insurance company for requirements and consider taking out a rider on your own policy for this purpose)
- Has notified their insurer that they are driving for the purposes of employment or self-employment.

A Database User may choose to cover the cost of transportation during the time the Direct Support Provider is with their loved one with a disability, though that generally looks more like an employment related benefit as opposed to what would be typical in an independent contractor relationship.

The Direct Support Provider should be responsible to ensure all passengers are safe, proper seat belts and car seats are being used. It is good practise to keep a First Aid Kit in the car. A phone or change for the pay phone for emergencies is also helpful. You may wish to discuss this with the provider.

e. Length of Agreement between Database User and Direct Support Provider

It is hoped that once an agreement has been made for Direct Support that the commitment of the Direct Support Provider to you will lead to an ongoing, productive and satisfying relationship.

A long-term relationship means the Database User can avoid having to seek out and engage a new Direct Support Provider.

If a Direct Support Provider decides to leave or Database User no longer needs the Direct Support Provider's support it is important to give each other notice (notice obligations depend on the status of the Direct Support Provider, the terms of any contract you sign and the requirements under the *Employment Standards Act, 2000* if applicable).

Note that if your provider is an employee, it is important to address termination specifically in your contract and limit termination entitlements to the *Employment Standards Act, 2000* minimum only, expressly excluding any common law reasonable notice or pay in lieu thereof in order to avoid having to pay out large sums related to "reasonable notice" or "severance" that may otherwise be payable.

f. Confidentiality

It is important that you maintain confidentiality with your Direct Support Provider and that your Direct Support Provider maintains confidentiality with you and your family. It's a good idea for there to be a clear understanding between the Direct Support Provider and the Database User that all personal information must not be discussed unless the person is present or has given their consent to specific information being discussed.

g. Sample Contracts

Ideally a contract is in writing between you and any Direct Support Provider. What will be included in the contract depends on the status of your worker. We have highlighted the issues that ought to be addressed in your agreement above in sections a-f. There are many resources available online for templates. Respiteservices.com

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expressly recommends that you get advice before entering into a legal contract provider and does not express any opinion on the enforceability or validity of any templates linked below.

- **Employment Agreements:**
 - There are numerous templates and resources available online including an employment agreement template that is available from the www.hrcouncil.ca website (click here: [Employment Agreement Template](#)).
- **Independent Contractor Agreements**
 - There are also numerous resources available online for independent contractor agreements. For example:
 - MaRS Discovery District - <https://www.marsdd.com/mars-library/independent-contractor-agreement-sample-template/>

STEP 10 - ONBOARDING AND ORIENTATION

The Direct Support Provider attends an orientation/information session before they become active on the Direct Support Provider Database. However, this is a very general session about the Direct Support Database and not related to providing service to Database Users, or the specific needs and expectations you may have for supports for your loved one. It is a good idea for every Database User to provide the Direct Support Provider they have engaged with information related to:

- Your loved one's needs and any health concerns, medications, allergies they may have
- The location where supports will be provided (if controlled by you)
- A list of key contacts (local hospital, parents, doctors or other supports)
- Any emergency support plans that you have prepared for your loved one
- Any person centre plan (ISPs) your loved one might have
- Lists of likes and dislikes and any recommendations you may have as to how to avoid or respond to upset

For further information in this regard see the section on 'Preparing a Direct Support Provider' to support your loved one below.

STEP 11 - TIPS FOR MAINTAINING A GOOD WORKING RELATIONSHIP

Identify and discuss problems as soon as they arise. Be prepared to negotiate a solution to the problem:

- Keep communication open and on-going. You may want to maintain a communication book to keep everyone informed and be responsive to any suggestions or recommendations documented.
- Discuss specific strengths and needs of your son/daughter and any strategies used to support him/her with communication, behaviour or in various situations in the community or at home
- If serious problems arise document dates, times, issues and concerns.
- If possible for quality programming, invite the Direct Support Provider to accompany you to a therapy session to observe the therapist at work with your son/daughter. In this environment, the Direct Support Provider can ask the therapist questions and observe and implement the program under the watchful eyes of an expert. This also allows you to observe the Direct Support Provider in action with your son/daughter. Keep in mind that the more training that is provided, however, the more likely the provider will be an employee and not an independent contractor.

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- Discuss activities, any costs associated with activities and travel expenses with the Direct Support Provider. Many places in the community offer discounts, on entrance fees and activities, to support Direct Support Providers or individuals with a disability.
- Train Direct Support Providers on proper use of any communication aids, assistive devices or equipment.
- Unless you agree otherwise, only the person engaged and approved by you should provide care to the individual. Generally, if a Direct Support Provider is not able to fulfil hours a family would be responsible to make other arrangement. Keep in mind that allowing or requiring that the Direct Support Provider to arrange alternative supports will help to prove that the provider is an independent contractor.

PREPARING A DIRECT SUPPORT PROVIDER TO SUPPORT YOUR LOVED ONE WITH A DISABILITY

Think about what makes your loved one with a disability and your family unique

Take some time to think about your loved one and your family and what their special characteristics are. This will help you to talk about your loved one and develop a plan of support for them. It will also help you to think about what is most important for your loved one and for your family. It's sometimes difficult to do this, but the more specific you can be the more likely you will be to find someone who is a good match for your family. Most families will have to recruit, select and train a number of support providers over the years, so taking time to think about these things and make notes for yourself will help you in this process.

Your Loved One's Unique Personality and Needs:

We know that people with disabilities have particular kinds of needs. It often means that they have particular challenges related to communication, physical care, social interaction and medical needs. It often means that they may have very specific kinds of reactions to the world around them, including sensory issues, making it hard for them to interpret what's happening. Usually, as a caregiver, you and other people who know your loved one with a disability well have special knowledge about the way he or she communicates. You have come to know the "cues" that something is happening. It might be confusion, anxiety, anger, frustration or excitement. Someone who does not know your loved one might read these signs incorrectly and inadvertently set off a chain of events that set your loved one up for failure. The more information Direct Support Providers have, the more likely they are to assist your loved one to be successful.

Make notes for yourself about these things. Database Users sometimes find it hard to "tell their story" over and over. Putting things in writing often makes it easier to do this. Sometimes it is easy to get distracted in the conversation and a written guide helps to focus on the things that are important. Sharing information at the time you are interviewing and screening a new Direct Support Provider helps you both to decide if the Direct Support Provider's skills, interests and personality fit with your loved one.

In consulting with Database Users about the development of this booklet, caregivers said that they wanted the Direct Support Provider to have knowledge about their loved one's disability, but it was just as important that the Direct Support Provider think about their loved one as a person, get to know them as a unique individual and understand how their disability affects them. Your loved one is a person first who has a particular disability that affects how they interact with the world. Help the Direct Support Provider to understand your loved one as a

person, not just the labels. How can the Direct Support Provider help move towards the vision you and your loved one have for his or her life?

Moving towards goals and vision:

What do you and your loved one picture for his or her future? This vision likely includes friends, activities that are meaningful, connections to their community, safety and security and skills that help them to live their life in the best and most independent way that they can. The Direct Support Provider is not there to be a friend for your loved one, but instead a bridge builder who can help your love one pursue these dreams. Think about how you want them to use their time to help your loved one nurture friendships and relationships, build connections in their community, have valued roles and build skills to use in the future.

Reflecting on Support Needs:

As someone who loves and cares about a person with a disability, you will be aware of how their disability affects them. Think about how you might describe their needs to a Direct Support Provider who is meeting him or her for the first time and how you want a Direct Support Provider to provide the right kind of support.

Clearly describing your loved one's personality, interests, abilities and needs is critical in choosing and preparing someone to provide support for your loved one with a disability and your family. Write out a profile of your loved one. Have the information in a binder that you can update as the needs of your loved one and family change. Having it written will help you keep things organized and not overlook information. It also helps to keep things positive and focused on your loved one's strengths, interests and challenges. Include the following information:

Support areas to consider:

Communication:

- How does your loved one communicate?
- Are there particular words, signs, or other methods that you use in times of distress or anxiety?
- Are there ways that you encourage them to ask questions or make their needs known?
- Do they use any communication devices?

Creating and Maintaining Relationships:

- What helps your loved one feel most comfortable with others?
- Are there things that help them to connect to other people?
- When do they need space from others?
- What types of activities help them to break down barriers with others?

Sensory Issues:

- Are there things that affect your loved one such as crowded environments, noise level, smells, colours, texture or feeling of clothing?
- How are they most comfortable and how do you help them to deal with these issues?

Activities and Play:

- Are there particular activities that your loved one likes to do?
- What are the activities that they need the highest level of support with?

You obligations and an Direct Support Provider's rights depend on their status as a self-employed contractor or employee. There are a number of resources available on the web that will help you determine an Direct Support Provider's status. The information provided here is not legal advice and the Direct Support Database does not warrant that any information provided is up to date or accurate. It is expressly recommended that you seek legal advice (or at the very least seek further legal information) before entering into a service relationship with an Direct Support Provider.

- Are there activities that they can enjoy independently?
- Is there a regular community program that your loved one can participate in with support (e.g. parks and recreation, Girl Guides, Scouts, choir, etc.)

Responses through Challenging Behaviours:

- Are there situations when your loved one responds in a way that is challenging to support them?
- What does this look like?
- How do you find it most effective to help them move through a difficult time?
- Are there things that you avoid because it leads to problems?
- What is the best plan for safety for your loved one?

Physical Needs:

- What are the physical needs that your loved one requires support with?
- Does this include help in the bathroom, eating, doing up their seatbelt, dressing?
- Is there any special equipment that the person supporting them needs to know about?

Medical Needs:

- Does your loved one have any special medical needs that they need to know about, including seizures, allergies, medications, diet.
- What is the emergency plan for any medical issue?
- What are the specific instructions about any medications or medical needs?

Cultural or Religious Background:

- There may be things that are important within your family that the Direct Support Provider must know to respect your family's cultural or religious background.

Who is the Best Person to Support your Loved One with a Disability?

Develop a list of traits that you hope to see in a Direct Support Provider. If you define what is most comfortable for you and your loved one with a disability it will assist you in recruiting and screening a Direct Support Provider.

Some different examples are:

- comfortable helping my loved one participate in community activities,
- is a "connector" helping to nurture relationships and meaningful roles
- relaxed- not too rigid, open to new things, calm demeanour during stressful times
- structured- has an organized approach
- willing to implement specific kinds of activities, responses and techniques
- is a real problem solver- has an open mind about how to solve problems without getting flustered

- is committed to having my loved one be included in the community
- has a warm and open disposition

HAVING SOMEONE INVOLVED IN YOUR HOME AND FAMILY

Having a Direct Support Provider involved in your family is both a great opportunity and a stressor. We know that sometimes, having someone coming into your home is difficult. Perhaps you feel you'd just like to attend to other things, perhaps you are having a bad day, or perhaps the kids have just made a big mess. Database Users have the right to expect that the Direct Support Provider will keep their family information private and confidential. They also have the right to determine how their loved one is to be cared for, keeping in mind that the more control over the day to day supports a family has the more likely that a provider will be found to be an employee.

“Setting boundaries” is a formal way of saying that you need to keep in mind the reason that the Direct Support Provider is in your home. You may want them to feel comfortable, but how you do that depends on the style of your family. While you want to develop an open and trusting relationship, the person is not there to be a friend or confidant, nor are you finding a “friend” for your loved one. They are there to provide the care and support for the loved one and to fulfill the responsibilities that you have agreed to. Having healthy boundaries allows you to be clear about what your role and the role of the Direct Support Provider is and to not feel that you need to solve problems that are beyond you. Here are some things that you need to consider:

- We recommend that you never lend money or borrow money.
- Keep your times that you socialize with the Direct Support Provider to occasions that are focused on your loved one, such as your loved one's birthday party.
- Do not discuss your own personal problems with the Direct Support Provider
- If you are going to cancel or change the time you need support, give the Direct Support Provider as much notice as you can.
- Encourage the Direct Support Provider to set a time to discuss plans and issues with you on a regular basis. This gives them the knowledge that you can be approached and wish to be involved.
- Be thoughtful and clear about your expectations around communication and the use of social media, texting, applications such as “Snapchat, Instagram” etc.

Following these guidelines helps both the Direct Support Provider and Database User to define their roles. It is important for both Database User and the Direct Support Provider to be flexible, considerate and respectful.