

# NASP

NEBRASKA ASSOCIATION  
OF SERVICE PROVIDERS

## A GUIDE TO CHOOSING A DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES SERVICE PROVIDER IN NEBRASKA



[www.neserviceproviders.org](http://www.neserviceproviders.org)



## About the Nebraska Association of Service Providers

NASP is a statewide membership association of community organizations who provide supports to people with disabilities. NASP supports organizations that serve thousands of individuals across the state of Nebraska. NASP members provide habilitative services, residential care, and more.

*Photos courtesy of Ken Kauffman.*

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## PART 1: INTRODUCTION

### Introduction

What is important to you? Is it spending time with your family? Is it getting a college degree? Is it attending as many major league baseball games as you can? Is it all three? Whatever your goals in life, there are service providers in Nebraska who want to support you and cheer you on.

This guide will help you make choices about the services available for individuals with developmental disabilities in Nebraska. It includes information, resources, questions—and answers! This guide will help you find information and make decisions about your options and goals.

This guide was developed by the Nebraska Association of Service Providers. Learn more about the Nebraska Association of Service Providers at [www.neserviceproviders.org](http://www.neserviceproviders.org).

### Principles

In addition to what is important to you, there are basic principles that are important to all of us. These principles are promoted by the Developmental Disabilities Planning Council.<sup>1</sup> Service providers should promote these ideas too.

- Independence: being able to make choices for yourself
- Productivity: being able to give back
- Integration: being a part of your community
- Inclusion: having places where you belong
- Self-Determination: directing your own life

Don't be afraid to ask questions or ask for more information or help. Service providers believe in independence, productivity, integration, inclusion and self-determination and they will gladly respond.

<sup>1</sup>The Planning Council on Developmental Disabilities is an advocacy group for Nebraskans with disabilities: [www.dhhs.ne.gov/developmental\\_disabilities/Pages/ddplanning\\_index.aspx](http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/developmental_disabilities/Pages/ddplanning_index.aspx)

## PART 2: GETTING STARTED

### Person-Centered Planning

Your goals, skills and view on life are at the heart of decision making about services. Person-centered planning is a process of identifying what is important to you and how to get there with your strengths and capabilities as well as supports related to health care, habilitation, and other needs. People with training in person-centered planning are available to help you along with friends, family members and others that you choose. Your person centered plan is the beginning of the conversation about choosing a provider.

To learn more about person-centered planning contact your local ARC organization or see the PACER Center Website: <http://www.pacer.org/tatra/resources/personal.asp>

### People to Help You

As you get started, you will want to think about the people you want to help you choose a provider.

**Service Coordinators:** Service coordinators are the people at the State of Nebraska Division of Developmental Disabilities who help you understand your choices. Service coordinators meet with people with developmental disabilities and their families to make a plan. They can help you use all of the resources your community has to offer.

**Your Friends and Family:** Your friends and family care about you. They can help you think about your options. It is your decision, but you have a right to choose the people who will help guide you.



**Service Providers:** People at the service providers in your community are there to help you. They want you to find the place that works best for you. Call them and ask questions.

**Your Peers:** People who currently get services through the Division of Developmental Disabilities know what it's like. Ask them questions about their experiences.

**Advocacy Organizations:** Advocacy groups are there to help you when you need it.

#### THE ARC OF NEBRASKA

The ARC of Nebraska provides advocacy to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families.

 [www.arc-nebraska.org](http://www.arc-nebraska.org)  
 402-475-4407

#### DISABILITY RIGHTS NEBRASKA

Disability Rights Nebraska assists individuals with disabilities and their families in protecting and advocating for their rights.

 [www.disabilityrightsnebraska.org](http://www.disabilityrightsnebraska.org)  
 402-474-3183

## PEOPLE FIRST

People First of Nebraska is Nebraska's only state-wide nonprofit advocacy organization led by people with disabilities.

[www.facebook.com/pages/People-First-of-Nebraska/183687925090709](https://www.facebook.com/pages/People-First-of-Nebraska/183687925090709)  
308-258-1080

## PARENT TRAINING AND INFORMATION NEBRASKA

PTI Nebraska is a statewide resource for families of children with disabilities or special health care needs, enabling parents to have the capacity to improve the education and healthcare outcomes for their children.

[www.pti-nebraska.org](http://www.pti-nebraska.org)  
402-346-0525

## THE NEBRASKA ASSOCIATION OF SERVICE PROVIDERS

NASP is a statewide membership association of community organizations that provide supports to people with disabilities.

[www.neserviceproviders.org](http://www.neserviceproviders.org)  
402-802-8312

## Definitions

Here are some helpful terms to know.

**Residential Services:** support in your home, like help taking a shower in the morning

**Vocational Services:** job training and help with other work related tasks, like transportation

**Respite Services:** these types of services help caregivers get a break

**Transition Services:** job training, career planning, and other services to help move from school to work, volunteering, or other activities

**Service Coordinator:** a person who helps you connect with the help you need

**Waiver:** the "application" Nebraska submits to the federal government, outlining the state's responsibilities to people with developmental disabilities in return for funding

**ICAP:** an individual assessment documenting a person's strengths and needs

**Medicaid:** a governmental program providing funding for health care and other services

**Habilitative:** teaching or training to help someone learn or perfect a skill

**Waiting List:** a list of people kept by the Nebraska Division of Developmental Disabilities that are waiting for funding to be available for services

**Certified Provider:** an agency that has been approved to provide services by the state of Nebraska, meaning they meet certain training and safety standards

## Eligibility

The State of Nebraska has rules about who can get services. In general, people who can get help through the Division of Developmental Disabilities include people with:<sup>2</sup>

- Intellectual disabilities is a term used when a person has certain limitations in mental functioning and in skills such as communicating, taking care of him or herself, and social skills, for example, Downs Syndrome is an intellectual disability.
- A severe, chronic disability other than an intellectual disability which meets certain criteria, such as difficulty with self-care, developmental delays, mobility, learning, or other challenges.
- Generally, people must have experienced their disability before age 21.

However, you must apply to be determined eligible.

### YOU CAN APPLY FOR HELP ONE OF THESE WAYS:

- You can apply on-line through the "AccessNebraska" webpage [www.accessnebraska.ne.gov](http://www.accessnebraska.ne.gov)
- Contact your local Department of Health and Human Services office
- Contact the State Division of Developmental Disabilities office through our state-wide toll free number (877) 667-6266
- Visit the Nebraska Department of Education website at [www.ndetransition.site.esu9.org/linksresources](http://www.ndetransition.site.esu9.org/linksresources)
- Discuss eligibility during the transition process with a local Educational Service Unit transition coordinator
- Contact a local ARC office

You will receive an eligibility packet with more information after you apply and are found to be eligible.

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<sup>2</sup>Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services:  
[www.dhhs.ne.gov/developmental\\_disabilities/Pages/aDDIF-Eligibility.aspx](http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/developmental_disabilities/Pages/aDDIF-Eligibility.aspx)

# PART 3: CHOOSING A PROVIDER

## Four Steps to Choosing a Service Provider

There are four steps you can follow to find a provider that is the right fit for you:

1. Think about and talk about yourself.
2. Check what the provider has to offer—check on basic standards, see the provider in action and ask questions.
3. Work with people who can help.
4. Make a choice.

### STEP 1. THINK ABOUT AND TALK ABOUT YOUR IDEAS, PREFERENCES, AND GOALS.

#### Think about Your Ideas, Preferences, and Goals

Here are some questions to think about at home and on the job.

##### AT HOME

- What do I like to do?
- Do I like action or peace and quiet?
- Where do I want to live?
- Do I want a roommate?
- Do I want to live with others or by myself?
- If I want to live with others, who would like to room with?
- Residential services may be ongoing (continuous) or occasional (intermittent)—which do I need?
- What do I need to support my lifestyle (transportation, personal care, etc.?)
- Do I have medical or safety needs?
- What is most important to me? Least important?

##### ON THE JOB

- What is important to me on the job?
- What do I like to do?
- What am I good at?
- What kind of schedule do I prefer?
- Do I prefer variety or consistency?

- What motivates me to work?
- What life experiences do I have to offer?
- What is my ideal job?
- What kind of training might I need?
- Do I like to follow directions or do I prefer to be creative?
- How important is making money to me?

Notes about my ideas and preferences:

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#### Talk about Your Ideas, Preferences, and Goals

You may want to use the space below to share information about yourself with potential providers.

My picture:

Important things to know about my health:

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My job goals:

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My family:

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## STEP 2. CHECK ON WHAT THE PROVIDER HAS TO OFFER.

### Basic Standards

Any provider should meet some basic standards. You should ask the following questions:

#### 1. IS THIS ORGANIZATION CERTIFIED?

**Certification:** Providers with certification are the only providers authorized to provide specialized services. Certified providers must meet application standards by the Division of Developmental Disabilities, must submit to ongoing reviews, must have an oversight board or committee, must make sure that their staff members do not have a history of crime or abuse, and must meet other health and safety standards.

#### 2. DOES THE ORGANIZATION PROTECT THE RIGHTS OF INDIVIDUALS?

Each individual receiving services has the same legal rights and responsibilities guaranteed to all other individuals under the federal and state constitutions and federal and state laws. Some rights include: being informed of your rights and responsibilities upon entry into services, annually, and when significant changes occur. Information must be given in a manner that is easily understood by you, and no one can retaliate if you exercise your rights.

#### 3. IS THE ORGANIZATION GENERALLY HEALTHY AND SAFE?

The health and safety of individuals should be primary for provider organizations. The staff members should be appropriately trained, facilities should be clean and well maintained, exits should be cleared and well-marked, staff members should clear a background check, staff members should know basic CPR and infection control.

### Review what Providers have to Offer

Different providers have different things to offer. Some services include:

- **Vocational:** providing employment and job training services
- **Medical:** providers serve a variety of medical needs, ranging from daily medication assistance to intermediate care facilities serving individuals with significant medical needs in a residential setting
- **Residential:** serving and supporting clients in activities of daily living
- **Extended Family Homes:** providing support to people with disabilities in a family home environment
- **Unique Programs:** some providers have special expertise, such as providing services to individuals with traumatic brain injury or autism

#### YOU MAY WANT TO:

- Review the NASP provider directory to see the providers in your community and the services they offer. See *the directory on our website at [www.neserviceproviders.org](http://www.neserviceproviders.org)*

- Look at the websites and materials of different organizations.
- Visit the provider in person. Visit other providers to compare.
- Think about how to mix and match providers to meet multiple needs and goals.
- Talk to other people who use the services.
- Spend some time at the provider to see what it's like.
- Meet and talk to staff members.
- Ask questions!
- Reach out to your support system if you feel overwhelmed.

### Questions to Ask

#### QUESTIONS ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION

- What is this organization's mission statement?
- What do other people and their families say about this organization?
- How long has this provider offered services?
- How many people do they serve?
- Do they have expertise in the areas that are important to me?
- Was the organization home-like, clean and organized both inside and out?
- Did people appear to get along well?
- Did the organization seem to run smoothly? Was the staff able to address the needs of the people being served?

#### QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STAFF MEMBERS

- What are the hiring practices of this organization?
- How do staff members get matched up with individuals?
- What kind of training does this provider provide employees?
- Are the right staff and supports available for my medical needs?

#### QUESTIONS ABOUT POLICIES

- What could I do if something went wrong with this provider? How do they respond to incidents?
- What is the official grievance (complaint) process?
- How does this provider meet the needs of my friends and family?
- What is this organization's approach to self-advocacy?
- How will this organization work with my desire for privacy or alone time?
- What are the house or workplace "rules?" Who makes them?

## QUESTIONS ABOUT SERVICES

What are my options in terms of:

- Daily schedule
- Roommates
- Coworkers
- Transportation
- Work schedules
- Special outings
- Social activities
- Food
- Work and home locations
- What assessments does this organization use? How comprehensive are they?
- What happens if I want to make a change?
- What if I need help on the weekends or evenings at home or at work?

### Other Questions

Are there other things that are important? For example:

- Are there other people with the same interests as you (like sports or movies or art) at the organization?
- Can you get to and from the provider in a way that you feel comfortable?
- Will this provider be able to help you as you get older or face other changes in your life?
- Do my friends and family like this organization too?
- Did you get a chance to meet the leaders of the organization if you wanted to?

## STEP 3. LEARN FROM OTHERS.

### Advice about Choosing a Provider

“It is important to be able to trust and talk to your provider. We found one staff member we like and trust and we stuck with her! I have had challenges with some staff members and the way they work with my daughter, but I can talk to the staff, and that makes all the difference. We have now found staff members that help her do things on her own— independently!” *–Nancy, Parent*

“I like my provider now. The staff is nice. I would suggest to other people that it is a good place for friends and family and that they should tour the workshop. They help me stay connected to my church. I get to volunteer, answer the phones, and do cleaning. Variety is important.” *–Arthur, Peer*

### Advice from Joni Thomas, the Center for Independent Living

Attitude is critical. I’m looking for someone who recognizes their role as my aide/employee, not someone who will “take care” of me, not someone who will lecture me. What I need is someone to help me with things I need to get done or have done that I can’t do myself

Be prepared when searching for providers—know what things are important to you, make a list, and communicate this to the provider

Go over everything the aide or providers is to do and describe how you want them to do it

Be specific with what services you need. For example, say “I need help with toileting.” not “I need help with personal care.” “Personal care” may not mean the same thing to everybody.

### Lessons Learned

Here are some lessons from experiences of others in choosing a provider:

1. It is okay to admit that something isn’t working out. Identify what isn’t a right fit early on—then you can change it before you run into trouble.
2. Take a complete tour of the provider and spend a fair amount of time with them. You may see more after a period of time than you do at first.
3. Don’t limit yourself to one provider.
4. Relationships are central: Do you like your provider? Can you talk to the staff?
5. Check in over time, make sure things are working out.

### Talk to Your Team

What does your team think about the providers you are interested in? Write in their comments here:

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## STEP FOUR: MAKE A CHOICE

### Checklist

Have I?

\_\_\_\_\_ Looked into person-centered planning?

\_\_\_\_\_ Thought about my ideas, needs, and goals?

My top three priorities:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Found people to help me?

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Applied for help?

Call the state toll-free number if you have questions: (877) 667-6266

\_\_\_\_\_ Talked to my service coordinator?

Name/Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Checked on the provider I want?

My provider meets my expectations about:

- Safety
- Staff
- Services Offered

\_\_\_\_\_ Made sure I understand:

- My budget
- My options

\_\_\_\_\_ I have people to ask for help if I need it:

1. Name/Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Name/Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Name/Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ I know what comes next:

I have a plan for checking in on my goals and expectations in an ongoing manner.

MY RESIDENTIAL PROVIDER: \_\_\_\_\_

Why I chose this provider: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

MY VOCATIONAL PROVIDER: \_\_\_\_\_

Why I chose this provider: \_\_\_\_\_

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## NOTES

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Enhancing quality of services and supports to Nebraskans with developmental disabilities by promoting and strengthening the Association membership through collaboration and commitment to common goals.

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