

**Maryland State Department of Education
Division of Rehabilitation Services
Important Information About
DORS Independent Living Services**

The Maryland State Department of Education, Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) partners with people with disabilities to help them prepare for, achieve, and keep employment, and their independence.

General Terms and Conditions

The services DORS can provide depend on the availability of State and Federal funds and on openings at community providers which provide the services needed. DORS services are based on the individual's unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice.

DORS bases its rates of financial assistance on the cost of the least expensive service which meets the independent living needs of the person, with consideration of informed choice. DORS will only pay for services that have been pre-approved and authorized in writing by a DORS official.

All DORS services, except for assessments, vocational counseling, referral and placement services, and DORS teachers for the visually impaired, are subject to a financial need process and are reviewed annually. Recipients of SSI or SSDI are eligible for DORS services and do not have to have financial reviews. The Financial Need policy applies to all individuals eligible for the independent living program, including those who receive SSI or SSDI.

Informed Choice

DORS counselors provide information about various options and resources throughout the independent living process. All individuals are encouraged to fully participate in the selection of their independent living goals, services, and providers.

Rights of the Individual

Applicants for and recipients of DORS services have the following rights:

- **Confidentiality** – All information given to or obtained by DORS staff will be used only for the independent living needs of the individual and in the administration of the DORS program. Information may be released for purposes of the individual's independent living program, and if required by Federal Law and in response to legal investigations and judicial order. Information requested about an individual from DORS for any other purpose shall be released only with the written consent of the individual.
- **Client Assistance Program (CAP)** – CAP staff can give advice and provide information and assistance as individuals work with DORS and service providers. CAP staff work with individuals and DORS staff to help resolve concerns and problems. They can also help with mediation and the Appeal Process when concerns cannot be resolved at a lower level. CAP staff may be reached by calling 410-554-9361 or 1-800-638-6243.

- **Conflict Resolution** – If individuals believe they have not been treated fairly or provided with appropriate services by DORS, they may ask for help, either on their own or with assistance from CAP, in the following ways:
 - **DORS Staff Review** – The individual may request a meeting with their DORS counselor and the counselor's supervisor to discuss the problem and seek a solution.
 - **Appeal Process** – If an individual is dissatisfied with decisions made by DORS staff which affect their independent living program, the individual has the right to an Appeal Hearing with an impartial Hearing Officer. If both parties agree, they may participate in mediation prior to the scheduled date of the Appeal Hearing.

All requests for an Appeal Hearing must be in writing to the Assistant State Superintendent in Rehabilitation Services, 2301 Argonne Drive, Baltimore, MD 21218, filed within 60 days of being notified of DORS' action with which the individual disagrees, and includes the individual's address and phone number.

Consistent with State regulations, hearings are scheduled with the Office of Administrative Hearings. Randomly selected Administrative Law Judges trained in independent living program issues act as impartial hearing officers. Appeals are heard within 60 days of receipt of the written appeal request.

See the [CAP Fact Sheet](#) provided by your DORS counselor for more information.

Other Important Rights

- DORS and its vendors do not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, religion, color, age, national origin, residence, physical or mental disability or political affiliation in providing access to services.
- Individuals must fully participate in the development of their independent living program, including the selection of their goals, services, and providers.
- Progress toward the individual's independent living goal will be reviewed regularly. An annual review will be conducted to determine continued eligibility. Individuals will be given an opportunity to review the program and, if necessary, jointly redevelop and agree to its terms.
- Individuals have the right to be informed of any significant delay in the provision of independent living program services.
- Individuals have the right to review the information in their record of services after signing a release of information statement.

Responsibilities of the Individual

Individuals have the following responsibilities:

- To provide DORS with staff with accurate information about their disability, limitations, capabilities, and other related matters.
- To fully participate in the selection of assessments, goals, services, and providers of services.

- To fully participate in their independent living program.
- To maintain regular contact with their DORS counselor and to keep all appointments scheduled with people involved in their independent living program.
- To cooperate in using other community services when they can be of help in their independent living program.
- To participate financially in the independent living program to the extent indicated by the DORS Financial Need policy.