

May 2025

Employee Handbook

For Self-Directed Participants' Employees

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Contact Information

PHONE/FAX:

Feel free to call or e-fax toll-free. Lines are open 24 hours per day. Phones are answered by a live operator during business hours 8:00am-4:30pm. After hours, you may leave a message in the general inbox or at a specific extension.

- ☐ **1.866.252.6871 (toll-free phone)**
- ☐ **1.888.272.2236 (toll-free fax)**

WEB:

Access the website to review the FMCS Contact Sheet with direct phone lines, staff emails, and email addresses for submitting documentation for processing.

<https://fello.org/selfdirectedservices/>

CUSTOMER SERVICE TICKET SYSTEM:

Open a customer service ticket if you need help.

<https://felloselfdirection.zendesk.com/>

OFFICE:

Schedule an appointment for a face-to-face meeting at Fello Linthicum (999 Corporate Blvd, Ste 300, Linthicum, MD 21090). Business hours are 8:00am-4:00pm except holidays.

Introduction

Welcome! You have been chosen to be an employee of a participant in the Maryland Self-Directed Service (SDS) Program, offered and funded through the Maryland Department of Health Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA). Participants in this program and their families wish to exercise more choice, control, and authority over their services. As an employee of a participant, you are playing an important role in supporting this choice. The participant or their representative will be your employer and direct the provision of your services.

It is important that you carefully read this handbook. You will be required to sign and acknowledge that you have reviewed and understand its contents on your Employee Agreement. If there is any information that you do not understand, you should talk with your employer (the Participant/Representative) for clarification before signing the Employee Agreement. The purpose of this handbook is to provide additional information on the concepts and responsibilities required for you to provide services. It is in everyone's best interests to employ the best and most qualified employees and to make sure they receive training and information on how to be successful. The Participant/Representative you work for is committed to providing a work environment that is fair, free from discrimination, and that adheres to all applicable employment laws and Self-Directed Services (SDS) program requirements.

This handbook will provide an overview of the Maryland SDS program. Each section will walk you through important information that you will need to know as an employee and outline your role in helping to create and provide quality support services. Additionally, this handbook will explain the role of Fello, the Fiscal Management & Counseling Services (FMCS) entity. An FMCS is the entity that helps perform employer-related activities for participants enrolled in the Maryland SDS program. Fello is responsible for assisting the employer with ensuring employee qualification and eligibility, processing approved time sheets, issuing payments, filing taxes, and many other activities you will find described in this handbook. This handbook is for informational purposes only. Nothing in this handbook shall be construed to create an employment relationship or contract between you and Fello.

All employees are required to receive this information prior to working with a participant. This handbook is a tool for your employer to use to help you better understand your role and is not all-inclusive. Your employer will also have additional expectations related to your employment which are not included in this handbook. If you have any questions about the information explained in this handbook, you should talk to your employer.

What is Self-Directed Services?

People receiving funding through The Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) may choose either a traditional provider delivery model or a self-directed services model. At Fello, both options are provided and supported. Each person decides which approach best fits their life.

Self-Directed Services (SDS) is an option for service delivery for persons with developmental disabilities and their families who wish to exercise more choice, control, and authority over their service needs. The SDS option is founded on the principles of self-determination and provides waiver participants and families greater control over the services they receive, how they receive them, and who provides them.

Under the SDS model of funding, the person with a disability or their chosen representative have both the choice and responsibility of who to recruit, hire, train, and supervise to provide their services. Choosing SDS requires Fiscal Management Services through a DDA approved provider.

The Principles of Self-Determination

- ☐ FREEDOM: To decide how one wants to live his or her life.
- ☐ AUTHORITY: The individual has authority over the support and service resources available to them.
- ☐ SUPPORTS: Organizing a network of support for the individual, family, friends, and those who care.
- ☐ RESPONSIBILITY: Individuals, with support, take responsibility for their decisions and actions to assure the wise use of public dollars.
- ☐ CONFIRMATION: Honoring the important leadership role individuals who receive public support play in changing their systems of support.

The Role of the Fiscal Management & Counseling Services (FMCS) Provider

Fiscal Management & Counseling Services (FMCS) is a required administrative service funded by DDA when Self-Direction is chosen by the Participant or their representative. Any participant choosing to self-direct will require the support and services of an FMCS provider, like Fello, who can assist them in exercising their employer and budget authority.

As the FMCS provider, Fello manages the payroll and payroll reporting services, payments to vendors for goods and services, tracking and verifying approved budget

items, and providing tax-related information to state and federal authorities on behalf of the participant. These services are provided by Fello for the benefit of the participant and do not create an employment relationship between Fello and the participant's employee.

New Employee Onboarding

All new employees must complete a new hire packet with their employer/participant and submit the packet to Fello at SDSNewHirePackets@fello.org for review and processing. It is the role of the FMCS provider to ensure compliance by confirming employee qualifications and eligibility. All employees must be at least 18 years old and have a high school diploma or GED. Employees must also be CPR and First Aid certified prior to working and are responsible for maintaining current certification over the course of their employment. If an employee's certification lapses, the employee shall no longer be qualified to provide services to the participant and should be suspended pending re-certification as the FMCS will not be able to provide payment from the participant's budget. The employer is responsible for identifying and providing all other training, which includes but is not limited to understanding the needs specific to the participant and their developmental disability.

Fello is also responsible for running the criminal background check, which is required in order for the employee to be cleared to work for the participant and be paid from the participant's budget. The employer is advised of the results of any background check disclosing reported crimes. If the employer wishes to continue to pursue onboarding of the potential employee, then the background check results are sent to DDA to review. Some offenses are immediately disqualifying in nature while others are not. The employer has the option of writing a letter to DDA explaining their preference to move forward with hiring and their reasoning. Ultimately, DDA determines if hiring may proceed given the employee's record. DDA notifies Fello and the FMCS notifies the participant of DDA's decision.

Fello guarantees state and federal tax and labor laws are upheld by maintaining the appropriate new hire documentation and registering all new employees through the Maryland New Hire Registry. Furthermore, Fello confirms state and county sick and safe leave laws and contracts with the payroll company to accurately track and show accruals for all state or county-required leave benefits, where applicable. Fello also provides information about and an opportunity for special state and federal tax exemptions which are based on the nature of Medicaid funded programs. More information about special tax exemptions is available on the Fello website.

Notice of Privacy Practices & Confidentiality

As an employee, you must comply with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and take measures to protect the participant's health information. The Privacy Rule protects all "individually identifiable health information" held or transmitted by you, in any form or media, whether electronic, paper, or oral. Protected Health Information (PHI) includes any identifiable health information, including demographic data, details that relate to the participant's past, present or future physical or mental health or condition, the provision of health care or services to the individual, or the past, present, or future payment for the provision of health care to the individual, and any information that could be used to identify the participant. Individually identifiable health information includes many common identifiers (e.g., name, address, birth date, Social Security Number, etc.).

In the course of your employment, be aware of the conversations you have about the participant, the notes you write, or other manners in which you support the participant to ensure you are maintaining their privacy in accordance with HIPAA standards. Make sure you have the participant and/or the guardian's written permission prior to sharing any information on their behalf with any third-parties.

Fello assigns an internal identification number, called a department number, to each participant upon enrollment. We provide this identifier so that there is a means to reference a participant without utilizing PHI.

Complaints and Grievances

Your feedback is very important to us. If you have a complaint or grievance regarding the services you receive from Fello, please let us know. Fello will respond to all complaints and grievances in a reasonable and prompt manner and will work diligently towards a resolution agreeable to all parties.

A complaint should be filed if you have an issue with something within reasonable control of Fello. Issues with the employee onboarding procedures, handling of payment issues, or payroll website concerns would be some examples of functions within reasonable control for Fello. Complaints may be made verbally or in writing. Written complaints may be submitted using the customer service ticket system accessed on the website.

If you feel your rights have been violated or you disagree with a policy of Fello, you may file a grievance. Grievances must be submitted in writing for FMCS

review. Once you file a complaint or grievance, The Fello FMCS Team will work with you to address your concerns. If you are not satisfied with the initial recommendations, then the issue will be escalated until your issue is resolved. All complaints and grievances will be responded to within reasonable timelines.

Mandated Reporting – The DDA Policy on Reportable Incidents and Investigations (PORII)

The DDA is committed to protecting the rights of people with developmental disabilities from harm and enhancing the quality of services. The DDA requires paid providers to identify, report, investigate, review, correct, and monitor situations and events that threaten the health, safety, or well-being of people receiving DDA services.

The individual's unpaid family members are not required to report such incidents, but *any employee paid to provide Medicaid waiver services* is required to report any events that could impact the individual's health or safety. If any of the events listed below occur, the employee should first ensure the participant's health and safety and then should contact the representative (if the individual has one), and the participant's Coordinator of Community Services (CCS) or the DDA Regional Office on-call staff as soon as possible.

What to report:

- Abuse
- Neglect
- Hospital admissions/ER visits
- Medication errors
- Choking
- Contact with Law Enforcement, Fire Department, or Emergency Medical Services
- Theft of an individual's property or funds
- Unexpected or risky absence
- Restraints
- Death

How to report:

There are three (3) options for reporting abuse, neglect or other events/concern:

1. If you know the Coordinator of Community Services (CCS) who works with your employer, contact them about any of the events described above so that they may complete an incident report.
2. If you have witnessed abuse to an individual with disabilities, you may contact the Office of Health Care Quality (OHCQ) at 877.402.8220.
3. Incidents of suspected abuse, neglect, or death must be reported *immediately* to the DDA Regional Office, directly after securing safety of the individual involved. This report can be provided verbally or by email to the following appropriate contacts:

Maryland DDA Regional Offices

| Region | Counties Served | Phone | Email |
|----------|---|---|-----------------------------------|
| Central | Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Howard and Harford Counties; and Baltimore City. | CMRO: 410.234.8200 After Hours: 410.978.4695 | cmrotriage.ddaqa @maryland.gov |
| Eastern | Caroline County, Cecil County, Dorchester County, Kent County, Queen Anne's County, Somerset County, Talbot County, Wicomico County, Worcester County | ESRO: 410.572.5920 After Hours: 443.890.9912 | emrotriage.ddaqa @maryland.gov |
| Southern | Calvert County, Charles County, Montgomery County, Prince George's County, and St. Mary's County | SMRO: 410.362.5100 After Hours: 301.806.0040 | smrotriage.ddaqa @maryland.gov |
| Western | Allegany, Carroll, Frederick, Garrett, and Washington Counties | WMRO: 301.791.4670 After Hours: 443.852.8002 | wmrotriage.ddaqa @maryland.gov |

Medicaid Fraud

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) defines fraud as an intentional deception or misrepresentation made by a person with the knowledge that the deception could result in some unauthorized benefit to oneself or some other person. It includes any act that constitutes fraud under applicable State and Federal law.

Some examples of fraud are as follows:

- Accepting pay for time you did not work
- Recording more time than actually worked on a timesheet (“padding” time)
- Stating that tasks or procedures were completed when they were not
- Forging other employees’ or the participant’s signature
- Changing another person’s timesheet or paperwork

Fraud may result in significant penalties ranging from warnings to suspensions, termination, fines or jail time. If an employee gives false information or fails to report it, he/she could be convicted of a crime. The employee might have to pay large sums of money or go to jail for up to a year. If there is a reason to believe that the misconduct may violate criminal, civil, or administrative law, then your employer and the organization must promptly report the existence of misconduct to the appropriate Federal and State authorities. To report suspected Medicaid fraud, please call the Maryland Department of Health OIG Fraud Hotline at 1-866-770-7175.

Wage Information

When you and your employer complete your new hire documentation, your employer indicates the service(s) you will be providing and the wage you will be earning for each service. Those new hire documents are submitted to and reviewed by Fello FMCS. Once your qualifications and eligibility are confirmed, the FMCS provides your service and wage information on your Employee Clearance Verification Form for confirmation. This form is issued to the employer. You should ask to review the form before working because not only does the form confirm your service/wages, but also your clearance date, which is the date from which you may receive payment from the participant's budget.

Timekeeping Practices

Your employer has the option of utilizing electronic (web-based) timekeeping practices or completing and submitting paper timesheets to the FMCS for processing. If your employer opts-in to electronic timekeeping, they may elect to input your start and stop times or allow for you to have login credentials and submit your own shift times for their approval. The employer advises the FMCS of their preference.

Your role is to ensure accuracy in your timekeeping records and submit your time based on your agreement with your employer and in accordance with the Fello payroll calendar to facilitate timely processing and prompt payment for services. Late time submittal (electronic or paper) may result in a delay of payment. If timesheets

are submitted more than 30 days late, they may not be paid if the time cannot be otherwise confirmed. This information is also available on the Fello Payroll Calendar posted on the website.

Fello will provide payment for services on behalf of the Participant/Representative following the submission of accurate and approved payment requests, within the constraints of the participant's plan and budget. Payment will be for typical services rendered as assigned by the Participant/Representative and as outlined in the plan and Budget.

Updating Information

Employees must notify Fello of any change in name, address, or phone number. This is done by completing an Employee Change Form and submitting to Fello at SDSEmployeeUpdates@fello.org for processing. Please note that a name change requires confirmation via a Social Security Card copy submitted with the Employee Change Form. Updates must be communicated to Fello within five (5) business days for the purposes of payroll and employee record updates.

A change of direct deposit requires submittal of a new 'Direct Deposit Authorization' form and a supporting bank document for account verification. The new 'Direct Deposit Authorization' and bank document must be received at least a week in advance of a pay day to ensure sufficient time for processing in advance of payment.

Please note that all other payroll impacting changes must also be received a minimum of one (1) week prior to the pay date to allow enough time for the change to be processed in advance.

Verification of Employment

A verification of employment is often required when you are trying to get financing for lease approval for a new car or home. Verifications of employment are handled by Fello for all Participants/Representatives.

All verifications of employment requests must include the employee's release of information and be emailed to us at SDSEmployeeRelations@fello.org or faxed to 888.272.2236. Please allow up to three (3) business days for a verification of employment to be processed.

Pay Periods, Pay Day, and Final Pay

All pay periods are two weeks long. Pay periods begin on a Sunday and end on a Saturday. Paydays are the Friday immediately following each pay period. Both pay periods and paydays are identified on the Fello Payroll Calendar, which is posted on the website.

If you quit or are terminated, please submit your final time record within two (2) business days of the last date of service. This will ensure that you will receive your final payment in a timely fashion. Your employer will need to complete/submit an Employee Termination/Inactivation Form as well. Your final check will be paid according to the normal pay schedule.

Termination/Resignation

Your employment by the participant is “at will”, which means you do not have a contract that guarantees you a job. An employment relationship exists between you and your employer only for as long as you both want it to.

If you wish to resign or quit, it is traditional to give at least two weeks’ notice to the Participant/Representative. This allows your employer time to find someone to replace you. Otherwise, service needs may go unmet, which is something the Participant/Representative would like to avoid.

Benefits

Employees are eligible for any benefits included in the participant’s plan and budget. Because plans and budgets are unique to each participant, please discuss them with your employer for more information.

Insurance

Fello provides Unemployment Insurance and Workers’ Compensation Insurance for Employees. If you are hurt on the job, you **MUST** report the injury or accident to the Participant/Representative. You also must call Fello within 24 hours of the occurrence. If you do not report an injury right away, the Workers’ Compensation claim may be delayed or denied. See ‘Workplace Safety’ for more information.

Additionally, there is information available on our website under 'Worker Injury Reporting.'

Workplace Safety

Your safety on the job is important to your employer and to Fello. Fello, as the FMCS provider, ensures workers' compensation coverage for all employers through Chesapeake Employers' Insurance. Workers' compensation coverage and policy information for employees and employers, including how to report a workplace injury, can be found on the Fello FMCS website under 'Worker Injury Reporting.' Any active employee who experiences an injury while performing on-the-job work-related duties should work with their employer to inform Fello of the injury within 24 hours of the occurrence. Also, the employee will be required to submit an 'Employee Report of Injury' within two (2) days of the injury. Your employer and any witnesses will need to complete and submit reporting forms as well.

Back injuries are the most prevalent employee injury reported in the field of disability services. For both the employee's and the participant's safety, it is very important that employees understand the proper methods for lifting, moving and positioning the participant, should that be within the scope of the job duties. For OSHA recommendations on safe patient handling, please review information available at <https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/healthcarefacilities/safepatienthandling.html>.

For the protection of all parties, employees should also be aware of precautions necessary to prevent the exchange of infectious diseases and blood borne pathogens. For OSHA recommendations, please review information available at https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/healthcarefacilities/infectious_diseases.html.

Appendix

| Acronyms and Initialisms | Meaning |
|--------------------------|---|
| CCS | Coordinator of Community Services |
| CMRO | Central Maryland Regional Office (DDA) |
| CMS | Center for Medicare & Medicaid Services |
| DDA | Developmental Disabilities Administration |
| ESRO | Eastern Shore Regional Office (DDA) |
| FMCS | Fiscal Management & Counseling Services |
| HIPAA | Health Insurance Portability & Accountability Act |
| OHCQ | Office of Health Care Quality |
| OIG | Office of Inspector General |
| OSHA | Occupational Safety & Health Administration |
| PHI | Protected Health Information |
| PORII | Policy on Reportable Incidents & Investigations |
| SDS | Self-Directed Services |
| SMRO | Southern Maryland Regional Office (DDA) |
| WMRO | Western Maryland Regional Office (DDA) |