



South Carolina
Department of Disabilities
and Special Needs

The Journey to Help South Carolinians with Disabilities to Live their Best Lives



Constance Holloway
*Interim State Director/General
Counsel*

Janet Brock Priest
*Associate State Director
Operations*

Lori Manos
Associate State Director Policy

Harley T. Davis, Ph.D.
Chief Administrative Officer

Quincy Swygert
Chief Financial Officer

Greg Meetze
Chief Information Officer



South Carolina
Department of Disabilities
and Special Needs

3440 Harden Street Extension
Columbia, South Carolina 29203
(803) 898-9600

Toll Free: 888/DSN-INFO

Homepage: ddsn.sc.gov

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August 4, 2023

On behalf of the South Carolina Department of Disabilities and Special Needs (DDSN), I am excited to share with you a draft Strategic Plan. DDSN calls this plan a Journey to Help South Carolinians with Disabilities to Live their Best Lives. A journey starts with a single step forward. This plan is that first step. While ambitious, the plan reflects our ongoing commitment to strive for the best in everything DDSN does.

The guiding principle to development of this plan is how DDSN can support people with disabilities to live their best lives. We know the DDSN service delivery system is in a constant state of change, which sometimes makes it a challenge to be proactive in creating long-term solutions to help people live the lives they wish. This plan is intended to help us.

DDSN began development of this plan earlier this year, by talking with people who access our services, their families, providers, advocates, and other state agencies. DDSN and the community agree we are committed to the same mission - to provide services and supports that people need to live their best lives. There are many things DDSN does well – especially when we work together and strive for innovation, share ideas of what we can do better to make sure the services and supports DDSN provide are accessible, work in partnership with other types of supports, and focus on high quality.

DDSN again seeks your input. While this plan will guide DDSN actions, the plan belongs to all of us. It needs to reflect the best of who we are, build on what works well, and foster partnership and innovation. DDSN welcomes your feedback. We hope that you will take the time to provide your thoughts to strengthen the Journey to Help South Carolinians with Disabilities to Live their Best Lives.

It is my privilege to serve as DDSN's State Interim Director. I look forward to working with you all to make this plan become reality.

Respectfully,

Constance Holloway
Interim State Director

Introduction

The Department of Disabilities and Special Needs (DDSN) wants all people with disabilities to live the lives they want to live in settings of their choice. DDSN works with other state agencies and service providers to plan, develop, organize, fund, and oversee a wide range of services to people with developmental disabilities, autism, or a head or spinal cord injury.

DDSN serves more than 21,500 people. About 15,000 people are waiting for services. Many of the services that people use are funded by Medicaid. However, DDSN also offers state-funded supports that helps people who are not eligible for Medicaid.

DDSN programs and services go through constant change. Many people need services that they can't get. This places more pressure on families.

To help with challenges like this, DDSN decided to talk with people who are using or waiting for services, along with their families, providers, and other organizations who play a role. DDSN gathered information to develop a plan called *South Carolina's Journey to Living Our Good Lives*.

The *Journey to Living Our Good Lives Strategic Plan* provides a whole-person view of what people need to live their good life, but does so with understanding that DDSN, while critical, is only one part of the larger whole.

Strategic Planning Process

In late 2022, DDSN initiated the planning process.

- 1** DDSN looked at things like reports and data to understand “where DDSN is now”.
- 2** DDSN began to talk with people – people who get services, people who are waiting for services, families, providers, and other state agencies and organizations that play a role in the services people receive.
- 3** DDSN used what they learned from people to create buckets of thoughts and ideas called themes.
- 4** DDSN arranged these themes into:
 - The goals that DDSN hopes to achieve.
 - The steps to get to each goal.
 - The ways that DDSN will know if they met each goal.



What DDSN learned

DDSN asked people questions like these...



What does a *Good Life* mean to me?



What does a system of *Good Lives* look like?



What is working well?



What is not working well?



If you could make one change, what would it be?



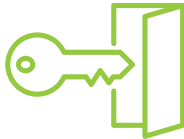
DDSN Learned



That many people feel a *good life* means to:



Love
Belong



Have the same access (to everything) including
life experiences that others have



Have friends, family, and people to do things with



Have information and help when needed
Have services and supports when needed



Have independence
Have value



Have meaningful activities
To be healthy



To live in a clean and safe home

What is Not Working Well?

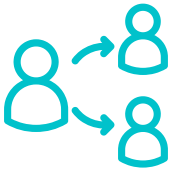
DDSN learned that some things don't work so well.

What doesn't work so well includes:



Talking with People about What's Available

- Information is not shared well.
- Information that is shared is hard to understand.



Working Together to Help People Access What They Need

- The state agencies like DDSN, mental health or vocational rehabilitation don't work well together.
- Everyone needs to understand who does what in the system.
- Everyone including families and providers need training.



What to Do When Things Change

- It's hard to get help when people move:
 - from one setting to another like hospital to home.
 - between programs like between leaving school and getting a job.



Services and Supports

- There are not enough staff to provide the services people need.
- Staff need training.
- Sometimes people need a service that DDSN or another state agency provides that is unavailable or hard to get like transportation, job coaching, or respite.
- There are long waiver wait lists.
- Choices and options may be limited.
 - Example, if a person doesn't want to live with their parents, but also doesn't want to live in a group home, they have limited options to find a place to live.
 - Example, specialized services to help a person who is having trouble managing their feelings and actions.
- People want to direct more of their services but can only direct respite and attendant care.

Things that Guide Our Journey Together

The Guiding Principles of DDSN's *Journey to Living Our Good Lives Plan* are that:

- All people with disabilities can live the lives they want to live in settings of their choice.
- When people with disabilities are eligible for DDSN programs and services, they get and receive what they need, when they need it.
- When needs change, programs and services adapt within what's possible.

The DDSN *Journey to Living Our Good Lives Strategic Plan* aligns with *What We Believe and Value*.

What We Believe and Value is a System of Supports and Services that:

<p>Respect the Voice that Matters Most</p> <p>Nothing else matters if people using our programs and services do not understand or see value in what we offer.</p>	<p>Delivers Excellence</p> <p>We are excellent when we plan to get the most out of the resources we have.</p>	<p>Strives for Full Inclusion</p> <p>We expect everyone to promote social connection, independence, and choice.</p>
<p>Promotes Innovation</p> <p>We try out new ideas to make things work better.</p>	<p>Champions Dignity and Positive Control</p> <p>We promote the strengths and well-being of each person as unique members of their communities.</p>	<p>Has Consistent Expectations</p> <p>We make sure that everyone is doing what's right.</p>

Snapshot of Strategic Plan Goals

1**Make Navigation Easier**

Help people to know about and use programs and supports they need including DDSN programs they are eligible to get.

2**Strengthen Services and Supports**

Offer flexible services to help people to direct their own lives and reach their unique life goals.

3**Build Up High Quality and Available Providers**

Expand the amount, knowledge, skills, and quality of fee for service providers (i.e., private, DSN boards).

4**Make Roles Clear**

Ensure that all people whether DDSN, person receiving supports, families and providers know their roles and responsibilities.

5**Foster Relationships**

Build relationships to make things work better.

6**Use Technology and Promote Quality**

Use data and technology to streamline operations, support people with disabilities to achieve life goals in settings of their choice and improve overall quality of DDSN programs and services.

7**Establish Regional Centers Hubs of Excellence in Specialized Care**

Clarify the role of the Regional Centers within the context of the overall system, leverage their knowledge in complex care, and ensure that people who require Regional Center placement have the individualized high-quality care and supports to live meaningful lives.

Goal 1.

Make Navigation Easier



Help people to know about and use programs and supports they need including DDSN programs they are eligible to get.

Steps to the Goal

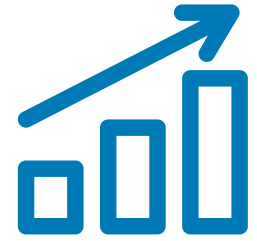
1. Make materials easier to read and understand.
2. Make sure there is a plan to help families understand what is available to them.
3. With the help of other state agencies, create a map of programs and services available across the state and provide a guide to people with disabilities and their families.
4. Develop tools and resources that walk people with disabilities and their families through the steps needed to access and use DDSN programs and services.
5. Develop training and resources to help people when life or their needs change.

How We Will Know We Met the Goal

- People will understand DDSN programs and services better.
- People will get faster access to DDSN programs and services.



Goal 2. Strengthen Services and Supports



Offer flexible services to help people to direct their own lives and reach their unique life goals.

Steps to the Goal

1. Explore changes to Medicaid funded services to make services like respite and transportation more available.
2. Expand opportunity for people to direct more of their services.
3. Explore the role of parents and family members as paid caregivers.
4. Manage waiver wait lists differently.
5. Explore different housing options.
6. Improve connection between DDSN programs and other state programs.
7. Make it easier to apply for services.

How We Will Know We Met the Goal

- People will have more choices.
- People will have more flexibility to get services in the settings they prefer.
- Individual needs and preferences will drive service delivery.



Goal 3.

Build Up High Quality and Available Providers



Expand the number, knowledge, skills, and quality of fee for service providers (i.e., private, DSN boards).

Steps to the Goal

1. Explore developing a plan to find, hire and keep direct support workers.
2. Help services providers have good training.
3. Work with providers (including DDSN Regional Centers) to find new and interesting ways to support people with more complex needs.
4. Find better ways to prevent and manage crises.
5. Set expectations for high quality and create ways for everyone to know if providers are meeting expectations.

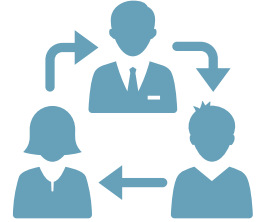
How We Will Know We Met the Goal

- Workers will have more knowledge and skills.
- People will work together better to reach shared goals.
- More direct service workers will be available to support.
- People with more complex needs will have better supports.
- People in crisis will have access to better supports.



Goal 4.

Make Roles Clear



Ensure that all people whether DDSN, person receiving supports, families and providers know their roles and responsibilities.

Steps to the Goal

1. Make the DDSN Mission, Vision, and Values clear.
2. Help all people understand their roles and responsibilities at all levels of the system and clarify what DDSN is and is not
3. Provide training to help people understand DDSN programs and services.
4. Create an advisory group of people with disabilities and their families across all DDSN programs and services to provide ongoing input on this plan.
5. Partner with other state agencies and interested organizations to develop a plan to help people who want to transition to community services to do so.
6. Create ways to share information consistently (e.g., a newsletter, news blasts, regional meetings, annual listening sessions).
7. Develop tools and resources to help everyone understand what services and supports are available to people with disabilities, and how they can access these supports (including DDSN, but not just DDSN services).

How We Will Know We Met the Goal

- People with disabilities and their families are heard.
- Organizations and people will understand their roles and responsibilities.
- Engagement that is more effective and inclusive.
- People will be more aware of what DDSN is doing and why they are doing it.

Goal 5. Foster Partnerships



Build relationships to make things work better.

Steps to the Goal

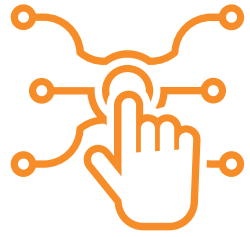
1. Provide people with disabilities and their families opportunities to talk with DDSN about what the programs and services, including the chance for training, mentorship, and opportunities to talk with one another and with DDSN.
2. Support family caregivers (e.g., respite, training on futures planning, emergency preparedness, understanding and use of assistive technology and other remote supports).
3. Build partnerships between DDSN and other state agencies to help people access supports and services outside of DDSN.
4. Work across state agencies so that people can more easily access lots of different types of services from multiple agencies to help people reach their goals.

How We Will Know We Met the Goal

- People will be more empowered to advocate for themselves.
- Organizations in the system will have stronger relationships.



Goal 6. Use Technology and Promote Quality



Use data and technology to streamline operations, support people with disabilities to achieve life goals in settings of their choice and improve overall quality of DDSN programs and services.

Steps to the Goal

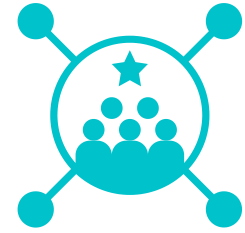
1. Expand the use of assistive technology and remote supports.
2. Increase data automation.
3. Decrease administrative burden and increase efficiencies through business process improvement.
4. Have, use, and organize data to support decision-making.

How We Will Know We Met the Goal

- Access to services will be faster and easier.
- DDSN will have more data to make more informed decisions about service delivery.
- People will have access to more technology to help them reach life goals.



Goal 7. Establish Regional Centers as Hubs of Excellence in Specialized Care



Ensure high quality supports for people who live in Regional Centers to help them reach their goals and live meaningful lives.

Steps to the Goal

1. Promote supports that help people reach their personal goals and build relationships in the community.
2. Continue projects that keep the buildings clean and in good repair.
3. Explore creative pay and training opportunities to hire and keep more staff.
4. Build partnerships with local community organizations.
5. Help families to know about and stay involved in what is happening at the Regional Centers (including activities, policies, operations and advocacy needs).
6. Think about Regional Centers as places to design creative ways of supporting people with complex needs.

How We Will Know We Met the Goal

- People will have more meaningful daily activities.
- The buildings and grounds will be improved.
- There will be more trained and high-quality staff.
- Family members will be more empowered to advocate.
- The Regional Centers will be more connected to their communities.



How to Provide Public Input

This is DDSN's first time developing a plan like this. We want to know what you think!

Take some time to let us know whether we caught everything important.

- What do you like most about the plan?
- Do you think these are the right goals?
- Do you think these are the right actions?
- Is there anything missing that you think should be added?
- What specific changes would you recommend, if any?


To provide your feedback, please click on this link:

<https://forms.office.com/g/VUWCREFT3j>

All comments must be received by August 23, 2023



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