

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
DEPARTMENT ON DISABILITY SERVICES**



***NEWS***

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**D.C. Department on Disability Services Introduces**

**New “Host Homes” Program**

*Program Enables People with Disabilities to Live in Home Settings*

(Washington, D.C.) - The D. C. Department on Disability Services (DDS) has recently developed a new service called “Host Homes,” which is a short term or long-term residential opportunity in which a person with a disability lives in the homes of people within the community. This service was approved for use in the District in the new Developmental Disability Home and Community Based Services Waiver Program.

A Host Home is an arrangement where a person, who owns or leases a home and who is certified by DDS, is compensated for providing a supportive environment to maximize independence for a consumer with an intellectual or developmental disability.

**New Rules Increase Support**

Under the new DDS rules, the consumer receiving services will select a contract provider who will join in partnership with the Host Home to improve services to the individual by helping the Home meet certification standards, and receive any necessary training and support to ensure quality.

The contract provider also assumes responsibility for coordinating professional services, including health care, dentistry, education, nutrition, and much more. The District currently has 37 Host Homes, serving a total of 41 consumers. Host Homes accept the responsibility for supporting one, two, or in some instances, as many as three individuals with intellectual disabilities.

“Our goal is to bring more Host Homes on line to prepare for consumers aging out of the Child and Family Services system into DDS,” said Judith Heumann, Director of the DDS. “In addition, there are currently a number of people who are interested in living within their community in a home-based setting. Everyone needs a family, and a Host Home is a great option when circumstances make it impractical to live in their family home.”

### **Host Home Families Endorse Program**

There are Host Home families who have cared for DDS consumers for 10, 20, 30 and even 40 years and have embraced them as beloved members of their families.

Carolyn Connor, who lives in the 100 block of Longfellow St., N.W., has served as a Host Home caregiver since 1994, when she took in consumers that her mother, who is now deceased, was caring for. She is currently hosting Michael, now 45, and Steven, 35.

“When my mother died, I knew I had to open my home for Michael who had lived with her since he was 21. He was already a part of our family,” said Connor. “I also have another consumer, Steve, who has been with me for years. I take them everywhere with me and I love them as my own. We are planning a party for Steve who will be turning 36 soon. My entire family treats them just like another relative.”

Lorraine Cooper, who lives in the 400 block of Nicholson St., N.W., said she had worked with children all her life, and became interested in the Host Home program after learning about it from another Host Home caregiver. She has hosted consumer Paulette, age 30, for five years.

“They brought Paulette to meet me, and she went right upstairs and claimed her bedroom by lying in the middle of the bed,” said Cooper. “She is a member of my family now and I love her. When she came to me, she weighed 300 pounds, and I put an end to that by cutting out fried foods, potato chips and soda. Now she’s down to 139 pounds. And wherever I go, she goes with me. Where I shop, she shops. She is like my own daughter.”

Cooper also complimented the support that the DDS provides her and other Host Home caregivers.

“We are working with a group of very conscientious and caring people at the Department. Anything I think I need, they are quickly there to provide it. When you work with someone who works with you, it makes a difference,” Cooper added.

Host Home services are reimbursed by the D.C. Medicaid program for consumers with disabilities who are enrolled in the Medicaid Home and Community Based Services Waiver for People with Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities.

For more information or if you are interested in applying to serve as a Host Home, contact Angelia Powell at the D.C. Department on Disability Services, 1125 15<sup>th</sup> St., N.W. 9<sup>th</sup> Floor, Washington, D.C. 20005 or call (202) 730-1700.

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