

Understanding Eligibility for the Self-Directed Personal Assistance Services Program (SDPAS)



The Self-Directed Personal Assistance Services Program (SDPAS), also known as the Personal Care Assistant (PCA) program, is one of the most empowering services available through Montana Medicaid. It is designed to give individuals greater choice, control, and flexibility over the personal assistance they receive in their daily lives.

Through SDPAS, eligible individuals can hire, train, and manage their own personal care assistants, including trusted family members or friends. This approach recognizes that people know their own needs best and should have a meaningful say in who supports them and how that support is provided.

What Is the Self-Directed Personal Assistance Services Program?

The Self-Directed Personal Assistance Services Program is sponsored by **Montana Medicaid** and is intended for individuals who need assistance

with activities of daily living due to a disability, chronic condition, or functional limitation. These activities may include personal care, mobility support, meal preparation, or other tasks necessary for independent living.

Unlike traditional agency-based care, SDPAS allows participants to:

1. Choose who provides their care
2. Set schedules that work for their lives
3. Direct how services are delivered

Basic Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible for the Self-Directed Personal Assistance Services Program in Montana, an individual must generally meet the following criteria:

1. Be enrolled in Montana Medicaid

Participation in SDPAS requires active Montana Medicaid coverage. Some individuals may need to be enrolled in a specific Medicaid category, often referred to as Standard Medicaid.

2. Have a documented need for personal assistance services

Eligibility is based on functional needs. This means the individual must require assistance with daily activities due to disability, health condition, or limitation that affects independent living.

3. Complete a functional assessment

Montana Medicaid uses an assessment process to determine the type and level of assistance needed. This assessment helps establish whether SDPAS is appropriate and how many service hours may be authorized.

4. Be able to direct their own services or have a representative

Participants must be able to manage their services independently or designate a representative, such as a family member or trusted individual, to help make decisions and manage care on their behalf.

Who Can Be a Personal Care Assistant?

One of the most flexible aspects of SDPAS is the ability to choose your own personal care assistant. In many cases, this may include:

1. Family members
2. Friends
3. Trusted members of the community

Caregivers must meet program requirements and complete necessary training and paperwork, but the program recognizes that support often comes from people who already know and understand the individual's needs.

Important Things to Know

1. SDPAS is a Medicaid program, so eligibility and approvals are determined by Montana Medicaid, not by LIFTT or other service providers.
2. Approval timelines can vary, and it may take time to complete applications and assessments.
3. Eligibility decisions are based on individual circumstances and documented need.

Even if someone is not immediately eligible, learning about the program can help individuals plan ahead and understand future options.

How LIFTT Can Help

Navigating Medicaid programs can feel overwhelming, but you do not have to do it alone. LIFTT provides information, guidance, and support to help

individuals understand SDPAS eligibility, application steps, and alternative resources when needed.

Our role is to empower people with knowledge, clarify options, and support informed decision-making. Whether someone is ready to apply or simply exploring possibilities, LIFTT is here to help.

If you have any questions about the Self-Directed Personal Assistance Services Program, or if you would like assistance with applying, please feel free to contact:

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