

Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities
Guidelines for the
Georgia Participant-Direction Advisory Group

I. GAPD Definition

The group will be called the Georgia Participant-Direction Advisory Group “GAPD.” GAPD is a “family action network” comprised of Participants/Representatives with Developmental Disabilities who freely choose to self-direct their New Options (NOW) and Comprehensive Supports (COMP) Waiver Services.

II. Authority

GAPD is self-organized group of Participants/Representatives who participate in the Participant-Direction delivery of NOW/COMP services, and which has been recognized by the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD) as an advisory group. DBHDD, along with the Department of Community Health, retains absolute authority over all aspects of the NOW/COMP Participant-Direction Program pursuant to state and federal law and regulation, and is responsible for drafting, approving, and enacting policies related to the program.

III. Mission

To promote and support Participant-Direction (self-direction) for individuals with developmental disabilities through advocacy, education, and training on waiver services, supports, and policy, so that they may live independently in their homes and communities.

IV. Essential Functions

- A. To inform DBHDD about matters of concern to the Participants/Representatives with regards to the Participant-Direction program in a respectful, organized manner;
- B. To facilitate communication between DBHDD and program participants/representatives;
- C. To disseminate information about program policy changes to the participants/representatives of the program at DBHDD’s request. Such information may only be disseminated upon express approval of final content by the DBHDD Participant-Direction Manager;
- D. To assist and support other Participant-Direction participants/representatives in the use of NOW/COMP waiver services;
- E. To recommend improvements or revisions to Participant-Direction policy to DBHDD in an effort to improve overall quality of Participant-Direction services.

V. Group Composition and Structure – Membership

- A. The GAPD will be comprised of Officers and Members. With the exception of DBHDD representatives, both Officers and Members must be current participants/representatives of the Participant-Direction program.
- B. A representative from DBHDD shall have permanent membership in this group. Such member shall be the Participant-Direction Manager. The DBHDD representative will not have voting power. If at any time DBHDD determines that GAPD is failing to perform it’s essential functions as specified in section IV of these guidelines, the following will occur:
 - 1. The DBHDD Participant-Direction manager will withdraw from GAPD membership.
 - 2. DBHDD will cease to recognize the GAPD as an advisory group.

- C. There shall be 2 representatives from each Region. Such representatives must be current participants/representatives in the Participant-Direction program. Representatives will be nominated by any current GAPD member, by DBHDD, or by any current participant/representative of the Participant-Direction program, including by self-nomination. Such nominees will be confirmed by majority vote.
- D. There shall also be 2 self-advocate participants, from any region.
- E. The initial members of the group will be selected from among the attendees at the meeting which adopts these guidelines. Members must be confirmed by a majority vote of all participants/representatives who are present at the meeting. Individuals who are not participants/representatives in the Participant-Direction program will be ineligible to vote.
- F. Members who are absent from two meetings in any 1 calendar year will be subject to a removal vote by the group. Members should take into consideration any extenuating circumstances or reasons for the absence in deciding whether or not to vote for such member's removal. Presence is defined as physical presence at the meeting, and does not include telephonic presence.
- G. Members will serve a term of two years. Members may be re-elected to subsequent terms, subject to a majority vote of the group.
- H. Terms will begin biennially on January 1.
- I. Members must be present in person to vote. There will be no proxy or absentee voting.

VI. Group Composition and Structure – Officers

- A. There shall be three Officer positions: Chair, Co-Chair, and Secretary. Officer candidates must be an existing Member of GAPD.
- B. Upon nomination, voting Members of GAPD will vote in order to confirm the nomination. A majority vote is required in order to confirm the nominee.
- C. Once confirmed, the officers will serve a term of 2 years. Officers may be re-elected to subsequent terms, subject to a majority vote of the group.
- D. Terms will begin biennially on January 1.
- E. The responsibilities of the officers will be as follows:
 - 1. Chair:
 - a. Facilitate meetings in an orderly fashion.
 - b. Notify GAPD members about upcoming scheduled meetings.
 - c. Publicize information about the meeting time and location so that other Participant-Direction participants/representatives and other interested members of the public may attend.
 - d. Ensure meeting locations are secured for each meeting.
 - e. Develop and disseminate the agenda for each meeting at least 14 days prior to each meeting.
 - f. Serve as the sole point of contact between DBHDD representatives and GAPD members.
 - g. Compile written recommendations and reports and submit to the Participant-Direction Manager.
 - h. Facilitate the dissemination of information from DBHDD to the group.
 - i. Delegate a portion of his/her responsibilities to the co-chair and/or secretary as needed.
 - 2. Co-Chair:
 - a. Carry out duties of the Chair in his/her absence or as delegated to him/her by the Chair.

3. Secretary:
 - a. Record meeting minutes during each meeting and deliver a copy of the minutes to each member within 14 days of each meeting.
 - b. Carry out duties of the Chair as delegated to him/her by the Chair.

VII. Procedures

- A. Meetings will be held quarterly (February, May, August, and November) in Macon, GA.
- B. Specific meeting dates for the subsequent meeting will be decided by majority vote during each meeting prior to adjournment.
- C. At least 7 voting members must be present in order to constitute a quorum.
- D. A “majority” vote for the purpose of any vote shall be considered to be a simple majority of the members present.
- E. All meetings are open to the public.