

Urgent Staffing Support

Program Overview

Disability Support Program

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About this Document

This document provides an overview of the expectations, structure, and operational requirements of Nova Scotia's **Urgent Staffing Support (USS)** service. It is intended to support Disability Support Program (DSP) Participants and their natural supports, Local Area Coordinators (LACs), Intensive Planning and Supports Coordinators (IPSCs), USS Service Providers, and other audiences to understand how USS functions, who it is for, and how it is delivered.

Disclaimer: USS Service Providers are bound by the terms and conditions outlined in their service agreements with the Department of Opportunities and Social Development and by applicable legislation. This document expands on those requirements but is not a substitute for service agreements. In the event of a conflict, the service agreement shall prevail.

Program Purpose and Background

What is Urgent Staffing Support (USS)?

Urgent Staffing Support (USS) is a short-term, participant-directed backup staffing service for eligible Disability Support Program (DSP) Participants who self-manage their Individualized Funding (IF). USS provides temporary support when a Participant's regular day-to-day support is **unexpectedly unavailable**, and when all other backup or safeguard options have been exhausted.

USS is designed to ensure continuity of essential disability-related supports so that Participants can remain safely in their homes and communities with minimal disruption to their daily lives. The service is coordinated on a 24/7 basis by approved third-party USS Service Providers and is intended as a **last resort support option**.

USS supports Nova Scotia's broader transformation of disability services under the *Nova Scotia Human Rights Remedy* by strengthening individualized, community-based supports and reducing reliance on institutional or crisis-driven responses.

What USS Is and Is Not

USS is:

- Available to DSP Participants who **self-manage their IF**
- A short-term, urgent response to unexpected gaps in support availability
- Coordinated and delivered by Approved DSP Service Providers
- A user-pay service which is intended to be used as a last resort.

USS is not:

- Available to Participants whose IF is managed by an approved DSP Service Provider
- A replacement for crisis services, emergency response (e.g., 911), or specialized medical care
- Intended for planned staff absences, vacations, or routine scheduling gaps
- Managed or delivered directly by DSP

Service Model Overview

USS operates within the decisions outlined in each Participant's approved Support Plan and Individualized Funding allocation. Decisions regarding the type, timing, and duration of support remain Participant-directed.

USS functions as a safeguard rather than a replacement for regular staffing. It is accessed only after the Participant has reviewed and exhausted the natural supports and backup options identified and documented through planning.

During the support planning process, Participants work with their planner (LAC or IPSC) to identify the designated USS provider for their geographic region. This ensures clarity and preparedness when urgent staffing needs arise.

Service Vision and Objectives

The vision of USS is to provide reliable, person-directed urgent staffing support that enables Participants to live independently in their communities with dignity, safety, and autonomy when their regular support is temporarily disrupted.

The objectives of USS are to:

- Provide timely and equitable access to urgent staffing support across Nova Scotia
- Protect Participant autonomy, decision-making authority, and overall continuity of support
- Reduce service disruption and unnecessary escalation to emergency or crisis situations
- Strengthen safeguarding within the individualized funding framework for those self-managing

USS Service Delivery Model

USS is delivered regionally. One USS Service Provider is selected for each defined geographic region and is responsible for ensuring coverage within that region.

USS Service Providers:

- Maintain a **24-hour, 7-days-per-week on-call service**
- Receive, assess, and triage urgent requests as they arise
- Deploy appropriately trained staff to deliver temporary disability-related supports
- Use Participant profiles and staff profiles to support informed matching and continuity where possible

USS Service Providers recognize that urgent situations can be stressful and disruptive and are expected to minimize disruption and support Participant safety and comfort.

Roles and Responsibilities

USS involves several interconnected roles. This section outlines general responsibilities; more detailed expectations are described in later sections.

Participants and Their Support Networks

Participants accessing USS are responsible for:

- Identifying USS as a backup option within their support or safeguard planning process, where appropriate
- Completing the USS Participant Information One-Pager to share with USS Provider
- Communicating relevant information about their needs, preferences, and safety considerations to their USS Service Provider
- Attempting to use identified backup supports (e.g., family, friends, neighbors) before requesting USS
- Contacting their regional USS Service Provider when urgent support is required
- Paying for USS services, using their existing Individualized Funding allocation
- Sharing feedback or concerns regarding USS services

Support networks and Authorized Representatives may, at the Participant's request, contact and request USS supports on their behalf. .

USS Service Providers

USS Service Providers are responsible for:

- Being available on a 24/7 basis, to deploy timely, qualified staff to provide disability-related support
- Triage and responding to urgent requests using trained personnel and established protocols
- Deploying appropriately trained staff who can provide Residential Rehabilitation Worker (RRW) or equivalent support

- Ensuring staff follow Participants' established support plans, profiles, and preferences
- Communicating with Participants, LACs/IPSCs, and other relevant parties as required
- Meeting all reporting, quality assurance, and incident reporting requirements

Disability Support Program (DSP) Planners (LACs and IPSCs)

Planners are responsible for:

- Working with Participants to identify safeguard and backup strategies, including USS where appropriate
- Helping Participants understand how and when to access USS, including completing the Participant Information one-pager
- Receiving, assessing and conducting follow-up on information received about USS usage, risks identified, or recommended plan updates
- Engage with Participants to update plans as needed to address any gaps identified.

Accessing Urgent Staffing Support

USS may be accessed when all of the following conditions apply:

1. A Participant's scheduled support worker becomes unexpectedly unavailable.
2. Backup supports identified in the Participant's support or safeguard plan are unavailable or insufficient.
3. The Participant requires temporary support to meet their disability-related support needs.

Process:

- The Participant reviews backup options identified in their Support Plan (e.g., family, friends, neighbors).
- If no other backup support is available, the Participant determines that USS is required on a temporary basis.
- The Participant (or Authorized Representative) contacts their designated regional USS Service Provider using the established on-call contact.
- The USS Service Provider completes intake and triage and deploys staff as appropriate.
- After accessing USS, the Participant returns to receiving their regular support and contacts their IPSC/LAC if they believe they need to update their plan to reduce reliance on USS.
- After the USS service is received, the Participant is invoiced and uses their IF allocation to pay.

Communication and Follow-Up

USS Service Providers document the request, actions taken, and outcomes, and share relevant summaries with the Participant's Planner, including:

- Any incidents or concerns requiring follow-up
- Risks identified (if any)
- If relevant, recommendations for updates to support or safeguard plans
- Any updates to the Participant's one-pager, if identified

Funding and Cost

Participants are **fully responsible for paying for USS services using their existing Individualized Funding allocation**. USS reinforces the responsible use of IF while ensuring urgent staffing needs can be addressed when other safeguards fail.

USS Service Provider Funding and Administration

Selected USS Service Providers may receive start-up and administrative funding to support service readiness and operational capacity. This funding supports:

- Establishment and maintenance of 24/7 on-call systems
- Regional service availability and coordination capacity

Detailed funding terms and conditions are outlined in the service agreement.

Types of Support

USS staff provide ad hoc disability-related support aligned with the Participant's established support plan and profile documentation. Supports may include:

Daily Living and Independence

- Assistance with Activities of Daily Living (ADLs)
- Assistance with Instrumental Activities of Daily Living (IADLs)

Building and Maintaining Connections

- Support to maintain relationships and community participation as outlined in the support plan

Personal Growth and Development

- Temporary or ad hoc support aligned with existing goals and routines

USS does not include specialized medical procedures or crisis intervention beyond de-escalation and immediate safety support.

Organizational Competency and Operational Expectations

Disability Support Expertise

USS Service Providers demonstrate expertise consistent with the standards of approved DSP Service Providers, taking a human rights-based approach to service delivery that promotes autonomy, independence and social inclusion

Staffing, Training, and Safety

USS Service Providers ensure all deployed staff:

- Meet DSP core competency requirements
- Have appropriate training in trauma-informed care and de-escalation
- Have Criminal Record and Vulnerable Sector Checks completed with no concerns identified
- Comply with Occupational Health and Safety requirements

24/7 Availability and Response

USS Service Providers:

- Maintain a 24-hour on-call intake and coordination system
- Establish and communicate clear response-time parameters
- Maintain contingency plans for complex situations, staffing shortages, and extreme weather

Regional Coverage and Rural Considerations

USS Service Providers ensure equitable service delivery across their contracted region, accounting for travel time, geography, and climate-related disruptions, and may collaborate with other service providers to enhance coverage.

Monitoring, Reporting, and Program Evaluation

Continuous Quality Improvement

USS Service Providers must maintain a continuous quality improvement approach informed by data, feedback, and incident analysis. Information collected through service delivery may be used to:

- Monitor program usage and response times
- Identify patterns, risks, and regional service pressures
- Support evaluation of program effectiveness

Program monitoring focuses on ensuring USS supports continuity of care without replacing planned supports. DSP will use this information to inform service improvements and future planning.

Reporting Requirements

USS Service Providers are required to meet the following DSP reporting requirements:

- Track service usage, response times, and outcomes through a monthly tracking form
- Support annual USS user and DSP support planner surveys

Incident Reporting and Safety

USS Service Providers comply with DSP incident reporting requirements, including:

- Timely reporting of critical incidents and significant service disruptions
- Supporting Participants and staff following incidents
- Cooperating with investigations and follow-up actions

Equity, Inclusion, and Rights-Based Practice

USS services are delivered in a manner that:

- Respects Participant dignity, autonomy, and choice
- Is culturally responsive and inclusive of diverse identities and communities
- Upholds the principles of the Human Rights Remedy

Conclusion

Urgent Staffing Support is a critical safeguard within Nova Scotia's Individualized Funding framework. By providing responsive, temporary or ad hoc backup staffing grounded in person-directed and rights-based practice, USS helps ensure Participants can continue to live safely and independently in their communities, even when unexpected disruptions occur.