



GREAT PROVIDER PLAYBOOK



Insights you can act on from OPRA

DODD Waiver Amendment Changes for 2026

The start of a new year often brings questions for providers — what's changing, what's staying the same, and where to focus time and energy. As 2026 begins, providers continue to navigate familiar challenges such as staffing pressures, documentation expectations, and ongoing quality oversight. The January edition of the Great Provider Playbook is intended to focus on upcoming Waiver Amendment changes and how to move into the new year with clarity and intention. Preparing for 2026 isn't about predicting rules. It's about strengthening systems that absorb change.

Remote Support	<p>Remote Support services are defined as continuous oversight of technology with remote staff immediately available to respond as needed — but it does not require constant video surveillance of the individual. Effective January 1, 2026.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Terminology has been updated. “Vendor” changed to “Remote Support Provider” and is now defined as the agency responsible for the monitoring base, remote staff, and all technology used.Backup support may be unpaid family/friends or a paid provider (HPC or AWC). Clear definition added for when backup is needed and who can fulfill the role.New provider requirements including written agreement detailing how backup is contacted, who they cover, and expectations for response.Remote Support now bills in 15-minute units.
Assistive Technology	<p>Assistive Technology services enable individuals to use smart or electronic devices to increase their independence. Effective January 1, 2026.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Definition has been updated to include “non-electronic” items such as pencil grips, weighted pens, screen readers, and communication boards.Coverage details updated. May include items, equipment, engineered solutions, product systems, service-animal training, along with any required software or subscription fees needed for the device to function.“Subscription” is now defined as a recurring payment for services that support the use of AT equipment without involving real-time Remote Support.Teams may choose to purchase or rent equipment, with rental agreements documented in the ISP.
Support Broker	<p>Support Brokerage helps a person develop skills and build confidence that will support their success and independence self-directing. The Support Broker works closely with the person until they feel confident transitioning to full independence with self-direction. Effective January 1, 2026.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Service will now be available under both the Individual Options (IO) and Level One waivers, increasing access to self-direction support.Service now allows for some virtual support and travel time, expanding flexibility in how support can be delivered.Billing is shifting from an hourly unit to a 15-minute unit, aligning with other HCBS services.New Support Broker training will be released in December 2025 on DODD My Learning. Completion will be required for Support Broker certification, with current brokers and SSAs encouraged to complete the updated curriculum.



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More Waiver Updates: What's in Place and What's Ahead

State Funded Waiver Guidance	DODD has implemented a new process to request state funded waivers (exit waivers from intermediate care facilities and nursing facilities, diversion and conversion waivers, and developmental center downsizing waivers). The Department will continue to honor all exit waiver allocations previously granted. New requests must be submitted to DODD through the county board. DODD will consider these in the context of whether the county board needs financial assistance. Effective January 1, 2026.
Vehicle Modification Guidance	Ohio established Vehicle Modifications as a stand-alone HCBS waiver service in July 2025. The process begins with a clinician assessment to document medical need, followed by obtaining required quotes from certified vendors and verifying vehicle ownership and insurance. Modifications must be medically necessary and cost-effective, with manual options considered before automated features. Payment is issued after the SSA confirms the work is complete, and higher-cost requests must follow the appropriate approval or prior authorization process.
Waiver Modernization	Waiver Modernization will continue in the new year. The overall goals of Waiver Modernization include implementing a single needs-based assessment, streamlining and refreshing the billing process, creating data-sharing technologies, and supporting the sustainability of the waiver program and County Board funding.
InterRAI	The InterRAI is a needs-based assessment tool that will eventually replace the Ohio Developmental Disabilities Profile (ODDP) for individuals who have a waiver. The tool will be utilized to help decide budgets for individuals on the IO waiver, help set payment rates for providers based need for the IO, SELF, and L1 waivers, and to help SSAs with person-centered planning. Implementation date has not yet been established. Please note that the ODDP will continue to be utilized for those individuals who reside in an Intermediate Care Facility (ICF).



For more information or resources on Waiver Amendments or upcoming changes, please contact Rachel Hayes, Director of Residential Resources, at rhayes@opra.org.

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