

Continuity of SSP Services

January 1, 2021

The Pennsylvania Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH) is pleased to provide an update on the provision of SSP (Support Service Provider) services. For reference, please note that all SSPs are independent contractors who support Pennsylvanians who are deafblind by providing environmental information and acting as a guide and communication facilitator (but not as an interpreter or decision-maker).

To ensure there is no interruption of services, ODHH has procured two emergency purchase orders that will take effect on **January 1, 2021**, for a period of ninety (90) days. These purchase orders will serve individuals who are deafblind and in need of SSP hours. Please note that, in order to qualify for services under this emergency purchase order, individuals **do not** have to be previously served by the Center for Independent Living of Central PA (CILCP)/formerly active consumers receiving SSP hours. At the conclusion of the ninety days, ODHH will either extend the emergency purchase orders or have other services in place.

ODHH and its stakeholders are aware of the lack of qualified providers available, decreased training opportunities, and transportation and compensation concerns related to SSP services, and we are working diligently to address these. We are also pleased to share that, with support and collaboration from PA stakeholders, the Governor's Office has recognized ODHH's mission and awarded General Government Operating funds to pilot a new SSP initiative consistent with the implementation of a successful statewide SSP project, as proposed by House Bill 2938.

The Pennsylvania Office of Vocational Rehabilitation and ODHH would like to thank you for your patience and understanding during this time. If you have further questions, comments or concerns, please contact the Director of ODHH, Melissa Hawkins, at mehawkins@pa.gov.

For more information about OVR and ODHH, please visit [OVR's web page](#).

Sincerely,



Melissa Hawkins, MS, MHR
Director
PA Department of Labor and Industry
Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing