

# Sample Policies and Procedures for SSPs

**Note:** This document was developed based on research of various SSP programs around the country, as well as personal input from DeafBlind program participants. The agency should select and or modify these policies to meet the needs of their population.

## Sample Policies

### Accepting Assignments:

SSPs must consider their own skills prior to accepting an assignment. The SSP must be confident that they are able to meet the individual’s needs in the assignment.

### Professionalism:

SSPs full focus should be on the assignment. While on duty, SSPs should not be performing personal errands calling, texting, or chatting with others while working with a consumer.

### Approved Activities:

[Sample list of Approved Activities](https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/0vwc62hketkey7q2tfc6v/Sample-List-of-Approved-Activities.docx?dl=0&rlkey=bge4f690c93tcqxkl9cty8lrv)

### Activities SSPs Should NOT partake in:

* Teaching/instructing
* Doing for (laundry, cleaning, shopping, administrative assistant role…)
* Personal care
* Offering opinion, unless requested
* Formal interpreting
* Advocating or counseling
* Providing childcare

Any requests for these types of services should be reported to the coordinator

### Cancelation Policy:

An assignment should be viewed as a commitment. Cancellations should only occur in the case of illness or other serious unavoidable circumstances. If it becomes absolutely necessary to cancel an assignment, contact the SSP coordinator. (24-hour) notice is expected, unless there is an emergency or sudden illness. The Agency will determine repercussions and timelines.

### Communication:

SSPs and program participants must communicate clearly and respectively with one another. The team needs to determine communication mode with for schedule changes or emergencies (i.e., text or email). It is the responsibility of both parties to establish this communication system. Both the SSP and the program participant have an obligation to communicate honestly about the number of hours worked and the number of hours of service remaining toward the weekly total.

### Billing:

Billing time begins when the SSP reaches the program participant’s home or agreed upon pick-up site, not when the SSP leaves their own home. Fees such as parking fees, gas, admission fees are the program participant’s responsibility. Do not bill such fees to the agency, as the program will not make payment.

### Complaints or Grievances:

For minor grievances, such as suggestions for improving communication, mobility, or other issues around maximizing the benefit of services. SSPs and participants should consider discussing these issues with each other to see if they can be resolved. However, if either party feels uncomfortable discussing an issue or if there are major complaints about inappropriate or unsafe conduct, the SSP or DeafBlind person should consult directly with the service coordinator.

Upon completion of each assignment, the SSP and DeafBlind consumer will complete an evaluation survey. In this survey they will have the opportunity to provide feedback. The SSP Coordinator will review this feedback and address issues as needed. This should be done on a regular basis, so that if something is minor, it's not framed as a complaint, rather a suggestion, but if it's a major issue then the coordinator can address it and follow up.

### Fees:

The program participant must pay for any transportation and activity-related costs for them self and the SSP. This can include admission fees, public transportation fees, gas, parking fees and tolls.

### Dress Code:

SSPs should dress appropriately for the assignment. SSPs are required to wear solid color clothing contrasting to skin color, minimal jewelry and or perfume for optimal visual access and comfort for DeafBlind individuals. SSPs should dress appropriately for the assignment. For example, in a more casual setting an SSP may wear jeans or sports clothing but in a professional setting professional clothing would be expected.

### Emergency and Medical Attention:

If a program participant has a medical emergency while the SSP is on assignment with them, the SSP has an ethical obligation to solicit medical attention if necessary. Some agencies may require an SSP to have training in first aid and CPR. If a DeafBlind person contacts an SSP when they are not on assignment with that person to indicate that they are having an emergency, the SSP should direct that person to appropriate professional help, be it medical, social work, etc. The SSP should use their discretion; for example, if the DeafBlind person is having trouble communicating with 911, the SSP should use their discretion for contacting 911 for them.

### Employment Related Services:

Each agency must have their own guidelines regarding receiving SSP services in the workplace. If this service is offered the SSP would be expected to undergo additional training.

### Guests on assignments:

SSPs may not take any members of their family or friends on an assignment

### Background check:

All SSPs must consent to a background check that will be conducted by the program coordinator.

### Illegal substances:

Use of any illegal substances by either the SSP or DeafBlind individual will result in termination from this SSP program.

### Alcohol:

SSPs may not consume alcohol while on assignment. Program participants may consume alcohol on assignment. However, should the participant become overly intoxicated the SSP can terminate the assignment ensuring that the individual is in a safe place or bringing the individual home.

### Lateness:

The program participant must be ready at the scheduled time. The SSP will wait 60 minutes, if the individual does not show they will report to coordinator as a “NO SHOW”. The SSP will receive payment for this assignment. The SSP coordinator will meet with the program participant to determine the circumstances for the “no show”. Many programs instill a three no-show policy. If the DeafBlind participant does not show more than three times, they will be suspended from the SSP program for a determined period of time. This is the case for the SSP as well.

### Money:

No lending or borrowing money between DeafBlind individuals and SSPs

### Number of Hours:

The number of hours of SSP service a program participant can receive per month will be determined by the agency's availability of SSPs and funds. The agency will need to establish guidelines for this including identifying who is responsible for managing these hours, typically this is the SSP coordinator but often program participants are asked to keep track of their hours and if participants are able to bank hours that are not used.

### Physical Contact:

The SSP/program participant relationship is a professional one, sexual conduct and/or sexual harassment are prohibited and should be reported to the SSP coordinator.

### Professional Conduct:

SSPs must follow the ethical standards set by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf “Code of Professional Conduct” including, but not limited to:

* Adhere to standards of confidential communication.
* Possess the professional skills and knowledge required for the given situation.
* Conduct themselves in a manner appropriate to the support service situation.
* Demonstrate respect for consumers.
* Demonstrate respect for other support service professionals.
* Maintain ethical business practices.
* Confidentiality: All SSPs are expected to maintain strict confidentiality at all times. No aspect of any assignment should be discussed with anyone other than the DeafBlind person agency staff. SSP should never discuss other deaf-blind people with the person with whom he/she is working. SSPs can discuss all issues with the SSP Coordinator to address problem solving and receive guidance when necessary.

### Professional Development/Training:

Successful completion of the agency’s SSP Training program is required. SSPs are also expected to participate in ongoing workshops and discussions/activities provided by the agency to continue to develop their skills. SSPs are expected to receive and apply constructive feedback from program participants and the SSP coordinator.

### Reporting:

All SSPs report directly to the SSP Coordinator.

### Safety Considerations

If an SSP is concerned with the safety of starting or completing an assignment, they should safely discontinue the assignment. For example, if a program participant was experiencing extreme dizziness, and did not seem stable on their feet, but wanted the SSP to assist with shopping the SSP should ensure the safety of the person possibly by returning home or calling an ambulance. In circumstances such as these, the SSP should not start, or should safely discontinue the assignment. An SSP should always be comfortable with the safety factor of an assignment. The SSP should explain their concern to the participant, and follow whatever reasonable course is necessary to safely discontinue the assignment. The SSP should report the incident as soon as possible to the Service Coordinator and document the incident in their logs.

### Service Animals:

The SSP cannot ask the DeafBlind individual not to bring their dog guide. However, if the SSP has an allergy this should be noted up front and the SSP should not accept assignments with individuals who have a service animal. SSPs should not be expected to walk or care for a service animal. When on duty the SSP is not to pet or distract the service animal. It is the DeafBlind individual’s responsibility to take care of the toileting needs of their animal.

### Signatures:

SSPs may never sign a document for a DeafBlind person with OR without their permission.

### Soliciting:

SSPs may not sell any product to a program participant. The SSP may not share the name of the DeafBlind individual with anyone who wishes to make them the target of a sales attempt.

### Transportation:

The program participant is responsible for setting up their own public transportation. The SSP can facilitate communication with the transportation service or act as a reader or scribe as necessary. The program participant is responsible for all transportation costs for themself as well as their SSP. The individual agency will determine if an SSP is permitted to use their personal vehicle. This will vary from agency to agency due to liability issues.

### Unprofessional Behavior:

* Abuse of alcohol by DB person
* No alcohol for SSP
* NO use of illegal drugs
* Verbal or physical abuse
* Sexual advances or flirting
* Telling inappropriate jokes
* Profanity
* Any behavior that makes the SSP or DB individual feel uncomfortable.

If either the program participant or the SSP is uncomfortable with the conduct of behavior of the other person, they should discuss their concerns with the program coordinator, they should also have the option of filing a formal written complaint and there should be process for dealing with these, so that there is a record about the complaint and how it was handled. There should be a person or organization above the program coordinator who is listed as a point of contact for serious misconduct issues, or if there is dissatisfaction with how the program coordinator handled the situation.

### Unusual Circumstances:

Many situations may arise during an SSP assignment. There are times when an SSP must go with their best judgment. However, the SSP should constantly reevaluate their service activities. If the SSP becomes unsure of his/her role in any situation, the SSP may contact the SSP Coordinator for guidance.

### Other questions the agency should explore:

* The agency must determine if the SSP, if qualified, can take on the role of “interpreter” in specified situations. If so, the rate of pay should be changed.
* Can family members or friends take on the role of SSP – many agencies do not allow family members to work as SSPs. Some suggest that there are specific situations in which a family member or friend may be the best match, and the individual needs to explain the reason, but should not be used ongoing.

## PROCEDURES:

### How to apply for services:

The agency should create an application for the DeafBlind individual to apply to become a program participant. [Sample Application.](https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/lpf41nmbhk1fnwnx7csz3/Draft-Application-to-Receive-SSP-Services.docx?dl=0&rlkey=b0stc7wx0onrub5rx5rc26kk1) Note all applications should be created in accessible fillable forms.

Questions to consider:

* Who determines if the DeafBlind person is eligible for services?

### How to apply to become an SSP:

The agency should create an application based on their needs.

[Sample/DRAFT SSP Application](https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/h2sm9wb5ljm6wn8vsh94j/Sample-SSP-Application.docx?dl=0&rlkey=ehngctyoj7wht5rss36vp5op2)

### Supervision for New SSPs:

Once the SSP has completed the mandatory training they should complete a determined number of SSP hours under supervision. This can be done with an experienced DeafBlind individual that is able to assess and provide guidance and instruction to the SSP or the facilitator or an identified person should accompany the SSP and program participant on an assignment to observe and intervene if necessary. Once the SSP completes the decided upon number of hours and the facilitator feels that the SSP is ready, they can start providing independent services. Some agencies pay a lower rate for the supervised hours.

### Requesting an SSP:

This varies from agency to agency. The original request should always go to the SSP Facilitator. This [SSP Request Checklist](https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/dzf5r7a9bel8rw6mnr2bz/Sample-SSP-Request-Checklist.docx?dl=0&rlkey=fdzdf6o6tx3x0v2bd3l5ypo9y) includes all the items that should be included on a fillable form which the program participant will need to complete and send to the facilitator. The facilitator will need to approve or not approve the request. There are two options for identifying and scheduling the SSP.

1. The SSP facilitator contacts the appropriate SSPs for the individual and the event to determine who is available. Once an SSP is identified, the facilitator contacts the program participant and shares the contact information
2. Several programs have the program participant contact the SSPs on their own. They must first submit the request to the SSP facilitator and receive approval. Once they have approval, they will reach out to SSPs using the SSP Contact List which includes short blurbs about each SSP indicating their communication skills, interests, limitations etc. Once the SSP is secured the DeafBlind individual will inform the coordinator.

### Timeline for Submitting SSP Requests:

Some agencies ask the individual to submit the request a week to two weeks prior to the event and others ask for a few days.

### Evaluating SSP and Program Participants:

It is highly recommended that a process be established to collect data and feedback from both the program participant and the SSP after each assignment. This can be easily collected using an online survey service such as Alchemer. A word version of this survey should be available if necessary. This information can be used to show the effectiveness of the program for funding purposes, to identify areas where additional training is needed and to identify problems that need to be addressed immediately. The SSP facilitator should review each evaluation after it is completed. [Sample Assignment Evaluation Form](https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/39k0kqoy7e816symtqlmi/SAMPLE-DeafBlind-Participant-Assignment-Evaluation.docx?dl=0&rlkey=90qxgr7vd6gw64dhhangtgwr8)

### Billing for SSP services:

Once the assignment is completed. The program participant will submit an completion evaluation [Sample Assignment Evaluation Form](https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/39k0kqoy7e816symtqlmi/SAMPLE-DeafBlind-Participant-Assignment-Evaluation.docx?dl=0&rlkey=90qxgr7vd6gw64dhhangtgwr8). The SSP must submit an invoice. It is recommended that a short evaluation form be included on the invoice to indicate if any problems arose during the assignment. It was recommended that SSPs invoice for each assignment. The agency needs to determine if they want to follow this policy or send in invoices weekly or monthly.

### Eligibility:

Agencies request documentation proving that the individual has a combined vision and hearing loss. However, since this is a self-directed service, the agency also needs to determine if the individual is able to manage and direct the SSP when out on an assignment. They can request a recommendation if needed. Some agencies use a screening tool to determine if the individual is able to manage SSP services.

[Sample Screening Assessment](https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/8j1xo7xhj0enul1oyd0qe/Sample-Screening-Assessment.docx?dl=0&rlkey=rt1bhgzv7f2dhff1nvh6gr0zz)