SSPNJ POLICIES

Effective date: May 1, 2026 *These policies replace all previous versions.*

At SSPNJ, we believe every person deserves fair and respectful access to services. Our goal is to support each consumer while ensuring that services are provided in a safe and positive environment for both consumers and Support Service Providers (SSPs). It is assumed that any use of the SSPNJ program services is non-criminal and within the bounds of the SSPNJ Code of Professional Conduct. An activity may be denied if it seems probable that it would cause a violation of the SSPNJ Code of Professional Conduct. Deafblind people and SSPs are responsible for reporting policy violations to the SSPNJ administrative staff. ***All SSP assignments must be approved before they take place.***

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ACCEPTING ASSIGNMENTS

Before accepting an assignment, the SSP considers their own skills, the activity and the needs of the person who is deafblind. The SSP accepts an assignment only if they are confident in their ability to meet the individual's needs and to participate in the activity to completion.

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ALCOHOL/CANNABIS

Requests will not be confirmed if the main purpose of the location's activity, event or establishment is to serve alcohol or partake in cannabis.

SSPs will not use alcohol/cannabis while on an assignment.

Program participants may consume alcohol/cannabis on assignment; if the participant becomes intoxicated, the SSP can terminate the assignment after ensuring that the individual is safe; if no safe space is available, the SSP should call 911. The SSP must report the incident and the steps taken to the SSP Coordinator as soon as everyone is safe.

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APPROVED ACTIVITIES

To ensure that an SSP can be used for an activity, please check the Approved Activities list.

SSPs must fully focus their attention ***at all times*** on providing service to the deafblind person. ***At no time will an SSP combine personal needs or errands with the job.*** This means no personal phone calls, texting, chatting with others, doing their own grocery (or other) shopping, or any other activities that take their focus away from the assignment.

If an SSP arrives at an assignment and finds that an unapproved activity is planned, it will be the SSP's decision whether to stay or not. The SSP will report the unapproved activity to SSPNJ.

SSPs do not:

- Drive the deafblind person
- Teach, instruct or provide skill-building services
- Provide personal care services (bathing, grooming, coloring hair, manicuring or painting nails)
- Perform household tasks – cook, clean or do laundry – without the deafblind person
- Shop or run errands alone for the deafblind person
- Organize personal belongings without the deafblind person
- Act as an administrative assistant or personal valet
- Answer questions or make decisions on behalf of the deafblind person
- Offer an opinion or make a decision on behalf of the deafblind person
- Answer questions directed to the deafblind person
- Lift heavy items/bags/boxes (more than 10 lbs.) or move furniture or large items
- Store personal items that belong to the deafblind person
- Interpret in medical, legal, business or other formal settings
- Advocate or represent the deafblind person in legal, medical, social services or other matters

- Provide care for the deafblind person's children, pets or service animal
- Perform case management, financial planning or counseling
- Schedule travel arrangements, appointments or SSP assignments for the deafblind person
- Find employment or housing for the deafblind person

Requests for these types of services should be reported to the SSP Coordinator.
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APPROVED SSP REQUEST

An Approved SSP Request is a request for SSP services that has been approved by SSPNJ. Each request has a unique number. **A request must be approved before the assignment takes place** for the SSP to receive payment.
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BILLING

Billing time begins when the SSP reaches the deafblind person's home or agreed-upon location, not when the SSP leaves their own home.

Do not bill SSPNJ for mileage, tolls, parking fees, gas or admission costs; SSPNJ will not pay them.
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CANCELLATION

Each assignment is a commitment. Cancellations should happen only if there is illness or a serious unavoidable circumstance. If it is absolutely necessary to cancel an assignment:

1. ***The person who is cancelling MUST have a conversation with the other person.*** An e-mail, text message or voice message that is not answered is not acceptable and will be recorded as a No Show. The cancellation must also be reported to SSPNJ *before the time of the assignment*.
2. **IF THE STATE OF NEW JERSEY IS IN A STATE OF EMERGENCY** due to a natural disaster, a weather emergency or an act of terrorism, the assignment will be cancelled. The SSP will not be paid, and the deafblind person will not lose the hours of service.
3. ***We encourage SSPs who must cancel to find a replacement*** from the Approved SSPs List ***who is acceptable to the deafblind person***. If the SSP finds an acceptable replacement, the SSP will not receive a Warning for that cancellation. If the SSP does not find a replacement, SSPNJ will do its best to find a replacement, but we cannot guarantee that an SSP will be found or that the deafblind person will accept or like the replacement SSP.

Consequences for Cancellations

SSPs or deafblind consumers can ask the SSP Coordinator for reconsideration on an incident-by-incident basis.

Regular cancellation – More than 24 hours (1 day)

- The hours are not deducted from the deafblind person's monthly hours, and the SSP is not paid.
- Four regular cancellations in 1 year: 3 months suspension
- Repeat offenders: The Agreement will be terminated.

Last-minute cancellation – Less than 24 hours (1 day)

- **Warnings are issued for all last-minute cancellations. The ONLY exceptions are the following Verified Exceptions,** provided required documentation is submitted to SSPNJ within 10 business days of the assignment.
    1. The SSP and the deafblind person decide together to cancel.
    2. **Medical Emergency: *Documentation Required:*** A signed note from a doctor or medical facility confirming that the individual was unable to attend the assignment due to illness or injury.
    3. **Access Link Cancellation: *Documentation Required:*** A copy of the cancellation notice, text or email from NJ Transit Access Link showing the service was unavailable or cancelled by Access Link.
    4. **Declared State of Emergency: *No Documentation Required*** if the State of New Jersey has officially declared a State of Emergency due to weather, natural disaster or public safety.
    5. **Death in the Immediate Family: *Documentation Required:*** A copy of an obituary or program from the funeral service.
- Two last-minute cancellations in 1 year: 3 months suspension
- Repeat offenders: The Agreement will be terminated.
- If the deafblind person cancels: The hours will be subtracted from his monthly hours, and the SSP will be paid.
- If the SSP cancels: There is no pay, and no hours are used by the deafblind person.

Community Hours Last-Minute Cancellation & Exceptions

If a consumer cancels a Community Hours assignment at the last minute or is a No Show, the hours will be subtracted from the consumer's monthly hours. **However, hours will not be deducted if the cancellation is due to one of the Verified Exceptions listed above *and* provided that the required documentation is submitted to the SSPNJ office within 10 business days of the assignment.**

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CERTIFICATION

A Certification is an Approved SSP Request that has been signed by the deafblind person ***after the assignment is finished***. SSPNJ needs the signed Certification to authorize payment to the SSP. The deafblind person should complete this form in privacy and without assistance from the SSP.

At no time EVER should the SSP tell the deafblind person to complete and/or sign the form in front of the SSP, nor should the SSP ever offer to submit the form for the deafblind person. Signing and sending the form is the responsibility of the deafblind person.

The Certification tells SSPNJ:

- The assignment took place
- The level of satisfaction with the SSP on this assignment
- Comments on the assignment
- It is okay to pay the SSP

Certifications must be sent within seven (7) days after the assignment to one of the following:

- Email: sspnj@ShoreCTE.com
- Phone/Text: 215-284-7881
- Google Form (use the link on your Certification)
- Fax: 732-676-7635

- USPS: SSPNJ, 1 Jamie Court, Neptune, NJ 07753

NOTE: SSPNJ will not approve the SSP's payment without the signed Certification from the deafblind program participant.
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CHANGING AN APPROVED REQUEST

A deafblind person, a family member or friend they approve, or the CVBI counselor can request a change to an Approved SSP Request. **SSPs cannot change an approved request.**

To request a change:

1. Confirm the change with the SSP
2. Request the change with SSPNJ by email, text, phone or fax at least one day before the assignment

If an assignment goes longer than expected, it is the deafblind person's responsibility to contact SSPNJ no more than 24 hours after the assignment is completed and explain the reason for the extended time.
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COMMUNICATION

Deafblind people and their SSPs must communicate clearly and respectfully with each other. They must also set up a way to contact each other – email, text, phone, VP, fax – for schedule changes and/or emergencies. Both people are responsible for establishing this communication.

Both the SSP and the deafblind person have an obligation to communicate honestly about the number of hours worked.
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COMPLAINTS/GRIEVANCES

The goal of SSPNJ is to provide quality services. We encourage deafblind people and SSPs to complete the satisfaction survey after every assignment. Your honest feedback helps us to continually improve SSPNJ services. The SSP Coordinator reviews all comments and addresses issues as needed.

Problems, complaints or concerns should be discussed between both people at the time the issue arises. If the issue is not resolved to the satisfaction of both people at that time, then both people are responsible for reporting the issue to the SSP Coordinator within 24 hours. We will work quickly to resolve concerns in the best interests of all involved. If a policy has been broken, a Violation Notice will be issued. All complaints and grievances will be brought to the attention of the SSPNJ Advisory Council. Please keep in mind that SSPNJ and Shore CTE and its employees and subcontractors are not counselors or in a position to provide formal mediation.

The following procedures will be followed for all complaints and grievances:

1. Contact the SSP Coordinator within 24 hours of the incident. A Grievance Report will be sent to you.
2. The Grievance Report must be completed and returned to SSPNJ within 30 days of the incident.
3. SSPNJ will recognize receipt of your Grievance Report by sending you a letter. The other person involved in the complaint will also receive a letter.

4. SSPNJ will conduct an investigation. During the time of the investigation, you may be able to continue using SSPNJ services; however, SSPNJ also reserves the right to suspend approved assignments and services. SSPNJ will not approve any assignments between you and the other person involved. One or both of you may also be suspended from the type of activity that caused the complaint.
5. SSPNJ will monitor both people's participation in the SSPNJ program. All Approved SSP Requests will be observed by SSPNJ staff.
6. You will be notified when a decision has been made regarding the situation.
7. Program participants who have been using only one SSP will be required to start building a pool of SSPs.

For minor grievances, such as suggestions for improving communication, mobility or other issues that would improve the services: SSPs and program participants should consider discussing these issues with each other to try to resolve them. 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 SSP Coordinator.
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CONFIDENTIALITY/PRIVACY

Deafblind people and SSPs must respect each other's privacy. This means ***they will keep private all information*** about each other that was shared during the assignment. **The entire SSP experience – all information exchanged, what happened, who you met or saw – must be kept private.** *DO NOT talk about anyone and keep all records secure.* If this policy is not followed and confidences are broken, the deafblind person or the SSP will receive a Violation Notice. The second time that confidentiality is broken, the Agreement will be terminated.

You could be held liable if you share information, and you could be subject to a cash fine for breaching confidentiality.

HIPAA compliance is mandatory. All SSP activities involving Protected Health Information (PHI) must strictly follow federal security and privacy standards.
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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

SSPs do not provide services where they can personally or financially benefit. SSPs will not self-promote by handing out their own business cards while on the job, nor will they act as a paid interpreter, social worker, personal assistant or any other paid role while providing SSP services at the same time.

SSPs do not provide paid services for a spouse, family member or other person with whom they have a close personal relationship. The SSP Coordinator will have approval authority for these cases.
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CONSUMER ELIGIBILITY & SAFETY REVIEW

SSPNJ is dedicated to treating every program participant and SSP with dignity and fairness. We work collaboratively to find solutions that promote access to services while maintaining the safety and well-being of everyone involved.

Services provided through SSPNJ are available to all eligible consumers. In some situations, we may need to take extra steps to review a service request to make sure that the environment and circumstances are safe and appropriate for everyone involved. These situations are reviewed on a case-by-case basis with care, respect and confidentiality.

Procedures

1. Individual Review
   - When a service request raises potential safety or environmental concerns, SSPNJ will carefully review the situation to understand the supports or adjustments that may be needed.
   - The review may include looking at where the service will take place, the type of service being requested and how to best support both the consumer and the SSP.
2. Service Planning
   - If risks are identified, SSPNJ may suggest modifications or limits to the services to ensure everyone's safety.
   - In rare cases, services may need to be adjusted or declined if providing them could place an SSP or another consumer in an unsafe situation.
   - Whenever possible, SSPNJ will work with the consumer to explore alternative arrangements or resources.
3. Privacy and Respect
   - All reviews are handled privately and respectfully. Only staff directly involved in coordinating services will have access to related information.
4. Communication and Collaboration
   - Consumers will be informed of the outcome of the review and, when applicable, invited to take part in planning any modifications or next steps.

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CONTACT SSPNJ

SSPNJ appreciates your ideas and comments. Please contact us in any of the following ways:

- Email: sspnj@ShoreCTE.com
- Phone/Text: 215-284-7881
- Fax: 732-676-7635
- USPS: SSPNJ, 1 Jamie Court, Neptune, NJ 07753

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CONVERSATIONAL TOPICS TO AVOID

Our experience has shown that it's best to avoid conversational topics concerning sex, politics and religion. Most people have strong opinions on these subjects, and misunderstandings can easily happen. Keep to general topics such as the weather, food, sports, vacations or sales at grocery/department stores.

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COSTS

The SSPNJ program is free for eligible deafblind residents of the State of New Jersey. Eligibility is determined by the New Jersey Commission for the Blind & Visually Impaired.

The deafblind person must pay for transportation and activity-related costs for themselves and the SSP. This includes admission fees and public/shared ride transportation fees.

SSPs are responsible for their own food/refreshment costs while on assignment.
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DRESS CODE

SSPs should dress appropriately for the assignment. For example, in a casual setting, the SSP may wear jeans or sports clothing, but in a professional setting, business clothing is expected. Perfumes, colognes and aromatic creams should not be used under any circumstances.

Both people should refrain from smoking before and during an assignment, unless they both agree that smoking is okay.

If an SSP is working with someone who uses sign language, for optimal visual and/or tactile access, the SSP must wear solid color clothing in contrast to their skin tone and minimal jewelry. Hands and fingernails should be neat and clean, and polish must not be distracting.

Consideration should always be given to wearing sensible footwear that allows comfortable, safe travel. The SSP's hands, arms and body must be free of protruding obstructions so that communication and safe travel can be accomplished. This means no shoulder bags, messenger bags, tote bags or purses. Examples of appropriate containers for personal belongings include small backpacks or fanny packs worn in front or back.

The SSP must wear the SSPNJ ID badge while on assignment.
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DRIVING

SSPNJ prohibits SSPs from driving deafblind individuals at any time in connection with an assignment.

The assignment begins at the designated "meet at" location and time; SSPs may not arrive early to provide transportation. Once the assignment ends, the SSP is no longer on duty, and any transportation arrangements made between the SSP and deafblind individual are strictly personal and outside the scope and liability of SSPNJ or its subcontractors. **The SSP immediately assumes full personal liability for any issues that occur after the planned conclusion time or location.**
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ELIGIBILITY

Deafblind people who apply to use SSP services must be:

- Adults (over the age of 18 and out of the K-12 school system)
- Approved and referred by the New Jersey Commission for the Blind & Visually Impaired
- A New Jersey resident living in the community
- Capable of directing and managing an SSP*

*SSPNJ may request an assessment of the individual's capability to direct and manage their SSP services; this assessment is completed by the CBVI counselor.

Individuals who apply to be SSPs must:

- Be adults (over 18)
- Have basic knowledge of deafblind culture
- Demonstrate the skills necessary to communicate comfortably and effectively with deafblind people
- Have internet access and working knowledge of e-mail and pdf files
- Have a valid driver's license or other state-issued identification
- Demonstrate no criminal record as verified by a fingerprint check

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EMERGENCY MEDICAL ATTENTION WHILE ON ASSIGNMENT

If the deafblind person becomes sick during an assignment, the SSP has permission and an obligation to seek medical attention through a doctor, emergency services (911) or a hospital. If there is an emergency or accident resulting in an injury, the SSP ***must*** seek medical attention through emergency services (911).

If the SSP has a medical emergency while on assignment, the deafblind person has an ethical obligation to immediately try to get help.

If a deafblind person contacts an SSP when they are not on assignment with that person to say that they are having an emergency, the SSP should direct the deafblind person to appropriate professional help (medical, social work, police). The SSP should use their discretion; for example, if the deafblind person is having trouble communicating with 911, the SSP should use their discretion about contacting 911 for them.

The deafblind person will not hold SSPNJ, Shore CTE or its subcontractors responsible for any costs associated with any of these events.

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EMERGENCY ROOM ASSIGNMENTS

If a deafblind person or their family member has to go to the Emergency Room, the SSP can be approved *after the assignment*. The deafblind person must be going to the Emergency Room ONLY – not to any other doctor or care center. ***Please remember that this is the ONLY time an SSP assignment can be approved after it happens, and SSPNJ must receive documentation of the Emergency Room visit for the SSP to be paid.*** This policy applies to:

- SSPNJ deafblind program participants
- Their immediate family members
- Someone for whom they have a caregiver relationship

We encourage all program participants to talk with their SSPs about the possibility of this situation happening, especially if they live alone or if they live with someone who has ongoing medical needs. Ask your SSPs' permission to add their information to your emergency contacts list. Please note that even with this policy, all other SSPNJ policies remain in effect. This means that SSPs are not allowed to drive you to the hospital, and SSPs are not allowed to administer any kind of medical attention, procedures or medicines.

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FINGERPRINTING

Fingerprinting is a standard background check for positions involving public trust, the safety of vulnerable populations and access to sensitive information. It is a **New Jersey Department of Human Services requirement** used to verify an SSP's suitability for the role.

SSPNJ will provide prospective SSPs with a fingerprinting packet before training begins.

- SSPs **must follow the directions in this packet** for fingerprints to be accepted
- Fingerprinting must be completed in person at an **IdentoGO** location in New Jersey
- SSPs **must submit original fingerprinting results** to the SSP Coordinator **before starting training**

Reimbursement for Fingerprinting Costs

Shore CTE will reimburse:

- The full cost of initial fingerprinting
- 50% of the 2-year recertification cost

To receive reimbursement, the SSP must:

- Submit a valid copy of the payment receipt to SSPNJ
- Successfully complete SSPNJ training and/or required professional development

Mandatory Reporting of Criminal Convictions

SSPs are required to notify Shore CTE (SSPNJ) in writing within five (5) business days of any:

- Arrest
- Indictment
- Conviction
- Plea of guilty or no contest
- Entry into a pre-trial intervention program

Failure to comply with this requirement will result in immediate dismissal as an SSP. **There is a policy of zero tolerance for any criminal conviction. A criminal conviction of an SSP will result in immediate dismissal from the SSPNJ program.**

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GIFTS

SSPs shall not accept any form of monetary payment, gift or non-service compensation from a deafblind consumer for services rendered under the SSPNJ program. The SSP's professional compensation is solely provided by the contracting agency.

Deafblind individuals shall not accept any form of monetary payment or gift from an SSP.

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GUESTS ON ASSIGNMENTS

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

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ID BADGE

SSPs are required to wear their SSPNJ identification badge when working. This badge is valid for two years. Renewal coincides with fingerprinting and professional development requirements.

The original ID badge and ID badges issued at 2-year renewals are provided free of charge. Replacement for an ID that is lost is $25.

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ILLEGAL SUBSTANCES/ACTIVITIES

Any illegal substance use, misuse of prescribed medication or illegal activity by an SSP or a deafblind individual will lead to termination from SSPNJ.

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LATENESS

"Late" means not being ready to work at the time scheduled on the Approved SSP Request. ***Both people*** – the deafblind person and the SSP – are expected to be on time and ready to work at the scheduled time.

If the deafblind person is late:

- The SSP will wait 60 minutes past the scheduled meeting time.
- The SSP will make every attempt to contact the deafblind person and/or their transportation.
- If, after 60 minutes, the SSP can't make contact, the SSP will report the assignment to SSPNJ as a No Show.
- SSPNJ will issue a Warning to the deafblind person.
- The SSP hours will count, and the SSP will be paid for the entire assignment.

If the SSP is late:

The deafblind person is responsible for reporting late-arriving SSPs.

- **30 – 60 minutes late:** The SSP will not be paid for this time, and the deafblind person will be credited that service time.
- **More than 60 minutes late:** The deafblind person gets the hours back, the SSP is not paid, and SSPNJ will issue a Warning.

The following consequences will be issued for being late:

- Reported lateness three times in 1 year: 3 months suspension
- Repeat offenders: The Agreement is terminated

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LIABILITY

If the deafblind person or the SSP has an accident or gets hurt during an assignment, the deafblind person and the SSP agree that they will not hold SSPNJ, Shore CTE or its subcontractors responsible, nor will they sue the person with whom they were working. If there is an injury, the SSP or the deafblind person must call emergency services (911) for medical attention. The incident must also be reported to SSPNJ as soon as possible, and an Accident Report must be completed and submitted.

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MANDATED REPORTING

SSPs are considered mandated reporters. This means they must report suspected or confirmed abuse, neglect or exploitation of deafblind program participants within 24 hours. The SSP Coordinator will then continue the reporting process.
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MEDICAL EMERGENCIES

If you have an unexpected, acute medical need that poses a risk ***right now*** to your life or long-term health, contact your CBVI counselor immediately for SSP services for this single, non-recurring need. This is not for regular doctor's appointments; this is for an unexpected emergency health need. All emergency requests are subject to approval by your CBVI counselor. All appointments must be documented with a note from your doctor.

Please note the following:

- Unscheduled hours in your monthly account will be used first.
- You are responsible for finding a support person (family member, caregiver, friend) to relieve the SSP within 24 hours of a hospital stay.*
- If your immediate need for SSP services is expected to exceed 25 hours for a single event, contact your CBVI counselor to ensure the hours are allocated appropriately and that all relevant resources are considered.
- If your total usage of emergency hours becomes extensive over the course of the year, please contact your CBVI counselor; there may be a more appropriate, long-term program that would better meet your needs.

**Currently under review by NJCBVI and SSPNJ and subject to change*

Your CBVI counselor may be able to provide SSP hours for:

- The **FIRST** appointments (including referrals to specialists) and tests ***directly connected to an unexpected, acute illness or injury.*** These must be the first appointments, and they must be completed within 4 weeks of the onset of the health crisis situation. Follow-up doctors' visits and tests must be budgeted within your allotted hours per month.
- Therapies and/or treatments prescribed by your doctor as a direct result of this illness/injury may also be covered.

Examples of illnesses and injuries covered*:* Head injuries, possible broken bones/sprains, burns, acute bodily injury, severe diseases, suspected diseases, testing for suspected diseases, blood poisoning, surgery and same-day surgery, scratched cornea, detached retina, severe cuts/bleeding, broken teeth/mouth injuries and therapies/treatments prescribed by your doctor as a direct result of this illness/injury (OT, PT, cancer treatments, dialysis or transfusions).

Examples of illnesses and injuries NOT covered: Follow-ups to the kinds of appointments listed above, any regular doctors' appointments or visits to your insurance carrier.

Please contact your CBVI counselor with questions about what may be covered for your illness/injury.
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MONEY

There is to be no lending or borrowing of money between deafblind individuals and SSPs.

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MONITORING OF SSP PROGRAM

To ensure the integrity of the SSPNJ program and to ensure high quality services, SSPNJ may observe an assignment at any time. A Violation Notice will be sent when it comes to our attention that a program policy has been broken.

- Two Violations in one year will result in a 3-month suspension of SSP services or removal from the Approved SSPs list.
- The second time that two Violations are issued in a 1-year timeframe, the Agreement will be terminated.

Additionally:

- SSPNJ staff are available to consult should a questionable situation arise in the line of duty.
- SSPNJ provides ongoing monitoring of SSP assignments to ensure that services are being provided in accordance with the established policies and procedures of the SSPNJ program.
- SSPs and program participants must participate in program evaluations.
- SSPs and program participants must report misconduct and/or inappropriate behavior to SSPNJ.
- Deafblind people must complete the Certification section of the Approved SSP Request following each assignment. This section includes a rating of the quality of the assignment. Assignments noted as being unsatisfactory will result in follow-up from the SSP Coordinator.

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"NO SHOWS"

If the SSP is a No Show

- The deafblind person will report the No Show to SSPNJ
- The SSP receives a Warning
- Two No Shows in 1 year: 3 months suspension
- Repeat offenders: Agreement is terminated

If the deafblind person is a No Show

- The SSP reports the No Show to SSPNJ
- The deafblind person receives a Warning
- Two No Shows in 1 year: 3 months suspension
- Repeat offenders: Agreement is terminated

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NUMBER OF HOURS

Deafblind people have an allotted number of SSP hours available each month.

- The number of hours is determined by CBVI.
- These hours cannot be saved and carried over to another month.
- The hours cannot be given or transferred to any other deafblind person.

Minimum # Hours on an Assignment: Two hours, unless both the SSP and the deafblind person agree to a shorter assignment.

Maximum # Hours on an Assignment: As long as the deafblind person has the hours available, and both the SSP and the deafblind person agree, there is **no maximum number of hours** for one assignment.

An option for long assignments (i.e., full-day assignments): The deafblind person can consider using two or three SSPs for several hours each.
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PAYMENT FOR SERVICES

The deafblind person is responsible for verifying and rating the quality of each assignment within seven (7) days of the assignment. They complete the Certification in private and return it to SSPNJ by email, phone, text, fax, regular mail or Google Form.

SSPs should never offer to assist in the Certification process, and this includes completing the Certification, as well as emailing, texting, phoning, faxing, mailing, using the Google Form or otherwise returning the signed Certifications to SSPNJ. SSPs that break this policy will be issued a Warning.

Once the Certification has been received by SSPNJ, SSPNJ sends an Authorization for Payment to the payroll processor, Community Access Unlimited (CAU). SSPNJ strives to send the authorization for payment within three weeks of the assignment. CAU produces the checks and sends them.

In all, this process should be completed within 45 days. **If payment has not been received within 45 days**, the SSP should:

1. Contact sspnj@shorecte.com with the Approved SSP Request number and the date of the assignment. We will verify that the signed Certification was received, and we can tell you when it was authorized for payment.
2. If we have told you that it was authorized for payment, and you still have not received it, contact Yevgeniy Gavrylyul at CAU: YGavrylyuk@caunj.org Yevgeniy can tell you the date the check was/will be mailed.

Upon request, SSPNJ will send a list of the SSP's and/or the deafblind person's outstanding and paid assignments.
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PHYSICAL CONTACT

The relationship between the deafblind program participant and the SSP is professional. Any physical contact not connected to communication, alerting or guiding is prohibited. This includes sexual conduct and/or sexual harassment. Inappropriate behavior must be reported to the SSP Coordinator.
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PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

SSPs must follow ethical standards based on SSPNJ's Code of Professional Conduct, including, but not limited to:

- Possess the professional skills and knowledge required for the situation
- Conduct yourself in a manner appropriate to the situation
- Demonstrate respect for the deafblind person
- Demonstrate respect for other professionals providing services

- Maintain ethical business practices

Confidentiality: All SSPs are expected to maintain strict confidentiality at all times. No aspect of any assignment will be discussed with anyone other than the deafblind person or SSPNJ staff. SSPs should never discuss other deafblind people with the person with whom he/she is working. SSPs can discuss all issues with SSPNJ staff to address problem solving and receive guidance when necessary.
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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

SSPs must satisfactorily complete the SSPNJ Training Program and demonstrate openness to guidance, feedback and constructive criticism from deafblind people and SSPNJ staff.

Within each two-year period, SSPs must also complete at least five pre-approved workshops, seminars, conferences, retreats, camps, clubs, volunteer activities or similar learning experiences related to sensory disabilities, human services or communication. Pre-approval must be obtained from SSPNJ staff before the activity takes place for it to count toward professional development credit.

Requirements for the five activities:

- No more than two can be webinars
- At least one in-person activity must be completed during each calendar year of the two-year cycle (minimum of two total)
- At least one must be hosted by SSPNJ
- For camps, retreats, multi-day trainings, conferences or immersion experiences, each day counts as one activity.

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RENEWING SSPs

SSPs must renew their credentials with SSPNJ every two years. SSPNJ reviews their SSP activity, and SSPs in good standing are offered to renew their credentials with SSPNJ, including updating their fingerprints (required by the New Jersey Department of Human Services) and providing proof of five professional development activities over the past two years. A new SSPNJ ID badge is issued at this time and is valid for the next two years.

SSPs who were in good standing and had completed the required number of professional development activities but let their renewal lapse by not completing their fingerprinting may be eligible to rejoin SSPNJ **by updating their fingerprints** and completing Module 4 training. This training offers a review of skills, in a community setting, as well as a policy update/review. Module 4 may also be used as a refresher for any SSP who has been referred for additional training, incurred Violations and/or Warnings, or has otherwise been recommended by SSPNJ staff for additional training.
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REPORTING

All SSPs report directly to the SSP Coordinator.
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REQUESTING AN SSP

The deafblind person must complete and submit the SSP Request as early as possible. If the deafblind person is unable to submit the request, the CBVI counselor, or a trusted family member or friend approved by the CBVI counselor may submit the request. **The SSP may not submit a request.**

Requests can be sent to SSPNJ by:

- Email: sspnj@ShoreCTE.com
- Phone/Text: 215-284-7881
- Google Form
- Fax: 732-676-7635
- USPS: SSPNJ, 1 Jamie Court, Neptune, NJ 07753

SSPNJ strives to process requests as quickly as possible. From the time the SSP Request is received in our office, SSPNJ allows the following turn-around time:

- If the deafblind person sets up the SSP: 3 days
- If SSPNJ must find and/or confirm the SSP: 5 days

All assignments must be approved before they take place.

If the assignment is approved, SSPNJ will send an Approved SSP Request to the deafblind individual and the SSP. SSPs must have a unique Approved SSP Request for every assignment.

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SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

If the SSP is concerned about the safety of starting or completing an assignment, they should safely discontinue the assignment. For example, if the deafblind person is dizzy and not stable on their feet, but wants the SSP to continue assisting with shopping, the SSP should primarily ensure the safety of the person. This could mean going home or calling an ambulance. In circumstances like these, the SSP should not start or should safely discontinue the assignment.

The SSP should always be comfortable with the safety part of an assignment. The SSP should explain their concern to the deafblind person, and follow whatever reasonable course is necessary to safely discontinue the assignment. The SSP should report the incident as soon as possible to the SSP Coordinator and document the incident.

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SELECTING AN SSP

SSPNJ encourages deafblind people to have at least three (3) to five (5) SSPs with whom they like to work. SSPNJ also encourages deafblind people to select and set up their own SSP from the Approved SSPs list for every assignment.

If necessary, SSPNJ will match SSPs and deafblind program participants based on the skills of the SSP, the needs of the program participant, and the community location of both individuals and the assignment.

The SSP Coordinator and other SSPNJ staff maintain their status as SSPs; however, they can SSP only in emergency situations or when the assignment is complex or unusual.

Please Note: If a deafblind person asks SSPNJ to find an SSP, there is no guarantee that an SSP will be available, or that the deafblind person will like the SSP.

SSPNJ also encourages deafblind program participants to refer people they know who are interested in being trained as SSPs.
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SERVICE ANIMALS

The SSP cannot ask the deafblind person not to bring their guide dog. SSPNJ will note allergies or preferences regarding service animals on the Approved SSPs list.

SSPs should not be expected to walk or care for a service animal. While on duty, the SSP is not to pet or distract the service animal. It is the deafblind person's responsibility to take care of the toileting and feeding needs of their animal.
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SIGNATURE

Under no circumstances will an SSP ever sign documents for a deafblind person, with or without their permission.
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SOCIAL SERVICES REFERRAL

If the SSP observes an issue that is risky to the health and/or safety of the deafblind person, the SSP has an ethical obligation to have a conversation with the deafblind person regarding the observation and how it will be resolved. If the SSP is uncomfortable confronting the situation or unsure of what to say, then they must report the situation to SSPNJ as soon as possible.

Please Note: SSPs are not case managers, advocates, financial planners or counselors. If a need for these professional services is discovered, follow-up services will be provided based on the deafblind person's decision.
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SOLICITING

- **SSPs do not contact deafblind people to advertise their ability to be their SSP.**
- SSPs may not sell any product/s to an SSPNJ program participant.
- SSPs may not share the name of any deafblind program participant/s with anyone who plans to make them the target of a sales attempt.

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TRAINING

Successful completion of the SSPNJ 3-Module Training Program and three probationary assignments is required for every SSP working in SSPNJ.

Supervision for New SSPs: After the SSP has completed formal training, they will complete three probationary assignments under supervision. These assignments are paid at $20/hour and can be completed with an experienced deafblind individual and/or an SSP trainer who will assess and provide guidance and instruction to the SSP, as necessary. Once these assignments are completed, the SSP starts providing independent services at the customary SSP pay scale.

Trainees who do not complete the program ***and*** file all the required paperwork within three months will need to restart training at Module 1. Extenuating circumstances may be reviewed by the SSP Coordinator.

Module 4 Training is for SSPs who let their credentials lapse or for SSPs who need refresher training.
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TRANSPORTATION: LOCAL

The deafblind person is responsible for setting up his or her own transportation. This is not the responsibility of the SSP or SSPNJ, although the SSP can facilitate communication with the transportation service or act as a reader or scribe, as necessary.

The SSP can accompany a deafblind person on public transportation, paratransit, shared ride service (Uber, Lyft), taxis or other hired transportation services. If a friend or relative drives, the SSP has the choice to ride along or to meet at the destination.

The deafblind person is responsible for all transportation costs for themselves and their SSP.

SSPNJ does not allow SSPs to drive deafblind people while on assignments. SSPNJ and its subcontractors assume no responsibility or liability for SSPs or deafblind people who ignore this policy.
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TRANSPORTATION: TRAVEL WITH AN SSP – BUSINESS & LEISURE TRIPS

SSP services provide access. A deafblind person should not have to pay extra to receive that access.

The deafblind person and the SSP must discuss the travel plans and payment arrangements in advance and confirm all details before travel. SSPNJ may assist with this conversation; however, the final decisions are the responsibility of the deafblind person and the SSP.

SSPNJ maintains that a deafblind person should never be expected to personally cover the cost of accessibility. SSPNJ's position is as follows:

When a deafblind person travels with an SSP for business and/or leisure trips:

- The deafblind person does **not** pay for the SSP's transportation (airfare, train, bus, mileage, parking, etc.).
- The deafblind person does **not** pay for the SSP's hotel or lodging.
- The deafblind person does **not** pay conference or event registration fees for the SSP.

If the deafblind person is attending a conference or program, the host organization or sponsoring agency may cover the SSP's travel, lodging and registration as part of providing full access. The deafblind person is responsible for inquiring about this possibility in advance.

If SSP services are provided through a sponsoring organization or agency, that organization's policies regarding SSP travel expense will apply.
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UNPROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOR/ABUSE

The following behavior will not be tolerated:

- abuse of alcohol and/or cannabis
- use of illegal drugs

- verbal or physical abuse
- sexual advances
- flirting
- telling inappropriate jokes
- profanity
- illegal or criminal activity
- any behavior that makes either the SSP or the deafblind program participant feel uncomfortable or threatened

Inappropriate behavior must be reported to the SSP Coordinator. An investigation will be conducted and, if warranted, SSPNJ will suspend the SSP from providing services and/or terminate the Agreement. Legal action will be filed if allegations are of a serious or illegal nature.

If either the SSP or the deafblind person arrives at an assignment and the other person is under the influence of drugs or alcohol, they will cancel the assignment and report it as a Last-Minute Cancellation, and a Warning will be issued.

If there is any dissatisfaction with how the program coordinator handled the situation, the individual can file the complaint with any DB CAN NJ Board Trustee at dbcannj@gmail.com
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UNUSUAL SITUATIONS

Many situations may arise during an assignment. There are times when an SSP must use common sense and their best judgment. The SSP should always re-evaluate and thoughtfully learn from unusual situations. If the SSP becomes unsure of his/her role in any situation, the SSP should contact the SSP Coordinator for guidance.
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VIOLATIONS

A Violation Notice is sent when SSPNJ can verify that a program policy has been broken.

- Two Violations in one year will result in a 3-month suspension of SSP services or removal from the Approved SSPs list; SSPs will satisfactorily complete Training Module 4 before resuming service provision.
- The second time that two Violations are issued in a 1-year timeframe, the Agreement will be terminated.

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WARNINGS

Warnings are issued when either the deafblind participant or the SSP cancels at the last minute (less than 24 hours) or is a No-Show.

- Two Warnings in one year result in a 3-month suspension of SSP services or removal from the Approved SSPs list.
- The second time that two Warnings are issued in a 1-year timeframe, the Agreement will be terminated.

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WORKERS COMPENSATION INSURANCE

SSPNJ strongly recommends that deafblind people purchase workers compensation insurance. This insurance protects the SSPs on your behalf if they are injured while working. SSPNJ suggests calling your homeowner's or renter's insurance company to see if this protection is provided in your current policy.

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