

**Shining a Spotlight on Your Agency Through Online Reviews**



**About *ProviderGuidePlus***

In response to many requests from parents, guardians, and individuals over the years, a collaborative work group has developed an online tool to be used to search for and review providers of services to people with developmental disabilities in Ohio***.*** This easy to use website is called ***ProviderGuidePlus*** and can be found at <https://providerguideplus.com/>

***ProviderGuidePlus*** lists all agency providers certified by the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD) in the state that provide the following services:

Adaptive and Assistive Equipment

Adult Day Support

Shared Living

Career Planning

Career Planning - Assistive Technology Assessment

Career Planning - Benefits Education and Analysis

Career Planning - Worksite Accessibility

Community Respite

County Board CTI - Clinical/Therapeutic Interventionist

CTI - Senior-Level Clinical/Therapeutic Interventionist

CTI - Specialized Clinical/Therapeutic Interventionist

Environmental Accessibility Adaptions

Licensed Residential Facility

Functional Behavioral Assessment

Group Employment Support

Home Delivered Meals

Homemaker Personal Care

HPC Transportation

Individual Employment Support

Informal Respite (Family Only)

Informal Respite (Non-Family)

Intermediate Care Facility ICF/IDD

Interpreter

Money Management

Nonmedical Transportation - Mileage

Nonmedical Transportation - Trip

Nutritional Services

Participant - Directed Goods and Services

Participant/Family Stability Assistance - Counseling

Participant/Family Stability Assistance - Training

Personal Emergency Response System

Remote Monitoring Equipment

Remote Monitoring Service

Residential Respite

Social Work

Specialized Medical Equipment and Supplies

Support Brokerage (Paid)

Supported Living

Vocational Habilitation

Waiver Nursing Services (DD)

Non-Medical Transportation - Commercial Mileage

Non-Medical Transportation - Commercial Trip

Participant Directed Homemaker/Personal Care

Support Brokerage - Unpaid

Waiver Nursing Delegation

The list of agencies is imported every night into the ***ProviderGuidePlus*** website from DODD’s Provider Certification Wizard, so the list is current at all times.

When an agency applies for DODD Certification, they list the counties in which they conduct business and many say that they conduct business in all 88 counties in Ohio. Therefore, many agencies will be found in counties in which an agency actually has no presence. It is recommended that agencies update their information in DODD’s Provider Certification Wizard to more accurately reflect those counties in which they currently do (or plan to) provide services. This will allow for a more accurate search parameter in ***ProviderGuidePlus***.

Once providers begin receiving reviews, the search automatically lists those agencies with the highest star ratings first. For this reason, to make your agency come to the top of the list, providers are highly encouraged to complete your agency’s Profile Page and begin asking people to review your agency.

**Your Agency’s Profile in *ProviderGuidePlus***

One of the best ways to shine a spotlight on your agency is to create a well-presented Profile Page in ***ProviderGuidePlus***. You can do this by adding:

* A picture of your agency’s primary contact person
* Your agency’s logo
* A short, tag-line type of description that will catch a user’s attention
* A longer description that makes your agency stand out
* Your hours of operation
* Links to your agency’s website and social media platforms
* Which services you provide
* Photos of your facilities, services, staff, etc.
* A video that tells about your agency and/or services
* Links to agency brochures, flyers, or other documents you may want to share.

Details on how to create this Profile Page are listed below.

**Login –** To begin, providers must login to the ***ProviderGuidePlus*** site. Your login credentials should have been emailed to the person designated in DODD’s Provider Certification Wizard as the contact person for your agency. If you have not received your login information, please verify that the information in Provider Certification Wizard is correct. Also, check your Spam email box to see if it may be there. If you need additional help, [click here](https://providerguideplus.zendesk.com/hc/en-us/articles/360002407713-I-never-received-my-login-credentials) or go to the “Support for Providers” tab on the ***ProviderGuidePlus*** website and click “I never received my login credentials.” To submit a support ticket, click on “Submit a request” in the upper right hand corner of that page.

**Updating your Agency’s Profile Page** – The best way to see how you can personalize your agency’s Profile Page is to [watch this video](https://providerguideplus.zendesk.com/hc/en-us/articles/360001705753-How-do-I-update-my-listing-) which can also be found by clicking “Help for Providers” and then “How do I update my listing?” on the ***ProviderGuidePlus*** website.

Some important things to remember:

The primary contact person listed on your profile page came from information supplied by DODD’s Provider Certification Wizard. To change it, you need to go to Provider Certification Wizard and change your information there. The information is then updated overnight, so you will see the change the next business day.

The short, or tag-line type description is limited to 100 characters and will appear on the search page, along with your logo and address Use this brief description to say something unique about your services that will catch the searcher’s eye.

The main description is limited to 1000 characters. (The video says there is a 500 character limit, but that has been increased.) To use this space to your advantage, describe what makes your agency unique and why it stands out from the others (i.e. use your elevator speech!) Be creative! In order to be effective, it is recommended that you not use this limited space to describe that your staff are certified in CPR, First Aid, etc. or that you use service descriptions to describe what your agency does. When adding links for your agency’s website and social media platforms, be sure to include https:// before the web address.

For instructions on how to embed a video, click [here](https://providerguideplus.zendesk.com/hc/en-us/articles/360003184613-Can-I-add-a-video-to-my-listing-) or see “Can I add a video to my listing?” under “Support for Providers”.

Under “Services and Funding Types”, all of the services that you are certified to provide are selected by default. You can deselect the services that you do not provide or those for which you are no longer accepting referrals. Please be sure to do this in order to make search results more accurate for those who are using the site to find willing providers. To update the list of services for which you are certified, you must go to DODD’s Provider Certification Wizard. The updated information will then be transferred to ***ProviderGuidePlus*** overnight and you will see the change the next business day.

If you have multiple sites, you should see them listed. This information is provided by DODD’s Provider Certification Wizard. To change it, you must go to Provider Certification Wizard. It will then update ***ProviderGuidePlus*** overnight and you will see the changes the next business day. You can update the profile for each of these locations by repeating the steps that you completed for your main listing.

If you have questions about set-up issues that have no “help” articles listed under “Support for Providers”, you can ask for assistance by clicking ["Submit a request"](https://providerguideplus.zendesk.com/hc/en-us/requests/new) in the upper right hand corner or by sending an email to: [support@providersearch.com](mailto:support@providersearch.com)

Once you have completed your Profile Page, you are ready to ask people who use your services, as well as their guardians and family members, to rate and review your agency.

**Encouraging Users of Services to Provide Reviews**

People look to others to help inform their choices; they want to make the right choice so they tend to look at what others are doing because it gives them confidence that they are making the best decisions. That is one reason online consumer reviews has become so popular.

Data from a BrightLocal consumer review survey agrees with the claim that customer reviews impact peoples’ decisions:

* 84% of people trust online reviews as much as a personal recommendation
* 54% of people visit a company’s website after reading positive reviews
* 74% of people trust local businesses more after reading positive reviews
* 58% of people believe the “star rating” is the most important metric to them

Providers are encouraged to ask the people who use their services, as well as their guardians and families, to post reviews on ***ProviderGuidePlus***. Creative ways to send this message are:

* Include a link to ***ProviderGuidePlus*** on your website
* Display testimonials from ***ProviderGuidePlus*** on your website
* Include a link to ***ProviderGuidePlus*** on social media accounts: Facebook, Instagram, etc.
* Give “post cards” at ISP meetings
* Send “post cards” in direct mailings
* Personally ask people to submit a review
* Provide a link to ***ProviderGuidePlus*** on emails
* Include a link to ***ProviderGuidePlus*** on promotional materials and newsletters
* Display the ***ProviderGuidePlus*** information in your office and/or facility (on the door, a placard at the reception desk, on a bulletin board, etc.)

Once you decide on the methods you wish to use to encourage reviews, be sure to incorporate them into your average routine so they’re a matter of course when dealing with everyone you come into contact with. Don’t be afraid to try a few methods and go with the ones that gain you the best response. Research shows that about 70% of people will follow through with a review when asked.

Once you begin getting reviews, don’t forget to respond to them!

**Responding to Reviews**

Responding to reviews assists you in building relationships with those you provide services to, but they are also public. Your responses will be out there for everyone to see. Handling reviews with grace, gratitude, and a little bit of wit can have a huge impact on the way people perceive your agency. When replying, keep these guidelines in mind:

* Agency leaders need to be the ones to respond to online reviews. When responses come straight from the top, it sends a message to the reviewer and the public that you care about what others think and say about your agency.
* You need to respond to reviews as quickly as you can. This lets people know that you are attentive and considerate of their thoughts. You should try to set aside some time each day to respond to reviews.
* You should respond to all reviews.
* In general, you should try to keep all of your replies short and succinct – three sentences for your whole reply is a good rule of thumb.
* Be specific in response to reviews. Here is a real opportunity to stand out, since most responses to online reviews are generic and repetitive. The more effort someone put into a review, the more personalized and specific your response should be.
* Address the reviewer by name (if you have it) when you respond.
* Express your gratitude for their review.
* Never copy and paste the same message for your response. Always adapt your reply to the specifics of the review.
* Be mindful of HIPPA! Never disclose personal information. Even if a reviewer provides a specific name, do not acknowledge it in your response.
* Always sign your response with your name and title. Add your contact information if you think it is appropriate to the response.
* As a rule of thumb, you will want to mention your agency’s name in responses to positive reviews, but try to avoid it in responses to negative reviews. (This is just in case Google Search may pick it up.)

**Positive Reviews**

Agencies should always respond to positive reviews. Just as you would thank someone in person for a positive comment, you also want to thank an online reviewer. People notice the extra effort. Acting as graciously online as you would face-to-face builds trust and relationships.

When responding to positive reviews, match the tone of the reviewer. If they are enthusiastic, let them know that you are enthusiastic, too!

Thank a reviewer for their kind words. Be specific in your wording. Include your agency name in your reply. Here is an example:

*Hi (Reviewer’s Name), We are so pleased that you (something specific that they mentioned). Everyone at (Agency Name) was so proud to hear such wonderful comments! Thank you for taking the time to let others know about your experience.*

*(Name, Title)*

If a reviewer leaves a glowing five-star review, it can’t get any better, correct? Actually, it can. Responding to positive reviews is an easy way to show the public that you take pride in your agency and are happy that others think you’re wonderful, too!

Here are more reasons why you should always respond to positive reviews:

* It’s the polite thing to do.
* Everyone is looking.
* Actively creating and engaging in positive online conversations about your agency can encourage others to participate in the conversation, too.
* It affects search rankings.

Here are a few more examples of responses to positive reviews:

*Hi (Reviewer’s Name), Thank you for leaving us such a wonderful review. We are glad*

*that you are pleased with our services. Our staff work very hard to provide caring support to everyone at (Agency Name). Your kind words will be shared with all of them.*

*(Name, Title)*

*(Reviewer’s Name), Thank you for leaving such a nice review. Our dedicated staff will be pleased to learn of your high praise. They work very diligently and your kind words will provide them with great encouragement to keep doing what they do!*

*(Name, Title, Agency Name)*

*(Reviewer’s Name), We are incredibly grateful that you took the time to leave us this note. (Agency Name) strives to maintain the highest quality of service and your acknowledgement of our efforts has made our day!*

*(Name, Title)*

**Marginal Reviews**

Research by Brandify has found that, on average, marginal or neutral reviews make up half of all reviews, but only a fraction of these actually receive a reply. These three-star ratings will include a mixture of positive and negative comments. These reviews, too, should always receive a response.

**Negative Reviews**

When people share negative feedback, they are also giving you the opportunity to transfer that criticism into new customers. By facing negative reviews head-on and graciously resolving outstanding issues, you are showing them and others just how you run your agency. No one is perfect. It’s what you do with imperfection that counts and has the potential to make your agency shine!

Your agency is really an extension of you, personally. Therefore, negative reviews can be very difficult. Try not to take the review personally and be sure that your response is calm and non-confrontational. By responding correctly, you maintain your integrity and the integrity of your agency.

Choosing to not reply to a negative review and hoping that the issue will blow over is not recommended. Responding correctly can be a way to heal the hurt feelings of an upset person and will help them, and others, see you in a positive light. If someone brought you a complaint in person, you would try to make it right. The same goes with online reviews.

Picking up on individual keywords in a negative review is a really good way to think about formulating a personalized reply and encouraging a positive outcome. To do that, keep these guidelines in mind:

* Write a short, non-confrontational reply that shows that you’ve read and understand the issue that was raised, even if it is unfounded.
* Be specific and acknowledge the reviewer’s concern. Show sympathy that they have had a bad experience.
* Sincerely apologize for the upset and offer to make things right.
* Thank the reviewer for taking the time to provide feedback.
* Offer to talk to them offline. Provide your phone and email information.
* Sign your response with your name and title.

Here is an example of how to respond to a negative review:

*(Reviewer’s Name), Thank you for your comments. I’m very sorry to hear about your experience. This is definitely not the standard that people have come to expect from us. (Share what normally happens.) Please contact me as I would like to make up for your disappointment.*

*(Name, Title, Phone, Email Address)*

The worst thing you can do with a negative review is to ignore it. Once a negative review is published, it’s important to respond quickly. If there is an actual problem that should be addressed, take care of it promptly. However, be sure to reply to the reviewer as soon as possible – while they are still thinking about it. Once you have resolved the matter, it may be possible to ask the reviewer to edit their review or provide an updated one.

Here are a few more examples of how to respond to negative reviews:

*Dear (Reviewer’s Name), We want to sincerely apologize for your negative experience with our agency. However, we’d like to learn more about what happened. We want to make things right. Please give me a call at (Phone Number). You can also email me at (Email Address) and I will get back to you promptly. I look forward to hearing from you soon.*

*(Name, Title)*

*(Reviewer’s Name), We apologize that our service did not satisfy your expectation. We set a high standard for our agency and are truly sorry to hear that standard was not met in your interaction with us. Your satisfaction is our number one priority. Please contact me at (Phone Number) or (Email Address) so we can discuss this in further detail. I look forward to hearing from you soon.*

*(Name, Title)*

*Dear (Reviewer’s Name), We want to extend our apologies concerning the issue you have faced. We pride ourselves in maintaining the highest quality standards and I hope you will give us an opportunity to discuss this further with you. You can reach me by calling (Phone Number) or by emailing me at (Email Address). I will take care of this personally and hope we can find a resolution that makes you smile.*

*Sincerely, (Name, Title)*

*Hi (Reviewer’s Name), I am extremely sorry to hear that your experience with our agency did not meet your expectation. I would like to hear more, so I hope you will call me at (Phone Number) or email me at (Email Address). I promise I will get back with you promptly.*

*(Name, Title)*

**Conclusion**

By setting up a an accurate and compelling Profile Page, asking the people who use your services to submit reviews, and taking the time every day to monitor and respond to reviews, you have an opportunity to set your agency apart from the others and shine a spotlight on it for others to see. Those who are searching for services in your area will be grateful!

