



Medication Administration in Self-Direction

A Guide to Safe Medication Practices
at Home and in the Community



Medication Administration in Self-Direction: The 2-Minute Version

Medication administration doesn't look the same for every family.

Some individuals:

- Self-administer medications independently
- Self-administer with reminders or other identified assistance
- Receive medication support from a parent, guardian, or other natural support
- Receive medication administration from trained and certified employees
- A family member may also work as a paid employee. When acting in the employee role, applicable training and documentation requirements may apply.

If Employees Administer Medications

Here's what happens:

- The need is discussed with your SSA.
- The support is included in the ISP.
- Boundless helps coordinate training and certification requirements.
- Staff receive Individual-Specific Training (IST).
- Nursing delegation is completed when required.
- Medication administration is documented using a Medication Administration Record (MAR).

Some Supports Require Additional Safeguards

Examples include:

- G-Tube or J- Tube medication administration
- Insulin administration
- Certain health-related tasks

These supports may require nursing delegation, additional certifications, and ongoing nursing oversight.

What If Things Change? That's okay.

Medication needs can change over time. When they do, families work with their SSA and support team to update plans, training, and services as needed.

The Good News!

You do not need to understand every medication administration rule before starting services. The need is discussed with the person's SSA and planning team. The support is reflected in the ISP, and the selected provider helps coordinate the training, documentation, certification, and nursing requirements that apply. If Boundless@Home is selected as the provider, our team helps individuals, families, and employees navigate these requirements.

Key Takeaway

The goal isn't paperwork. The goal is helping individuals receive safe medication support in the way that best matches their needs, preferences, independence, and lifestyle.

Want more details? The remainder of this guide explores each topic in greater depth.



Medication Administration Choices in Self-Direction

One of the benefits of self-direction is flexibility. Every family's situation is unique, and medication administration can be approached in a way that best meets the needs of the individual and their support team.

Some families choose to have trained employees administer medications, while others prefer to manage medications themselves. Depending on the individual's needs and abilities, medication administration may also be completed through self-administration or self-administration with assistance. DODD recognizes that individuals have the right to self-administer medications when they can do so safely.

There is no one-size-fits-all approach. The goal is always the same: ensuring medications are administered safely while supporting health, independence, and personal choice.

Medication Administration by Natural Supports

In some situations, a parent, guardian, family member, or other natural support administers medications rather than assigning medication administration to a paid employee. The person-centered plan should clearly identify who is responsible for medication administration and what paid employees are expected to do if medication support is needed during service hours.

A family member who also works as a paid employee may be subject to employee medication administration requirements while working in that role.

Reasons families may choose to administer medications themselves include:

- Comfort with managing medications
- Complex medication schedules
- Preference for family oversight
- Medical needs requiring frequent monitoring
- Personal choice

If a family chooses to administer medications themselves, employees may still provide other waiver services and supports that do not involve medication administration.

It is important to remember that choosing to manage medications yourself does not impact your ability to utilize other self-direction services. Families should select the approach that best supports the individual's health, safety, and overall needs.





Self-Administration of Medications

One of the goals of self-direction is helping people maintain as much independence as possible. For some individuals, that may include managing their own medications.

The Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD) recognizes that people have the right to self-administer their medications when they can do so safely. In fact, individuals are presumed to be able to self-administer medications unless there is a reason to believe they need support.

What Does Self-Administration Mean?

Self-administration means an individual is able to take their own medication safely, either independently or with limited support. Assistance with self-administration must match the assistance identified in the person's approved assessment and plan. Assistance may include an identified prompt or other specifically authorized support. Employees should not handle, select, prepare, or routinely verify medication unless that responsibility is permitted by the assessment, plan, applicable certification, and provider process.

Some individuals may:

- Take medications completely independently
- Need reminders when it is time for medication
- Need assistance opening containers or accessing medications
- Need support with certain parts of the medication process while still directing their own care

Every person is different, and the amount of support needed may vary.

How Is This Determined?

A person is presumed able to self-administer medication or perform health-related activities unless there is information indicating that support may be needed. A medical or psychiatric diagnosis alone does not establish that the person is unable to self-administer.

The assessment helps identify what the person can do safely, what assistance may be appropriate, and whether support from certified personnel is needed.

The assessment must be updated annually and completed at least every three years. A new assessment may also be needed sooner when circumstances change, including changes in the person's health, abilities, medication route or packaging, routine, environment, provider, or support needs.

Self-Direction Means Having Choices

Not every individual needs a paid employee to administer medications.

Depending on the person's needs and preferences:

- The individual may self-administer medications independently.
- The individual may self-administer with assistance or reminders.
 - Assistance from employees must match the support identified in the person's Self-Administration Assessment and ISP.
- A parent or guardian may choose to administer medications.
- A trained and certified employee may administer medications.

All of these options can be appropriate depending on the individual's needs, abilities, and support plan.



Choosing the Right Approach

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to medication administration.

Some individuals may:

- Self-administer medications independently.
- Self-administer medications with reminders or support.
- Have a parent or guardian administer medications.
- Receive medication administration from trained and certified employees.

What is most important is that medications are administered safely, consistently, and in a manner that supports the individual's health, independence, and personal preferences.

Factors to Consider

When deciding how medications will be managed, it can be helpful to consider:

- The individual's ability to safely manage medications independently
- The complexity of the medication routine
- Whether medications must be administered at specific times throughout the day
- The need for specialized supports, such as G-Tube medications or insulin administration
- The person's desire for independence and involvement in their own healthcare
- Family preferences and comfort level
- The availability of trained and certified staff
- Health and safety considerations

What works well for one family may not be the best fit for another. Medication administration plans should reflect the individual's needs, preferences, abilities, and support requirements.



What Happens When Employees Administer Medications?

Medication administration begins with the planning process. During annual planning meetings, or whenever a change in needs occurs, families work with their Service and Support Administrator (SSA) to discuss the individual's health-related needs and determine what supports are required. The planning team identifies the person's medication and health-related support needs and documents provider responsibilities in the ISP. The applicable Self-Administration Assessment, current orders, service setting, employee role, required certifications, and nursing delegation requirements then help determine how those supports can safely be provided.

As part of this conversation, the planning team will discuss:

- Whether medication administration support is needed
- Who will be responsible for providing that support
- Whether the individual can self-administer medications independently or with assistance
- Whether a parent, guardian, or natural support will administer medications
- Whether a provider agency or employee will be responsible for administering medications

When Boundless@Home is selected as the provider, our team helps coordinate the administrative steps necessary to implement medication support, including identifying training needs, confirming required documentation, communicating with the person-centered planning team, and connecting employees and families with nursing resources when delegation is required. Licensed nurses maintain responsibility for the clinical assessment, decision to delegate, nursing instructions, competency verification, and ongoing nursing oversight required by the delegation.

This may include:

- Medication administration certification for employees
- Collection and review of physician orders
- Nursing delegation, when required
- Development of documentation and medication tracking processes
- Ongoing monitoring and support

Our goal is to ensure that medication administration is implemented safely, accurately, and in a way that supports the individual's health, independence, and daily routine.

A Team Approach

Medication administration is not the responsibility of one person alone. Successful medication administration relies on ongoing communication between:

- The individual
- Family members or guardians
- The SSA and County Board team
- Healthcare providers
- Nursing professionals, when applicable
- Boundless@Home staff and support teams

When everyone works together, medication administration becomes one part of a larger support system focused on helping individuals safely participate in everyday life and the activities that matter most to them.



Understanding Medication Administration Training & Certification

Category 1 is the foundational DODD medication administration certification. It may allow certified employees to administer prescribed oral, topical, oxygen, and inhaled medications and perform certain health-related activities. Employees also receive training specific to the person they support.

At Boundless@Home, we help families understand these requirements and coordinate the necessary training before employees begin providing medication administration supports.

Category 1: Prescribed Medications and Health-Related Activities

Category 1 is the foundational DODD medication administration certification. Depending on the person's needs, setting, orders, and staff responsibilities, it may authorize certified personnel to administer prescribed oral, topical, oxygen, and inhaled medications and to perform specified health-related activities. Certification alone does not authorize staff to support every person or perform every task. Before providing support, the employee must also receive training specific to the individual and must follow the person's current orders, plan, and provider procedures. Medication administration certifications require annual renewal.

Employees who complete Category 1 training may support individuals with:

- Oral medications
- Topical medications
- Inhaled medications
- Certain health-related activities approved by DODD

For many families, Category 1 certification provides the training needed for routine medication administration supports.

Category 2: G-Tube and J-Tube Supports

Category 2 is additional certification for employees who administer prescribed medication through a stable, labeled G-Tube or J-Tube. Employees must also hold Category 1 certification and receive nursing delegation.

Nutrition and fluids delivered through a G-Tube or J-Tube are nursing tasks that also require nursing delegation. The planning team, provider, and nurse help determine the exact training and delegation requirements that apply.





Category 3: Insulin and Injectable Treatments for Metabolic Glycemic Disorders

Category 3 is additional certification for employees who administer prescribed insulin and certain injectable treatments for metabolic glycemic disorders. Employees must also hold Category 1 certification and receive nursing delegation.

Individual-Specific Training

Medication administration certification provides general training. Before administering medication or providing an authorized health-related support to a particular person, the employee must also receive required Individual-Specific Training.

This training may include:

- Physician orders and medication instructions
- Medication schedules and routines
- Health and safety considerations
- Emergency procedures
- Documentation requirements
- Equipment or specialized supports used by the individual
- Individual preferences and routines related to care

Certain Tasks Have Stand-Alone Training

Certain supports, including use of an epinephrine auto-injector, a VNS magnet, and qualifying over-the-counter topical products, have separate DODD training requirements. The provider and planning team can help identify the appropriate training.





A Collaborative Process

Individual-Specific Training is often most effective when it includes the people who know the individual best.

Depending on the person's needs, training may involve:

- The individual receiving services
- Parents, guardians, or family members
- Trusted caregivers or natural supports
- Nurses and healthcare professionals
- Boundless@Home staff and support team members

Families, trusted supports, and the individual receiving services often help guide Individual-Specific Training by sharing important information about routines, preferences, communication, and successful support strategies. This helps employees learn not only what to do, but how to provide support in a way that is personalized and person-centered.

How Boundless@Home Supports Medication Administration

When Boundless@Home is selected as the provider for medication-related support, our team helps individuals, families, and employees understand and navigate the applicable requirements. Depending on the person's needs and the responsibilities assigned to Boundless@Home, this may include coordinating employee certification, confirming required documentation is available, supporting Individual-Specific Training, maintaining required records, and connecting the team with nursing resources when delegation is needed.

Licensed healthcare professionals and delegating nurses remain responsible for clinical orders, nursing decisions, delegation, competency verification, and nursing oversight within their roles.

Whether medication needs are simple or complex, our goal is to help individuals receive safe, effective supports while maintaining independence and community participation.



Nursing Delegation

Whether nursing delegation is required depends on the medication or health-related task, the route of administration, the service setting, and applicable requirements. Some tasks require nursing delegation before a trained employee may perform them.

Nursing delegation does not prevent self-direction. It creates a structured pathway for appropriately trained employees to provide specific supports safely.

What Is Nursing Delegation?

Nursing delegation is the process by which a licensed nurse evaluates an individual's needs and authorizes a trained employee to perform a specific health-related task for a specific person. Delegation helps ensure that individuals receive needed supports safely while continuing to live, work, and participate in their communities.

It is important to remember that nursing delegation is:

- Person-specific – delegated for a particular individual.
- Task-specific – applies only to the identified task.
- Staff-specific – applies only to trained and delegated employees.

A staff member who has been delegated a task for one individual cannot automatically perform that same task for another individual.

When delegation is required, the delegating nurse evaluates the person and the task, determines whether delegation is appropriate, provides or verifies person-specific instruction, establishes written directions, observes the employee's satisfactory return demonstration, documents the delegation, and provides ongoing supervision and reassessment. Delegation is completed before the employee independently performs the delegated task and is reassessed at least annually.

How Boundless@Home Supports the Delegation Process

The selected provider helps coordinate applicable employee training, documentation, and communication with the delegating nurse. The licensed nurse remains responsible for decisions related to nursing delegation, competency verification, and nursing oversight.

While every situation is unique, nursing delegation generally includes:

- Gathering required medical information and physician orders.
- Ensuring employees complete the appropriate medication administration certifications.
- Coordinating with nursing professionals when delegation is required.
- Providing employee training and individual-specific education.
- Maintaining required documentation and ongoing compliance requirements.
- Supporting annual reviews and renewals when applicable.

Our goal is to make the process as straightforward as possible so families can focus on what matters most: supporting their loved one's health, safety, independence, and quality of life.



Tasks That Commonly Require Nursing Delegation

Many prescribed medications can be administered by appropriately certified personnel after required Individual-Specific Training. Whether nursing delegation is also required depends on the medication, task, route, service setting, and applicable requirements. However, some health-related tasks require additional nursing oversight, specialized training, and nursing delegation before employees may perform them independently.

If you or your loved one requires one of these supports, don't worry. Boundless@Home will help guide you through the process and work with your support team to ensure all required training, documentation, and nursing requirements are completed.

Medication Administration Through a G-Tube or J-Tube

Medication administration through a G-Tube or J-Tube requires additional certification and nursing delegation. Nutrition and fluid supports may also require nursing involvement. The person's provider and support team will help determine what requirements apply.

Examples may include:

- Administering medications through a G-Tube
- Administering medications through a J-Tube
- Administering prescribed nutrition through a feeding tube
- Administering prescribed fluids through a feeding tube

Every individual's needs are unique, which is why employees receive training specific to the person they support.

Insulin Administration

Employees who administer insulin require additional certification, person-specific training, and nursing delegation.

The delegation process helps ensure employees understand:

- Physician orders
- Individual-specific care instructions
- Documentation requirements
- Safety considerations
- When additional support or nursing assistance may be needed



Medication Administration at Home and in the Community

When considering self-direction, it is important to think about when, where, and how medications will be administered throughout the day. Some individuals receive medications only at home, while others may require medications during community activities, work, medical appointments, vacations, social outings, or other activities away from home. Understanding a person's medication needs can help determine what level of support will be needed from employees and whether additional training, certification, or nursing delegation may be required.

Questions to Consider

As you build your self-directed support team, consider the following questions:

- Does the individual take medications daily?
- Are medications required at specific times throughout the day?
- Will medications need to be administered while in the community?
- Are there emergency medications that should be available at all times?
- Are there medications that require refrigeration or special storage?
- Does the individual receive medications through a G-Tube or J-Tube?
- Does the individual require insulin administration or blood glucose monitoring?
- Can the individual self-administer medications independently or with support?

The answers to these questions can help determine what training, certifications, and supports may be needed for employees.

Supporting Community Participation

For many individuals, medications are just one part of daily life. People should be able to attend community events, participate in activities they enjoy, spend time with friends, travel, work, volunteer, and pursue their goals while continuing to receive needed health supports. This means medication planning often extends beyond the home.

Families and support teams should think about how medications will be managed during:

- Community outings
- Recreation and leisure activities
- Employment and volunteer opportunities
- Family vacations and travel
- Medical appointments
- Day programs or other scheduled activities

Planning ahead helps ensure supports remain safe and consistent while allowing individuals to fully participate in the activities that are important to them.



Medication Administration in Action

Every family uses self-direction differently. Medication administration supports should be tailored to the individual's needs, preferences, and daily routine. The following fictional examples illustrate general possibilities. Actual requirements depend on the person's assessed needs, ISP, current orders, employee responsibilities, required training, and nursing delegation requirements.

Example 1: Family-Provided Medication Administration

Jacob takes medications each morning and evening.

Because Jacob's parent is home during both medication times and feels comfortable managing medications, they choose to administer medications themselves.

Jacob's employees provide community activities, transportation, and skill-building supports throughout the day, but medication administration remains the responsibility of the family.

This allows the family to maintain direct oversight of medications while still benefiting from self-directed services.

Example 2: Employee Medication Administration in the Community

Maria attends community activities several days each week and is prescribed medication that must be taken at lunchtime.

Because this medication is due while Maria is receiving services in the community, her family and SSA include medication administration support in her ISP.

Boundless@Home helps ensure staff receive the required training and certification so medication can be administered safely while Maria continues participating in the activities she enjoys.

Example 3: Self-Administration with Support

Anthony independently takes his medications but occasionally forgets when they are due.

After completing the self-administration assessment process, Anthony's support plan identifies that he can self-administer medications with assistance.

His employees provide reminders and support as needed, while Anthony remains responsible for taking his medication himself.

This approach promotes independence while ensuring medications are taken safely and consistently.





Example 4: Nursing Delegation for G-Tube Supports

Taylor receives nutrition and medications through a G-Tube.

Because G-Tube medication administration requires additional training and nursing delegation, Boundless@Home works with the family, nursing team, and employees to coordinate the required certifications, delegation, and documentation.

Once all requirements are completed, trained employees can safely support Taylor at home and in the community.

Example 5: Insulin Administration

Brandon requires insulin administration throughout the day.

Because insulin administration requires specialized certification and nursing delegation, staff complete the required training before supporting Brandon with this task.

This allows Brandon to continue participating in community activities while receiving the health-related supports he needs.

Example 6: When Needs Change

Katie has always eaten by mouth and has never required specialized medical supports. Over time, however, Katie begins experiencing significant weight loss and difficulty maintaining adequate nutrition. After working with her medical team, her physician recommends the placement of a G-Tube to help support her nutritional needs.

This is a new experience for Katie and her family.

Katie's changing medical needs did not end her ability to use self-direction. Her team updated the plan and put the appropriate training, documentation, certification, and nursing support in place so employees could safely provide the additional assistance she needed.

Although the change happened unexpectedly, Katie's support team was able to adapt and put the necessary supports in place.





How Is Medication Administration Documented?

One of the most common questions families ask is:

"If I'm not there, how do I know my loved one received their medication?"

When employees are responsible for medication administration, a Medication Administration Record, commonly called a MAR, provides a record of the medication administration documented by the employee.

The MAR helps:

- Support employees in following and documenting current medication orders
- Provide clear documentation of medication administration.
- Support communication between families, employees, nurses, and healthcare providers.
- Promote consistency and accountability.

If medications or physician orders change, it is important to notify your support team so records, training, and documentation can be updated as needed.

Key Takeaways

- Self-direction gives families flexibility in how medication supports are provided.
- Medication administration may be completed by the individual, a parent or guardian, or trained and certified employees, depending on the person's needs and preferences.
- Some individuals can self-administer medications independently, while others may benefit from reminders, assistance, or employee support.
- Employees who administer medications must complete required training and certifications before providing support.
- Certain supports, such as G-Tube/J-Tube medication administration and insulin administration, require additional training, nursing oversight, and delegation.
- Individual-Specific Training helps ensure employees understand the unique needs, preferences, and routines of the person they support.
- Medication administration is documented through a Medication Administration Record (MAR), helping promote accuracy, accountability, and communication.
- If medication needs change, support plans, training, and services can be updated to ensure individuals continue receiving safe and effective support

Remember

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to medication administration.

The goal is not simply to administer a medication. The goal is to support health, safety, independence, and quality of life while ensuring individuals receive the supports they need in a way that reflects their preferences and circumstances. Whether medications are managed by the individual, a family member, or trained employees, self-direction provides the flexibility to create a support plan that works for each unique person and family.



Frequently Asked Questions

What if I don't want employees administering medications?

That's okay. Many families choose to administer medications themselves while employees provide other waiver services and supports. Self-direction offers flexibility, allowing the people directing services to determine what works best for their situation.

What if my loved one can take their own medications?

Some individuals are able to self-administer medications independently or with assistance. A DODD-approved Self-Administration Assessment is used to determine what level of support, if any, is needed. Individuals are presumed able to self-administer unless support is needed to do so safely.

Do all employees need medication administration certification?

No. Employees only need medication administration certification if medication administration is one of their assigned responsibilities.

What is Individual-Specific Training (IST)?

Individual-Specific Training often includes input from the individual, family members, trusted supports, and healthcare professionals to help employees understand routines, preferences, and support strategies specific to the person receiving services.

Why does a nurse need to be involved?

Certain supports, such as G-Tube/J-Tube medication administration and insulin administration, require nursing delegation and additional oversight before employees can safely perform those tasks independently.

How do I know medications are being administered if I'm not there?

Employees document medication administration using a Medication Administration Record (MAR). The MAR provides a record of medications administered, when they were given, and who administered them.

What should I do if medications change?

Notify your support team as soon as possible whenever a medication is added, discontinued, adjusted, or otherwise changed. Changes may require updated physician orders, documentation updates, additional training, or nursing review.

What if my loved one's needs change?

Needs can change over time, and self-direction is designed to be flexible. Families should discuss significant changes with their SSA and support team so the Individual Service Plan (ISP), training, and supports can be updated as needed.