

Guide to Understanding DSMES Services and How to Refer



This guide to diabetes self-management education and support (DSMES) services is part of the [DSMES Toolkit for NPs](#). This toolkit was created with and for nurse practitioners (NPs), in collaboration with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), to help educate more NPs about DSMES services and **how to refer patients**.

This guide complements the recorded webinar and *DSMES Services At-A-Glance* by providing NPs with more information about DSMES services and links to available tools and resources.


The guide includes the following sections:


*




1 What are DSMES Services?


DSMES services are highly effective in improving the health and diabetes management skills of people with diabetes in ways that fit their lifestyle. They are **offered one-to-one or in a group, in person or online**, and **require a referral** from a health care provider. Patients receiving DSMES services will:

 Work with a diabetes care and education specialist (DCES), also known as a diabetes educator, to **set and track goals**. A DCES is a health care provider with specific diabetes-related training and expertise. Many also obtain certifications.

 Learn to manage diabetes using **knowledge, skills, and tools**.

 Build **confidence** and **emotional strength**.

 **Practice** how to fit diabetes care into all their daily routines.

 Find ways to **get support** (in person and online) from their:

- Family
- Friends
- Community
- Health care team.

The American Diabetes Association (ADA) and the Association of Diabetes Care & Education Specialists (ADCES) accredit or recognize diabetes programs providing DSMES services that meet **required national standards**, including use of a curriculum. Curricula are often rooted in the evidence-based framework of the **ADCES7 Self-Care Behaviors[®]**.

Studies have shown that DSMES services can help people make positive lifestyle changes, such as developing healthier eating patterns or increasing activity levels. These changes can ultimately lead to **decreases in A1C levels, prevention or delay of diabetes complications, and improved quality of life**.

Insurance coverage of DSMES services varies, but many private and state Medicaid plans cover it, as well as Medicare.

2 Evidence on Effectiveness

The effectiveness of DSMES services has been published in several journal articles:



[Diabetes Self-management Education and Support in Adults With Type 2 Diabetes: A Consensus Report](#) of the American Diabetes Association, the Association of Diabetes Care & Education Specialists, the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, the American Academy of Family Physicians,

the American Academy of Physician Assistants, the American Association of Nurse Practitioners, and the American Pharmacists Association

[Diabetes self-management education for adults with type 2 diabetes mellitus: A systematic review of the effect on glycemic control](#)

[Group-based diabetes self-management education compared to routine treatment for people with type 2 diabetes mellitus. A systematic review with meta-analysis.](#)

3 Requirements for DSMES Services and Insurance Coverage

To participate in DSMES services, a person must have a **documented diagnosis** of **type 1, type 2, or gestational diabetes** and meet the criteria below. Written referral from a treating health care provider also is required.

REQUIRED ADDITIONAL CRITERIA

Fasting blood glucose	≥126 mg/dL on two separate occasions
2-hour post-glucose challenge	≥200 mg/dL on two separate occasions
Random glucose test	>200 mg/dL with symptoms of uncontrolled diabetes



Insurance coverage of DSMES varies, but many private and state Medicaid plans cover it.

Medicare covers up to 10 hours of diabetes education for people diagnosed in the past year. After the first year, coverage may change. Medicare offers qualifying participants:

- 10 hours of initial DSMES/T in a 12-month period from the date of first session, plus
- 2 hours of follow-up DSMES/T per calendar year with written referral from the treating qualified provider (MD/DO, APRN, NP, PA) each year.

See [Medicare reimbursement guidelines](#).



Note: The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) uses the term diabetes self-management “training” (DSMT) instead of “education and support” (DSMES) when defining the reimbursable benefit (DSMT). The term DSMT relates specifically to Medicare billing.

4 When and How to Refer

DSMES services provide people with additional support to help them make lifestyle changes required to effectively manage their diabetes. It helps them stay motivated, lets them know they are not alone, and can help them stay on track with their management goals.



There are four key times to refer patients with diabetes to DSMES services:

- 1 At diagnosis
- 2 Annually (or when not meeting treatment targets)
- 3 When complicating factors develop
- 4 When a transition in life or care happens

Participating in DSMES services will help your patients be more aware of and receive necessary care. They will be more likely to get **routine lab work, recommended immunizations, medication adherence support, and regular care for eyes, ears, teeth, and feet**. DSMES participants have higher satisfaction rates with their care, improved knowledge, better treatment adherence, more positive outcomes, and strengthened quality of care.

How to Find a Local or Online Program Providing DSMES Services and Refer

1. First, see if your city has a current local, in-person program providing DSMES services. **Go to the [ADCES Program Finder](#) and the [ADA Program Finder](#).** Enter your location information and view your search results.
2. If there is an in-person program in your area, **contact them** and **ask how to refer**. You can also use this [Sample Referral Form](#).
3. If you do NOT find an in-person program in your area, you can:
 - ▶ Reach out to your [state health department](#) or the [National Association of Chronic Disease Directors](#) to **find your DSMES State Specialist** who may know about programs not included in the program locator tools, or
 - ▶ **Contact one of the virtual/online programs** listed in your program locator search results.



5 Getting Accredited or Recognized to Offer DSMES Services

Are you already providing diabetes education and support to your patients? You may be able to become an accredited or recognized DSMES services provider.

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has authorized the Association of Diabetes Care & Education Specialists (ADCES) and the American Diabetes Association (ADA) to grant accreditation and recognition, respectively, to diabetes self-management education and support (DSMES) services providers.



Learn how to become an accredited or recognized DSMES services provider, including requirements, benefits, and a comparison of the ADCES and ADA processes.

- [ADCES Diabetes Accreditation Education Program](#)
- [ADA's Education Recognition Program](#)



6 Additional Resources

Below are links to additional resources related to DSMES services that may be helpful to you.

- ✓ [Referral requirements, documentation, CPT® codes](#)
- ✓ [DSMES/T Sample Referral Form](#)
- ✓ [DSMES flyers, posters, and postcards](#) reflecting different patient populations with space to add your local DSMES program information
- ✓ Patient [visual aids](#) and a [plain language glossary](#)

