



**SENTINEL FOUR**  
Financial Management Service Provider

**Participant Welcome Packet**

# Welcome Packet

## Table of Contents

<b>1. Introduction</b> .....	3
<b>2. Overview of Sentinel Four</b> .....	3
<b>3. Importance of the Welcome Packet</b> .....	4
<b>4. Overview of the Self Determination Program</b> .....	5
<b>5. Role of Financial Management Service (FMS) Providers</b> .....	6
<b>6. Necessary Documentation</b> .....	7
<b>7. Timeline for Enrollment</b> .....	7
<b>8. Setting Up Your Account</b> .....	7
<b>1. Steps to Create Client Account</b> .....	7
<b>2. Security Measures for Account Protection</b> .....	8
<b>9. Expense Submission Guidelines</b> .....	8
<b>10. Client Responsibilities</b> .....	9
<b>11. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)</b> .....	12
<b>11. Contact Information</b> .....	15
a. Phone Numbers .....	15
a. Email Addresses and Website.....	15

# Welcome Packet

## **1. Introduction**

Welcome to Sentinel Four, your trusted partner in Financial Management Services (FMS)! We are delighted to extend a warm greeting as you embark on a journey with us as part of the Self Determination Program in California. At Sentinel Four, we understand the importance of financial well-being and the freedom to make choices that matter most to you. We are honored to be your chosen Financial Management Service provider and look forward to supporting you every step of the way.

As you enter this program, you've chosen a path that empowers you to take control of your life and make decisions that align with your unique needs and aspirations. Sentinel Four is here to ensure that the financial aspects of your journey are seamless, transparent, and tailored to your preferences.

Our commitment goes beyond managing finances; it extends to providing you with the tools and resources necessary to navigate the Self Determination Program successfully. This Welcome Packet serves as a comprehensive guide to acquaint you with our services, Self Determination, and the collaborative partnership we are eager to cultivate with you.

Within these pages, you'll find valuable information on setting up your account, understanding our financial management services, navigating budgeting and reimbursement procedures, and embracing your responsibilities in the Self Determination Program. Additionally, we have included essential contact details, support resources, and frequently asked questions to assist you in making informed decisions.

At Sentinel Four, we believe in the power of clear communication and efficient processes. We invite you to reach out to our dedicated team for any assistance or clarification you may need. Your satisfaction and success are at the core of our mission, and we are here to ensure that your experience with us exceeds expectations.

Thank you for choosing Sentinel Four as your partner in financial management. We look forward to being a reliable support system on your journey through the Self Determination Program.

## **2. Overview of Sentinel Four**

Sentinel Four was founded as a company specializing in professional services such as bookkeeping, payroll management, human resources and consulting. Our background in professional services aligned perfectly with the needs of an FMS company associated with the Self Determination Program. Now, in addition to the services offered at our founding, Sentinel Four operates as an FMS company vendored through the Regional Center. Our company's guiding principles are:

## Welcome Packet

**Integrity:** Integrity within Sentinel Four is the bedrock of trust and ethical conduct. It involves consistently adhering to moral and professional principles, even in the face of challenges. It requires transparency, honesty, and a commitment to doing what is right, fostering a culture of accountability. Sentinel Four's integrity prioritizes fair and equitable dealings with clients, customers, partners, and employees, creating a foundation for sustainable success.

**Professionalism:** Professionalism within Sentinel Four embodies our commitment to excellence, accountability, and ethical behavior. As stewards of the organizations and agencies reputation, we strive for the highest standards. This involves maintaining a polished demeanor, respecting colleagues, and consistently delivering quality outcomes. Professionalism is reflected in timely communication, meeting deadlines, and a dedication to continuous improvement.

**Transparency:** Transparency is the cornerstone of open communication and trust. It involves providing clear insights into decision-making processes, company goals, and performance metrics. A transparent culture encourages accountability and collaboration, fostering an environment where everyone is informed and empowered. Sentinel Four prioritizes transparency to build strong connections with employees, customers, and stakeholders.

**Service Before Self:** Service Before Self is a guiding principle within Sentinel Four that emphasizes a selfless dedication to the greater good. We embody this ethos by prioritizing the needs of customers, colleagues, and the community above personal interests. It involves a commitment to delivering exceptional service, going beyond the call of duty, and fostering a culture of empathy and responsiveness. We hold true that this instills a sense of purpose to our teams, promoting a customer-centric mindset.

### **3. Importance of the Welcome Packet**

The Welcome Packet is a cornerstone of our commitment to providing a seamless and empowering experience for our new clients in the Self Determination Program and Financial Management Services. It serves as a vital bridge, connecting you to the comprehensive suite of services offered by Sentinel Four. Beyond its informational value, the Welcome Packet is a testament to our dedication to transparency, communication, and client empowerment.

In its pages, you'll discover a wealth of information designed to explain the complexities of the Self Determination Program and explain the unique role of Sentinel Four as your Financial Management Service provider. From practical steps to set up your account to a detailed exploration of our financial management services, budgeting, and reimbursement procedures, the Welcome Packet is a roadmap crafted to guide you through every phase of your journey.

More than just a collection of documents, this packet is a commitment to your success. It empowers you with the knowledge needed to navigate the program confidently, make informed decisions, and exercise the freedom that the

## Welcome Packet

Self-Determination Program affords you. As your dedicated partner, Sentinel Four recognizes the significance of clarity and understanding in fostering a collaborative and supportive relationship.

Furthermore, the Welcome Packet is a living resource, continually updated to reflect the latest information, guidelines, and resources. It stands as a testament to our pledge to keep you informed, engaged, and well-equipped to make the most of your participation in the program.

In essence, the Welcome Packet is more than an introduction; it is a symbol of the partnership we embark upon together. Your journey is unique, and Sentinel Four is honored to be the compass that helps you navigate it with confidence and empowerment. Welcome aboard; your success is our shared destination.

### **4. Overview of the Self-Determination Program**

#### **1. Explanation of Self-Determination Program**

Self-Determination Program (SDP) is a program designed to provide individuals with greater control and flexibility in choosing and managing the services and supports they receive. Please note that programs and policies can undergo changes, so it's advisable to check for any updates or changes that may have occurred through.

**Philosophy of Empowerment:** The Self-Determination Program is grounded in the philosophy of empowerment and self-direction. It recognizes the importance of allowing individuals with developmental disabilities to have a greater say in decisions that impact their lives.

**Individualized Service Planning:** Participants in the Self-Determination Program have the opportunity to create an Individual Program Plan (IPP) that outlines their specific needs, goals, and preferences. This plan is personalized to reflect the unique requirements of everyone.

**Budget Control:** One of the key features of the program is that participants have more control over their allocated budget for services and supports. They can make decisions about how to use their budget to meet their needs, whether it's for housing, transportation, employment support, or other services.

**Selection of Service Providers:** Individuals enrolled in the Self-Determination Program have the flexibility to choose their service providers. This allows for a more customized approach to receiving services and support, aligning with the participant's preferences and goals.

**Program Eligibility:** Eligibility for the Self-Determination Program is generally determined by meeting criteria related to developmental disabilities. Participants may need to meet specific requirements to enroll and actively participate in the program.

## Welcome Packet

**Oversight and Support:** While participants have more autonomy in decision-making, there is usually a support structure in place to assist with planning, implementation, and monitoring of services. This may include the involvement of support coordinators or advisors.

It's crucial to stay informed about the latest developments and changes in the Self-Determination Program by referring to official sources, such as the California Department of Developmental Services (DDS) or other relevant state agencies. These agencies typically provide up-to-date information about program guidelines, participant rights, and any modifications to the program.

### **5. Role of Financial Management Service (FMS) Providers**

Sentinel Four, your FMS provider, will play a crucial role in the administration of various self-directed programs, including the Self-Determination Program (SDP). Here's an explanation of the role of Financial Management Service providers:

#### **Budget Administration:**

- Sentinel Four, in conjunction with a Regional Center, will be responsible for helping clients manage their budgets within the guidelines of the self-directed program.
- Sentinel Four will assist clients in understanding the allocated budget, allowable expenses, and how to use funds for various goods, services and support.

#### **Payment Processing:**

- Sentinel Four will facilitate the processing of payments on behalf of clients. This includes payments to service providers, vendors, and other entities that deliver approved goods and services.
  - See (NOTES) for more information regarding payment.

#### **Financial Reporting:**

- Sentinel Four will generate regular financial reports for clients, detailing the status of their budgets, expenditures, and remaining balances.
  - These reports help clients track their financial activities and ensure compliance with program regulations.
  - Financial reports are sent electronically to the Client and the Regional Center Monthly. If requested, Sentinel Four can provide a financial report mid-month.

#### **Compliance and Record Keeping:**

## Welcome Packet

- Sentinel Four will ensure that financial transactions adhere to the regulations and guidelines of the self-directed program.
- Sentinel Four will maintain all records of all financial transactions, providing a transparent and auditable trail for accountability.

### **Mediation and Conflict Resolution:**

- Sentinel Four, in conjunction with a Regional Center may act as intermediaries in case of disputes or conflicts between clients and service providers regarding financial matters.
- Sentinel Four can help to resolve issues and ensure that the interests of both parties are considered within the framework of program guidelines.

In essence, Sentinel Four acts as a financial intermediary, helping clients navigate the complexities of budgeting, payments, and compliance within self-directed programs. The role of Sentinel Four is pivotal in supporting individuals to exercise greater control over their finances while ensuring adherence to program standards.

## **6. Necessary Documentation**

Below is a helpful checklist for you to ensure all documentation has been completed and returned to Sentinel Four.

- Self-Determination Participant and FMS Agreement
- Participant Contact Card
- Independent Service Provider Contact Information (if applicable)

## **7. Timeline for Enrollment**

For all accepted referral forms, received from a qualified Regional Center, Sentinel Four will onboard a client within 45 business days. For more information on “accepted referral forms” [click here](#).

## **8. Setting Up Your Account**

### **1. Steps to Create Client Account**

All clients of Sentinel Four have a unique Electronic Client Folder where all documents are stored and easily accessed by the client, their approved representative, and their Regional Center. Items stored on the portal will include but are not limited to all participant and provider invoices, current and historical monthly budgets, and client contact information. For additional security measures Sentinel Four will not collect or store personal information such as social security numbers or personal bank account information.

## Welcome Packet

During your onboarding process a member of Sentinel Four will create a personalized and secure portal system and assist with the login process with an email address and password.

### **2. Security Measures for Account Protection**

As noted above, Sentinel Four will NEVER use any personal information such as social security numbers or bank account information. If anyone related to your Financial Management Services or from Sentinel Four requests this information, immediately contact your regional center to report the incident.

### **9. Expense Submission Guidelines**

These guidelines are designed to provide clarity and facilitate a smooth process for submitting expenses related to your individualized budget. Please carefully review and follow these steps to ensure timely and accurate processing of your expense requests.

#### **Eligible Expenses:**

- Only expenses specified in your certified spending plan are eligible for reimbursement.
- Sentinel Four can only make payments directly to a business that provides goods or service to remain in compliance with SDP laws and regulations. We cannot reimburse participants for any expenses.

#### **Required Documentation:**

- For each expense, a Sentinel Four Invoice Cover letter must be included. To ensure expedited payment please ensure all elements of the cover letter are completed.
- For each expense, the invoice or receipt from the service provider must be submitted. Please ensure to submit clear and legible invoices indicating the date, description of the service, and the chargeable amount.
- Invoices must also include the name and contact information of the service provider.

#### **Invoice Submissions:**

- Sentinel Four requests all expense forms and supporting documentation be submitted within 48 hours of service.
- Late submissions may result in delays in processing.
- A confirmation notification will be sent for all successful invoice submissions.

#### **Preferred Submission Method:**

- All invoices will only be accepted through our email portal. For unique circumstances some invoices will be accepted through alternative delivery methods. It is our responsibility as the client to communicate with Sentinel Four if special circumstances or handling is required.



## Welcome Packet

- Ensuring all necessary documents are sent to Sentinel Four is the primary responsibility of the client.
- If applicable, independent service providers can send an invoice directly to Sentinel Four.

### Review and Approval Process:

- All submitted expenses will undergo a review process to ensure compliance with program guidelines.
- Once approved, reimbursements will be processed within 10 business days.

### Tracking Expenses:

- Keep a personal record of all submitted expenses for your reference.
- Regularly review your budget to monitor the status of your allocated funds.

### Appeals Process:

- In the event of a denied expense, you have the right to appeal the decision. Contact our Sentinel Four representative for details on the appeals process.

### Assistance and Support:

- If you have any questions or need assistance with the expense submission process, our team is here to help.

Thank you for your cooperation in adhering to these Expense Submission Guidelines. Your commitment to compliance ensures the efficient and effective management of your budget, contributing to the success of your self-directed journey in the Self-Determination Program.

## **10. Client Responsibilities**

As a valued participant, your active engagement and adherence to responsibilities are vital for the success of your self-directed journey. Please review the following client responsibilities:

### Active Participation in the IPP:

- Work collaboratively with your support coordinator and other stakeholders to develop and maintain an accurate and up-to-date Individual Program Plan (IPP).
- Regularly review and contribute to the planning process to ensure that your goals and needs are appropriately reflected.

### Budget Management:

- Take an active role in managing your allocated budget. Understand the budget categories, allowable expenses, and the overall financial landscape of your self-directed plan.

## Welcome Packet

### Accurate Expense Submission:

- Submit expenses in a timely manner, ensuring that all required documentation is clear, legible, and aligns your certified spending plan.
- Use the designated expense submission (including our invoice template) process provided by the Sentinel Four team.

### Communication with FMS Provider:

- Maintain open and transparent communication with your FMS provider. Notify them promptly of any changes in your circumstances, service providers, or contact information.

### Reviewing Financial Statements/Invoices:

- Regularly review financial statements provided by the FMS. Ensure that you understand your financial status, including budget balances, expenditures, and any pending reimbursements.
- Review invoices when they are uploaded to your participant portal for accuracy and inform Sentinel Four of any inaccuracies.

### Service Provider Selection:

- Take an active role in selecting service providers. Ensure that your chosen providers align with your goals, preferences, and the guidelines of the SDP.
- Services providers will be listed on your certified spending plan. You cannot utilize any service provider that is not listed on your plan. If you choose to add or change a service provider you must work with your service coordinator to revise and certify your spending plan before any changes in services can be completed.

### Reporting Issues and Concerns:

- Report any issues or concerns related to your services, budget, or overall experience promptly to your support coordinator or FMS provider.

### Participation in Reviews and Assessments:

- Engage in periodic reviews and assessments with your support coordinator and other relevant parties to evaluate the effectiveness of your services and make any necessary adjustments.

### Education and Advocacy:

- Educate yourself about your rights, the SDP, and FMS processes. Advocate for your needs and preferences to ensure that your self-directed plan aligns with your vision for a fulfilling life.

### Compliance with Program Rules:

## Welcome Packet

- Adhere to program rules and guidelines. Understand the consequences of non-compliance and work proactively to address any issues that may arise.

By actively embracing these responsibilities, you contribute to the success of your self-directed journey and the effectiveness of the SDP and FMS partnership. Your commitment to collaboration and compliance is instrumental in achieving the goals of a self-determined and fulfilling life.

### **Consequences of Non-Compliance**

As a participant in the Self-Determination Program (SDP) and Financial Management Service (FMS), it is crucial to uphold the guidelines and rules established for the effective functioning of the program. Compliance with these guidelines ensures a positive and successful self-directed experience. Failure to adhere to program rules may result in consequences that impact the quality and continuity of services. Please be aware of the following consequences of non-compliance:

#### **Delay in Service Delivery:**

Non-compliance with program guidelines may lead to delays in the delivery of services. Failure to submit required documentation, inaccurate expense submissions, or non-participation in reviews can hinder the timely processing of requests.

#### **Budget Adjustments:**

Non-compliance may necessitate adjustments to your allocated budget. Failure to adhere to guidelines may impact the approval of certain expenses or result in a reassessment of your budget based on demonstrated needs and adherence to program regulations.

#### **Impact on Reimbursements:**

Inaccurate or non-compliant expense submissions may result in delays or denials of reimbursements. It is essential to submit clear and eligible documentation within the specified timeframe to ensure prompt processing. If you receive service that is not on your certified spending plan you may be personally responsible for payments.

#### **Service Provider Concerns:**

Non-compliance with the selection of service providers or failure to communicate changes promptly may result in challenges with service delivery. It is important to actively participate in the selection and management of your service providers.

#### **Reassessment of Program Participation:**

Persistent non-compliance may lead to a reassessment of your continued participation in the FMS program. This could involve a review of your eligibility or the need for additional support and oversight.

## Welcome Packet

### **Communication and Education:**

In cases of non-compliance, there will be an increased emphasis on communication and education. It is our commitment to work with you to address any challenges, provide clarification on guidelines, and support your understanding of program expectations.

### **Appeals Process:**

Participants have the right to appeal decisions related to the consequences of non-compliance. The appeals process allows for a thorough review and consideration of individual circumstances.

These consequences are intended to maintain the integrity of the SDP and FMS, ensuring fair and consistent application of program rules. Our goal is to collaborate with you, offering support and guidance to foster a positive and successful self-directed experience.

## **11. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

### **Q. What are Financial Management Services (FMS)?**

A. Financial Management Services (FMS) help participants manage their individual budget and spending plan. The FMS does not control the budget or spending plan. The FMS supports participants by paying for the services they choose.

The FMS also makes sure the participant has funds to purchase needed services and support for the entire year. The FMS provides the participant and the regional center with a monthly expenditure report. This report provides the following information:

- The amount of funds allocated by budget category;
- The amount spent in the previous 30 days; and,
- The amount of funds remaining in the individual budget.

### **Q. Does everyone participating in the Self Determination Program have to have an FMS provider?**

A. Yes. SDP participants are required to utilize the services of an FMS provider of their choosing. The FMS provider must meet standards and certifications set by the department and be vended by a regional center.

### **Q. Who can be a Financial Management Services Provider?**

A. Any provider or person (except a relative, legal guardian or other legally responsible person) chosen by the participant that meets the required qualifications and certifications and is vended by a regional center may be an FMS provider. More information can be found at FMS Requirements.

## Welcome Packet

### **Q. What is an individual budget and spending plan?**

A. The individual budget is the amount of money an SDP participant has available to purchase needed services and supports. The spending plan is how that money will be used to purchase services and supports. The individual budget is determined by the individual program planning team and is based upon the amount of purchase of service funds used by the individual in the most recent 12-months. This amount can be adjusted, up or down, if the individual program planning team determines that the individual's needs, circumstances, or resources have changed. Additionally, the individual program planning team may adjust the budget to support any prior needs or resources that were not addressed in the individual program plan.

### **Q. What goods and service can I utilize/purchase through the SDP FMS program?**

A. At the most basic level, a participant's individual spending plan include three distinct categories of spending. Those categories are *living arrangements* (respite services, live-in caregiver, etc.), *employment and community participation* (community integration supports, training and education, etc.) and *health and safety* (environment accessibility adaptation, dental services, etc.). All goods and services purchased through the SDP FMS program must align with the individual program plan to accommodate participant needs. While the goods and services purchased through Sentinel Four must fall into one of those three categories, the goods and services available to participants is immense. A large though not comprehensive list of goods and services available to participants can be found on the Department of Developmental Services website.

### **Q. Can I utilize goods or services from any business that I want?**

A. In general, no you can't purchase goods or services from just any business. But Sentinel Four can work with you within the limits of your spending plan to utilize businesses that may not traditionally be utilized by the Regional Center. Sentinel Four can assist you in obtaining goods and services from nearly any business so long as the goods or services they sell fall within the parameters of your spending plan. There are a few steps that you and Sentinel Four can take to obtain services from from businesses. The great thing about being an SDP participant is that you have more choices on fulfilling your needs. With Sentinel Four's assistance, your options for purchasing goods and services are increased dramatically.

### **Q. As a Self-Determination Program participant, would I pay my providers directly and get reimbursed by the Financial Management Services entity, or would I submit the expenses to the Financial Management Services entity for payment to my providers?**

A. No. The FMS provider pays all providers, including employees hired by the participant, directly.

### **Q. Who pays for the cost of my FMS provider?**

A. Effective July 1, 2022, the cost of the FMS provider is paid by the regional center outside of the participant's individual budget. Additional information about this change may be found in the Department's July 27, 2022 Directive.

## Welcome Packet

**Q. How will I know how much I have spent and how much I have left to spend?**

A. Spending plans are based on 12 month periods. Each spending plan includes a total budget in addition to budget categories. Sentinel Four will provide you with a monthly budget statement that breaks down how much you spent during that month in total and by category. Additionally, the statement will show you how much you have spent year to date and the amount of remaining funds available to you.

**Q. Are the services provided by the FMS provider counted when determining the FMS rate?**

A. No, the FMS provider is funded as a separate service outside of the individual budget.

**Q. Will FMS providers be expected to verify the use of generic resources?**

A. The participant's individual budget may not include funds for services that are available from generic agencies such as IHSS, Medi-Cal or school districts. Regional center service coordinators will continue to verify the use of available generic resources. The FMS provider will only use the funds in the individual budget to pay for services identified in the participant's Spending Plan.

**Q. Where do I find more information about FMS?**

A. The Department has a directive, which contains detailed information regarding the role of the FMS provider. You can view the Department's directive at FMS Roles. You may also find it helpful to look at the FMS model comparison chart which provides information about the tasks and responsibilities between you and your FMS provider.

## Welcome Packet

### **11. Contact Information**

a. Phone Numbers

Office Number: 530-515-2948

a. Email Addresses and Website

[www.SentinelFour.com](http://www.SentinelFour.com)

[www.dds.com](http://www.dds.com)

**General Questions or Referrals:** [fms@sentinelfour.com](mailto:fms@sentinelfour.com)

**Invoice Submission:** [invoice@sentinelfour.com](mailto:invoice@sentinelfour.com)