NORTHEND

TENNESSEE AGENCY PATH INSIGHT

How to Choose the Right Tennessee Agency Path

Tennessee uses different licensing authorities for nonmedical personal support, disability-focused professional support, skilled home health, and hospice. The correct path depends on the services, population, payer, and Certificate of Need requirements.

Personal Support Services Agency (PSSA)

This is Tennessee's primary nonmedical personal-support pathway. It is licensed through the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services and applies when an agency serves people who have a chronic condition and substantial limitations in at least two major life activities.

Services may include self-care assistance, household help, personal assistance to access community activities, and education services. The rules contain exemptions for limited models such as housekeeping-only, transportation-only, family care, and a person serving only one recipient without holding out as a business.

Professional Support Services Provider

This Health Facilities Commission license is different from Personal Support Services. It covers qualifying nursing and occupational, physical, or speech therapy services delivered to individuals with mental, intellectual, or developmental disabilities pursuant to a contract with the state agency financially responsible for those services.

A home care organization authorized to provide only Professional Support Services is exempt from the Certificate of Need requirement. The population, state contract, professional staffing, and service scope must still match this license.

Home Health Agency

The skilled home health path is licensed by the Tennessee Health Facilities Commission. Home health services include skilled nursing, physical, occupational or speech therapy, medical social services, home health aide services, and certain medical supplies or appliances furnished in the patient's residence.

A Certificate of Need is generally required before establishing and licensing a new home health agency, although narrow exemptions exist for certain pediatric-only and federal energy-worker programs. State licensure, Medicare certification, accreditation, TennCare enrollment, and payer contracts are separate approvals.

Hospice and Residential Hospice

Tennessee separately licenses a hospice organization and a residential hospice. A hospice provides interdisciplinary care to terminally ill patients in home or community settings; a residential hospice adds a licensed inpatient setting. A Certificate of Need is generally required before initiating hospice services, subject to narrow statutory exceptions.

Questions to consider

- Will the agency provide nonmedical ADL support, skilled nursing or therapy, disability-focused professional services, or hospice?
- What chronic-condition or disability population will the agency serve?
- Will services require a state contract, physician orders, Medicare certification, or a Certificate of Need?
- Will the agency operate from one licensed location or add branches and service areas?

Two names that sound alike

Personal Support Services and Professional Support Services are not interchangeable. They use different regulators, serve different qualifying populations, and authorize different services. Confirm the category before purchasing policies or building the staffing plan.

Certificate of Need comes first

Home Health, Hospice, and Residential Hospice generally remain CON-regulated in Tennessee. The CON process addresses the proposed service area, need, staffing, financial viability, quality, and consumer advantage. A CON does not replace the later licensing or federal certification process.

Application and survey readiness

HFC licenses are issued for the applicant, premises, and approved geographic area and are renewed annually. A new HHA may not admit patients or hold itself out as operating before licensure. PSSA applicants complete the required documentation and an initial electronic desk audit before an initial license is issued.

Current Medicare-enrollment alert

As of November 2026, HFC is warning new HHA and hospice CON applicants about the federal six-month moratorium, effective May 20, 2026, that temporarily pauses processing of initial Medicare enrollment applications. Confirm the current CMS status before relying on a Medicare timeline.

Build the agency in the right order

Choose the population, services, payer, and service area first. Then confirm the regulator, CON status, location, staffing, policies, survey, certification, and enrollment requirements before marketing or admitting clients.

Planning a Tennessee agency?

NorthEnd Consulting helps owners identify the correct regulator and approval path, then prepare the licensing documents and operational structure that match the agency plan.

Visit northendconsultants.com to discuss your agency plan

Current as of November 2026. Requirements, forms, fees, CON rules, service-area approvals, and the federal enrollment moratorium may change. Licensing, certification, accreditation, enrollment, and payer contracting are separate decisions controlled by the applicable authorities. This is a general planning resource. NorthEnd Consulting does not guarantee approval.