



Florida Needs To Offer Providers of Developmental Disability Services a Fair Rate

By Sylvia James-Miller

The Individual Budgeting Home and Community Based Waiver administered by Florida's Agency for Persons with Disabilities offers supports and services to assist almost 30,000 individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) to live in the community by ensuring that their health and safety needs are met, as well as providing services to improve their access to their community and a meaningful life.

This waiver gives individuals with developmental disabilities an alternative to institutional care. Florida's general revenue funds match federal Medicaid reimbursement for Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) Waivers. The match from Medicaid is 60.51 percent of Florida's contribution. Instead of institutional care, individuals with I/DD can choose to live at home with their families, live independently or live in small group homes at a much lower cost.

Reductions in waiver funding that were experienced for several years until 2014, resulted in multiple reductions to services and significant cuts to provider rates, or, wages to paid professionals who provide essential care to individuals with developmental disabilities. Retaining a qualified workforce is reaching crisis proportion with very large turnover rates and limited choices for services. Florida needs to again reinstate the provider rates from 2004 that will maintain and improve the availability of a qualified workforce that can adequately address the needs of individuals with developmental disabilities. An across the board 7 percent provider rate reinstatement will be a good start to stabilizing this workforce.

In the 2015 edition of the State of the States in Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, Florida is ranked 50th for its fiscal effort of total spending and community spending for 2013 I/DD services. We can do better than that! Providers are receiving rates for services that are 14 percent lower than they were in 2004. Illustrating this crisis is the 42 percent reduction of providers who offered several services and now offer one service. Furthermore, multiple unfunded mandates have been added in the form of billing requirements, background screening of staff, new licensure standards, staff training and experience requirements, and now additional residential and community integration standards.

The Florida Developmental Disabilities Council is grateful for the funding that has taken individuals with developmental disabilities off the waiting list over the last few years. These

individuals and all others receiving funding need to receive stable services to fully access their goals for a productive life. To do so, Florida needs to offer providers of developmental disability services a fair rate that will maintain and improve the availability of a qualified workforce for individuals with developmental disabilities. An across the board 7 percent provider rate reinstatement is required this year to begin the process of stabilizing the iBudget service system.

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