



## **FLORIDA DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COUNCIL, INC.**

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### **The Individual Budgeting/Home and Community Based Services Waiver – a lifeline for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities to ensure choice, independence and access to their communities**

- **The Council urges the Florida Legislature to ensure that individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families who receive the Individual Budgeting/Home and Community Based Services Waiver have stable and qualified service provider staffing for delivering waiver services. Providers need greater compensation. Today's Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) iBudget Waiver reimbursement rates are on average 14.17% lower than they were in 2003!**
- **The Council urges the Florida Legislature to continue their support of a meaningful long-term commitment to eliminate the Individual Budgeting/Home and Community Based Services Waiver waitlist and to appropriate enough funding for any new individuals on the Waiver waitlist in categories three, four and five.**

The Individual Budgeting Home and Community Based waiver administered by the 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. The reductions in waiver funding that were experienced for several years until 2013 resulted in multiple reductions to services and significant reductions to provider rates. Today's Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) iBudget Waiver reimbursement rates are on average 14.17% lower than they were in 2003! Retaining a qualified workforce is reaching crisis proportion with increased turnover rates, little service availability and the closure of group homes and other provider businesses. Florida needs to offer providers a rate that will maintain and improve the availability of a qualified workforce that can adequately address the needs of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Provider agencies and individual providers are facing increased insurance costs and the state has added multiple unfunded responsibilities in the form of additional billing requirements, background screening costs for staff, licensure standards, staff training and experience requirements. Remaining on the current path will continue the deterioration of a network that exists to provide for Florida's most vulnerable citizens. Florida has seen a 29.8% drop in the number of providers actually providing services since FY 07-08; and, agencies who were providing multiple (two or more) services show a 42% reduction over the last 8 years.

Florida's expenditures on its most vulnerable individuals are very low compared to other states recovering from the Great Recession. According to *The State of the States in Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*, (10<sup>th</sup> Edition, 2015, Braddock), Florida's fiscal effort in 2013, or spending for intellectual and developmental disability services (I/DD) per \$1,000 of aggregate statewide personal income, ranked 50<sup>th</sup> out of 51 entities (50 states plus the District of Columbia). Florida's fiscal effort for I/DD services has decreased 13% since 2011!

There are 21,455 individuals on the waitlist for Waiver services as of August 25, 2015. Funding was allocated during the 2015 legislative session to take about 2039 individuals off the waitlist, making this the third time in eight years that individuals were taken off the waitlist. The problem of the Waiver waitlist is a longstanding one and reducing the number of people on the waitlist requires continued long-term support. The Council understands the financial commitment needed to compensate providers and still wants to maintain the positive waitlist reduction momentum from the past three years. Therefore, the Council requests funding to remove new individuals on the iBudget Waitlist in categories three through five with the understanding that the provider infrastructure must be addressed first before addressing the needs of individuals in categories six and seven.