



Florida
Developmental
Disabilities
Council, Inc.

Legislative Platform 2023



Invest in home- and community-based services for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Position Statement

The Council supports a Medicaid Home- and Community-Based Services waiver for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The waiver must include services that encourage inclusion in the community; a safe, healthy, meaningful life; and help the individual avoid costly, restrictive institutional care.



LEARN MORE

Margaret J. Hooper,
Director of Public Policy and Advocacy
email: MargaretD@fddc.org
website: www.fddc.org

Issue

This year, the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council (FDDC) will prioritize talking with lawmakers about the value of investing in Florida's Home- and Community-Based Services (HCBS) Medicaid waiver for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). This waiver is referred to as the iBudget waiver, whose recipients waive their rights to an institution and features the provision that each person's plan of service is individualized to their unique needs for health, safety, and community inclusion.

Last year, Personal Support providers received rate increases to \$15 an hour to encourage providers to enter the profession and to retain those in it who were earning lower rates. While the Council is monitoring the outcomes of this investment, it now appears that in several areas of the state, there are not enough Support Coordinators in the system to initiate and develop service plans and a shortage of Behavior Specialists and other providers to assist individuals and their families with necessary services.

Support Coordinators report increased caseloads, burdensome reporting requirements, and difficult reporting systems. A few years ago, the Legislature required independent support coordinators to work for organizations and the loss of income that resulted due to administrative costs has not incentivized these workers to remain in the profession with the increased workload.

Unfortunately, the need for behavioral services is increasing for children and young adults and there are not enough behavioral service providers to meet the need. Foster care diversion programs for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and adults with I/DD who are on the waiver and need behavioral service providers are going unserved and many are placed in psychiatric hospitals through the Baker Act when this could have been prevented with in-home behavioral services.

Recommendations



The Council supports estimating increases in utilization that accurately reflect the additional needs of individuals on the iBudget waiver.

Service utilization estimates and management are a crucial way to predict and contain costs. Currently, the need for more services for existing waiver recipients is the largest reason for perceived deficits. The actual biggest reasons for increased service needs are due to aging caregivers, aging waiver recipients, and an individual's graduation from high school.



The Council recommends that a significant number of individuals on the iBudget waitlist be transitioned from the list each year with the goal of eliminating it. A careful analysis of who is on the waitlist should be undertaken and reviewed yearly.

Lawmakers should include a yearly reduction of the iBudget waitlist with the goal of eliminating it. Policymakers and the public would benefit from a detailed analysis of the largest waitlist categories six and seven. It would add to understanding the current needs of those on the waitlist and help predict future needs by gathering information about the length of time people have been on the waitlist and what services they will need.



The Council supports creating a robust case management and support coordination workforce to address the needs of individuals with I/DD.

The State needs to encourage and employ individuals to provide the case management services that are essential to create and implement a person-centered service plan. Incentives can include rates commensurate with experience and training, along with streamlined reporting systems and burdensome regulations that must be met. This will increase the availability of providers and improve workforce stability.



The Council supports addressing the behavioral needs of individuals with I/DD.

Individuals with I/DD are having extraordinary challenges finding behavioral services even when they are in crisis situations. Involuntary commitments through the Baker Act and voluntary hospitalizations are on the rise because families and providers are unable to care for those in crisis at home. Active recruitment of providers and priority funding for Intensive Behavioral (IB) and Behavior-Focused (BF) group homes are recommended. Also, active recruitment of behavior therapists and a larger rate differential are essential for personnel managing extreme behaviors that are typical in an IB group home placement.