

2021 Advocacy Priorities

Supporting the Intellectual Disability (ID) & Autism (A) Community and the People who Provide their Care

Increase DSP Compensation to Support the Workforce in the Community ID System

The current COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the strain on an already fragile workforce of caregivers. Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) are underpaid, and it has an enormous impact on existing services to individuals and families. With an additional 13,000 Pennsylvanians on a waiting list and not receiving benefits, it is essential to improve DSP wages to sustain our workforce, build capacity, and stabilize services. A competitive living wage is vital for DSPs.

- Over 55,000 Pennsylvanians with intellectual disability, many with highly complex needs, are supported by the Community ID system.
- A recent statewide survey indicates that the mean wage for a DSP in Pennsylvania is approximately \$13.25 per hour, far below the average wage of \$18.00 per hour paid in the remaining state centers.

Pennsylvania Title 55, Chapter 6100 Regulations require that the Commonwealth reevaluate the ID/A fee schedule every three years at a minimum. The 2022-23 Fiscal Year will mark the first year since the inception of Chapter 6100 regulations in October 2019 that the Commonwealth will review rates. The prevailing rates adopted are based on U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) wage data from May 2015. **The Commonwealth must adopt new rates that reflect the demands and responsibilities of the job. Rates must be sufficient to attract and retain an adequate workforce of frontline workers to support and protect our most vulnerable citizens. We must see new rates in the FY 2022-23 budget, and our advocacy must focus on this outcome.**

Application of an Annual Market-Based Index to ID/A Rates is Essential for Quality & Stability

For providers to simply maintain a position in a competitive marketplace for workers, the Commonwealth must apply an annual, market-based index to the fee schedule rates for the ID/A system to keep pace with inflation and other rising costs that occur over an individual's lifespan. In January 2021, Pennsylvania House Representatives Dan L. Miller and Brandon J. Markosek, along with 12 other co-sponsors, reintroduced a bill to meet this standard. **We must demonstrate broad support to reintroduce this legislation and engage individual citizens and stakeholder groups across every community.**

- Unpredictable discretionary appropriations are insufficient to sustain changes in current services and respond to the significant waiting lists. A nationally recognized index is a simple, efficient, and less costly method to ensure rates keep pace with inflation.
- The Commonwealth serves as the single-payer for the community ID/A system. Each year there are no increases to the fee schedule rates, which leads to costly risks for individuals served, providers, and the community.

Simplifying our Community ID/A System for Greater Access & Improved Efficiency

System simplification is essential to remove barriers to available resources. Eliminating duplication and unnecessary administrative requirements that do not contribute to quality is critical.

- Regulation that is complex and inconsistent creates inflexibility in service delivery designed to meet the individuals' needs.
- Oversight is layered, repetitive, and inconsistent, and it has no impact on improving outcomes.

We must develop a comprehensive plan to submit to the Office of Developmental Programs that would include specific recommendations to increase service availability and reduce the administrative burden that unnecessarily increases costs and provides no benefit to families and individuals served.