

THE TIME HAS COME TO END THE DD WAITLIST

A proposal to ensure access to quality services and enhance IDD system capacity

BACKGROUND

Colorado currently has ten Medicaid waiver programs that provide services to people with disabilities. These waivers provide supports in the person's home and community to help with activities of daily living like bathing, getting dressed, finding and getting to work, and participating in community life. The Developmental Disabilities (DD) waiver is designed to serve people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) who need access to 24/7 support and supervision. *It is the only Colorado waiver that still has a waiting list.*

THE PROBLEM

Waiting List for DD Services

Unfortunately, despite the intensive level of care needed by people on the waiting list, it continues to grow and today totals about 3,000 Coloradans. Many of these individuals have been waiting more than a decade for the critical supports they need to fully participate in their communities. Despite a 2014 General Assembly decision (HB14-1051) to direct HCPF to create a comprehensive plan to eliminate the waiting list by 2020, no clear plan currently exists. While we have made some progress to help people come off the waiting list in recent years, a long-term solution is sorely needed.

IDD System Capacity

Because Medicaid is the only funder of these services, IDD providers rely on Medicaid reimbursements for 90-98% of their revenues and they cannot shift costs to the people they serve or private insurance payors like other Medicaid providers. IDD providers are therefore disproportionately affected by economic factors such as the rising minimum wage and inflation. In 2008, the baseline rate structure for IDD services was set at only 76% of the cost of doing business. Since then, rates have continued to lag far behind inflation and increasing costs. For example, in the last five years, the Colorado minimum wage has increased 34.7%, while IDD waiver rates have increased only 11.6%. This disparity will be compounded by local minimum wage increases allowed by HB19-1210. Despite the unique budgetary reality that IDD providers face, Colorado currently sets one common policy rate increase for all Medicaid services, including IDD. Keeping IDD rates included in the common policy makes it difficult to remedy decades-long structural financing issues, placing strain on the service system, and limiting access to services.

System capacity and addressing the waiting list are inextricably linked – adding more people to an underfunded system simply means that, instead of waiting for enrollment, people wait to find providers. We call this the “invisible waiting list”.

THE SOLUTION

To advance the goal of eliminating the waiting list while ensuring system capacity, the General Assembly should:

- **Commit to a 6-year, phased-in elimination of the DD waiting list.** In each of the next six years, Colorado should enroll one-sixth (about 500 people) of the individuals on the DD waiver's As Soon As Available waiting list; and
- **Remove IDD rates from the common policy and tie future increases to the Denver-Boulder-Greeley Consumer Price Index (CPI)** to ensure the availability of providers to serve new and existing enrollees.

THE COST

Year one of the six-year waiting list elimination coupled with a rate increase based on CPI (approximately 2.7% in 2018) amounts to \$26 million General Fund (not including savings from people moving off the SLS waiver). For every dollar Colorado invests, the federal government provides a 100% match, doubling the impact. Once fully implemented after six years, the lives of 3,000 Coloradans and their families will forever be changed.

Alliance is a statewide association of Community Centered Boards (CCBs) and Program Approved Service Agencies (PASAs) that provide services and supports to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Alliance members serve over 10,000 individuals with IDD and employ 3,200 DSPs and case managers throughout Colorado.
www.AllianceColorado.org



IN SUPPORT (Updated 10/30/19)

Advocacy Groups:

- The Arc of Colorado
- Disability Law

Community Centered Boards:

- Blue Peaks Developmental Services, Inc.
- Colorado Bluesky Enterprises, Inc.
- Community Connections, Inc.
- Community Options, Inc.
- Developmental Disabilities Resource Center
- Developmental Pathways
- Eastern Colorado Services for the Developmentally Disabled
- Envision
- Foothills Gateway, Inc.
- Horizons Specialized Services
- Imagine!
- Inspiration Field
- Mountain Valley Developmental Services, Inc.
- North Metro Community Services
- Southeastern Developmental Services, Inc.
- Southern Colorado Developmental Disabilities
- Starpoint

Provider Agencies:

- A Better Life Experience, Inc. (ABLE)
- A Brighter Community, LLC
- Ability Specialists
- Activity Options
- Ariel Clinical Services
- Ascendigo Autism Services
- Behavior Services of the Rockies
- Belk Model, LLC
- Bethesda Lutheran Communities
- C.A.R.E. Inc
- Colorado Autism Consultants

Provider Agencies, cont.:

- Community Advantage
- Community Link
- Community Living Alternatives
- Community Support Services
- Continuum of Colorado
- Cottonwood Community Alternatives
- Devereux Advanced Behavioral Health - Colorado
- Dungarvin Colorado, Inc.
- Dynamic Dimensions, Inc.
- Easterseals Colorado
- Elevated Supports
- Evergreen Service Providers
- FRIENDS of Broomfield
- Garden, Inc.
- Jewish Family Service
- Jordan Residential and Vocational Services
- Karuna Care Services
- Laradon
- Metro Support Services
- Mosaic
- Oliver Behavioral Consultants
- Overture
- Parker Personal Care Homes, Inc.
- Pueblo Diversified Industries
- Quality Life Services
- Rehabilitative Rhythms Music Therapy
- Sample Supports
- Schaefer Enterprises
- Stepping Stone Support Center
- Support, Inc.
- Thrive Community Options
- VitalCare
- Wellspring Community

Email jrael@alliancecolorado.org to join this list!