



May 5, 2021

Molly Magarik  
Secretary, Delaware Department of Health and Social Services  
1901 N. DuPont Highway  
New Castle DE 19720

Dear Molly:

In preparation for our meeting on May 11<sup>th</sup>, I am forwarding the following suggestions that have been made by A.N.D.'s membership regarding what they feel should be deemed acceptable uses of the time-limited 10% increase in federal funding for Home and Community Based Services.

**A. Bring programs to full participation levels by assisting providers with the resources needed to attract and retain their Direct Support Professionals, especially those that are needed for re-opening of day programs or to maintain required staffing ratios in residential programs.**

- 1) Offer "hazard pay bonuses" to Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) who have worked in residential settings in which they needed to care for people diagnosed with COVID-19.
- 2) Give "thank you" bonuses to DSPs for working in residential settings on shifts that are difficult-to-staff (nights, weekends).
- 3) Give retention bonuses to DSPs who have maintained their employment for 6 months or longer.
- 4) Offer incentives to attract new workers to replace those that have been permanently lost to residential and day program providers (for example, sign-on bonuses).
- 5) Provide payments to providers for DSP training, so that it can be completed by DSPs outside of their regular work hours during which they are required to meet staffing ratio requirements.
- 6) Review staff training requirements and update/modify them to meet current training needs and limitations, so that DSPs are not pulled away from their regular work assignments except when it's absolutely necessary.

**B. Offer funding to assist programs with costs associated with re-opening and expanding program participation, including, but not limited to, increased program operation costs, social distancing and mask wearing requirements, space limitations, increased PPE costs and needs, and lack of supportive technology.**

- 1) Update the DDDS social distancing and mask wearing requirements on an ongoing

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basis, to conform with advice from the Division of Public Health and the CDC, in order to safely open programs to more participants by modifying social distancing / mask requirements.

- 2) Support re-opening/expansion by funding expenses required to prevent risks / exposure for those who are most vulnerable (i.e., any HCBS participants who have not been vaccinated and cannot wear masks) or to provide services to them in alternative settings.
- 3) Fund site modifications to meet any persistent pandemic-related mandates from DDDS.

**C. Maintain service integrity to HCBS participants by addressing program budget gaps created by pandemic-related revenue losses and increased expenses.**

- 1) Provide gap funding for programs that continue to have reduced participation levels due to risk mitigation and social distancing mandates from DDDS, for as long as the mandates are needed for the safety of the HCBS participants.
- 2) Review transportation funding needs and implement JVGA recommendations to enable providers to obtain additional resources to transport participants to programs, while meeting safety and staffing requirements.
- 3) Support staffing increases needed to support more small group interactions.

As we have discussed numerous times over the last nine months since you became the DHSS Secretary, providers serving adults with I/DD have experienced considerable revenue losses and cost increases since the onset of the pandemic. These losses continue, especially for day programs that are attempting to staff up to support re-opening and residential programs that are being requested to support new people with I/DD who need services. The continued strain on their finances – with some having exhausted their financial reserves - jeopardizes services offered to HCBS participants and long-term provider viability.

I look forward to discussing these suggestions at our meeting next week, as well as any options that your team has identified for using the American Rescue Plan funds received by the state government to support network integrity.

Yours truly,



C. Thomas Cook  
Executive Director

CC: DDDS Director Marissa Catalon  
DMMA Director Steve Groff  
A.N.D.'s Membership  
Ruggerio, Willson, & Associates