



## Invest in a Comprehensive Approach to the DD Waiting List:

### Continue to Draw Down the Waiting List, Ensure IDD System Capacity, & Fund a Study to Allow for Accurate Long-Term Planning

#### BACKGROUND

Colorado currently has three Medicaid waiver programs that serve people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD): Children's Extensive Supports (CES), Supported Living Services (SLS), and Developmental Disabilities (DD). 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. They are critical to ensuring that people with IDD can access the services they need to fully participate in their communities. Community-based IDD services are a unique marriage of the public and private sectors; the private agencies that provide them rely on Medicaid reimbursements for 90-98% of their revenues.

#### THE PROBLEM

##### *Waiting List for DD Services*

Because waiver programs are not an entitlement, states are permitted to have waiting lists for them. While the SLS and CES waiting lists have been eliminated, the DD waiver waiting list continues to grow and today totals more than 3,000 Coloradans. Many of these individuals have been waiting more than a decade for the supports they need. Yet, we also know that not everyone on the waiting list would accept an enrollment if offered one today. Last year, HB18-1407 provided funding for 300 people to come off the waiting list, but approximately 20% of those offered enrollment declined for a variety of reasons. If we more clearly understood the needs of those waiting for comprehensive services, we would be better prepared to fulfill the promise of eliminating the waiting list and meeting the true needs of people with IDD and their families.

##### *IDD System Capacity*

Because Medicaid is the only funder of these services, IDD providers cannot shift costs to the people they serve or other private insurance payors like other Medicaid providers. Despite this unique budgetary reality, Colorado currently sets one common policy rate increase for IDD rates along with other Medicaid providers. As a result, IDD rates have lagged far behind inflation and the cost of doing business, placing strain on the service system and limiting access to services. HB18-1407 made an initial investment to better align IDD rates with costs and stabilize the direct support workforce, but with this year's inflation and rising employment costs, half of that investment is at risk. 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”. Increases to IDD rates should at least keep pace with increases to state employee compensation, currently slated to receive a 3% increase in the 2019-2020 budget.

#### THE SOLUTION

To advance the goal of eliminating the waiting list and ensure system capacity, the General Assembly should:

- **Fund an additional 300 enrollments from the waiting list**, maintaining and building on last year's momentum;
- **Remove IDD rates from the common policy and fund a 3% increase to IDD waiver rates** to ensure the availability of providers to serve new and existing enrollees; and
- **Fund an in-depth, independent study of the waiting list** using the 300 new enrollees as a sample to inform future planning. The study should examine: reasons people decline and accept DD enrollment; what needs were unmet by other disability programs; what services and service models are most in demand; and other relevant trends.

#### THE COST

The JBC has already planned for a 1% community provider rate increase, which means the total *additional* investment for this comprehensive approach is **\$15.8 million General Fund**. This year, HCPF is reverting \$14.8 million GF that was not spent on the SLS waiver, which should be reallocated to support this long-term strategy to serve people with IDD. For every dollar invested in these services, the federal government provides a 100% match, resulting in an even greater impact for people and families.

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.

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