

# *News from the Wyoming Department of Health*

Wednesday, July 24, 2013

## **Planned Changes to Disability Programs Described**

Specific Wyoming Department of Health (WDH) plans for changes to the programs offered for state residents with developmental disabilities are now available for review.

“Our proposals have been crafted to reflect our priority of meeting participants’ needs as well as we can, in addition to being mindful of the requirements placed on us by state and federal law,” said Chris Newman, Behavioral Health Division senior administrator with WDH.

A law approved by the Wyoming Legislature and the governor earlier this year called for a redesign of current programs. “The legislative intent was clearly to provide needed services for more of the people who are on our unfortunately long waiting list without increased funding,” Newman said. “We believe what we are proposing is the best possible path to accomplish our goals and we very much appreciate the input we received from interested Wyoming residents online and during the public forums we held across the state.”

Two new waivers have been developed: a capped “Supports Waiver” and a “Comprehensive Waiver” that will use a combination of state and federal Wyoming Medicaid dollars.

The Supports Waiver is intended to help individuals and their families use both natural supports and paid providers to support participants in their own homes. The Supports Waiver provides self-directed opportunities for enhanced health, freedom, choice, control and responsibility over services received. Waiver participants may also opt for traditional service delivery or a mix of the two.

The Comprehensive Waiver has similar goals and is intended for individuals with a higher level of service needs, including community-based residential care such as group homes.

The new waivers will replace the existing “Adult Developmental Disabilities Waiver” and the “Child Developmental Disabilities Waiver.” Current participants will be transitioned to the new waivers beginning January 2014. “We understand that many people may have concerns about the coming changes. Our staff is planning for extensive outreach and support for those involved during our transition periods,” Newman said.

Newman said another improvement to the overall system requested by the legislature will be a switch to what is known as “conflict-free case management” targeted for July 2014. “Right now case managers assigned to help folks receiving waiver services are often employees of the very same organizations that are getting paid to support these individuals. Under conflict-free case management that will not be permitted in most cases,” Newman explained.

Documents describing the new waiver programs, as well as more information about the waiver redesign project, are available online at <http://www.health.wyo.gov/DDD/index.html>.

#####